



Recreation Advisory Board Meeting Minutes November 12, 2025

Call to Order

Members Present: Brad Long, Vice Chair, Bill Bowen, Hal Dockins, George Vancore, Casey Van Rysdam, and Jason Trent.

Members Absent: Lauren Watkins

Recreation Staff Present: Ryan Kane, Director, Jamie Baccari, Assistant Director, Carrie Miska, Business Manager, and Diane Gorski, Project Specialist/Liaison

Also present: David Simpkins, St. Johns County School District Liaison

Approval of the Minutes

Long called for approval of October 8, 2025, meeting minutes. Van Rysdam motioned to approve the minutes and received a second from Vancore. Motion passed 6/0.

Public Comments

The Vice Chair called for Public Comments for non-agenda items and there were none.

Reports

David Simpkins provided an update on high school fall sports. He mentioned that Bartram Trail would be playing at Matanzas for the first round in the Florida Invitational Tournament on Thursday November 13th. He provided Friday nights high school football schedule. Simpkins stated that Pedro Menendez students Gabriella Jacobsen, John McGaughey, Eli Anckner qualified for the bowling state playoffs. The Cross County state championships are scheduled for Saturday, November 22. Swimming and Diving state championships are November 14-15. Golf state championships are underway. He provided the results of the Girls' Volleyball Regionals in Tallahassee. Kane asked if the school district planned on adding additional turf fields and Simpkins replied that the plan is to add one field a year. Van Rysdam asked for clarification of funding for the artificial turf fields and Simpkins stated the funding was a mix of district and private funds. Discussion relating to artificial fields followed.

RAB Member Reports

Van Rysdam recommended coming up with metrics proving the department is moving forward. He mentioned the misinformation being shared on the Shore Drive Trail and suggested the county push the project forward.

Trent asked about the number of beach passes sold at the Tax Collector's office versus the other locations. Kane shared that staff was working on finding the best way to collect and report all beach pass sales.

Bowen mentioned that John Ellison had attended last month's meeting to discuss disc golf course options. He said that he hoped Nelson and other members of the St. Augustine Disc Golf Club would be included in future

discussions relating to creating new disc golf courses. He mentioned that the fairgrounds parking lots and fields were a swampy mess because of cars parked everywhere for the Cracker Day event. He said that park maintenance did a great job of repairing the damage and that he hoped that next year some effort could be made to ensure that attendees parked in the lots and not in the grass fairways.

Dockins mentioned the Power Walk clinic he was hosting in preparation for the upcoming 5k race in December. He said that he was adding a 4:30 p.m. option for clinic attendees. The RAB congratulated Dockins on his accomplishments and placement in the Senior Games held in Utah.

Vancore announced that the Field of Dreams 1.6 mill upgrade/improvements were coming along nicely. He was pleased that ADA parking only lot and additional parking lot, concession stand, and restrooms were added. He invited everyone to the opening day and the groundbreaking ceremony on Saturday, January 31st. He shared that CAA Flag Football has over 800 participants. He mentioned that participation level in girls' sports is dropping. He mentioned the state mandated level II background check cost as being prohibitive. He provided details on cost and the state clearing house.

Long mentioned that the Park Foundation has been working on raising funds for the Field of Dreams and that the Foundation will continue to seek donations. He said the Foundation actively supports parks and recreation and will continue to raise funds for programming and other needs.

Long announced that the December meeting was canceled.

Consideration of RAB Applications

Long asked for and was given a consensus to reassign Watkins to the District 5 position and review applications for a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) to fill the open at-large position.

Long introduced Whitney Graves who addressed the RAB members. She shared that she is a local resident and actively involved in youth sports. She shared that she is an employee of the Tax Collector's office and will be the upcoming Human Resources Director as well as an adjunct professor at Flagler College teaching Public Administration. She has 17 years of experience in Public Administration. She explained that her goal is to further the agenda that is already in place. She expressed her desire to support the Parks and Recreation Department and was looking forward to assisting in finding additional funding for projects if there is a tax overhaul as non-essential services will be hardest hit. She stated that she would like to see parks and recreation facilities expand in the rural parts of the community. Questions from the RAB members followed.

Long introduced Ashely Sumners who provided her background in St. Johns County. She is a graduate on Ponte Vedra High School and is an active runner. She stated that she works in commercial real estate in Northeast Florida. She was part of ULI leadership classes in Duval County. She hopes to help in whatever way she can and learn from everyone ways to implement goals of the future. Questions from the RAB members followed.

Long instructed the RAB members to cast their vote on the paper provided. The votes were counted and provided to Long who announced that the RAB recommended Whitney Graves to fill the open at-large seat. Long congratulated Graves and thanked Graves and Sumners for their participation. Kane explained that the BCC would consider the recommendation at the next board meeting.

Staff Reports

Kane shared that staff have been working on the partnership agreement. He said that staff would be meeting with the partner organizations on December 4th to deliver the policy and procedure updates and all requirements. He

provided an overview of the updates and proposed changes to the RAB. Discussion followed. Kane said that a copy of the partnership agreement would be provided to the RAB.

Kane provided an update on Shore Drive Trail. He said that Commissioner Murphy has a 12/1/25 meeting scheduled with staff and members of the neighborhood after which a public meeting will be scheduled. The public meeting will show the previous design and the proposed current design and include members of the design team, consultant and staff. He said that a survey will be provided for the community to answer yes or no to the trail. The results of the survey and input from the public meeting will be presented to the board to decide the fate of the project.

Kane gave an update on the status of 4 regional parks projects. Discussion ensued.

Kane mentioned the Color Run scheduled for Saturday. He stated that the purchase of 31+ acres next to the fairgrounds was scheduled for the December 2, 2025, BCC meeting. He announced that North Beach Park has been refurbished with additional parking and that a ribbon cutting invitation would be sent to all members.

Long thanks Van Rysdam for his service and commitment to the RAB and wished him well on his future endeavors. Kane presented Van Rysdam with a clock & plaque expressing thanks and appreciation. Kane spoke to the value that Van Rysdam brought to the RAB, the importance of his participation, input and commitment. Van Rysdam thanked staff and the RAB.

There was a motion by Vancore and a second by Trent to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried 6/0.

DRAFT