



Recreation Advisory Board Meeting Minutes September 10, 2025

Call to Order

Members Present: Lauren Watkins, Chair, Brad Long, Vice Chair, Bill Bowen, George Vancore, Harold Dockins, and Jason Trent.

Members Absent: Casey Van Rysdam

Also Present: Commission Chair Krista Joseph and David Simpkins, St. Johns County School District Liaison

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

Approval of the Minutes

Watkins called for approval of August 13, 2025, meeting minutes. Bowen motioned to approve the minutes and received a second from Dockins. Vancore requested an edit identifying Field of Dreams Baseball as the group providing 80k towards improvements to the Field of Dreams. Motion passed 6/0.

Public Comments

The Chair called for Public Comments for non-agenda items. There were none.

Watkins moved the Shore Drive Trail to the beginning of the agenda. She mentioned Margo Geer was in attendance for the update and explained Geer wouldn't have to stay for the whole meeting to glean the information.

Reports

Simpkins provided this week's football schedule and gave an update on high school sports countywide. He announced that the State of Florida mandated that beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, an electrocardiogram (EKG) screening is required for student-athletes in grades 9 through 12 in Florida public Schools. The goal is to identify potentially life-threatening heart abnormalities before they lead to sudden cardiac arrest on the athletic field or court. Additionally, The Florida High School Athletic Association voted that a 35-second shot clock will be required in all boys and girls high school basketball games starting in the 2026-2027 school year.

Commission Chair Joseph asked for further engagement between the Library, Recreation Department and the public referencing fundraising opportunities for Bird Island Park and playground. She asked Kane to work with GIS to get the library hubs that share locations with park facilities identified on county maps.

RAB Member Reports

Bowen shared that he would not be attending the October RAB meeting. He stated that the Disc Golf Club met with Kane and his staff to discuss the disc golf course project. He said that the final bid was \$200K over budget and that

the county decided not to proceed with the project. He mentioned that the county continues to look at other properties on which to build a course. He said a disc golf course was needed in the northern sector of the county.

Kane mentioned that the Moccasin Creek Disc Golf Course was in the news. He said Paul McBeth, six-time world champion disc golf player, set a course record of 27 under par. He mentioned McBeth posted a video to his YouTube channel on August 17th recording his time on the course.

Dockins reminded everyone that he is running Race Walk/Power Walk Clinics Mon/Thu from September 8 to September 18 at the Solomon Calhoun Community Center Gymnasium to help residents train for the upcoming Endless Summer 5k Run/Walk on Anastasia Park Beach in November. He announced that he would not be attending the October RAB meeting as he was competing in the upcoming Huntsman World Senior Games in Utah. He mentioned that St. Augustine and St. Johns County launched the St. Johns County Black Heritage Trail in August. The trail showcases 20 historical sites spanning more than 450 years of Black History honoring the voices and stories that shaped the community. He encouraged everyone to take the self-guided trail and visit all the historic sites. Baccari said these county park sites are marked with signage identifying them as part of the Black Heritage Trail: Butler East, Collier Blocker Puryear, Armstrong, Alpine Groves, and Beluthahatchee Parks.

Long shared that the SJC Parks Foundation was sponsoring the St. Johns County Parks & Recreation Department's Yappy Hour Halloween event at Treaty Park and 5k color run event. He extended his thanks and appreciation to the disc golfers for volunteering at the fairground events. He mentioned that the Foundation continues to look for sponsors and information is available on the website. He said the Foundation was trying to raise funds for a turf field at the Field of Dreams.

Vancore said that he would not be able to attend the October RAB meeting. He announced that the Field of Dreams (FOD) park expansion was underway, and everyone was looking forward to the completion of the project before the start of the season in January. He said the FOD Athletic Association was working with vendors to outfit the concession stand. He mentioned residents complaining about lack of field space availability, travel ball, paid coaches. He said he was hearing a lot of noise about St. Johns County Middle School Sports facility usage and he did some research and found that over a 6-week period 42 of 52 middle school games were played on school property. Commissioner Joseph said she was walking at Landrum Middle School, and the field was open.

Watkins asked about Van Rysdams request for an update on Strategic Plan Key Performance Indicators (KPI). Baccari responded that there were no KPI's in the current documentation and system that the county has implemented at this time. She said she would share information in the future when received.

Shore Drive Trail Update

Watkins read Tim Connor, Project Manager Shore Drive Path Update aloud. The re-design contract amendment has been executed with the architect & engineering firm. Staff are meeting today, September 10th, with the consultants to review a draft re-design and confirm next steps and upcoming milestones. Since the load of foundational work has already been completed, we are anticipating this effort will take +/- 60 days to complete. Upon finalization of a new design staff will bring forward the revised plans, cost estimates, and project specifications. This revision will be inclusive of path width and alignment, as well as an evaluation of path surface material. Kane explained that Commissioner Murphy had been working with a citizen advisory committee, and they would like to bring the path closer to the road and make it 5' in width. Commissioner Murphy will bring the advisory committees' final suggestions to the Board of County Commissioners with the hopes of reaching a consensus and getting the trail built. Bower asked if permeable materials were still in play and Kane responded that they were being considered in

specific sections. He said they are also looking at the cost of tree protection. Trent asked for more information on the committee. Kane shared that there were four members, two pro trail, two against the trail and the group meets in the St. Augustine South Community.

Kane reminded everyone that the **FY 2025 Second and Final Budget Hearing September 16, 2025, at 5:01 p.m. in the County Auditorium**. He said that there was reason to believe that the Board would agree to the roll back decided on at the first meeting and that meant a millage reduction. He said the Parks & Recreation budget was about the same as last year. He mentioned new full-time employees will be added towards the end of the year for the new parks opening in late 2026. Bowen stated that the tax bill had been received by residents and that the biggest increase was in the school district budget. He mentioned the school sales tax that residents voted in favor of.

Bailey Ranch – Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) Grant Application

Baccari explained that through LAMP, two waterfront parcels were purchased near Julington Creek on Bishop Estates Road. asked for RAB support in applying for the FRDAP grant to begin renovating the property and creating an ADA kayak launch. She discussed the funding. She said that Phase 1 would be to clear, create access, design and construct the ADA kayak launch. Phase 2 would be through a Florida Communities Trust Grant to renovate the house onsite for use as an Environmental Education Center. The RAB provided a consensus for the Chair to write a letter of recommendation to approve the FRDAP Grant Application submittal to the Board of County Commissioners

Fees

Baccari explained the annual process for setting fees through the Office of Management and Budget with the Approval of the Board of County Commissioners. She said that staff were doing internal audits to determine what fees are being collected. She said over the next few months staff will be researching fees throughout the and once the data has been compiled, it will be shared with the RAB. She asked the RAB members to review the FEE Schedule and submit any suggestions for new, revised or redundant fees to staff for compilation. A brief discussion relating to fees that included a request for a senior rate ensued. Baccari said that she would bring back the suggestions and research findings at a future RAB meeting.

First Draft – Updated Partnership Agreement

Baccari reviewed the first draft of the youth sports Partnership Agreement. The RAB members asked questions and offered suggestions. Baccari stated that she would bring the agreement back to the RAB with the changes and ideas discussed today along with the attachments referenced in the Partnership Agreement and the department's policy and procedures relating to youth sports. Modifications will include but will not be limited to a fee waiver policy, stronger language and consequences to prevent subletting of fields, fee waivers for at risk youths, scheduling, rosters for recreational and travel sports identifying county and out-of-county participants, penalty for non-payment of fees, expanding the association footprint beyond what has been authorized. The RAB discussed the agreement and partnerships at great length and agreed to revisit it in the future.

Staff Reports

Kane announced that Solomon Calhoun artificial turf field is good to go. He said the county will have 12 artificial turf fields eventually. He stated staff are working on getting artificial turf installed on infields at Davis Park and Davis Park will be getting \$3 million in improvements that includes transitioning one football field to an artificial turf field.

Kane stated that Shearwater and Silverleaf Regional Parks work is underway. He said the packages for the other regional parks would be going to the Board of County Commissioners soon and that the NW park was waiting on permitting.

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