

Recreation Advisory Board Meeting Minutes – February 11, 2026

Call to Order

Members Present: Lauren Watkins, George Vancore, Bill Bowen, Harold Dockins, Brad Long

Members Absent: Jason Trent and Whitney Graves

Recreation Staff Present: Ryan Kane, Director; Jamie Baccari, Assistant Director; Robert McFarland, Sports Tourism Specialist; Carrie Miska, Business Manager; Lauren Trice, Administrative Coordinator/Liaison

Also Present: David Simpkins, St. Johns County School District; Christian Whitehurst, County Commissioner; Marithza Ross, St. Johns County Parks Foundation

Approval of the Minutes: Watkins called for approval of January 14, 2026, meeting minutes and received a motion from Dockins who was seconded by Vancore. Motion passed 5/0.

Public Comment: The Chair called for Public Comments for non-agenda items:

1. **Bruce Miliken 2706 Shore Dr** – praised Ryan Kane on how he’s handled the proposed Shore Drive trail project. He stated that the survey that came out from Public Affairs is a flawed survey, because it can be taken multiple times by anyone.

Watkins asked Ryan if he would like to provide an update on the Shore Drive Trail. Ryan shared that there is a public meeting tonight to display the current Shore Drive Trail plan. The survey will be open until March 1st, with tentative plans for this to come back to the first Board of County Commissioners meeting in March. Ryan anticipates that he will be presenting at that meeting.

Reports:

Commissioner Whitehurst shared that he has made his decision on the Shore Drive Trail over a year ago based on what he’s seen from both sides. He is for the trail based on public safety and accessibility. Whitehurst attended the event at Field of Dreams on Saturday and spoke very highly of the event. He said it was very positive and thanked George Vancore.

David Simpkins shared that winter sports are wrapping up. He provided updates on boys and girls basketball, competitive cheer championships that were held in January, boys’ and girls’ soccer, girls weightlifting, and boys and girls wrestling. Kane asked when beach volleyball season is beginning and how many teams. Simpkins said it is a spring sport, and three schools will be participating. Dockins inquired about funding for travel when teams go out of town. Simpkins stated that the athletic booster clubs pay for this, the schools do not.

Board Member Reports:

Lauren Watkins said that Jalisa the county attorney will be coming next month to provide annual training on board rules and policies. Watkins will send out the annual RAB report next month for RAB members to review before sending it to the BOCC.

Bill Bowen said that disc golf had a big event and thanked Parks and Recreation.

Harold Dockins thanked Health and Human Services for allowing the use of their parking lot during the Fort Mose Jax Festival. He has 9 students currently taking his power walking. He is also attending Adult Camp, a new Parks and Recreation program.

Brad Long shared that the Foundation meeting was last night and Marithza Ross will share an update on that. He was also in attendance at the Field of Dreams last week and said it was a great event. He invited Marithza up for an update.

Marithza Ross thanked them for the \$20,000 check donation to the Foundation. The biggest program coming up right now is the Kids Triathlon. This year we will be able to have more kids participate in the event thanks to the help of a timing company. They are currently accepting sponsorships. The Bird Island campaign to raise money for a new playground has soft launched. They have already received \$10,000 for the project. Their fundraising goal for a new playground is \$150,000.

George Vancore said the Field of Dreams opening day went very well. He said there was a nine month window to get to opening day and he thanked the Parks department. They've grown from 248 to 271 participants. He stated that unfortunately there are daily confrontations at other fields over electric bikes. Electric bikes have been an issue, and they cause damage to grass fields. They ask the coaches to call the non-emergency number. He requested more presence from Parks and Rec staff between the hours of 4 and 7 to deter this activity. Lacrosse is starting, as well as baseball and softball. They hit 2500 kids participating and numbers keep rising.

Partner Agreement Changes (Baccari)

Jamie Baccari presented a power point showing the changes to enhance the partnership agreement. Each association is now locked into the sports they offer and will need to formally request any additions of new sports. Watkins requested clarification on what can be appealed by associations. Dockins inquired if a CivicRec account was required for payment and if pavilion rentals were included or separate. Brad Long complimented the changes. Vancore raised concerns about the cost of background checks and where those funds would come from. He said one year notice for expansion is not realistic. Baccari clarified that expansion meant when an association decides to open up new divisions or new sports. He requested clarification. He is dissatisfied with the percentage of participants who are required to be St. Johns County residents. Baccari addressed these concerns and explained that we are internally figuring out how to address the issue. Watkins stated we will revisit this in a future meeting.

Police Athletic League Expansion Request (Baccari)

The Police Athletic League requested two expansions. The first request was soccer at the Flagler Estates Community Center. The second request was to expand into 8v8 Spring football at Pomar. Baccari stated that Parks and Recreation does support the requests, with the condition to review at the end of the season. Vancore asked if it would displace anyone at Flagler Estates and Baccari said it would not. Long supported the soccer expansion to bring more sports to South SJC. Dockins asked about the definition of "youth". It is 3-18. PAL would like to bring more sports. Long made a motion to approve soccer expansion, Vancore seconded. Motion passed 5/0.

A motion to approve the second request for the one-year expansion into 8v8 Spring football at Pomar park, with a condition to evaluate the condition of the field upon conclusion of the season, was made by Vancore. Second by long. Motion passed 5/0

Staff Reports:

Ryan Kane explained that Jamie Baccari and Robert McFarland were tasked with working on changes to the partnership agreement to address loopholes in the agreement. Ryan shared that Field of Dreams was completed on time and within budget. Groundbreaking for park improvements will begin at De Leon Shores Park on February 27th. The Pacetti Bay project will begin soon. The Genovar/San Sebastian Boat Ramp facility off the 312 bridge has begun construction for the driveway, which is the only stage of construction approved at this time. Kane stated that it will overall be a \$30 million project.

Silverleaf and Shearwater parks are both well into construction and are anticipated to be completed by December. Davis Park is included in the bonding for the four regional parks for improvements and additional parking, beginning in the next few months. Micklers bathroom expansion is currently underway. Riverdale boat ramp is getting an overflow parking lot, construction starting next week. Sundot trail, an FDOT project, will be managed by the County Parks department. Lastly, Ryan shared that Parks and Rec went to SJC Day last week in Tallahassee.

Watkins asked Kane about an update on the vandalism campaign. Kane stated that we do not have a current update at this time, Baccari stated that it would come in Spring/Summer. Dockins asked about public input on the trail. Vancore asked about the Davis Park closure and how to handle the sports at that time.

Jamie Baccari said that we have a Movie in the Park this month. March will bring easter egg hunts.

Youth basketball registration is closing soon. She also shared that she did have a conversation with the sheriff's office regarding damage from e-bikes on fields in the evenings when staff is off. The challenge is that staff leaves by 5pm. Parks right outside the neighborhoods are the problem areas.

Dockins inquired about sharing field space with Duval County and Baccari said that we do not have room to share, and Jacksonville runs their fields differently.

Motion to adjourn by Dockins, seconded by Vancore.