



Recreation Advisory Board Minutes  
February 13, 2020

Present:

**Board Members:** Chair Al Guido, Vice Chair Casey Van Rysdam, Jillian McNiff-Villemaire, Bert Watson, William "Bo" Browne, Brad Long

**County Staff:** Joy Andrews, Assistant County Administrator, Commissioner Paul Waldron, Emily Howington, Recording Secretary, Teddy Meyer, Recreation Facilities Manager, Diane Gorski, Recreation Supervisor, Sydney Lindblad, Beach Services Manager, Jamie Baccari, Community Program Manager

**Other Attendees:** Tony VonDolteren, Angel Natal, Adam Rogers

Absent: Deb Chapin

Chair Guido called meeting to order at 3:12pm

First order was to approve minutes of January's meeting. Minutes approved with a consensus.

The board moved to the election of chair and vice chair. Discussion ensued. Guido recommended the new chair be someone who can champion Parks and Recreation.

Watson recommended Van Rysdam for chair. Guido recognizes the nomination and as there were no other nominations, board voted unanimously and Van Rysdam accepted.

Watson nominated McNiff-Villemaire for vice chair, McNiff-Villemaire stated she was going to nominate Watson to remain vice chair, however Watson declined as he wanted to be able to fully commit to the upcoming Park Foundation. The Board unanimously voted for McNiff-Villemaire as Vice Chair.

Van Rysdam requested that Guido finish leading the meeting as his last meeting as chair and thanked Al Guido for his many years of service to the RAB and the community of St. Johns County.

There were no public comments.

Guido gave his final Chair report. He expressed his concern as a citizen regarding the new Administration and personnel changes and wondered how they might impact current staff.

Andrews stated Director Bataille was attending training with other department directors and that she was in attendance to ensure that all questions and concerns related to Parks and Recreation were addressed in his absence. She provided updates for:

**Villages Park/Library project:**

Andrews stated the most likely locations would be the Villages West and East parcels because it would be most cost effective to share access roads with between a library site and parks site. After the feasibility study results have been reviewed Administration and the Parks and Recreation Departments will work closely with Public Works to give recommendations on the project. Andrews stated as the project moves forward they expect feedback from the Recreation Advisory Board and the public, and that they will work on public outreach to inform the public of the process.

**Davis Park expansion project:**

In the update for Davis Park, the county was able to get the project budget below 2 million. Resized SCOPE of project that resulted in a budget reduction. Project funding using the surplus allocation, impact fees and private

contributions. There is opportunity for additional improvements to the site through private/public partnerships in the future.

Waterway Access Improvement project:

For the Waterway Access Program, one of the highest prioritized project is Palm Valley West, and preferred for maintenance according to public comments. Staff will be applying for FIND Grants to assist with funding improvements at Palm Valley West and dredging at Vilano Landing.

Van Rysdam stated that he wished to develop a dialogue with the TDC to recommend together what projects they believed the BOCC should prioritize for the category 5 dollars. Andrews stated she believed the RAB already had that voice since Commissioner Waldron is a voting member of the TDC as well as BOCC liaison for the Recreation Advisory Board. Van Rysdam spoke of his concern for the quality of experiences for tourists and residents and desire that the cat 5 funding be allocated for improvements rather than marketing.

Andrews assured that the intention in developing that additional 5<sup>th</sup> funding category was for the purpose of improvements and that none of the cat 5 funding would be intended for marketing. Marketing would be contained within the 4<sup>th</sup> category.

Andrews spoke of transitions in the county administration she stated they welcome any feedback from the RAB and the community. She acknowledged the significant personal changes and stated that the administration believes these are the necessary steps to be taken to improve the administration.

Andrews referenced new County Administrator Hunter Conrad, and stated that he has met with all department directors of St. Johns County and has been candid about the changes the board does or does not plan to make and that the BOCC 's intention is to better align itself with its design of serving the community. They don't expect any other major personnel changes. Conrad will be spending the next 6-8 months evaluating operations.

Guido commented on the significant role Billy Zeits had in the Parks Dept. and he asked if there was intention to fill that position.

Andrews responded that any major personnel change was an improvement opportunity. She stated that Director Bataille is very aware of this and has held off on finding a replacement while being in communication with the BOCC to decide they best way to move forward in regards to community growth and keeping the pristine shape of St. Johns County's park assets.

Guido asked for an update with the Golf Course. Andrews stated it was delayed due to the ongoing negotiations with the primary bidder McGarvey, that their appraisal is different from their initial proposal.

Commissioner Waldron gave an update that the TDC was contemplation running a sports commission. Waldron stated he attended the Field of Dreams opening day, that the facility was looking great and the children were having a great time.

McNiff-Villemaire asked if Waldron could address why the BOCC did not appointed the recommended person for new member of RAB and whether this is common.

Waldron and Guido discussed further, clarifying that while the BOCC accepts the RAB recommendations, appointments are at the pleasure of the BOCC. While it's not a requirement, it was the BOCC's goal during this appointment process was to have a RAB member from every district. Thus the reason for choosing Mr. Long from district 5. The board discussed further the process for selecting preferred applicants for board members.

Lindblad gave updates on Beach Projects, included the recent hiring of Natural Resources Superintendent, Nathan Otter. The board discussed the Beach Nourishment project from South Ponte Vedra down to Serenata and the ongoing Pier project.

Tony VonDolteren & Angel Natal from Perfect Game, Inc. then gave information on the Baseball Tournament and provided the four applications for the four tournaments they intended to hold.

Natal spoke of the previous tournaments success and assured it would be greater this year for the county because it would draw in teams from other states which would benefit St. Johns County tourism.

VonDolteren described how they hosted 2 smaller fall events for which they did not ask funding to show good faith. The board unanimously voted to fund \$7.5k each for 3 of the events and \$15k for the fourth, larger event with the contingent that Perfect Game, Inc. displays a video provided by the county on their website to market St. Johns County as a destination.

Adam Rogers from American Junior Golf Association spoke on their Junior PLAYERS Championship & Billy Horschel Junior Championship tournament. There was brief discussion on the Billy Horschel October tournament dates conflicting with the St. Augustine National Golf Tournament, as they could not be changed the board proceeded. Watson made a motion to approve the requested \$15k for the 2 golf tournaments, Van Rysdam added the contingency that the American Junior Golf Association display a provided video link for the county for marketing purposes. The board approved the motion.

Guido asked if there were any questions on the Project Updates, Van Rysdam asked Meyers for an update on the nets. Meyers stated the company who supplied the nets had a facility fire therefore orders were backlogged roughly one month. Meyers continued that Treaty Park was completed at the end of January, and they dept. is prepping for a pickleball tournament at the end of February.

Meyers explained that new project updates would be listed for the public to view on the county's website with old ones being removed as they pass. Guido asked about the procedures for the fields at Gamble Rogers Middle. Meyers stated that the county schedules the field and pays the electric bills, and typically no conflicts as the school requires no evening usage. Commissioner Waldron stated that the county has had a good relationship with Gamble Rogers Middle.

Guido asked for any board member reports.

Van Rysdam brought up the FY2020 Maintenance Summary and requested a report of the progressive usage of the Maintenance Surplus fund. Baccari stated that she and Meyers would coordinate with Facility Maintenance to present a report. Guido recommended that Van Rysdam in future meet with the staff to discuss upcoming agenda items.

Browne commended Guido on his leadership of the Recreation Advisory Board over the years and thanked him for his leadership. Guido reflected on his time with the Board and his enjoyment of the involvement in the community.

The board discussed which members were up for reappointment in November, being McNiff-Villemaire and Browne. Guido suggested beginning the process as early as possible.

Watson made a motion to adjourn at 4:52pm and all were in agreement.