



St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners

Parks & Recreation Department

RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes – June 11, 2020

11:00 AM – St. Johns BCC Auditorium

500 San Sebastian View | Saint Augustine | FL 32084

Present: Chair Casey Van Rysdam, Commissioner Paul Waldron, Doug Bataille Parks and Recreation Director, Emily Howington, Recording Secretary, Sydney Lindblad, Natural Resources Manager, Teddy Meyer, Rec Facilities Manager, Diane Gorski, Project Specialist, Jamie Baccari, Community Program Manager

Present via Conference Call: Vice Chair Dr. Jillian McNiff-Villemaire, Al Guido, Bert Watson, Brad Long

Absent: Bo Brown, Deb Chapin, Paul Abbatinozzi

Meeting was called to order at 11:01 am by Chair Van Rysdam followed by roll call.

The April minutes were reviewed with a minor correction, Guido made a motion to approve, Watson seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously. Van Rysdam thanked Diane Gorski for providing a script for the televised meeting. There were no public comments.

Sydney Lindblad provided an update on TDC Sports funded events effected by COVID-19 closings, Tour De Forts was rescheduled for September 13th. Two Perfect Game tournaments were cancelled and not yet rescheduled. Sunshine State Championships and Old School Kingfish Shootouts events remained as scheduled. Van Rysdam requested Lindblad to send a comparison of requested, approved, and pending dollars for TDC events.

Lindblad along with Dena Masters, of TDC, wrote additional language for specific marketing requirements in the agreement between the TDC and groups receiving event funding. This will be based off the TDC's rewritten Arts and Culture Heritage Grant. The post event form will change to include information such as requiring the group to list what hotels they used.

McNiff-Villemaire asked if funds for events cancelled due to Covid-19 would be money refunded or reapplied for next year. Lindblad stated that the group would be required to reschedule before September 30th otherwise the money is not eligible for reimbursement. There were no further questions.

Van Rysdam gave Chair Reports, mentioning the Golf Course and the Galimore Center as sites for board workshops. He asked the board to submit their ideas of site locations to Emily Howington.

The RAB annual report was mentioned and he asked if the board had any comments regarding the report, afterwards it would be submitted to the Board of County Commissioners. The report was approved by the board members with no further comment.

Commissioner Waldron reported the county fields are open for leagues with Covid-19 restrictions. Waldron mentioned Old School Kingfish Challenge, this is first in 20 years that it had been awarded grant funding through Parks and Recreation. The event is anticipated to be very popular with over 500 boats signed up to participate.

Guido gave comment on his concerns regarding the increasing number of Covid-19 cases and the county's encouragement of tourism. He observed visitors to the county were not following CDC guidelines of wearing masks and social distancing in St. Augustine. Guido stated his concern on how this affects county residents who do follow guidelines, particularly the senior community who are more susceptible to the virus. Waldron said the issue is a state health initiative, and the state has opened facilities such as short term rentals. He said St. Johns County has increased testing, but percentage of positive numbers had stayed low.

Van Rysdam asked if events such as Old Kingfish are required to give a Covid-19 protection plan. Lindblad stated the event plan was altered to comply with Covid-19 requirements. A drive-thru check in will be available for the captains to collect their information. Boat ramps in 3 different counties are available, and listed on the event website. Vilano Boat ramp will likely have the most people, a SJC sheriff deputy will be stationed at the boat ramp during event hours. The award ceremony has been moved off of SJC property to a private venue.

Van Rysdam asked if there should be a Covid-19 testing site at the Vilano Ramp during the event due to the amount of people. Waldron stated that the ramp was often crowded and that a testing site would be a matter for the state health department. Bataille agreed that the Vilano Boat Ramp was frequently busy on regular weekends. Guido stated his concern for the children of St. Johns County and the number of cases in the northeast part of the county.

Lindblad provided Beach Updates; completed projects include the Ocean and Fishing Pier, the decking between the Pier Gift Shop and bathrooms was replaced and expanded slightly. The Fort Matanzas ramp was completed and is now open as an exit only ramp. Memorial Day weekend saw record breaking numbers. Toll booths saw a 62% increase from Friday to Monday. The Pier Gift Shop saw an increase of over 25%. In partnership with SJC Sheriff's Office and City of St. Augustine Beach Police the Vilano and A Street access ramps were closed to vehicles for a temporary time, but were still open to pedestrians. A shuttle was offered at Mickler's and the Pier beach access to alleviate parking needs. Increased numbers are expected for the July 4th holiday.

Van Rysdam inquired about the 2020 Beach Driving Passes being valid for 2021 as well and why this was the case if purchasers weren't inconvenienced since the beaches are now open. Lindblad replied this direction was given by Administration. Van Rysdam directed the question to Bataille if there was further discussion on the matter. Bataille stated there was not. Commissioner Waldron commented it was voted on to approve the passes for both years to offer financial help due to Covid-19.

Teddy Meyer provided Project Updates; the Gamble Rogers project is on schedule despite the consistent rainfall, with completion estimated in two weeks. The Davis Park ADA sidewalks are about 75% or a week and a half behind schedule due to weather. The West Augustine fitness equipment is in final permitting for the shade structure. Royal Road and Al Willkie are in the final phases of their shade structures being implemented. Several Boat Ramp projects are on hold. Armstrong Parks playground was completed, there will be an ADA sidewalk added.

Jamie Baccari gave Community Program Updates; to comply with CDC guidelines, nature programs offered with Park Naturalists Ayolane Halusky and Kelly Ussia include guided walks with limited numbers, and kayak trips. Staff are required to wear facemasks, only card payments are accepted, and all kayak boats are sanitized before trips. Solomon Calhoun Pool opened for reservation only lap swim and reservation preferred family swim, walk ups will be based on availability. The pool remains closed to summer camps but is in progress to open for swim team practices with restrictions.

SJC Summer Camps were cancelled. The department is working on community activities that can be provided within the Ketterlinus, Solomon Calhoun, and W.E. Harris Community Centers.

Van Rysdam praised Baccari and the department for doing a "good job on social media" in keeping the

public informed. He then asked if the high school swim teams use the pool. Baccari responded that high school fall swim would have already had their practices. The pool would be utilized by a multi-age swim team. Van Rysdam asked if high school swim teams would use the pool if there was clearance. Baccari responded that decision had not been made yet with the school district.

McNiff-Villemaire asked Lindblad if in extending beach passes to 2021 there was documentation of the anticipated revenue decrease or if the money would be made up somewhere else. Lindblad replied that the decreased revenue was discussed at the budget workshop.

Bataille addressed Budget Workshops, the budget itself was “fairly status quo”, and Finance was looking at how Covid-19 would have an effect. He addressed the 5-year plan the department was working on with the Budget office in projecting impact fees over the next few fiscal years. There are anticipated changes in funding due to Covid-19.

Van Rysdam asked if the General Funds Surplus was at risk because of Covid-19 and how this would impact funding for Parks and Recreation construction projects. Waldron specified that it remains to be seen and that once Covid-19 started the County started sweeping budget items for this year, to save future funds. He indicated that administration only had the change in April numbers, not May and that the final numbers wouldn't weigh into the county's reserves or cause any kind of detriment.

Van Rysdam asked if the Maritime Grant, requiring a \$100,000 match was still in process. Bataille stated it was still available, but in a holding pattern. The department's current construction projects were higher priority. Van Rysdam asked Waldron what the next steps in the budget process were in relation to the Recreation Advisory Board. Waldron responded that at the next BOCC meeting officers will present to the Commissioners and additional budget meetings will be conducted in September.

Bataille and Van Rysdam decided further discussion on impact fees would take place in the RAB's July meeting.

Bataille spoke of the revised Naming/Sponsorship/Memorial Policy, the agenda packet reflected changes between the old and revised policy. After viewed by RAB, the policy will be submitted to the county attorney's office for review, and then returned to the RAB for approval. McNiff-Villemaire asked Bataille if the expectation was for someone from the Parks Foundation to be the first to address a naming request, and then present it to RAB. Bataille stated the goal is to have the Parks Foundation's process be in line with the county, for future donations to be accepted by the Parks Foundation and then transferred to the county.

Van Rysdam announced that the next RAB meeting would have discussion about the Golf Course and the Pier. He asked board members for further comments. McNiff-Villemaire asked when it was anticipated for the RAB workshops to start. Van Rysdam replied there wasn't a specific date, but rather post Covid-19 in reference to safety and convenience to county staff.

Director Report from Bataille included the continuous adjustments to programming as Covid-19 recovery phase's change to follow social distancing guidelines. Sports organizations utilizing county fields must adhere to the adjustments. The department has provided staff on the front lines with PPE, face masks etc. He explained that the increase of people and therefore trash on the beaches required county staff to be moved in order to keep up with the demands. Guido inquired if the county could purchase tractor rakes to collect trash. Bataille stated that the beaches and shoreline were actually very clean, and that trash is often piled around the receptacles.

Van Rysdam asked if staff could contact Abbatinozzi about the status of summer programs at school facilities.

Watson stated the progress of the Parks Foundation was slow moving due to Covid-19 and documentation was in process.

Guido explained that his earlier comments were not political, but out of concern for SJC residents.

Brad Long and Van Rysdam mentioned that they had visited several park sites. Van Rysdam said the July meeting may be pushed back.

McNiff-Villemaire told Guido she did not take his comments as political, and shared his concerns.

Watson motioned to adjourn, Guido seconded. Vote was unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 12:07 pm.