



St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners

Parks & Recreation Department

RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes – August 11, 2020

3:00 PM – St. Johns BCC Auditorium

500 San Sebastian View | Saint Augustine | FL 32084

Present: Chair Casey Van Rysdam, Doug Bataille, Parks and Recreation Director, Emily Howington, Recording Secretary, Sydney Lindblad, Natural Resources Manager, Jamie Baccari, Community Program Manager, Stacia Cotter, Assistant to Deputy Administrator

Present via Conference Call: Vice Chair Dr. Jillian McNiff-Villemaire, Teddy Meyer, Rec Facilities Manager, Diane Gorski, Project Specialist, Paul Abbatinozzi

Absent: Deb Chapin, Bert Watson, Brad Long

The meeting was called to order at 11:01 am by Chair Van Rysdam followed by roll call. The June minutes approval was postponed due to no quorum. There were no public comments.

Paul Abbatinozzi, School Board Representative delivered an update of the school reopening process amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The school year's start date was pushed to August 31st. The options for schooling include brick and mortar distance learning, home education, and St. Johns Virtual. High school sports were shut down in the spring, conditioning programs resumed on June 15th with new COVID-19 protocol to follow CDC and local health department guidelines. The high school athletic associations put together a task force to provide a presentation to the Florida high school Board of Directors, whose meeting on August 14th will provide determine how the athletics programs will function. Abbatinozzi stated there will be reduced numbers at the events when they resume.

Chair Van Rysdam asked if the groups were putting a compacted schedule for example, only playing with teams in the same county. Abbatinozzi replied there were 3 options either a holding pattern, keeping the August 24th date, or moving all sports to November. He stated the difficulty with pinpointing start dates is how the state of other districts can affect the decisions.

Vice Chair McNiff-Villemaire asked if the start date was for practices or competitions. Abbatinozzi answered the official start date is when equipment/pads, etc. are introduced. Practices without equipment take place prior to official start dates. He estimated that if the official start date was approved for August 24th, then the start of competitions may be Sept. 11th.

Van Rysdam addressed the two vacancies on the RAB due to the resignations of Bo Browne and Al Guido. He stated that two members terms were soon to expire being Dr. McNiff-Villemaire and Bert Watson. The process to fill the vacancies has begun and the chosen applicants will likely address the board at the September meeting. The Vice Chair said she thought her term expired in November, Van Rysdam replied that the process was being moved to September for streamlining purposes and that they looked forward to her reapplication.

Van Rysdam stated he and Director Bataille would spend the next month developing Key Performance Indicator's to be used in the RAB annual report. During the fiscal year RAB can then report on their progress with initiatives like the Parks Foundation.

Director Bataille informed the Parks and Recreation department now reports to Deputy Administrator Brad Bradley along with 13 other departments. Mr. Bradley's assistant Stacia Cotter was present and



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Bataille stated they look forward to Mr. Bradley being able to attend RAB meetings. Van Rysdam mentioned Deputy Administrator Joy Andrews who previously worked with Parks and Recreation and her involvement, Bataille said there would still be a relationship with Joy in special projects such as the Golf Course and various parks.

Van Rysdam brought up the condition of Commissioner Waldron who was hospitalized with COVID-19, and they continue to hold him in their prayers and thoughts.

Sydney Lindblad provided Beach Updates, Tropical Storm Isaias was the first time they shut down the ocean to no swimming in partnership with Marine Rescue and the Sheriff's office. This was requested through Marine rescue due to the high number of savings and drownings from the previous hurricane. Marine Rescue patrolled the beach and said the closing went well. This will likely be implemented moving forward.

There were two large special events, a triathlon at Micklers Beachfront Park and a Pro Watercross National Tour at Vilano. Van Rysdam asked why RAB wasn't involved in regards to TDC funding. Lindblad stated it was because they didn't apply for a Sports Marketing Grant. Van Rysdam asked if they were given any TDC money. Lindblad replied the triathlon did not and the jet-ski (Watercross) event was given money out of the Visitor Convention Bureau's budget.

Lindblad stated the toll booths were still collecting everyday but would soon move to just Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Current revenue overview reflected \$927,158, last year's total revenue was \$881,852. Van Rysdam asked what the variance was referring to the beach driving pass sales. Lindblad said 48% of 2019's revenue was from annual passes and 2020's revenue is currently 52% from annual passes. Next fiscal year forecasts roughly \$800,000 in tolls not included the 20-50% revenue loss expected. Van Rysdam asked about the departments expenses, Lindblad stated they should be similar to last year.

For TDC Sports Marketing, Lindblad addressed the proposed new grant application process. A sample of which was included in the agenda packet. She stated as of now there were no funds allocated to next year's TDC Grant Program. Lindblad elaborated on the application process, Van Rysdam asked if there could be more flexibility in how requests are quantified. McNiff-Villemaire mentioned the reasoning for having more strict deadlines. Van Rysdam asked what the criteria was for exceptions to the deadlines on reporting and the two windows a year. Bataille stated his thoughts on needing the ability to make exceptions to be approved by RAB and the positive aspects of setting a maximum request amount. Lindblad said the TDC requested deadlines be reexamined.

Bataille addresses Beach Visitation, the beaches generated revenue detailed in the agenda packet. The spreadsheets detailing the percent of beach users that pay for access vs overall users. The numbers were sources from surveys done by the State and the TDC. Bataille pointed out the beach is "the number one thing people come to St. Johns County for" and bottom line beach goes are about 15% paid access and 85% non-paid access.



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Teddy Meyer provided Recreation Project Updates. Van Rysdam asked about the estimated project cost list, and how to identify how much of the cost was for design work. Meyer replied this was possible, but with most projects design was included in the overall amount. Bataille stated usually 10% of construction cost goes to design, but it varies with each project. Meyer stated that a lot of projects have been done despite the effects of COVID-19.

Jamie Baccari spoke on Community Programs, with the fall season in preparation. Registration for after-school programs will begin. The registrations for Nature Walk programs are open, with two classes being live Zoom classes. Baccari had spoken with Abbatinuzzi to possible meet a need of physical fitness for the students who are partially or completely schooling from home. The Hastings Back to School Event differed due to COVID-19, the department partnered with two food banks and other nonprofits. 180 households were fed through Epicure food donations, including 800 residents and about 400 youth received back to school supplies. Parks and Recreation donated about \$1,000 in school supplies and will contribute \$1,000 in school supplies to the West Augustine CRA Back to School event in two weeks. McNiff-Villemaire asked about the possible day programs home based students can use for their P.E. requirements. Baccari replied this was in progress and was waiting to hear from the school district P.E. director to see if Solomon Calhoun Center or W.E. Harris were possible locations. Abbatinuzzi responded the school districts P.E. curriculum department coordinator will be reaching out to Baccari sometime next week.

Bataille provided a brief update on the Alpine Groves Barn. A proposed destruction will be voted on at a later meeting by the RAB. The agenda packet provided the chief engineer's report relaying the extensive wear, tear, and safety hazards of the structure with pictures.

Van Rysdam stated the New Business items of Impact Fees, Golf Course, and Pier Strategy would be pushed for later meetings.

Van Rysdam asked about inter-local agreement with the St. Augustine Port Beaches Waterway for Vilano dredging. Lindblad replied that BCC approved department to apply for the FIND Grant, matching funds of \$120k. \$60k of the match would come from SJC and \$60k would come from St. Augustine Port Beaches Waterway.

Teddy Meyer spoke on the Parks and Recreation Department's application for a \$2,000 Facility Recovery Grant Award through the United States Tennis Association (USTA) on behalf of Heather Diegan, St. Johns Tennis Academy, Inc. (SJTAI). The grant was awarded, and will be used to help defray tennis-related expenses to reopen the Mills Field tennis programs temporarily shut down due to Covid-19. Van Rysdam asked if this would be covered on social media, etc. Meyer replied after funds transfer, they will be working with Lauren Ferro in communications.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:52 pm