



St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners

Parks & Recreation Department

RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes – September 10, 2020

3:00 PM – St. Johns County Auditorium

500 San Sebastian View | Saint Augustine | FL 32084

Present: Chair Casey Van Rysdam, Doug Bataille, Parks and Recreation Director, Jamie Baccari, Parks and Recreation Assistant Director, Deb Chapin, Emily Howington, Recording Secretary, Stacia Cotter, Assistant to Deputy Administrator

Present via Conference Call: Vice Chair Dr. Jillian McNiff-Villemaire, Brad Long, Teddy Meyer, Rec Facilities Manager, Diane Gorski, Project Specialist, Sydney Lindblad, Natural Resources Manager, Paul Abbatinozzi, School Board Representative.

Absent: Bert Watson,

The meeting began at 3:03pm. There was a brief recess due to minor technical difficulties. The meeting resumed about 3:16 pm. A roll call of staff and board members followed. The June and August minutes were approved unanimously. There were no public comments.

Chair Van Rysdam mentioned the RAB annual report and requested that the B.A.R.T.H. report be sent to the board members once the new ones were appointed.

Paul Abbatinozzi provided School Board Updates, speaking on the upcoming home football games. The procedure adjusted due to COVID-19, no tickets will be handed out, and the event would hold reduced capacity. Abbatinozzi stated there would still be security at the events as well as faculty and staff and that the attendance number was capped at 600 people. Deb Chapin asked what the normal capacity number would be and if masks were mandatory or suggested. Abbatinozzi replied the regular number was about 2,000 masks are required to enter until seated and the capacity number of 600 was designed for social distancing.

Van Rysdam asked if Middle School Sports was in action. Abbatinozzi replied that they had started about a week before the other sports and have played roughly two games. Van Rysdam asked if their social distancing protocols were similar to the school boards, Abbatinozzi said that he knew they had protocols in place but was unsure of the details. Director Bataille stated the department, including Teddy Meyer, has worked with youth organizations and required them to provide a plan stating how they will operate adhering to the CDC guidelines when they reserve field space. Abbatinozzi spoke on the return of students to school, some doing distance learning or online learning from home and others returned to the school buildings with social distancing in place.

Van Rysdam briefly spoke on Commissioner Paul Waldron's return after being hospitalized with COVID-19 by calling in to the Budget Meeting. Van Rysdam stated the board looked forward to him returning to his seat as liaison.

New Member Applicants were the next agenda item for the two open at large board member positions. Three applications were reviewed by the board prior to the meeting. Each applicant was given a list of questions regarding the positions which was also reviewed by the board.

Marty McEachan attended the meeting in person and spoke of how his appointment would be positive to the board. McEachan spoke of his long history of community involvement, growing up in the Boys and Girls Club, being a youth counselor as well as X and up to his current position as first V.P of Creeks Athletic Association. He spoke of his how his years in community involvement in St. Johns County would be beneficial to the board and that his interests were to help and benefit the children of the community. He stated being a part of the RAB would give him great opportunity to learn and bring his leadership skills to the table.



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Van Rysdam asked if his position at Creeks would be a conflict with a position on the board and if there was a Creeks issue would he recuse himself from the topic. McEachean said he did not think it would be an issue and would excuse himself if a topic was a conflict of interest because it was the right thing to do.

Van Rysdam asked what sort of things he would do to help with funding.

Chapin asked about his experience with non-organized sports and thoughts on expanding. He said it was a great opportunity especially because of the pandemic.

Van Rysdam asked if Marc Williams was in person or on the phone. There was no reply.

Van Rysdam asked if Dockins was on the phone, there was no reply.

Van Rysdam asked for a motion to recommend McEachean for the first open seat. Long made the motion, Chapin seconded. The vote was unanimous. The BCC will address the recommendation at a later agenda meeting.

Bataille brought up that Dockins had been previously recommended by the board to BCC for appointment last year, and that the board was not prevented on voting on the positions if the applicants were not present.

Van Rysdam stated he was hesitant to vote if the applicant was not present and asked the board their thoughts.

Chapin asked Bataille about the district representation of the board members. Bataille explained that the current board members provided a representative for each district, therefore the two new positions would be considered at large.

Vice Chair McNiff-Villemaire stated she thought they would vote on Mr. Dockins at this time and because Dockins had attended last year's appointment meeting she had no issue with re-recommending him for appointment.

Van Rysdam asked for a motion to appoint Dockins as the second recommended member. Long made the motion, McNiff-Villemaire seconded, the vote was unanimous.

Bataille presented the proposed demolition of the Alpine Groves Barn. The chief engineer's report relaying the extensive wear, tear, and safety hazards of the structure with pictures. The barn was built in the 1960's and while old is not considered historic in nature to the site compared to the other structures. The estimated cost of reconstruction to current code would be approximately \$250,000.00 while the cost of demolition and removal is estimated to be approximately \$5,000.00. Bataille mentioned in the future possibly restoring a historic orange packing shed with greater history to the original site instead. The motion of support to demolish the barn was unanimous with discussion of possible interpretive signage for the park.

Bataille provided updates on renovations to the golf course. Negotiations are ongoing, and will hopefully be presented to the board soon. During the COVID-19 pandemic, golf course participate numbers have increased by between 5-10 %. The public golf was slightly under budget by about \$5,000. The public course is an area with high future growth. Van Rysdam asked about wear on the golf carts, Bataille replied that the carts were new, and through COVID-19 they were rented one person per cart. This raised the concern they may wear out faster than normal, the Golf Course is now renting them as 2 riders per cart. McNiff-Villemaire asked how long the Golf Course would be closed or at reduced capacity for possible renovations. Bataille replied at least 9 months which is based off of growing season. Chapin asked about the plans the developer is proposing. Bataille stated that would be reviewed by the BCC, negotiations were ongoing, and that the developer proposed in exchange for the site's additional 90 acres to be converted into home sites, they would pay for the Golf Course improvements.



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Updates on the Pier and Gift Shop, the Pier was renovated last year for over \$800,000 and is inspected every year. It is estimated the renovations will provide another 10 years relative to weather and storms. At the end of this period, it would then go to the board for possible replacement and if so, how much to be replaced. Depending on how long a new pier would be, the estimated cost is \$5-10 million. BCC approved when Shands Bridge is replaced, 860ft of that bridge will be used for a fishing pier on the St. Johns River. Van Rysdam asked Cat 5 TDC dollars was approved for the Pier, Bataille will reach out to Tara Meeks of TDC to determine.

Under Staff Reports, Bataille welcomed Jamie Baccari in her promotion to Assistant Director. Baccari has been with the county for 21 years, heavily involved in the community, and has a BA in Sports Administration and Public Administration, and a Master's in Public Administration.

The Park foundation received a green light to move forward. Design for permitting for proposed boat ramps is underway. A traffic survey at Palm Valley West is being conducted, two weeks have been spent counting boats to provide to engineers, there are four different proposals for the area, two dry storage and two launch ramps. Chapin mentioned safety concerns due to high traffic in a narrow area,

Baccari gave Community Program Updates, after school care began at the three community centers. The procedure for social distancing transport followed the school districts, children wore masks and were spread out in the vans. Adult Softball has begun, two leagues in Jullington Creek and one league at Treaty. Due to the decrease of men's softball at Treaty Park, there are plans to begin a coed kickball league. Social distancing procedure has been put in place such as limiting games, and rotating people on the field. Staff is working on next year's programming plans in preparation for the new budget season.

Sydney Lindblad provided updates for Beaches and TDC Sports Marketing. Labor Day was extremely successful out on the beach. Toll revenue was about \$28,000 from Saturday through Monday. Shuttles were run at Micklers and the Pier with very low numbers, 8 and 4 respectively. Vilano Beach is closed to vehicular access due to the nourishment project including Surfside Park. There is pedestrian access, so those who live in the neighborhood still have beach, restroom and facility access. Tolls end the last Sunday in September, they have reached just over \$1 million in revenue. Music by the Sea has begun, the event has reduced numbers through a ticket lottery. Under TDC, the proposed application and new criteria was included in the meeting's agenda packet. The new scoring chart will add up to 100, if the applicant scores 90/100 than the funding awarded will be 90% of the requested amount, e.g. the request is \$5,000 the score would determine an award of \$4,500. The applicants will be ranked highest to lowest, and the funds will be awarded until the funding is depleted for that year. The frequency of accepting current applications are two dates, September 1st and June 1st. The proposal is to allow applicants to attend a board meeting during those two times, and present. The RAB will then score the presentation and the ranking list will be distributed by staff at the following board meeting. RAB's final recommendation will be sent to TDC. Previous discussion as to allow grants outside of the two deadlines, TDC's request was to see a cut off amount that RAB would be able to award without TDC approval. Lindblad stated \$10,000 would be the cut off, to be discussed. TDC adjusted the sports marketing agreement to have the awardee list the hotels where their participants stayed and show how they applied funds to market St. Johns County per the agreement.

McNiff-Villemaire asked about the status of the Porpoise Point closure. Lindblad replied that the base of the vehicle access has a large lagoon, which prevents cars from accessing beach space. The base of the ramp has been compromised, currently Coastal Division and Army Core are doing a survey for a long term solution.

McNiff-Villemaire asked what Vilano Boat Ramp's approximate capacity is, Lindblad said about 30 to 40 vehicles and law enforcement makes the call of when it is full. McNiff-Villemaire then asked about the TDC application and the number of points for tourism development and adding gradient. Lindblad said she would work on that in adding that to give ranges on what the numbers mean.



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Brad Long asked if there was still monitoring and limiting number of people on the beaches. Lindblad stated that Vilano Ramp was closed for re-nourishment and it was the only ramp that is typically closed at capacity. Chapin asked to clarify that capacity refers to areas with vehicle access. Lindblad stated capacity refers to just vehicles. Chapin asked about the cutoff for TDC presenting being \$25k not \$10k. Lindblad did not recall, Van Rysdam stated there may have been discussion and \$10k was where they settled.

Van Rysdam asked the cost of the beach shuttle, Lindblad said per weekend it was \$350 at Micklers and \$250 at the Pier. Van Rysdam asked if the trend for Beach Pass sales continued with 50/50 daily passes and annual passes. Lindblad said there were more sales of annual passes, last year was 40% annual. Van Rysdam asked if she could look at the revenue side of the budget and see what the assumption was for beach passes revenue. Bataille stated they would look at the projected budget and compare with the year to date at the next meeting. Van Rysdam asked how the TDC funds will be managed and if there will be a budgetary split between the two meetings. Lindblad said there would be further discussion and event dates would be considered for which deadline they group will apply. Bataille stated it would be good to look at this in terms of a maximum request amount. Van Rysdam asked about the criteria for accepting exceptions. Lindblad suggested having one deadline and left over funds be allocated for one-off events. Long said that communication in advance would help. Chapin said her opinion is that it should be fluid on a case by case basis. Lindblad stated if it was a fluid process, deadlines wouldn't apply which goes against what TDC was asking of the RAB. The TDC has one deadline for their Arts and Heritage Grant. Van Rysdam suggested the regular applicants be notified of the deadlines and also look into allocating dollar amounts to the respective deadlines and contingency acceptations. Teddy Meyer suggested that if a large event occurred without TDC funding, then they could apply the following year if the event is repeated. Bataille and Lindblad confirmed that if a large event came up and funds were already allocated, then there could be a presentation before TDC and RAB to request additional funding.

Meyer gave Construction Project updates, the West Augustine adult fitness equipment the delay being issues with contractors and should be finished by mid-October. The other being Doug Crane which is in finalized permitting. Capital projects are being reviewed for the approved budget.

Chapin made a motion to adjourn, Long seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 4:25pm