



St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners

Parks & Recreation Department

RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes – Thursday, December 21, 2020

3:00 PM – St. Johns County Auditorium

500 San Sebastian View | Saint Augustine | FL 32084

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

Present via Conference Call: Commissioner Paul Waldron, Vice Chair Dr. Jillian McNiff-Villemaire, Harold Dockins, Bert Watson, Diane Gorski, Project Specialist, Sydney Lindblad, Natural Resources Project Manager

The meeting began at 3:01 pm with roll call. All board members were present or present via conference call. The November minutes were approved with consensus. There was no public comment.

Chair Van Rysdam discussed the department's master plan that was developed by BARTH. Deb Chapin asked about reevaluating the details of the plan with another study. Assistant Director Jamie Baccari spoke on the importance and relevance of the county's parks and outdoor spaces amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and how this has shown the department is at the forefront of our community. Baccari also stated a reevaluation would have a financial cost requiring a budget. Commissioner Waldron stated the concern was to take care of the existing park properties and develop them, the county is "hurting for park space" rather than spending money on evaluation a new plan. Baccari mention the Performance Dashboard that Director Bataille is conducting, this will compare St. Johns County Parks and Recreation's park acreage to size of the community with national parks and other parks of similar size and structure.

Commissioner Waldron updated the board on a discussion by BCC to better utilize the county's park properties. Rock Springs Park is nearly complete. Van Rysdam asked to clarify which aspects of the parks BCC reflect is underutilized. Waldron replied they do not feel we are underutilizing what we have, but rather not utilized the non-developed land to expand the parks before acquiring more land. Bert Watson stated he hope the Parks Foundation would help assist in developing land we have for more parks. Chapin commented on the Foundation to look into more possible grant funding. Baccari answered Van Rysdam's question that the department as a whole will be focusing more on grant opportunities.

The next agenda item was the appointment of two board members. The current board members', Vice Chair Dr. Jillian McNiff-Villemaire and Bert Watson, terms expired and they applied for reappointment. There were four additional applicants. McNiff-Villemaire spoke on how she has enjoyed her time spent serving Recreation Advisory Board and helping the community with her background of sports and education. Applicant Brandi Schmidt was present and talked of how she has been involved in the St. Johns County community volunteering with the school system swimming. Schmidt expressed her love for the Treaty Park Skate Park, and desire to increase the swimming pools in St. Johns County. Bert Watson talked of his experience on the Recreation Advisory Board and his plans to work with the Park Foundation. The applicant qualifications were discussed by board members.

Harold Dockins motioned to reappoint McNiff-Villemaire as Vice Chair, Chapin seconded. The motioned was approved with consensus. Long motioned to reappoint Bert Watson as board member. Chapin seconded and the motion was approved with consensus. Van Rysdam thanked Schmidt for applying and Baccari spoke on possible involvement with the Parks Foundation.

The Recreation Advisory Board discussed future meetings in the County Auditorium. Due to scheduling issues, the meetings for January, February, and March 2021 will be changed to the second Thursday of the month at 2:00pm. The change was voted on unanimously.



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Under Unfinished Business Watson provided updates on the Parks Foundation, which is working on expanding the number of board members. The board is searching for members who can assist with budgeting and marketing. The foundation's intentions is to be advocates for the parks to the County Commissioners. Van Rysdam asked about the Foundation's operative restrictions. Watson replied there was not much they could not do in regards to the parks and green spaces and that he would check with the attorney serving on the board. Van Rysdam asked if they are independent of the BCC, Watson replied yes, they will present to the BCC but are not dictated by them. McNiff-Villemaire asked how many members were in the foundation, Watson replied there were currently 8 and they filed to have between 9 and 15 members. Chapin asked if there were projected paid positions. Watson responded the Director, Assistant Director and event organizer will likely be paid positions once the foundation receives funding in February or March. As of now all members are volunteering.

Assistant Director Baccari gave Community Program Updates, including Extended Day, Naturalist Programs such as kayak trips, a teen night in Hastings fed about 42 kids. A Movie in the Park and Christmas in the Park at Collier Blocker Puryear were very successful. 2021 will focus on the Movie in the Park series. Adult Athletics has been successful with kickball, softball and basketball will be in the spring.

Baccari directed the board to the Construction Project directed provided in the agenda packet by Recreation Facilities Manager, Teddy Meyer. Interviews were conducted to fill the Community Program Manager position, along with several maintenance positions.

Baccari stated that the RAB member most likely to serve on the Northwest Tower board as discussed in the last meeting would be Marty McEachean. Baccari will follow up with clarification if McEachean's address is located within the Northwest Tower boundaries. The committee meets four times a year to review applications for funding received by the cell tower located in the area. The funds are restricted to be spent on projects within the Northwest boundaries.

McNiff-Villemaire asked Baccari if 2021 programming will be planned with social distancing and masks in mind. Baccari answered programming will be approached probably not masked but with social distancing. This will likely be achieved with reduced numbers.

Sydney Lindblad gave Beach Services updates, the renourishment project at the north beaches will be completed by end of January. Beach Access passes are on sale, toll booth attendants will be hired to start March 1st. The sandspurs at the beach volleyball court have been removed, further landscaping will be done in the spring. Under TDC Sports Marketing, Lindblad further clarified the carry forward policy in the agenda packet. The Office of Budget and Management begins projections in May through August.

Chapin complimented the cleanliness at Micklers Beach. Long further complimented the maintenance staff of their hard work as the beaches have increased usage with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Commissioner Waldron informed that the TDC is working on beginning a Sports Council group to bring more sports events to St. Johns County.

The meeting adjourned at 4:05pm.