



St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners

Parks & Recreation Department

RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD Meeting Minutes – Thursday May 13, 2021

Chair called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm.

Present: Casey Van Rysdam, Chair, Harold Dockins, Brad Long, Bert Watson
Absent: Jillian McNiff-Villemaire, Deb Chapin, Marty McEachern

Staff: Doug Bataille, Director Parks and Recreation, Stacia Cotter, Business Manager, Diane Gorski, Project Specialist, Tess Simpson, Community Programs Manager; Jamie Baccari, Assistant Director

Chair called for approval of the April 8, 2021 minutes. Motion to approve by Dockins, seconded by Long. 4/0

Chair called for public comments for items not on the agenda only and advised 3 minutes per speaker.

Stephen Decker, Director of Coaching for Prime Soccer Academy. Announced that they were partnering with Ancient City Soccer to provide recreational and competitive soccer out of Rivertown. He said that they were projecting 300 kids for the rec program in August and that they were happy to be using the Rivertown facility and to be a new option for soccer programs in St. Johns County.

Joe McAnarney, 1005 Blackberry Lane. Thanked the RAB for their service. Requested that the Parks and Recreation website be updated to include listing the parks in each district and identifying them specifically as to purpose. He asked for someone to give him the acres per thousand per district and mentioned that the Comprehensive Plan requires 3,000 acres per resident. McAnarney encourages the county to increase the Parks and Recreation budget to buy more land. Bataille explained that the county was currently working on completely renovating the website and that the department was looking at a performance dashboard that included both national standards and a comprehensive level of standards and that the information was in a spreadsheet that he would email McAnarney. Van Rysdam discussed the importance of the Strategic Dashboard as a measurement tool for Parks and Recreation.

Sean Bubb, 299 Islebrook Parkway, Florida Elite Soccer Association (FESA) thanked the RAB for visiting their operations and taking the time to see how everything worked. He said that a record numbers of kids were trying out for soccer. He mentioned that the club continues to expand and is a powerhouse in St. Johns County. He announced that five (5) St. Johns County Veterans Park FESA teams were headed to the national championship.

Chair called for a vote on the annual report that is required to be submitted to the County Commissioners every May. Long motioned to submit. Van Rysdam interjected that he doesn't see a reference to the Park Foundation being an expectation moving forward. Discussion relating to the relevance and importance of adding the Park Foundation to the annual report ensued. Long modified the motion to add the park foundation to the annual report and Dockins seconded. 4/0

Van Rysdam mentioned the relocation of the RAB meeting, day and time change. He spoke at length about the increased attendance at RAB meetings and his concern with the space limitation of the executive conference room. He believes that the public should be able to have access to the meetings. He said that there have been issues that the community was engaged with. Long agreed that the auditorium was a better location. Commissioner Waldron replied that he would find out. He reminded everyone that the June 9 meeting is to review TDC Grant applications, evaluations will be due in to staff on June 7 prior to the meeting so that they can be tallied.

Chair stated that a quorum is required to vote on the funding requests. The Chair explained that the Attendance Policy was determined by the Governor's office and the Board of County Commissioners and that members were expected to attend in person. He mentioned the Veteran's Park visit and thanked FESA for their hospitality

and conversation about outsourcing youth sports programming as partners with St. Johns County.

Chair asked about the capacity of and possible conversion of basketball courts to pickleball courts at Veteran's Park. Bataille explained that there are user groups on courts and that staff was working on determining capacity. Chair wanted to know the cost of renovation from a basketball court to a pickleball court. Bataille replied that Meyer could provide an estimated cost. Chair mentioned that the sport of Pickleball is rising popularity and that the county lacks capacity.

Chair stated that on May 27 at 4 PM the RAB would have a site visit at the golf course. He announced that the meeting agenda was the golf course plan, timeline, cost, issues that are potential conflicts for making the timeline work and disk golf. He said that the RAB would meet in the Club House but that there would be a tour of the golf course.

Paul Waldron, County Commissioner (BOCC Liaison) thanked the RAB members. He mentioned that the County was going through the budgeting process and that the workshops would be held at the Agriculture Center. Stacia Cotter confirmed that the Parks and Recreations budget would be reviewed at 9 AM on Tuesday, May 25. Waldron said that the commission was looking forward to the budget workshops and that they were waiting to find out what federal funding relief the county will receive. He mentioned looking forward to the park expansion and new park to be built and for new boat ramp locations.

Paul Abbatinozzi, School Board Representative announced that the last 20 day count was March 15 and there are now over 45,500 students, a 3% increase in growth. He said that Toco Creek High School was active with spring sports, hiring coaches and running summer camps and conditioning camps. Encourages everyone to get out there and take a look. He said that the Toco Creek High School football program will be independent the first year and then migrate into an official program. He shared that due to time restraints (Short summer/Covid-19 protocol) there will be no open Wednesdays. He said that school event capacity is being reviewed and will be increased.

Tess Simpson, Community Programming Manager, introduced herself and gave an overview of her 15 years' experience at Putnam County and Miami Dade County. She will be managing the Community Programming for the Parks and Recreation Department. She announced that we have partnered with the school district and library to offer STEM camps this summer. The pilot camp will kick off in Hastings and introduce the kids in Hastings to computer programming, programming drones, building Lego robots, and reading programs. She is working on scheduling more movies in the park. She is working with Natural Resources and our County Naturalists to create an educational component to emphasize that learning through fun is important. Dockins asked what age group the STEM Program served and Simpson replied K-8, elementary & middle school. Chair stated that partnerships and developing programs for kids are important and asked that Parks and Recreation continues to seek partners willing to come to underserved parts of the community. Simpson mentioned that First Tee is doing this and that the plan is to continue to expand. She shared that many new programs for youth and adults will be introduced over time.

Casey O'Linn, Ancient City Soccer (ACS) introduced the Club President Meredith Conroy and then gave a brief introduction about the club that was established in 1983 and is the oldest in St. Johns County. He shared that Ancient City Soccer Club revolves around three values: service, character, and community and the club takes on these values in everything they do. He said they offered three club soccer options: recreational, developmental and competitive soccer programs. The club serves over 1100 families in St. Augustine and world Golf Village areas with 900 families enrolled in recreational or developmental and 200 in competitive soccer programs. ACS partners with Osceola Elementary, WD Hartley, Otis Mason, Webster, Southwood and offers low cost after school soccer programs. They also partner with St. Johns Middle School Athletic Association and provide volunteer coaches to assist with programs. He stated that ACS has a girl's development center and offers free clinics. ACS collaborates with other organizations that share like values and have formed a coalition with JFC, Clay County, Gainesville Soccer Alliance and Prime FC to ensure a good environment for soccer players. ACS works with the county to find fields in the WGV area and on the island. They reach out to private communities to gain access to fields. Chair asked what fields ACS currently used and O'Linn replied, Gamble Rogers, RB Hunt and Treaty Park. ACS partners with schools directly to offer soccer camps. ACS is hoping to continue working with the county to secure fields as they become available.

Teresa Eliason, 485 Hart Lake Drive, Ponte Vedra, President Ponte Vedra Girls Softball (PVGS) requested a youth sports partnership for their softball group. She stated that they had a Babe Ruth Charter and provided an

overview of the girl's recreational softball. Watson confirmed the Babe Ruth charter was current and that PVGS was a recreational softball organization. Chair asked Baccari to explain the criteria needed to become a youth sports partner. Baccari reviewed the policy and explained that a partnership eliminated field rental fees and that they would only pay a per player fee. She stated that it didn't guarantee additional field space and the field requests would be reviewed by the department and that the department would provide an approved schedule. Bataille mentioned that youth sports partners have funded some meaningful facility improvements. Discussion relating to the benefit of being a partner ensued. Motion by Long, to approved partnership request, seconded by Watson. 4/0

Doug Bataille, Director, Parks and Recreation stated that the Board of County Commissioners approved the Golf Course Renovation Project and that they were proceeding as planned. He mentioned that there was a good construction team leading the project and that construction could start in January or February and that we anticipating reopening the course in October. Chair mentioned golf course site visit again. He stated that he wants to meet with Bataille to set an agenda and requested detailed documentation relating to financing. Commissioner Waldron assured Chair that the project was approved and budgeted and that there was no need to be concerned about funding.

Bataille presented a detailed Disc Golf Course proposal that contained three (3) options:

Option 1 - Simple course with trails. A passive approach with an 18 target disk golf course and 3 miles of natural surface trails. This is the least expensive option to build and maintain. Cost: \$63, 000 construction/\$20,000 maintenance and operations.

Option 2 - Simple course with paved trails. Same as Option 1 but with a paved trail which cost around \$250,000 mile. Cost: \$100,000 construction/\$20,000 maintenance and operations.

Option 3 - Destination course. Construction of 40 targets costing \$435,000. Maintenance and operations \$150,000. Potential for positive revenue. This options provides a tourism destination as a unique venue. Potential for national and international tournaments.

Chuck Wood, 24 Fountain of Youth Blvd, representing the St. Johns County Disc Golf Club with 90-100 members who support a destination disk golf course. He stated that an additional course would enhance play and that the location could easily be a champion tournament level course and that the county needed an additional course.

Chair offered his support. Watson shared his support for a destination course that supports tourism. Long questioned if Elkton was the place for a destination course. Dockins preferred Option 1, less expensive, and offers ability to gauge interest. Chair discussed the financials. Bataille explained that the golf course is a general fund endeavor and that Parks and Recreation is not an enterprise account. He stated that the disk golf course would contribute to the economy. A lengthy discussion ensued. Commissioner Waldron suggested that the RAB Chair request the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) add the disk golf course to a BOCC agenda for potential approval and funding. Discussion continued. Long motioned to authorize the RAB Chair to write a letter to the BOCC to move the disk golf course idea forward. Seconded by Dockins. 7/0

Doug Bataille, Director, Parks & Recreation mentioned that staff would provide a budget packet to the RAB prior to the May 25 budget hearing. Bataille mentioned his retirement and cited focusing on some key areas:

- Deferred Maintenance (DM) which is now called Maintenance Repair Replacement (MRR). Parks and Recreation continues to work with facility maintenance to identify infrastructure replacement needs. Currently we have \$6.9 million worth of infrastructure needs with a request for \$2.3 million in FY 22 budget. FY21 was \$1 million.
- Additional staff is needed. Asking for 2 positions for FY22. We are currently well below the national average for staffing for a community this size. The department has been completely reorganized. We have raised the bar in some previously neglected maintenance areas which has stretched staff thin.
- Parks and Recreation has twelve (12) undeveloped parcels totally 400 acres. Three (3) parcels are in north part of the county and over 40 acres each. Silverleaf is a 40 acre parcel all grass with much potential, however it would cost \$15 million to develop into twelve (12) multipurpose fields.
- PUD process and how they work. Increase the requirements and departmental oversight for all recreation related amenities.

Bataille stated that the St. Johns County Park Foundation (Foundation) was moving forward and that the bylaws would be approved at the next meeting. Next step is filing for the 501c (3) non-profit designation. Chair asked if the funding for an Executive Director was included in FY22 budget. Bataille explained that the Foundation Board will have to address the BOCC and request seed money for the director position. Waldron supports the foundation and said that the BOCC requires more information relating to seed money for the Foundation. Brad and Harold expressed support for the Foundation and Bataille. Chair asked for a time line. Bataille replied that he would provide a timeline. Long wished Bataille well and said that he would be missed. He expressed his support in the Foundation. Dockins said that he hated to see Bataille leave. Chair asked about Shore Drive sidewalk. Bataille mentioned that new director position interviews soon. Chair mentioned that he appreciated Bataille's hard work and that he would be missed. He said that Bataille had done a terrific job.

Cutter mentioned that last weekend's beach revenue was \$32,000 and an increase of \$4,000 from last year same time frame. May 1 signaled the start of sea turtle season and now the beach closes at 7pm

Chair asked that Meyer follow up on Perfect Game on documentation of prior events and AJGA provide an economic fulfillment report prior to June meeting.

Watson no report.

Long visiting park facilities and is amazed at the Parks and Recreation inventory. Was now using boating facilities.

Dockins no report.

Chairman spoke to the size of the meeting room again. Commissioner Waldron stated that he would look into it.

Motion to adjourn by Watson, seconded by Dockins. 4/0

Meeting adjourned at 3 PM