



Recreation Advisory Board (RAB) Meeting Minutes December 11, 2024

Call to order

Members Present: Watkins, Chair; Bill Bowen, Harold Dockins, and Casey Van Rysdam. Marty McEachern arrived at 1:47 PM.

Members Absent: Brad Long

Also Present: Commission Chair Krista Joseph and David Simpkins, St. Johns County School District Liaison

Recreation Staff Present: Ryan Kane, Director, Jamie Baccari, Assistant Director, Carrie Miska, Business Manager, Teddy Meyer, Rec Facilities Manager, and Diane Gorski, Project Specialist

Approval of the Minutes

Watkins called for approval of the November 13, 2024, meeting minutes and received a motion from Dockins who was seconded by Van Rysdam. Motion passed 5/0.

Public Comments

There was no public comment.

Reports

Krista Joseph, Commission Chair shared her excitement in being the BCC liaison to the RAB. She shared that she has been involved with sports throughout her life and mentioned that she has participated in disc golf, roller hockey, running track and lettering 8 times in track cross country at the University of Arizona and skiing to name just a few. She mentioned that her husband and his sister medaled in the Olympics in 1964 in Innsbruck and placed 2nd in the World Cup that same year.

David Simpkins, St. Johns County Schoolboard liaison, introduced Jessica Alley from the school district. He announced that the fall sports season was over and proceeded to share the results from the district High Schools and individual student rankings in the State Finals. Van Rysdam offered comments and questions. Dockins asked how students were recognized. Simpkins explained that school letters are issued by the coaches. Options to recognize students' accomplishments were discussed.

Comprehensive Plan Review

Kane introduced the County Growth Management Director Mike Roberson and asked him to provide an overview of the Comprehensive Plan update and an explanation on how Impact Fee credits are transferred. Roberson explained the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan. He emphasized that the plan acts as the policy document that helps manage growth within the county and is also the policy that helps inform or regulate the Land Development Code. He explained that reviewing the plan every seven (7) years was state mandated and serves as a tool to help decide necessary updates and changes. He mentioned that the county hired a consultant to formulate the plan, and that public input was gathered at public meetings, Planning & Zoning

meetings and Board of County Commissioners meetings. The consultant will provide a red-lined version of the comprehensive plan at the January commission meeting and the process will continue until the changes and updates have been finalized within the allotted time frame. Van Rysdam interjected with his questions and observations about the process throughout the presentation. Once Roberson had finished his presentation the Chair asked if there were any questions from the RAB. She recognized Dockins who spoke to the need for trails; Bowen who spoke to the negative transportation impact that rapid growth and development is having on the county and whether future development could be stopped until these issues were resolved; McEachean who asked how developers were held accountable. Roberson explained that there are currently 50 or 60,000 units that have legal rights to be built. He shared the transportation commitments and requirements and gave a brief overview of the Level of Service requirements. Kane and Baccari reviewed the requirements in the Land Development Code for the current levels of service relating to recreation and the need for change. Roberson explained that developers are bound by ordinance to provide recreation space and said that there is no way to predict future developments.

Kane asked for clarification on Impact Fee transfers now permitted by the state. Roberson explained that the impact fees are one-time fees to cover the impacts the development has on things like transportation, schools, parks and so on. The state has allowed developers to sell unused impact fee credits to another developer to be used in the same impact fee zone, whereas, in the past, the left-over impact fees were returned to the county.

Kane and Baccari reviewed the Level of Service Requirements within the Comprehensive Plan that are needed to benefit the community needs within Parks and Recreation. He stated that the department recommendations mirror the requirements provided by the National Parks and Recreation Association. There was a lengthy discussion about better defining the categories and needed improvements to active and passive recreation areas to achieve a beneficial level of service. The goal is to include well-defined, specific needs in the updated Level of Service requirement within the Comprehensive Plan document.

Jeff Lacher, Ponte Vedra resident asked about the metrics used to determine recreation space, and utilization demands. He shared his concerns and offered his suggestions and stated that he was encouraged by the direction the department was moving in relation to the Level of Service metric to be included in the Comprehensive Plan. Watkins clarified Lacher's questions:

- What are the metrics for success in active recreation?
- Do the metrics measure across all sports?
- What are the utilization rates?
- How is the highest and best use for citizen demand considered?
- Is there a cost benefit analysis for each project?
- How are we paying for growth as it relates to demographics, particularly seniors vs. families at a 4-5% growth rate?

Lacher confirmed that these were his questions and concerns and expounded upon his observations and suggestions. Commissioner Joseph asked, through the Chair, if Lacher was applying for the open position on the RAB and he replied that he was considering it. Watkins said she was available for any questions he might have about the RAB. Watkins asked if Kane or Baccari would like to answer these questions. Baccari answered that the department is looking at a strategic plan and how the parks are currently being utilized

and what future use looks like through analytics and comparisons. Kane explained that data collection is an ongoing process and that the department has streamlined the scheduling process and continues to find ways to maximize field usage by replacing sod fields with artificial turf fields and other improvements. The department uses the National Recreation and Parks Association and Florida Recreation and Parks Association databases to help determine the best possible outcomes for the department and the community. The department will continue to work towards providing all age groups recreational opportunities by better defining the level of service needs within new developments and Parks & Rec projects.

Special Events – Major Impact Applications

Jamie Baccari, Assistant Director, explained that both applications were for annual events and provided a brief overview of each. She requested a recommendation from the RAB to the Commissioners to approve the applications.

A motion by Van Rysdam to approve both applications was seconded by Dockins and approved 5/0.

Staff Reports

Ryan Kane, Director, reported that Plantation Park had completed the artificial turf field transition from sod and is actively being used and that this park now has two artificial turf fields. He announced that the Solomon Calhoun multipurpose field bid for artificial turf had closed and a contract was in the works to complete the project. He said that once the Certificate of Occupancy was granted, Mill Creek Park would have a soft opening of the artificial turf field for flag football and ribbon-cutting ceremony to coincide with baseball season. He provided an update on the Shore Drive Trail project that included the need to request permission from the Board of County Commissioners for an extension of the grant as it expires in March. He reported that the county had partnered with the Palm Valley community Association to hold the Palm Valley Boat Parade, and the event was a great success. He mentioned that over 300 people attended the launch party under the bridge and 75 people used the shuttle. He mentioned that Wes Tucker, Manager of the St. Johns Golf Course successfully ran the St. Augustine Amateur tournament, and someone shot the course record of 62 with someone from the golf neighborhood placing second. Bowen asked for a disc golf update and Kane answered that the county was working on the bid document to build the course for \$750,000. He mentioned that the real estate division was surveying additional property in the event that the golf course doesn't work out. Bowen mentioned there were challenges in building the disc golf course at the golf course among other challenges and hoped that consideration would be given to a more viable location or alternative. Kane mentioned the option of holding another public meeting with the disc golf players to address their concerns and asked Bowen if this would help alleviate any uncertainty. Discussion ensued.

RAB Member Reports

Van Rysdam asked for clarification on the Board approval of the Diamond of Dreams project funding of 2.2 million dollars from the American Rescue Fund. Kane explained that the Board agreed to allow PAL to develop land for an athletic facility. PAL received a grant from the state for approximately 6 million dollars to develop the facility. Kane explained that this will be an ADA site like the Field of Dreams with an inclusive playground. Van Rysdam asked for a golf course P & L to review it against a proforma that was run prior to the golf course renovations. Miska replied that she would send that to him.

McEachean mentioned the dedication and opening of the medical complex in West Augustine.

Bowen motioned to adjourn and was seconded by Dockins. Motion passed 5/0.