

PARKS, RECREATION & BEACHES ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
City of Fort Lauderdale
100 North Andrews Avenue
8th Floor Conference Room

Wednesday, January 28, 2004

<u>BOARD MEMBERS</u>	<u>ABSENT/PRESENT</u>	<u>Cumulative from 10/02/03</u>	
		<u>P</u>	<u>A</u>
John Rude, Chair	P	2	0
John Melnicoff, Vice Chair	P	2	0
Julie Cameron	P	1	1
Elizabeth Hays	A	1	1
Robert Hoysgaard	P	1	1
Joann Medalie	P	2	0
Robert Missal	P	2	0
Timothy Nast	A	1	1
Michael Natale	P	2	0
Rosalind Osgood	A	0	2
Randy Powers	P	1	1
Victoria Pisto-Revier	A	0	2
Joe Shover	P	2	0
Shirley Small	P	2	0

Staff Present

Phil Thornburg, Parks Superintendent
Steve Person, Recreation Superintendent
Kathy Connor, Parks Supervisor
Earnest Jones, Park Ranger Supervisor
Maybeth Irizarry-Binon, Administrative Assistant

Call to Order

Chair John Rude called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Roll Call was taken and all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Mr. Shover, seconded by Mr. Natale, to approve the minutes of the October 22, 2003, with the following corrections: On Page 3, the last sentence should read, "Mr. Gutierrez informed the Board the School Board is requesting an additional easement...." and a correction to the motion at the top of Page 4 to "Motion made by Mr. Natale...." In a voice vote, all voted in favor of the motion.

Recreation Program of the Month – First Serve and Tennis Welcome Program (Jimmy Evert Tennis Center)

Steve Person, Recreation Superintendent, introduced Whitney Kraft stating that Mr. Kraft had been awarded an additional three-year contract with the City. Mr. Kraft informed the Board that, statistically, about 97 percent of people who go out and hit balls on the court do not return to the play the game due to the level of difficulty. However, if people receive low-cost group introduction to tennis, 54 percent become regular players. He added that the Jimmy Evert Tennis Center and George English have registered to become a Tennis Welcome Center, which is a national program. At this point, Mr. Kraft turned the presentation over to Trey Buchholz, co-owner of Pro Tournaments Worldwide.

Mr. Buchholz introduced himself to the Board and told them his father was a product of public parks and went on to become a top five player in the world, winning the Junior Grand Slam. After his father's pro career ended, he took the skills he learned on the tennis court and transferred them over to the business world creating the fifth largest tournament in the world. Mr. Buchholz informed the Board that the U.S.T.A. transferred the First Serve Program to Mr. Buchholz's company in Fort Lauderdale.

Mr. Buchholz gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding the program and introducing the First Serve Youth Empowerment Organization. Some of the points emphasized were: utilization of public tennis courts, the promotion of community service projects, the incorporation of homework assistance, nutrition lessons, tennis instruction, and computer and reading skills. Mr. Buchholz mentioned that Dell Computers is working on supplying computers for the program, in addition to corporate partners sponsoring different stations of the program. He added that the stations are stored when not in use. Mr. Buchholz mentioned there would be a point system for the various age groups, so everyone will have an opportunity to record their achievements.

Mr. Buchholz discussed various levels of participation by Strategic Alliance Partners, corporations, tennis organizations, government entities, community tennis associations, and a nationally recognized panel of experts.

With regard to program impact on the City, Mr. Buchholz indicated the world headquarters of First Serve, Inc., would be home-based in the City, as well as a model or affiliate First Serve site. He added there are currently 13 affiliate First Serve sites throughout the State of Florida.

With regard to staffing the program, Mr. Buchholz said the program would need a person with tennis expertise to run the site and then recruit volunteers and mentors. He said the age group will be 7 or 8 to 17 years of age and they hope to tap into the schools in order to track the First Serve program and to determine its impact on a participant's attendance and academic improvements. Mr. Buchholz said the fees would be affordable and, in some cases, free to the youth, explaining that an at-risk youth will not have to pay for the program. Mr. Buchholz advised the Board there would be after school and summer programs. He added that program funding would be through trustees, corporate sponsors, and Board Members.

The Board thanked Mr. Buchholz for his presentation.

Mayor Naugle was recognized in the audience.

Tarpon River Park Subcommittee on the Draft Master Plan for Hardy Park

Parks Supervisor, Kathy Connor explained that a Master Plan is required as part of the grant process. She introduced Sara Horn and John Huntley who are members of the Citizen Planning Committee for the Master Plan. Ms. Connor explained the process for sending out approximately 8,000 surveys to the communities surrounding Hardy Park. She reviewed the results of the survey and identified popular activities, which were incorporated into the Master Plan.

Mr. Huntley explained they held several planning sessions and allowed the participants to design their own park layout by using an overlay of the property. He said the existing Southside School and tennis courts were incorporated into the plan. Mr. Huntley explained they were surprised to see that croquette was a requested activity, and found out this is a growing sport.

Ms. Horn informed the Board that, due to budgetary constraints, the City wanted to utilize everything that existed in the park and incorporated these items into the plan. She said they would be adding trees for shade, repaving the parking areas, retaining the practice and tennis courts, adding a tot lot, and planting a garden on the corner of 7th Street and Andrews Avenue. Ms. Horn showed the Board the locations for added basketball courts, picnic pavilions, and new parking that will be funded by a grant through the Tarpon River Civic Association has already received. She said they have not finalized the entrance and exit locations.

Ms. Connor informed the Board there are two grants, which have been awarded, the Florida Communities Trust (FTC) and Broward County Land Preservation, to fund acquisition of the land. She explained that with the Florida Communities Trust grant, the school building must be used as an environmental education center or a historic museum; however, they can extract the square footage of the building and use the building for whatever they want. She said the FTC has restrictions on historic renovation of the building and they would have to meet Florida State Historic Renovation Statutes for the interior and exterior of the building. Ms. Horn mentioned they have people who want to donate to the restoration of the building and they are in the process of setting up a not-for-profit organization for this purpose. Ms. Connor mentioned that a contingency of the School Board selling the site to the City is that renovations must be complete within two years.

Ms. Connor informed the Board they would be making a presentation to the City Commission on March 3rd regarding the use of the building.

Parks Superintendent, Mr. Thornburg, said that at this time plans are premature for the property, and the City, School Board and FCT Attorney are currently working out an agreement to be presented to the City Commission. He said that when the plan is finalized, they would bring it

back to this Board for action prior to taking it to the Commission.

ADA Consent Decree

Administrative Assistant, Maybeth Irizarry-Binon explained an ADA Consent Decree was entered into by the City based on a public access lawsuit and that the renovations must occur within the next five years. She said the estimated costs of the stadium improvements are \$500,000 and was included in the Request for Proposal to out source the management of the stadium. Ms. Irizarry-Binon told the Board the Americans with Disabilities Acts has been in effect since 1992 and since this is public access litigation, the City must comply. She informed the Board that the new facilities would be in compliance when opened. Ms. Irizarry-Binon outlined the various stages of implementation of the renovations and said they are progressing well and meeting various compliance deadlines. The Board discussed the fact that some of the required renovations should have been taken care of during initial construction.

Regarding funding for the renovations, Mr. Thornburg said there is \$750,000 this year in the Capital Improvement Program and engineering believes that if they receive the same amount annually over the next five years, they should be able to comply with all required renovations.

Department Budget

Mr. Thornburg explained that Mr. Burkeen is out of town on business and was sorry he could not attend this meeting.

Mr. Thornburg informed the Board the management layoffs were effective the end of December 2003, and the labor layoffs are effective the end of this month. He said there were approximately 30 positions within the Department that were frozen early in 2003 and subsequently eliminated, and as well as 19 employees laid off. Mr. Thornburg said staffing will be a challenge and they are do things differently. He added that staff is committed to continue provide quality service to the citizens and visitors of Fort Lauderdale.

Mr. Person advised the Board they lost \$400,000 in part-time salaries for employees that took registrations, coached teams, etc. He said they are looking at making sure the recreation centers are properly staffed and that programs will be offered from the existing recreational centers, not the outreach centers as in the past. Mr. Person added that not only will Mr. Buchholz's program cover expenses of that program, but they have also received a grant from the Children's Council for Carter Park that will add approximately \$250,000 to \$275,000 per year into the program.

Mr. Person said that they are meeting with staff and trying to keep up morale. He added the Parks and Recreation staff is dedicated, very creative, and continue to look for ways of providing services.

Mr. Hoysgaard inquired about how personnel losses will affect the Parks Department with respect to maintenance. Mr. Thornburg said he lost 20 people and they will have to figure out how to manage. He added they are shuffling positions and training people to do various jobs.

Mr. Thornburg said the Rangers were also affected. Park Ranger Supervisor, Earnest Jones said they went from 17 to 10 positions and they are going to a one-shift operation. He mentioned they are changing to an afternoon/night shift because this is when the parks are used the most. Mr. Jones said the impact would be with duties, which occur during other times of the day. These duties will shift to other staff, such as field personnel opening the parks in the morning rather than Park Rangers.

Mr. Melnicoff inquired about the method used in deciding the layoffs. Mr. Thornburg explained the layoff process and said there were management and union/regular employee layoffs, based on seniority. Mr. Melnicoff also asked if the layoffs would affect the summer recreation programs. Mr. Person said school starts one week earlier this year, which helped them keep the summer program.

Mr. Melnicoff asked which special events, with the exception of Fourth of July, would remain. Mr. Thornburg said they will continue the Cajun-Zydeco festival, with a reduction in the entertainment budget from \$90,000 to \$70,000 and the Starlight Musicals and Jazz Brunch will continue as they are sponsored events. The Board discussed the Air & Sea Show with regard to City contributions. Mr. Melnicoff expressed his concerns with the City laying off employees with families, and then expending \$250,000 in contributions to the Air & Sea Show. Mr. Thornburg said they are working the Air & Sea Show promoters and will be bringing the plan for the 2004 show to the City Commission on February 17th.

County Parks Bond Update

Mr. Thornburg handed out the January 2004 update indicating that County staff believes the County Commission will approve the funding for Phase 6 at their February 2, 2004 meeting, with applications being taken immediately thereafter. Applications will close on March 1, 2004. He asked the Board to give him recommendations for properties they would like to see considered by the City Commission on February 17th. Mr. Natale asked if they plan to revisit parks previously submitted that did not make the cut. Mr. Thornburg said they would be included in the current list. The Board discussed various sites for the list. Mr. Thornburg briefly explained the selection process to the Board.

Mr. Melnicoff inquired regarding the \$400 million Bond Issue and how the monies were spent. Mr. Thornburg said Riverside Park, Bayview Park, and Carter Park received bond monies. The swimming pool at Riverland was also funded from the bond. Mr. Natale asked if there is a countywide list showing how the \$400 million Land Preservation Bond was spent. Mr. Rude said that \$200 million was for land and the other \$200 million was for maintenance of existing lands. Mr. Natale asked to see the land portion. Mr. Rude mentioned several properties that have been purchased and renovated, adding that the funds are divided among the County Commissioners and the City of Fort Lauderdale has been short-changed, as it does not have as much available vacant land as other municipalities. He suggested contacting Commissioner Rodstrom and Commissioner Scott.

Other Items of Interest

Mr. Hoysgaard mentioned that the Community Foundation of Broward County has a Fort Lauderdale People for Parks Fund in existence for people who want to help the parks. The Board discussed promoting this dormant fund in order to obtain donations for parks. The Board decided to invite a representative from the Community Foundation of Broward County to the next meeting to speak about this fund.

Ms. Cameron inquired about the airplane. Mr. Thornburg informed the Board the airplane is at Executive Airport and the contract is to be awarded February 3 for the pedestal. Ms. Irizarry-Binon said it is anticipated the dedication will be held on Memorial Day.

Mr. Rude inquired about Cancer Survivor Park. Mr. Thornburg said they would have an update at the next meeting.

Mr. Rude asked about the status of the RFPs for Fort Lauderdale Stadium and an update on Carter Park. Mr. Thornburg said the RFPs were reviewed last week by the review team and a recommendation will be presented to the Commission on February 3rd. He said the Orioles and a national group have submitted RFPs. Mr. Thornburg understands that Carter Park is going nowhere and is possibly deteriorating due to vandalism while work is not being done because the contractor is out of business. Ms. Irizarry-Binon said she would forward a copy of the Engineering Department's e-mail regarding this matter to the Board Members.

Ms. Cameron expressed concern that the Board is not asked to vote on issues or make recommendations. Mr. Rude said he asked this question of Mr. Burkeen several times and got the impression that Mr. Burkeen has a different management style. Mr. Thornburg said that if the Board has any ideas they need or want to vote on, they should bring them to Mr. Burkeen's attention. He mentioned this Board has an agenda that states if an item is a presentation, discussion, etc., they may want to look at changing the style of the agenda. Ms. Cameron said that many items come to this Board after-the-fact. Mr. Thornburg said he would share this discussion with the Director.

Mr. Natale commented that the Parks, Recreation, and Beaches Advisory Board minutes are not listed on the City Commission agenda for review. Ms. Irizarry-Binon said the minutes are supplied to the City Clerk's office for inclusion in the Commission agenda packets and offered to check with the Clerk's office regarding this matter.

The Board discussed parliamentarian issues regarding voting on issues on the agenda.

Ms. Irizarry-Binon gave the Board invitations to a farewell reception for Lucy Kisela, City Clerk. She also handed out an article in the FRPA Showcase Journal for Palm Aire Village Park.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Handouts:

1. Desired Activities at Hardy Park.
2. Memorandum to Parks, Recreation and Beach Advisory Board dated January 27, 2004, from Phil Thornburg regarding Broward County Land Preservation Open Space Update-January 2004.
3. Article dated Winter 2004, FRPA Journal.