

**PARKS, RECREATION & BEACHES ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
100 NORTH ANDREWS AVENUE
8TH FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2008 – 7:00 P.M.**

Cumulative Attendance

Board Members	Attendance	October 2007- September 2008	
		Present	Absent
Mark Hartman, Chair	P	9	0
Michael Natale, Vice Chair	P	6	3
Curtiss Berry	P	9	0
Betty Shelley	P	8	1
John Verkey	A	6	3
Matthew Weiss	P	8	1
Sean Fee	P	8	1
Robert Payne	P	7	2
James LaBate	A	3	6
Joann Medalie	A	7	2
Ed Angelbello	P	7	2
Robert Hoysgaard	P	8	1
Larry Mabson	A	6	3
Donna Guthrie	A	2	5

Staff Present

Terry Rynard, Assistant Director of Parks & Recreation
Stacey Daley, Administrative Assistant
Earnest Jones, Park Ranger Supervisor
Hilda Testa, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Roll was called and all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Mr. Berry, seconded by Mr. Hoysgaard, to approve the minutes of the August 2008 meeting, as amended. In a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

The amended items for the minutes were as follows:

- Page 3, paragraph 1: replace “beaches were closed” with “water was closed.”
- Page 5: replace “Middle River neighborhood” with “South Middle River Park.”
- Page 8, paragraph 4: correct “Mr. John Rudy” to “Mr. John Rude.”

1. Department Report: Terry Rynard

Assistant Director Rynard informed the Board that Director Phil Thornburg had had a death in the family over the weekend, and would be out of town for the remainder of the week. She recommended that any cards be sent to Director Thornburg’s office.

Beach conditions, she said, still need improvement, but mechanical cleaning equipment is still not allowed at this time. Most staff spent the previous day (Tuesday, September 23) assisting in the removal of seven to eight tons of seaweed and other debris from the beaches, although Assistant Director Rynard noted that more seaweed continues to accumulate.

The shoreline has been walked on a daily basis, with Staff removing sharp or otherwise dangerous objects, but large debris is not removed daily, as there is insufficient manpower to undertake this project.

Assistant Director Rynard explained that the winds from recent tropical storms and hurricanes have destroyed the turtle nest markings, and the County has not successfully re-marked all nests. Mechanical equipment may not be used until at least one week after the last nest is expected to hatch, or until the Parks & Recreation Department is otherwise informed. A tentative date for a return to equipment use is the end of September-beginning of October week, but Assistant Director Rynard cautioned that this date is subject to change. She noted that restrictions are somewhat tighter during this turtle season.

Assistant Director Rynard announced that the following Board members have been reappointed to the Parks, Recreation & Beaches Advisory Board: Betty Shelley, Curtiss Berry, Donna Guthrie, Robert Payne, Larry Mabson, John Verkey, and Sean Fee. Retiring members will be recognized later during tonight’s meeting, she said.

Assistant Director Rynard continued that she and Ms. Daley attended the recent Better Meetings Academy for Staff Liaisons, and returned with new information regarding the Sunshine Law. She informed the Board that all notes taken during the meeting are to be retained by Ms. Daley as part of the record. They should

be left with her at the conclusion of the meeting. Copies may be made for anyone wishing to retain their notes.

Assistant Director Rynard recognized Andrew Pickens, a new member appointed by City Commissioner Teel, and Mark McCormick, recently appointed by Mayor Naugle and approved by the City Commission, who will begin attending meetings in October. It was noted that Mr. Pickens may not yet have received his notification of appointment.

Assistant Director Rynard stated she had attended the Joe Abrams Academy, an intensive three-day program of leadership training. She said she had gained a great deal of information, and felt the program was "very well done."

The Academy assigns each attendee a project for each quarter which, for this quarter involves a survey of Park Boards and other local civic associations, in addition to community members, to gather information on the public perception of Parks & Recreation, as well as its role in the City. She informed the Board that some of them may receive this questionnaire.

In conclusion, Assistant Director Rynard noted that the Teen Advisory Council meets the last Monday of each month, in response to a question asked at a previous meeting. Its next meeting will be Monday, September 29, 2008, at Lauderdale Manors Rec Center at 6:30 p.m.

2. Scenic Highway Presentation: John Rude

Chair Hartman welcomed Mr. Rude back to the Board, noting that he had previously served as Chair.

Mr. Rude stated he was speaking on behalf of Broward Urban River Trails, as its Executive Director. He has been involved with the Scenic Highway Program for a number of years now.

The Scenic Highway Program was created to showcase areas throughout the State of Florida that retain scenic beauty. This includes A1A, he said, noting that although it is primarily located in an urban environment, he and others involved with the program believe it is worthy of its Scenic designation.

Mr. Rude played a video for the Board, which discussed the history of the highway, dating back to its time as a trail. Its scenic aspects were discussed, including piers, beaches, parks and nature trails, conservation areas, and the Intracoastal Waterway.

At the conclusion of the video, Mr. Rude requested a letter of support or a resolution from the Board in support of the Scenic Highway Program. He added that several other cities and organizations had contributed these documents, which were important to the State Legislature when considering the program. Support from local citizens and recreational users was of particular importance, he said.

Designation as a Scenic Highway means the State will provide funding for upkeep, as well as the creation of a "corridor management entity" that will create a Master Plan for how the Scenic Highway should look.

He continued that the Scenic Highway Program hopes to create a unified look that manages to retain some of the individual charm of different areas. The project would not preclude redevelopment or any other plans already in progress, although Mr. Rude noted that billboards would be prohibited in a scenic area.

As an example, he cited the Indian River Lagoon, which has used some of the funds it receives from the State to build a Visitors' Center. In addition, marketing could also be achieved with use of State funds. Mr. Rude added that the Scenic Highway Program welcomed citizens' input into the Master Plan process, if any Board members would like to contribute their ideas.

Motion to approve the Scenic Highway Proposal by Mr. Natale, seconded by Ms. Shelley. In a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Rude offered to provide a sample letter for the Board and for individuals who wished to write the State Legislature on behalf of the Program.

Chair Hartman stated that Board Member Joanne Medalie had been instrumental in placing the Scenic Highway Program on the agenda, and expressed disappointment that she was not present, as she is an avid supporter of the project.

3. Lightning Detectors/Predictors in Parks: Kenny Nail

Mr. Nail informed the Board that in his recent time as a Little League umpire, he had visited several parks, both inside and outside Broward County, such as Coral Springs, Hallandale, and Miramar, that were fitted with "lightning predictors." He described these as towers, usually located atop the highest building or point inside the park, that sense the atmospheric instability that accompanies lightning

and emit loud warning sounds, which signal pedestrians, players, or others in the park to take appropriate cover.

Upon returning to Fort Lauderdale, Mr. Nail said he had been surprised that no such detection systems were located within the City's parks. He was told the City uses a different type of detector, which also senses lightning in the area, but within a much more limited expanse. He noted that when the two systems are placed side by side, their readings will often differ, making it difficult to judge their respective accuracy.

Fort Lauderdale is the only municipality within the County without lightning predictors in its City parks, Mr. Nail pointed out. He advocated that the Board bring this issue to City Commissioners and other officials, or perhaps pass a motion to install lightning predictors in City parks. While they are not foolproof, he stated from his position as a volunteer on the baseball field that the predictors minimize the "guesswork" in avoiding the danger of lightning strikes.

Fort Lauderdale is the "lightning capital of the world," he said, and added that the devices would be useful even in the absence of others, as they will go off whether or not activity is taking place inside a park. The appropriate response taught to all personnel and players is to clear the park area when the signal is heard, he said.

Mr. Nail noted that the lightning predictor system is approximately 15 years old, and the devices have been in other County parks for much of that time. He was not aware of the cost that might be involved in placing them, but strongly advised that the more limited detection system already in place at the parks is much less accurate. He reminded the Board that lightning strikes could occur with very little warning, and that deaths could occur if inadequate warning systems were not in place.

Mr. Berry asked if lightning rods could be used as an alternative. It was noted that lightning rods served a separate purpose from a warning system, and that the function of the predictors was to clear the area in danger.

Mr. Fee wished to know how many predictors the Parks system might need. It was discussed that the parks where organized activities, such as sports, take place have a more pressing need for the systems. Mr. Nail admitted he was not aware of the cost involved, but strongly urged that the predictors be implemented, even if this took place in stages over a few years. He suggested beginning with the "most used" parks in the County, adding a few more parks every year.

Mr. Natale recalled that the predictors had been recommended before, and the reason they had not been installed was an unwillingness to assume the risk if the devices did not function properly.

Assistant Director Rynard noted the Parks & Recreation Department had looked into the predictor system, although she too was unaware of the pricing. She did not feel that cost was as great a concern, however, as reliability, and also cited a concern that once such a system was relied upon, it would replace basic common sense. She suggested that there were perhaps "as many pros as cons" involved with the issue.

The detectors are currently in use in the parks where organized sports are played, she added, and the Department was more hesitant to install them in neighborhoods with "pocket parks," as the warning signal might go off many times during a single night.

Mr. Weiss said the predictors had been used at Holiday Park, and noted that they place a certain "burden" on the individual(s) holding them. The distance at which they can predict a strike, which can be greater than eight miles, means some events are disrupted more than once as participants cleared the field. He also expressed some doubt about their accuracy, recalling that at times flashes of lightning are visible in a dark sky, but the predictor does not give off a warning signal.

He felt this burden could be alleviated somewhat if the predictors are mounted instead of hand-held, so no individual is asked to clear the field multiple times. An individual with a predictor is also asked to move from one field to another and clear them, while a mounted predictor emitting a signal would eliminate this step. Mr. Weiss summed up that if these difficulties were taken into consideration, the predictors could be very useful.

Motion made by Mr. Berry, seconded by Mr. Hoysgaard, that the Board look into the lightning predictor system and discuss it further at a later date. In a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Hartman clarified that the motion called for the Board to further investigate the system and reconvene for further consideration. He informed the Board that one such system was currently housed in his office, and agreed with Assistant Director Rynard that the pros and cons of the issue are equally balanced.

Once such a handheld device goes off, Chair Hartman continued, the individual holding it has no choice but to clear the field, as the issue then becomes one of liability for the City. Visible weather conditions should no longer be a consideration once the signal has occurred, he stated. Mr. Nail said he had no difficulty at all in obeying this safety issue.

Chair Hartman added that a consideration was the occasional “mob mentality” that occurred when individuals wanted to return to a field but were not allowed to do so. He felt some such situations should allow for Staff to make a judgment call.

Mr. Weiss disagreed with this assessment, pointing out that Staff might not always have sufficient knowledge to make the right call, while the predictor’s signal was reflective of unseen conditions.

In response to a question, Mr. Nail clarified that he had spoken with every other municipality in Broward County, and Fort Lauderdale alone did not have the more wide-ranging system.

Chair Hartman thanked Mr. Nail for bringing the issue to the Board’s attention.

4. Plaque Presentation in Recognition of Retiring Members: Terry Rynard

Assistant Director Rynard noted that three Board members are retiring from the Board, all of whom have served extended terms. She thanked them for their contribution to and representation of the community, and on behalf of the Department, thanked them for bringing the Department’s attention to various issues.

Joann Medalie, who was not present, had served on the Board for six years.

Mike Natale had served on the Board for six years. He advised the Board members to remain diligent and continue to protect natural resources.

Mr. Hoysgaard had served on the Board for twelve years. He thanked Tom Tapp, who had first invited him to attend a National Park & Recreation Association (NRPA) event. He had also served for ten years in the Florida Parks & Recreation Foundation.

5. Board Comments: Mark Hartman

Chair Hartman also thanked the retiring members for their service on the Board.

He continued that he had also attended the Better Meetings Academy for Board members, where he was the only member of this Board in attendance. Some of the issues discussed at the Academy, he said, included the definition of a "meeting." This was defined as any reciprocal discussion, up to and including phone calls between individual members. Chair Hartman noted that phone calls, emails, and personal conversations between Board members were all prohibited under the Sunshine Law.

An individual is allowed to email the entire Board, he said; however, the email's recipients may not respond, as this constitutes a meeting.

Mr. Angelbello asked if there are remedial actions or disclosures that would follow an inadvertent violation of the Sunshine Law. Chair Hartman stated he did not know the answer to this question.

Chair Hartman encouraged all Board members to take a tour with one of the Park Rangers, especially if they had not been on a tour recently. He felt this experience was invaluable to members.

He congratulated Assistant Director Rynard on her recent time at the Joe Abrams Academy, noting for the Board that her invitation to this Academy was in recognition of her leadership. He also referred to a community newsletter in which a resident thanked Assistant Director Rynard for her help in improving Middle River Terrace Park.

Mr. Fee asked if permit fees were the same regardless of the particular park, sport, or season. Assistant Director Rynard stated these were not the same, and that the Department uses a calendar to determine whether a sport is in or out of season, with priority is given to those sports currently in season. For example, fall baseball permit fees are more expensive than summer baseball fees, as baseball is considered a summer sport.

Mr. Fee stressed that the Department should examine whether playing fields were being used appropriately, and the possibility of whether smaller parks should convert to multi-use fields, as so many children in the City used park fields for team sports.

Assistant Director Rynard stated there is a "Win-Win Committee" within the Department that looks into the demand for recreation and need for maintenance in the City's fields. She added that open spaces were used in lieu of fields where

upkeep issues were involved, and sports were often “rotated” among the various fields to reduce wear and tear.

Mr. Berry asked if the airplane formerly featured at Holiday Park was slated for return. Assistant Director Rynard informed the Board that repairs for the pedestal were underway through Public Services and the Air Force Reserves.

Mr. Berry also referred to a discussion at a prior meeting regarding parking at Holiday Park. Assistant Director Rynard advised that the Park users in question meet with Park Ranger Supervisor Jones to discuss specific events and dates and the need for parking, and that the Department is considering adding grass parking along the far west side along US1.

Mr. Angelbello commended the leadership of the Parks & Recreation Department, noting that at a recent softball tournament, visiting teams had commented favorably on the playing fields and the support of the field maintenance staff.

Mr. Verkey thanked the City for its maintenance of the Jaguars’ field during the summer. Ms. Shelley added that the Department’s involvement in the City’s neighborhoods, as well as in its parks, was also to be commended.

Mr. Payne asked for an update regarding shade on a playground. Assistant Director Rynard said the Department has applied for a grant to this end, but have not yet received a response. As playgrounds are replaced, she noted, the Department is seeking to ensure shaded areas are included, while retrofits take more time.

It was noted that a Chair and Vice Chair would be elected at the October meeting.

6. Adjournment: Mark Hartman

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

[Minutes prepared by K. McGuire, Prototype, Inc.]

