

**PARKS, RECREATION, & BEACHES ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
100 NORTH ANDREWS AVENUE
8TH FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2009 – 7:00 P.M.**

October 2008- September 2009

Board Members	Attendance	Present	Absent
Mark Hartman, Chair	P	4	0
Sean Fee, Vice Chair	P	4	0
Curtiss Berry	P	4	0
Betty Shelley	P	2	1
John Verkey	P	2	2
Matthew Weiss	P	3	1
Robert Payne	A	3	1
Ed Angelbello	A	2	2
Larry Mabson	P	3	1
Donna Guthrie	A	1	3
Roger Bond	P	3	0
Mark McCormick	P	3	1
Jeffrey Cannon	P	4	0
Kenny Nail	A	3	1
Marilyn Markus	P	2	1

Staff

Phil Thornburg, Director, Parks & Recreation
Terry Rynard, Assistant Director, Parks & Recreation
Stacey Daley, Administrative Assistant
George Gretsas, City Manager
Tom White, Landscape Architect
Brigitte Chiappetta, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. Roll was called and all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Ms. Shelley, seconded by Mr. Berry, to approve the minutes of the January 28, 2009 meeting. In a voice vote, the **motion** carried unanimously.

Chair Hartman informed the Board that Dr. Elizabeth Hays had died on February 20. Dr. Hays had been a mentor and a friend to Chair Hartman, and was active in several City organizations.

Gina Ellis, President of the Council of Fort Lauderdale Civic Associations, advised that the Council honored the memory of its civic activists by placing a monument and plaque in Civic Park. She asked that the Board move forward on the installation of a tree and a plaque in honor of Dr. Hays, who had given a great deal to the community over the years.

Motion made by Ms. Shelley, seconded by Mr. Berry, to place a tree and plaque in Civic Park in honor of Dr. Elizabeth Hays. In a voice vote, the **motion** carried unanimously.

Ms. Ellis thanked the Board for its time and actions.

Chair Hartman informed the Board that a funeral Mass for Dr. Hays will be held Saturday, February 28, 2009, at 3:00 p.m. at Barry University. A reception will follow.

He added that Dr. Hays' family has set up a memorial website in her honor on Legacy.com.

1. City Manager's Presentation: City Update – City Manager Gretsas

Chair Hartman introduced City Manager George Gretsas, whom he described as having "far exceeded" any expectations the Chair might have for a City Manager to learn about and take interest in the Parks & Recreation system.

City Manager Gretsas thanked the Board for its time, and provided them with an update on the City at large, beginning with its finances.

Using a PowerPoint presentation, he reminded the Board of the City's fiscal crisis of 2003, which had resulted in layoffs and furloughs. Part of the issue was the "rainy day fund" balance, which states that 5-15% of the City's expense budget should be in reserves. Moderating agencies study this fund, he advised, to determine the overall financial health of a city; it is also relied upon as a "cushion" in the event of hurricanes or other unforeseen emergencies. City Manager Gretsas added that the City will look to this fund over the coming year or so as significant revenue losses occur from property values and sales tax in the current economic situation.

In 2003, he continued, the City had \$875,000 in this fund, as opposed to its target balance of \$12-\$15 million. He noted that this came even before it was learned that salary savings had been overestimated, which created a further budget shortfall and resulted in the layoffs and furloughs mentioned earlier.

The fund has been slowly built since that time, and in 2008 the City had \$78 million in the fund, its largest balance in history. While this is in excess of the 15% goal, City Manager Gretsas pointed out, approximately \$24 million will be used this year for pension reform issues, as well as for capital projects. He described 2008 as a “tough budget year,” and funds were drawn on at that time as well to make capital improvements.

In 2003, the City’s insurance fund was \$21 million in deficit, he went on. Since that time, changes have been made in the management of health insurance funds, and this deficit was eliminated by 2005. In 2008, a surplus of \$10 million was ensured. City Manager Gretsas stated that this will be of great importance with the rising costs of health insurance, as it will hopefully prevent the City from the necessity of increasing this budget line item.

Moderating agencies have responded well to the City’s new fiscal policies and performance, as its bond rating has improved from AA- and AA3, in 2004, to AA and AA2, which are near the top of the ranking system. Fort Lauderdale is now one of the highest-rated cities in Florida among its peers. This is again due to the change in its indicators: fund balance, fiscal policies, and overall consistency and responsibility of fiscal management.

Taxes are another major concern, City Manager Gretsas continued. Fort Lauderdale’s taxes are the 22nd-highest of the 31 municipalities in Broward County, with a much higher population than most of those cities with lower tax rates. The largest cut in the City’s tax rate in more than 10 years took place in 2005; the rate was cut again in 2007. Water and sewer rates are the 27th lowest in Broward County, and the fire assessment is 15th lowest out of 27.

The 2008-09 budget, he advised, cut taxes again for all homestead and non-homestead properties.

Mr. McCormick asked if City Manager Gretsas was referring to the millage rate or the City’s total taxes. City Manager Gretsas clarified that this was the millage rate. While this could be considered a “deceptive” term, he added that the decrease in taxes between 2004 and 2008 was dependent upon whether an individual was or was not homesteaded; the bottom line, he asserted, was that the tax bill this year will be lower than last year.

In the 2008-09 budget, City Manager Gretsas pointed out, the rate remained the same, but both homesteaded and non-homesteaded homeowners paid less. The slowing economy also had an effect on this budget. While surrounding communities have struggled to keep taxes low and maintain services, Fort Lauderdale has managed to do both. He credited the City’s Department Heads for helping deal with this shortfall without reducing services.

He cautioned, however, that there are potential issues with the pension system. City Manager Gretsas explained that there are actually two such systems in the City: Police & Fire, who have their own unions and pension system, and General Employees, the majority of whom are represented by the Teamsters' Union.

He explained that for every year an employee of the Police or Fire Department works in the City, he receives a credit of three and three-eighths' percent of his base salary upon retirement. For example, if an employee works at one of these Departments for 24 years, the maximum percentage of base salary, 81%, is achieved. This will be that individual's annual pension payment for life.

There is also a Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP), which allows a police officer or firefighter to collect his full pension up to five years in advance of his retirement, while still working for the City and collecting full salary. This money is placed in a tax-deferred account, where it accumulates with interest. When the employee leaves the City, this money is distributed in a lump sum payment. This is in addition to the annual pension to be received, he clarified. For an employee beginning at age 20, this means by his mid-40s he could be receiving pension benefits.

City Manager Gretsas explained that he used these examples to show the value of the benefits received, as well as their consequences. In 2001, every employee cost the City approximately 10.5% of his base salary for pension costs, he stated. The total pension relationship at that time came to \$4.4 million. By 2008, the costs had risen to \$21.3 million, or 50% of the base salary.

Ms. Markus asked why the increase had been so steep in only seven years. City Manager Gretsas advised that a pension fund has two considerations: the total dollars in benefits to be given out over time, and how much money remains in the system in assets or investments. When the stock market drops, the value of assets also declines substantially. If this value is continually and consistently lost over time, he asserted, the pension system's funding must come from elsewhere.

The current agreement between the City and the Police and Fire Departments, he continued, states that each year, an actuary hired by the Pension Fund Board examines these figures and determines what the City's contribution must be in order to meet the formula of a properly funded pension system. He stated that there is no control or cap to this system, and the City is obligated to make this contribution once the figure has been determined. The 50% contribution in 2008, he said, is "unheard of" in terms of funding the pension system alone.

Mr. McCormick asked if this payment includes pensions to be paid during that specific year, or if this funding also covers all employees currently working. City Manager Gretsas explained that the actuaries factor in the lifetime cost of each employee, attrition, life expectancy, spousal benefits, and several other

considerations. He described this as both a funded and an unfunded liability; the unfunded portion being half of the 50% contribution. He described this as the “fundamental problem” that has led the City into its current pension negotiations.

The general employees’ total cost is 23% of their base salary, as their multiplier is lower and the benefits are less “rich.” City Manager Gretsas stated that as part of these negotiations, the City offered an up-front settlement in exchange for an agreement that incoming hires will not have pensions, but rather a 9% defined contribution plan, such as a 401A.

Unlike the current system, he explained, in which the system pays a general employee for every year he works as well as once he has retired or left the Department, the 9% would begin to be paid the first year an employee is hired and remains only 9%. When they leave the Department, the 9% would no longer be paid and the City’s relationship with that employee would end. City Manager Gretsas advised that this single change would save the City over \$100 million over the life of the pension system for the current pool of employees, with presently drawn pensions remaining secure. As more new hires who would receive the 9% instead of a pension are brought on, the existing pool gradually shrinks.

He felt this was a “win-win settlement,” and a major change in the way the City does business with its general employees.

The negotiations for Police and Fire have not had the same results, and a two-year contract was agreed upon, as well as an agreement to restructure the current pension system and “spread out” its payments over time. The City’s contribution went from 50% to 36%, a savings of approximately \$2.6 million the first year. He noted, however, that there is no cap on the 36%, so should investment values decrease further, this percentage may begin to grow again. City Manager Gretsas described this issue as the crux of the argument between the City and Police and Fire.

In January 2008, the total value of the Police and Fire pension system was \$491 million. By November 30, 2008, this had fallen to \$378 million. He noted that there is no way to predict whether the fund may lose more before the pension actuaries begin calculating the City’s contribution, or how the \$113 million loss will be factored in. He described the City’s requirement to fund the system as a lack of “protection for the taxpayers,” as this contribution used funds that might otherwise go toward different expenditures.

Overall, City Manager Gretsas concluded, the City’s taxes are down, the reserve fund is strong, the insurance fund is healthy, and bond ratings are up. He cautioned, however, that the economy is still worsening, and as property values

decline, it is not yet known what reduction this will result in for the City's tax rolls, although it will ultimately mean less money in the budget.

He urged the Board to consider the "tough decisions" the City faces at a later time, as it considers the needs and goals of the Parks system, among the City's many Departments.

Moving on to crime, City Manager Gretsas pointed out that in 2005 the City's crime index totaled 12,719, which was a double-digit increase. A team of consultants studied the City's operations and made suggestions, which included review of crime trends by Police officials on a weekly basis. The index dropped substantially in 2006 and 2007; the 2007 figure, in particular, was the lowest recorded number since 1975, when the Federal index began tracking figures. There has been a slight increase in 2008, which City Manager Gretsas indicated was due to economic hardships. He noted in particular that there has been a significant increase in the City's homeless population. He commended the Police Department for keeping this figure as low as possible.

Fire and Rescue services' efficiency is calculated by its response time, he continued, or how long it takes an emergency responder to arrive at the location. The goal is between four to eight minutes, he advised. In 2006, response time improved by 23 seconds, and 2007 showed a similar result. Figures for 2008 have yet to be finalized.

Code Enforcement addresses graffiti, illegal dumping, and other concerns; City Manager Gretsas noted that the longer graffiti is present, the more it accumulates. The goal is to remove graffiti within 24 hours. Code Enforcement Operations are now computerized and vehicles are equipped with GPS devices. This has led to the calculation that 59% of all Code Enforcement cases discovered by Inspectors, and 90% of Code complaints received by the public, are now responded to within that 24-hour time frame.

The City Commission has approved a new ordinance to standardize newspaper boxes throughout the City, he continued, which has contributed to improved visual impact.

Beach improvements include new medians and equipment. City Manager Gretsas felt the City should keep making improvements, as more quality hotels move into the area; this would make Fort Lauderdale a reliable "brand."

The City's ongoing vision includes the work of thousands of residents over the last four years of Master Planning; City Manager Gretsas noted that many current Board members were involved with the Parks Master Plan. When all Plans are considered together, he noted some common features, such as

standards for appropriate development, definition of a recognizable skyline, protection of City neighborhoods, and encouragement of mixed communities.

Another consideration is the creation of a “world-class” downtown area, which includes public spaces and public transportation. City Manager Gretsas identified the New River as a particularly important aspect of the downtown area, and one the City intends to make into a showplace. The first planning stage was to develop more buildings up and down the River over time, and design them in ways that would energize the Riverwalk area. The second phase, which is on the City’s agenda in April 2009, includes selecting what improvements should be made to the Riverwalk area, such as its infrastructure and enhancements. He encouraged the Board to involve itself in this planning process.

The City, County, and DDA have elected to establish a rail system in Fort Lauderdale, he continued, including light rail service within the downtown area. Service is expected to begin on NE 6th Street and end at Broward General Hospital, in a “loop” similar to the system used in Portland, OR. Assuming this first implementation downtown is a success, service could also be added to connect to the Beach and other areas of the City going forward.

The Beach Master Plan is still ongoing, City Manager Gretsas advised, with final decisions yet to be made regarding its zoning. He recommended that the Board become involved in this Plan’s development as well, as beaches are part of the Parks system.

He pointed out the importance of the boating industry as an economic engine for the City, as it creates jobs and revenue. If boating facilities do not keep up with the changes being made to modern boats, including an increase in their size, it will lose the ability to compete for them and they will go elsewhere. Therefore, maintenance of marinas and the depth of waterways remain important issues, as larger boats cannot get through to dock without the upkeep of these two key areas. It is expected that the City Commission will hear a proposal for a Master Plan for the City’s boating industry within the next few months.

Regarding neighborhood preservation, consultants are working with neighborhoods to decide what residents like and want to protect. This can be addressed by strengthening zoning regulations, he advised.

Enhancing the City’s corridors is also key, City Manager Gretsas continued, stating that Fort Lauderdale should maintain these areas to give visitors and residents a good impression. Funding for this upkeep is always an important issue.

He described the Parks System as a “premier system,” and added that the planning process had indicated that residents are happy in general with the City’s

parks. He praised Director Thornburg and Assistant Director Rynard and their Staff for their continued work in this area.

The City's infrastructure is being repaired and replaced throughout the City, to hopefully be complete by 2011. He estimated that this will mean \$750 million in new infrastructure, which will help the City's long-term success. Rebuilding fire stations is another part of this plan; it was decided, after discussion of beginning by rebuilding ten fire stations, to rebuild two stations first as a trial run. It was agreed upon that Staff did a good job in the rebuilding effort; however, when the stations were pre-planned some years ago, they were planned larger than necessary. The impact of hurricanes on work as these stations were being built also slowed work and raised prices. New bids on the next stations to be build are substantially lower than the costs of the first two stations. It is expected to complete all ten stations during the proposed eight-year time frame.

The rebuilding of City Hall and the Police Station must also be considered in the future, as the Police Station in particular is not hurricane-ready. Demolition and construction of a building of this size could cost \$80-\$100 million, City Manager Gretsas advised. Regarding City Hall, it was determined that replacement rather than repairs makes better financial sense, although this would also be a \$40 million project.

While these are both planned and ongoing projects, City Manager Gretsas added that due to economic reality, the City's focus must be on keeping what it already has for the next two years. He concluded by reiterating that the City is in good financial shape, although revenues will be down over the next couple of years. Once the economy has picked up again, the City's planning has created a framework to move the City forward significantly.

He offered to answer any questions at this time.

Mr. McCormick referred to the pension situation, asking for the total amount of funds spent on the Police and Fire pension system versus the total amount spent on Parks & Recreation; in addition, assuming that taxes are not increased in the near future and that the pension dollars continue to add up, he asked what impact these factors might have on the Parks & Recreation Department.

City Manager Gretsas advised that the total budget for the Department is \$28 million, while the pension fund in 2008 was \$21 million. He added that his answer to the second question would apply to every City Department, not Parks & Recreation alone. He explained that as this mandated cost rose with no change, it must come before other considerations. The City prefers a "two-tiered" pension system or another change, as employees with current benefits would not be affected.

Vice Chair Fee asked if the multiplier was negotiated several years ago. City Manager Gretsas affirmed this, stating that at one point it had been less than three and three-eighths percent. Once the benefit is given, it lasts for that employee's lifetime, he noted. The multiplier for general employees is 3%.

Mr. Berry asked if there had been consideration of turning the City's police operations over to the Sheriff's Department. City Manager Gretsas acknowledged that this had been discussed in the past; however, residents prefer to keep their own City Police Department.

Mr. McCormick requested statistics on the City's total population versus its total park space in five-year increments, so the Board could track the growth of this figure. City Manager Gretsas responded that he did not have this figure incrementally, but the Parks Master Plan includes some statistics of this nature. He stated that the majority of the City's budget goes to police, fire, parks, and public works, where residents are least willing to accept a decrease in services.

Mr. Verkey returned the discussion to the millage rate, noting that there is a large difference in this rate for commercial property as opposed to residential real estate. He asked how much of this rate goes to the City and how much to the County. City Manager Gretsas replied that of every dollar paid in property taxes, roughly 25% goes to the City.

He continued that when the new City Commission is seated on March 10, 2009, the City will resume negotiations with Police and Fire.

Mr. Cannon asked if the pension plan is self-funded by the employees. City Manager Gretsas advised that there is an employee contribution of 9% for Police and Fire and 7% for general employees. He added that this is a very small amount, however, and reiterated that while the employees' contribution is fixed, the employer contribution is mandated to be whatever funds will make up for any shortfall.

Ms. Markus asked who is in charge of keeping pension accounts, and how they are managed during the economic downturn. City Manager Gretsas answered that this fund is controlled by an asset manager, who is hired by the independent board. The board includes representatives from the two Departments, as well as from the City.

He thanked the Board for its time and questions.

2. Department Report – Assistant Director Rynard

Chair Hartman thanked Parks and Recreation Director Phil Thornburg for his attendance at tonight's meeting.

Assistant Director Rynard informed the Board that Andrew Degrafenreidt, who had served on the Board for many years, died earlier today. He was the first African-American City Commissioner, and had also served as Parks Superintendent. He had been a major advocate on behalf of parks. Assistant Director Rynard noted that the community building at Vass Park is named after him.

She stated that Hort Park came before the County Commission earlier in the week, and they approved \$2 million toward the purchase of the Hort Park Extension, which includes the existing School Board facilities adjacent to the City's Park. When the School Board vacates the building during the next two years, she added that the Department hopes to turn those sites into park space. Hort Park is located in the Shady Banks neighborhood.

She reminded the Board that in March, the City will be repairing the 8th Floor, so they will meet downstairs in the City Commission Chambers. The date and time of the March 2009 meeting will not change.

Chair Hartman stated that he had attempted to have the Board's meeting place changed, as he felt it was more appropriate for them to meet in "a variety of park space," where the facilities were capable of hosting a meeting and where the Board members would have the opportunity to meet with Park Staff.

Mr. Berry requested the removal of a rubber tree from the Senior Field, which he felt constituted a hazard to the nearby building. He added that at Croissant Park School, there was a need for lighting on the ballpark field.

3. Conceptual Master Plan: Flagler Heights Park – Assistant Director Rynard, Tom White

Assistant Director Rynard introduced City Landscape Architect Tom White, who would discuss the plan for Flagler Heights Park. She described this as an opportunity to create a park with a "very urban look," and the neighborhood had shown great interest in the project as well.

Mr. White stated that Flagler Heights Park is located at NE 3rd Avenue and Sistrunk Boulevard. The CRA is requesting a 20 ft. right-of-way for the entire 6th Street corridor; there is also an existing asphalt alley, with overhead power lines and a sewer system in its center. This alley will be vacated and the overhead lines will be moved underground, although the sewer system will remain intact. It will be turned into a one-way street, exiting onto the East onto 4th Avenue. This will mean the loss of one of seven small lots, with the north portion of that lost lot acting as the alley exit onto 4th Avenue, and the south half of that lot acting as a buffer between the site and the existing businesses.

There are oaks, tamarinds, ficus, and other trees which will be preserved as well as possible, he continued, as well as several royal palms. The two North entrances and two South entrances will be at a 45-degree angle, to preserve the entranceways and pedestrian circulation paths.

The Park will feature a small playground, Mr. White continued, in the furthest corner from the two busiest intersections and closest to a major residential area. The playground will have a very urban and modern appearance, using EVOS to give a metal look. There will be no pavilions, but open-air trellises instead, to give a curvilinear design. Trellises will also feature the metal design, as will benches, tables, and trash cans.

The Park has been awarded a recycling grant, and the playground's surface will most likely be artificial turf constructed from rubber pellets. Assistant Director Rynard clarified that this will be the same turf currently in use at the boundless playground on the former Southside School site.

Mr. Bond asked if parking is included in this plan. Mr. White stated that there is neighborhood parking, with the possible addition of two parallel spaces, although this may be restricted to City maintenance use.

Vice Chair Fee asked if the area serves a large number of children. Assistant Director Rynard stated that there are several young children in the area.

Mr. McCormick asked for the cost of the park. Assistant Director Rynard advised it was purchased with County and CRA money, with an estimated purchase price of \$3 million. The Park sits on one acre of land. Its development is expected to cost \$600,000 at most, and the timeline for construction is a year and a half. No park impact fees will be used on this property.

Assistant Director Rynard clarified that while Flagler Heights Park will not have a boundless playground, its playground equipment is accessible. She explained that a portion of play components must be reachable from the ground level for children who may have limited mobility.

Mr. Weiss asked if there was a possibility of adding exercise trails in this park. Mr. White stated that trails were not planned, and exercise stations are available at other parks nearby.

Assistant Director Rynard informed the Board that Department members had met with neighborhood residents before the park was designed; once the grant was received, they returned to show the residents the design concept. The residents were pleased with the results.

Motion made by Mr. Berry, seconded by Mr. Bond, to approve the Master Plan for Flagler Heights Park as drawn. In a voice vote, the **motion** carried unanimously.

4. LWCF Grant Application: Cypress Creek Sand Pine Preserve – Assistant Director Rynard

Assistant Director Rynard showed the Board a rendering of the location of Cypress Creek Preserve, which is near NW 21st Avenue. It is a property purchased with County funds and designated as a preserve, which means it must remain “native” and cannot be developed into active space.

With the property came a Clerk Grant from the County, which is for over \$200,000. This money will be used to match the LWCF Grant for which the Department is applying to the State. She explained that she is here to ask the Board’s approval of the request for a State grant.

An outdoor education arena will be constructed on the Preserve, with an accessible path, interpretive signage, and removal of exotic plants and replanting of native species. Assistant Director Rynard noted that schools will be encouraged to visit the Preserve, and the Department will use it as part of their own recreational programs, as well as an ecology site where education and interpretation of the habitat of native plants can be studied.

She added that this is a dry Preserve, situated on 8.1 acres. Ms. Daley will write the grant proposal if any Board members would like to see it.

She continued that approximately 70-80% of the Department’s grant requests are accepted. The primary grant writer is Gina Ravera, and Ms. Daley has just begun this task as well. In 2008, the Department’s proposal for the Bill Keith Preserve was ranked first in the State.

Assistant Director Rynard advised that a current difficulty facing the Department is the attempt to find grants that do not require matches, or for which a match is already available.

Mr. McCormick asked if grants are skewed toward water conservation projects or handicap-accessible parks, as he felt he has seen a great many of these recently. Assistant Director Rynard responded that all grants have a particular purpose. The Department’s present challenge is a search for more field space, for example. She pointed out that they had considered applying for an NFL grant in order to convert more field space to artificial turf, but the Department did not ultimately meet all necessary criteria.

Some grants are “marked” every year, she continued, and while the Department may not apply for a particular grant the first time it is available, they have a high acceptance rate.

Motion made by Mr. Berry, seconded by Ms. Shelley, in support of the Department’s grant application. In a voice vote, the **motion** carried unanimously.

Assistant Director Rynard requested that if a Board member, particularly if he or she is involved with an athletic association, would like to approach the Department for partnership on a grant, they send her the information. She affirmed that the Department consistently looks for ways to enhance recreation programs, as well as capital projects.

Responding to a question from Mr. Berry, she added that some grants are requested of the State of Florida, the Federal government, or private funding.

5. Board Comments – Chair Hartman

Chair Hartman informed the Board members that Mayor Naugle has invited them to attend the State of the City Address and Advisory Board Reception on March 4, 2009, at 6:00 p.m. at the Lauderdale Marine Center.

He passed a card to the Board members to send to Dr. Hays’ family, as well as a thank-you card to be sent to City Manager Gretsas for his presentation.

He advised that the South Beach Alliance, among other organizations, are asking the County to Save Our Sand (SOS), which continues the renourishment project that replenishes sand on Fort Lauderdale’s beaches. Chair Hartman asked the members to join in a letter-writing campaign to the County Commission on behalf of this effort. The County currently does not plan to continue beach renourishment, and the letter-writing campaign will urge County Commissioners to vote in favor of that ongoing effort. The City Commission has voted in favor of renourishment as well. He added that more information is available online, or he could email it to members at their request.

He recommended the National Recreation Park Association (NRPA) and Florida Parks Recreation Association (FRPA) websites to any members who have not visited them before as a way to keep up with current issues. The NRPA lobbied vigorously to ensure that the Federal economic recovery package did not exclude any funds being used for parks, and are celebrating that victory.

The National Legislative Forum on Parks & Recreation will be held in Washington, D.C. from March 17-20, 2009. Brochures for this event are available online through the NRPA website. Chair Hartman noted that while this is an important forum, it is probably easier for Board members to lobby through their

individual Congressmen. Debbie Wasserman-Schulz is the Representative from the Fort Lauderdale area, and Chair Hartman advised that Federal legislators are probably more accessible while at home than while working in Washington, D.C.

There is a comedy TV show called "Parks & Recreation" that will debut April 9, 2009 at 8:30 p.m. on NBC, featuring some cast members who have been associated with "Saturday Night Live," Chair Hartman concluded.

He encouraged all Board members to get "out of your comfort zones" and visit local parks that are not in their immediate area, or participate in programs that are new to them. He informed the Board that he had, for example, recently attended his first dodgeball tournament at Holiday Park.

He distributed the February editions of *Recreation Management* and *Parks & Recreation Business*, both of which are free periodicals.

Mr. Berry returned to the SOS effort, stating that three years previously, Hollywood Beach had been renourished, and Fort Lauderdale was to be the next Beach community to follow. However, the sand originally intended to renourish the City's beaches would, under the proposed plan, be used for this purpose in Hollywood Beach again. He explained that the SOS effort is asking residents to appeal to their County Commissioners to stop this plan. He reminded the members that the Beaches had once extended a great deal farther than they do now.

Ms. Shelley reminded the Board that Thursday, February 26, 2009, will be the final Candidates' Forum presented by the Fort Lauderdale Council of Civic Associations. It will take place in City Commission Chambers at 7:00 p.m. She encouraged all members to attend and to vote in the upcoming election.

Mr. Verkey stated that the creators of a locally filmed movie, "A Child is Missing," would like to give a PowerPoint presentation to the Board. He recommended the film to all Board members, especially those with children. He described it as a 10-15 minute film. Chair Hartman asked Mr. Verkey to communicate with Ms. Daley to add the film to an upcoming agenda.

Mr. Mabson advised that he had received an email from an individual regarding beach access that may have been prohibited by a hotel. Assistant Director Rynard stated that the access in question was South of the Yankee Clipper and North of Points of America. The public beach, she explained, ends at the Yankee Clipper; however, there is a segment of State public beach from the high water mark seaward. She agreed that there had been signs that appeared to restrict public access, which have now been removed except for the area that does make up a private beach.

Assistant Director Rynard stated that the Department had purchased a single-family lot in Twin Lakes. The house currently on the lot will be demolished.

Vice Chair Fee requested an update on the 9th Avenue Nursery. Assistant Director Rynard explained that the next phase will include grading, irrigation, and sodding, as well as removal of the existing fence and replacement with a wooden fence. The Department will then meet with the neighborhood to determine what the residents would like to be the next step. She estimated that sodding would take place within the next month to six weeks.

Regarding a question at a previous meeting about soccer space at Holiday Park, Assistant Director Rynard advised that the Department had received a proposal that they would present to the War Memorial Auditorium and other venues to reprioritize how their parking is handled, and provide them with alternative parking areas. This would free up more field space for games.

Chair Hartman concluded with a reminder that a new Mayor and City Commissioners would soon be seated, and the Board's role was as advisory body to the City Commission. He felt it is important to schedule personal meetings with the incoming City Commissioners. He encouraged the Board to educate the new City Commissioners on parks and recreation and its various issues.

Mr. McCormick added that there were still open positions on the City Commission, and the Board could attempt to find out the candidates' positions on parks and recreation issues before the election.

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

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