

**PARKS, RECREATION, & BEACHES ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES  
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE  
100 NORTH ANDREWS AVENUE  
CITY HALL, 8<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM  
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26, 2009 – 7:00 P.M.**

**October 2008- September 2009**

<b>Board Members</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Mark Hartman, Chair	A	8	A
Sean Fee, Vice Chair	P	8	1
Curtiss Berry	P	8	1
Betty Shelley	P	6	2
John Verkey	P	6	3
Matthew Weiss	P	8	1
Robert Payne	P	7	2
Ed Angelbello	P	6	3
Larry Mabson (arr. 7:01)	P	8	1
Mark McCormick	P	7	2
Jeffrey Cannon (arr. 7:03)	P	9	0
Marilyn Markus	A	6	2
Bruce Quailey	P	3	0

Currently there are 13 appointed members to the Board, which means 7 would constitute a quorum.

**Staff**

Stacey Daley, Administrative Assistant  
Phil Thornburg, Director, Parks and Recreation Department  
Gerry Roberts, Park Ranger Supervisor  
Brigitte Chiappetta, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

**Communications to City Commission**

None at this time.

**Roll Call**

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

Mr. Mabson joined the meeting at this time.

**1. Department Report – Director Thornburg**

Director Thornburg advised that former member, Kenny Nail, has resigned from the Board.

He continued that the previous Saturday, the dedication of Ann Herman Park took place in the Chula Vista neighborhood. This Saturday, August 29, at 9:00 a.m., Melrose Park will be renamed Shirley Small Park.

The following Items were taken out of order on the Agenda.

## **5. Budget Update – Director Thornburg**

Director Thornburg noted that while the budget will be discussed at length later in tonight's meeting, there have been some date changes for the upcoming public budget hearings. The September 1, 2009, meeting, which had originally been intended as a budget hearing, will now be a regular City Commission meeting; a budget workshop will be held on September 2 at 7:00 p.m. On September 9, the first public budget hearing will be held. It has not yet been determined whether the regular City Commission meeting on September 15 will also include the second budget hearing.

Vice Chair Fee asked if the Parks and Recreation Department has been affected by budget cuts. Director Thornburg explained the budget is down roughly 8%, or \$27.5 million as opposed to the 2009 budget of \$30 million. Layoffs are neither planned nor recommended, although some vacancies will not be filled; mowing and watering will occur less often, and horticultural supplies will be reduced. He concluded that major vital services, however, will not be affected.

Mr. Angelbello asked if the Park Ranger Supervisor position will be filled. Director Thornburg replied that this position is currently "frozen," and Staff member Gerry Roberts has assumed many of these responsibilities for the time being.

## **Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Weiss noted a correction on p.5, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, asking that his name be redacted from the agreement regarding the dog park.

Mr. Mabson also noted a correction on p.4, 6<sup>th</sup> paragraph, where the word "addenda" should be changed to "agenda."

**Motion** made by Mr. Berry, seconded by Mr. McCormick, to approve the June 2009 minutes as corrected. In a voice vote, the **motion** carried unanimously.

## **2. Renaming of Flagler Heights Park – Director Thornburg**

Director Thornburg stated this new park was purchased through the County Parks Bond, as well as with other sources of funding. It is located on 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and 6<sup>th</sup> Street, on the southeast corner. The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has submitted a request that it be named in honor of Peter Feldman, who was greatly involved in the development of the Flagler area.

He explained that the process for naming City parks is for the request to come through his office, to the Board, and then before the City Commission for formal approval.

Michael Ferber, representing the Flagler neighborhood, stated the park falls within the boundaries of the DDA and CRA. He advised that the DDA had passed a resolution that the park be named for Mr. Feldman, and the CRA may pass such a resolution as well at their September meeting.

He concluded this would be “a fitting tribute” to Mr. Feldman, who had worked tirelessly on behalf of the City, and asked that the Board consider this request. Before his death earlier in the month, Mr. Feldman had spent 25 years working in a part of the City that had been considered “slum and blight,” and the area now makes a positive contribution to the City.

Vice Chair Fee observed he had contacted individuals who had known Mr. Feldman well, and they had agreed he was “the driving force” behind obtaining the property.

**Motion** made by Mr. Weiss, seconded by Mr. Berry, to approve the renaming of Flagler Heights Park to Peter Feldman Park. In a voice vote, the **motion** carried unanimously.

Director Thornburg noted that Mr. Ferber was also instrumental in getting the park for the neighborhood, and thanked him for all his hard work.

#### **4. Renaming of South Beach Park – Director Thornburg**

Director Thornburg introduced Chuck Malkus, representing the Beach Council. He added that the Beach Council has also passed a motion to consider renaming South Beach Park to Fort Lauderdale Beach Park. He also pointed out that there is no formal record of naming South Beach Park, and the entire beach in that area is considered a park and is zoned accordingly.

Mr. Malkus stated the Beach Council has submitted a letter stating its reasons for wanting a new name for this area of the beach. He explained that events are held in that area, including the upcoming Super Bowl and Pro Bowl; the City does not wish this part of Fort Lauderdale to be associated or confused with the city of Miami’s South Beach.

He reminded the Board that the NFL will establish a “media center” in Fort Lauderdale prior to the Super Bowl, and the majority of Super Bowl-related events will occur in the Fort Lauderdale beach area. Mr. Malkus asserted that with international media, teams, and fans staying in Fort Lauderdale, the City should reconsider South Beach Park’s name and change it to Fort Lauderdale Beach Park.

He added that “people get confused” when they hear the name “South Beach,” thinking it refers to the city by the same name.

Vice Chair Fee asked if other names were considered as alternatives. Mr. Malkus stated they had also discussed Sebastian Beach, Bahia Beach, and Fort Lauderdale Beach South. The Beach Council had discussed these four possibilities over a period of three months, and had unanimously elected to support Fort Lauderdale Beach Park.

Mr. Angelbello asked if additional signs will need to be changed. Director Thornburg replied the City is studying a new “way-finding” signage in the beach area, which will be phased in over the next year or two. The signs that say “South Beach” could be changed earlier, without a “large expense.” He added that most signs simply say “Fort Lauderdale Beach.”

Mr. McCormick pointed out if the name is changed to Fort Lauderdale Beach Park, nothing precludes another name change at a later date if it is desired.

Director Thornburg advised that the entire area is zoned as a Park, and the change would affect how the area is referred to rather than serve as a formal name change. He characterized the issue as more of an approval of a sign change than a name change.

**Motion** made by Mr. McCormick, seconded by Ms. Shelley, to change what was previously known as “South Beach” to Fort Lauderdale Beach Park.

Mr. Payne asked if the north and south beaches are considered “divided” from a certain area, and whether the change will affect this. Vice Chair Fee explained that, for example, events are referred to as occurring in the north, south, or central beach areas; the references to the central and north beach areas will not be affected by the change.

In a voice vote, the **motion** carried unanimously.

### **3. George English Ballfield Lights Discussion – Director Thornburg**

Vice Chair Fee explained that Director Thornburg and City Staff would provide a brief history of this issue before discussion is opened to the public. Members of the public were asked to limit their comments to two minutes. Once the public hearing has concluded, the Board will discuss the issue further.

Director Thornburg stated the area under discussion is the baseball field in the northwest corner of George English Park, located on Bayview Drive, next door to Bayview Elementary School. Several years ago, Bayview Elementary underwent construction, and portable units were placed on City property at that time. The School Board agreed to refurbish the property on which the portables had been located.

The portable units remained on the property one to two years longer than had originally been planned, Director Thornburg continued, and the School Board decided not only to rebuild the existing baseball field, but to place \$150,000 in a fund to be used for "improvements to the baseball field."

He pointed out that there had been some consensus at the time that this money would go toward lighting the field, but no formal decision was finalized at the time. The lights were not installed and the money went into the fund instead, where it "sat for numerous years."

Recently, he concluded, discussion has arisen again regarding lighting the baseball field for evening use. The initial estimates were \$300,000-350,000, which is one reason the work was not completed. The project was recently sent out again for bid, and a responding bid came in at approximately \$130,000, with small changes in the placement of the lights to allow for maximum use of green space on the field. With engineering fees and other considerations, he felt the final total would be roughly \$150,000, although the exact number would not be known until the project closes out.

Director Thornburg recalled that the issue had been discussed at a previous meeting, after which bids had been received for the lights. There are six poles, with seven lights on each pole.

He added that the project did not go out for bid at an earlier time, and the \$300,000 figure was the engineers' estimate. He felt the economy is a consideration that affected this change in price.

Mr. Weiss asked to know the lights' height. Director Thornburg stated they are 60 ft. tall, which is standard for park zoning. No variance request would be necessary for this height.

Mr. Mabson asked when the \$150,000 was accepted by the City. Director Thornburg responded that this was done on April 30, 2000.

Mr. Angelbello asked what would be the proposed use of the space with six light poles – for example, are they on a baseball, soccer, or all-purpose field. Director Thornburg stated the use was “all of the above,” and the lights would ideally be placed along the four baselines and the outfield in order to maximize green space.

At this time Vice Chair Fee opened the discussion to the public, requesting that speakers identify themselves for the public record and limit comments to two minutes.

Daniel Emke, who coaches for the Fort Lauderdale Coral Ridge Little League, expressed frustration that the issue has been “dragging on” since 2000. He stated that the money is required to be spent on ballfield improvements, according to a contractual agreement. To set these aside would create a precedent that could affect other park locations, Mr. Emke noted.

He felt the source of some of the conflict surrounding the issue is that there is opposition to the use of the park for childrens’ sports. He concluded that there is a “dire need” for more ballfields in the area, with lighting.

With regard to the height of the poles, he reiterated that they are 60 ft., which are beneficial because at this height “the light is coming down,” as opposed to lower lights that must be more “spread out.” The park already has many other sources of light that are closer to the area residents.

Mr. McCormick asked how many years the construction precluded children’s use of the field. Mr. Emke replied that this was approximately two years, in which use of the facility was “lost completely.” He asserted that this is stated in the contract drawn up between Parks and Recreation and the School Board.

Scott Tilbrook, member of the Board of the Coral Ridge Little League, advised he had been working on the project “for a number of years” and had brought baseball back to George English Park. He explained the park is used for a particular division of baseball, and the present unlighted conditions could be dangerous at dusk hours. Mr. Tilbrook added that City parks are intended to be used until 9:00 p.m. He felt the lack of lighting on the field is a liability.

Mr. Tilbrook also recalled that a letter had been written to former City Commissioner Christine Teel, who had approved the project; in addition, the Coral Ridge Association had voted its approval at that time.

He concluded that “there is more to this community” than “a few” homes in close proximity to the park, and these needs should be taken into consideration. He felt the homeowners and the Little League could work together on the project.

Mr. McCormick asked the average age of the children using the fields. Mr. Tilbrook responded that the field at George English Park was used by seven- and eight-year-olds, although the Little League would like to expand this use, as the field is full-sized. Most of the children live in Fort Lauderdale, including the Coral Ridge neighborhood.

Mr. Mabson asked how long ago the field was developed. Mr. Tilbrook noted that he had begun playing there in 1971.

Mr. Angelbello asked if other communications had been made with City Commissioners or the Parks and Recreation Department since the original letter from then Commissioner Teel. Mr. Tilbrook advised there was no other communication.

Lisa Brock, resident of 12<sup>th</sup> Street, stated she was “vehemently opposed” to the proposed lighting, as the park is very small and 12<sup>th</sup> Street already suffers from a “huge traffic congestion problem” on a daily basis. She explained that the only available parking is in the school parking lot or the other side of the park. She asserted this was an attempt to put “big lights [on a] small field.”

Ms. Brock continued that the 12<sup>th</sup> Street residents have attended other meetings on this topic to state their opposition. They would like the funds to be used toward improvements to the entire park. She disagreed with Mr. Tilbrook that the ballfield in question is full-sized.

Mr. McCormick asked how long Ms. Brock had lived on 12<sup>th</sup> Street, noting that both the school and the park had been there for some time. Ms. Brock replied that she had lived there for 17 years, and that the capacity for both facilities was “at max right now.”

Mr. McCormick noted that he had not seen the crowded parking lots that Ms. Brock had described earlier, although he used the park regularly near dusk. Ms. Brock stated that the Little League had not used the fields “this entire summer.”

Vice Chair Fee explained that the Board does not have the authority to make this decision, but can only recommend to the City Commission.

Mr. Quailey noted that the park and field had been in use since the 1950s, and “ballfields come in all...sizes.” He pointed out that the entire purpose of the park was to be a “neighborhood park,” and noted that everything at the park is currently lighted, with the exception of its baseball fields.

Ms. Brock disagreed, stating that while the tennis courts are lit, the playground and sidewalks are not lit and need major improvements. She added that the lights on the tennis courts remain lit long after 9:00 p.m.

Vice Chair Fee noted that the lighting on these courts is an enforcement issue. Ms. Brock felt this meant the 12<sup>th</sup> Street residents would have “another set of lights on for endless hours.”

Mr. Angelbello asked Director Thornburg if there is an agreement with the school allowing for the use of the parking lot. Director Thornburg advised that the parking lot farthest to the east is Park property, and the lot to the west is used by the School Board.

Betsy Dow, President of the Coral Ridge Association, stated she is responsible for suggesting that the \$150,000 be used to improve the park's playground if the lights would cost too much. She noted that this has changed with the recent bid. She explained, however, that the residents of northeast 12<sup>th</sup> Street had an issue with the lights staying on all night, and proposed that they be set with a timer to solve this problem.

She added that the traffic is a genuine problem, and she had spoken with Commissioner Teel in regard to it; Commissioner Teel had informed her there is a City Code that states parking must be provided at parks. Ms. Dow suggested this be looked into further. She added that at some point, she hoped the Bayview Park playground could be improved.

Director Thornburg observed that he had not been aware of the lights on the tennis court remaining lit, and would check into this. He explained that there are timers for lights, but there is also a “coach's override,” which would allow the last coach to leave to shut off the lights if the timer malfunctioned.

Ms. Dow reiterated that there is a “critical traffic problem” on 12<sup>th</sup> Street during morning hours. It was noted, however, that this is school traffic.

Jamie Finizio Bascom, longtime resident, stated she has two young children who play on the soccer field “in the dark,” which creates a negligence issue. She felt the children's safety should come first, and asserted that if the money is available for the project, it should be done.

She added that Coral Ridge is “known to be a family community,” and added that she had never seen a traffic issue in the neighborhood at night. She hoped the Board would recommend the project to the City Commission.

Brian Pagliaro, private citizen, declared there is no municipality in eastern Broward County with “room for growth,” as they are landlocked and have limited



green space. He felt it is imperative that the community and School Board work together to enhance children's park areas.

He continued that he is in the parks profession, as well as a parent, and recalled being "shuffled to other places" when the ballfield grew dark in the evening. He asked the Board to consider supporting the endeavor.

Dion Joanu, Coral Ridge resident and President of the Boys Club, informed the Board that the soccer program involves 230 children; the field in question is one of the program's "primary fields." He stated that the children who play on the field are between the ages of five and nine, and most parents drop them off for practice and pick them up afterward; he is one of the people "left on the field in the complete dark" with the children.

He did not feel the lights would create a great deal of difference, and would only affect one portion of 12<sup>th</sup> Street. He did not recall a great deal of traffic in the area at night.

Jane Davis, resident of 12<sup>th</sup> Court, pointed out that programmed park activities improve the Coral Ridge neighborhood, while when there are no activities, there are "no lights and... a big park." She asserted that programmed activities and lighting keep bad behavior out of an area.

Eric Newman, President of the Fort Lauderdale Coral Ridge Little League, stated he is familiar with the area and felt the addition of lighting will improve safety for the children in the program and other park users. It will also add the benefit of more hours of use.

He also pointed out that users of the field, including the Little League, must have a permit from the City, and must pay for the field's use. He explained this creates a "very controlled environment," and that the coaches carry badges; in addition, they must submit to a background check before they are allowed to supervise children. In conclusion, he asked that the Board support the lighting of the field.

Frank Earnerd, longtime resident of Fort Lauderdale, stated he has used George English Park and other parks, and felt this is "an obvious situation" since the funds in question were allocated for the use of the park. He urged the Board to consider the issue favorably, and suggested that the higher lights on the field would spread less ambient light to surrounding neighborhoods.

**Motion** made by Mr. McCormick, seconded by Mr. Weiss, that, in order to address the critical shortage of playing fields for the children of the City of Fort Lauderdale, the Board strongly recommends that the School Board funding that was contractually dedicated to baseball field improvements at George English Park be used for baseball field improvements at George English Park,

specifically the installation of lights for the field, as this improvement is the desired improvement of Fort Lauderdale Little League and will allow them to safely and effectively serve the youth of the City of Fort Lauderdale. In a voice vote, the **motion** carried unanimously.

Mr. Quailey noted that there are currently 69 lights in the Park, at heights of 18 to 50 ft., on the tennis courts, marina, and playground area. He referred interested parties to the website for George English Park, which states that park hours are from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., and specifically lists "lighted athletic fields" under "Park Facilities and Amenities."

He added he had also requested traffic counts for Sunrise Boulevard to the east and west of Bayview Drive, as well as for Bayview Drive itself, from the Department of Transportation. Bayview Drive at 12<sup>th</sup> Street has an average daily traffic count of 11,500 cars per day, while the area of Sunrise Boulevard in question has 34,000-37,000 cars per day.

## **6. Correction of May Minutes**

Director Thornburg noted two items were brought to his attention: the City Clerk had requested that any dissenting votes on a particular item be listed. Vice Chair Fee noted that the dissenting votes on the **motion** regarding Gore Betz Park were Mr. Weiss and himself; dissenting votes on the **motion** to place further discussion of the baseball field at George English Park as an Agenda Item were Mr. Quailey, Vice Chair Fee, Mr. Weiss, Mr. McCormick, and Mr. Nail.

**Motion** made and duly seconded to approve the May minutes as corrected. In a voice vote, the **motion** carried unanimously.

## **7. Board Comments / Communications to the City Commission – Vice Chair Fee**

Mr. Berry invited the Board members to the dedication of Shirley Small Park on Saturday, August 29, 2009 at 9:00 a.m.

Gerry Roberts, Acting Park Ranger Supervisor, introduced himself to the Board at this time. He asked that any members with concerns feel free to contact him.

Mr. Angelbello requested an update on the maintenance facility at Holiday Park, asking if its renovations will be funded in the budget that will be recommended to the City Commission. Director Thornburg advised that this project has been downsized and will go out for bid again; the bids should be available in September, to be brought before the City Commission in October.

He added that the lightning predictors previously discussed by the Board are included in the 2010 capital improvement plan and is part of the budget request, but are not guaranteed to remain in the budget until after the second budget hearing. They have been included in the City Manager's budget presentation and will be a requested item in the budget.

Mr. Payne complimented the Staff at J.C. Carter Park and asked if they could be recognized for the superior work they provide. Director Thornburg suggested inviting these Staff members to an upcoming meeting. It was agreed that the Staff at "every park in town" do an excellent job.

Director Thornburg stated that the City Commission approved the purchase of a concession trailer for football at Croissant Park. The football team has agreed to do all its practices at Croissant Park as well, although games will be played at another location. It was noted that former Board member Kenny Nail had been instrumental in his assistance with field improvements at Croissant Park, and deserved recognition for his hard work.

It was also noted that Croissant Park might consider moving its lights back an additional 20 to 30 ft. in order to free up more field space.

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

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