

**PARKS, RECREATION, & BEACHES ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
100 NORTH ANDREWS AVENUE
CITY HALL, 8TH FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2009 – 7:00 P.M.**

October 2009- September 2010

Board Members	Attendance	Present	Absent
Mark Hartman, Chair	P	2	0
Sean Fee, Vice Chair	P	2	0
Curtiss Berry	P	2	0
Betty Shelley (7:04)	P	2	0
John Verkey	P	2	0
Matthew Weiss	P	2	0
Robert Payne	A	1	1
Ed Angelbello	A	1	1
Larry Mabson	P	2	0
Mark McCormick	A	1	1
Jeffrey Cannon	A	1	1
Marilyn Markus	P	2	0
Bruce Quailey	P	2	0
Cindy Bucher	P	1	0
Joe Bellavance	P	2	0
R.L. Landers	P	2	0

Currently there are 16 appointed members to the Board, which means 9 would constitute a quorum.

Staff

Stacey Daley, Administrative Assistant
Terry Rynard, Assistant Director, Parks and Recreation Department
Brigitte Chiappetta, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communications to City Commission

Motion made by Mr. Quailey, seconded by Ms. Markus, to recommend that the City explore any opportunity to acquire American Golf Course for the citizens of Fort Lauderdale so the community can have a public golf course. In a voice vote, the **motion** carried unanimously.

Roll Call

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

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Markus noted a correction on p.5: Dolphin Isles Park is located at NE 33rd Avenue.

Motion made by Mr. Berry, seconded by Vice Chair Fee, to approve the minutes as corrected. In a voice vote, the **motion** carried unanimously.

1. Department Report – Assistant Director Rynard

Assistant Director Rynard welcomed new Board member Cindy Bucher. Ms. Bucher was born and raised in Fort Lauderdale. She was an original board member of the Sunset Civic Association, and also served as Vice President/Treasurer of its Safety Committee, and was active in Crime Watch for 10 years.

Ms. Shelley joined the meeting at this time (7:04 p.m.).

2. Holiday Happenings – Assistant Director Rynard

Assistant Director Rynard noted the following holiday programs:

- Tree Lighting Ceremony: December 2 at Carter Park
- Holiday Luncheon: December 16 at the Holiday Park Social Center
- Jingle Bell Dance: December 18 at Warfield Park, 7:00-9:00 p.m.
- Santa on the Beach: December 21 at 12:00 p.m.
- Kwanzaa: December 31 at Bass Park from 1:00-5:00 p.m.
- Downtown Countdown: December 31 from 5:00 p.m.-3:00 a.m.

Chair Hartman stated he had attended the grand opening of Coontie Hatchee Park, which he characterized as “really well done.” He noted the property is beautiful, featuring a playground with natural shade.

Ms. Markus added that Patricia West, the historian present at the ceremony, was very informative. Chair Hartman noted he had invited her to address the Board in the coming year regarding the history of open space in the City. Mr. Bellavance commented that Ms. West is also the author of several books.

Mr. Berry stated that Veterans’ Day at Holiday Park was also a beautiful ceremony.

3. 2009-2010 Handbooks – Assistant Director Rynard

Assistant Director Rynard advised that handbooks are available for new Board members, and updates are available for those members who already have

handbooks. She noted there is “not a lot of detail” on the organizational chart, as some staff positions are vacant and some responsibilities are currently “fluid.” Cross-training is in place for many staff members.

Chair Hartman called the Board’s attention to the meeting dates for 2010, and pointed out that there is no meeting in July. Vice Chair Fee indicated this is a change from previous schedules, when there was no August meeting.

Chair Hartman encouraged all Board members to review their handbooks.

Mr. Berry asked if the handbooks include maps of all City Parks. Assistant Director Rynard agreed to provide these at the next scheduled meeting, and Chair Hartman added that maps are available on the City’s website, along with other reference materials.

Assistant Director Rynard informed the Board that if they would like to tour a park, the Department will ask a Park Ranger or other staff member to provide the tour. She asked that any interested individuals contact her or Ms. Daley to schedule a tour.

Chair Hartman stated that although Board meetings must be televised, he felt more value could be gained by holding meetings in different parks, and pointed out that the County’s Advisory Board and the Florida Recreation and Park Association (FRPA) meet in various parks and cities. It was noted that one reason for holding meetings in the Conference Room is the need for two forms of recording equipment, one of which will serve as a backup method.

Chair Hartman urged that the members visit the City’s parks between meetings so they do not rely only on the information presented during meetings to provide an understanding of the parks and park system. Dr. Landers agreed, adding that while he is familiar with some of the City’s larger parks, he is less familiar with its smaller ones.

4. Long Range Strategic Plan – Chair Hartman

Chair Hartman recalled that he had asked the Board members to review Section 6 of the Long-Range Strategic Plan at the October meeting. He emphasized that this Section is very important for the future of the City’s park system, and stated that the Plan attempts to integrate various components of “all previous planning efforts,” including the Central Beach and New River Master Plans and the Civic Association Future Plan, among others.

Ultimately the Long-Range Master Plan is intended to provide a clear layout of the Department’s park facilities and “provide a framework for all open space

within the City.” Planned improvements to the public realm include the following seven initiatives:

- Improve neighborhood access to local recreation amenities;
- Improvements to existing community-wide parks;
- Expand access to greenways and trails;
- Improved water access;
- Expansion of indoor health and fitness-oriented community recreation centers;
- Complete streets to create a network of sidewalks and bike paths to serve schools, parks, and neighborhoods;
- Expanded transit service to parks and the beach.

The Plan’s intent is to maximize the use of available open space in the City, pursue partnership opportunities, and minimize any potential acquisition of property. Chair Hartman noted he does not agree with this last point, which he suggested might be due to budget constraints.

Partnership opportunities could involve State or County parks, as well as partnering with schools and/or businesses. He cited Riverwalk as an example of a successful business partnership.

Chair Hartman referred to the proposed increase in access to water and natural areas, noting that many of the City’s waterways are “not readily accessible” to the general public. The Plan identifies a “high desire by City residents” for better access to the beach as well as to other City waterways.

Some area parks are identified as underused, including Snyder, Mills Pond, and Birch Parks. The Plan proposes “an integrated marketing program that helps City residents know what programs are available in the area.” It recommends brochures, use of the City website, and active programming to disseminate this information. Chair Hartman pointed out that the Plan criticized the City for cutting back on mailings that share programming information, and indicated that this was part of an effort to become more environmentally responsible and cut down on paper use. He noted the use of email blasts from the City as part of the “Rec Track” system, and the City’s willingness to address questions and respond electronically.

The Plan also recommends that the Department work with the County and State Park Services to “provide an overall awareness of natural resources to residents and visitors.” Chair Hartman explained that survey material had indicated that residents wanted increased access to open green space. He recalled, however, that Birch Park, which is used as an example of this open space, is cited as being underused.

With regard to “complete streets,” Chair Hartman stated these would be designed to provide safe access for pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and bus riders. The impact of street design on neighboring communities should be taken into consideration, and pedestrian streets could be developed to and from neighborhood parks. The proposed “Safe Routes to Parks” system is compared to the existing Safe Routes to Schools program.

He asked the Board for their feedback at this time.

Vice Chair Fee felt it is more cost-conscious to continue to use email rather than flyers. Assistant Director Rynard added that “people still get enough junk mail,” and the Department has not found mailers to be effective in comparison to the Rec Track system. Many program registrations are also available online.

She noted that the City has not yet pursued partnerships with other entities, such as schools or State parks. In previous years, the State, County, and City park systems “almost looked at each other as competition,” although now the systems fit together to address various needs. She felt partnerships would be a good opportunity, particularly if marketing efforts could be combined.

Vice Chair Fee asked if most activities in neighborhood parks are used by neighborhood residents. Assistant Director Rynard agreed this is often the case, although some activities are unique to specific parks, such as aikido lessons or tennis facilities.

Mr. Mabson recalled that the Plan alluded to issues with cities that are being redeveloped, and asked if this applied to Fort Lauderdale at present. He also asked how any such redevelopment would affect the Long-Range Strategic Plan, and added that with regard to partnering with the private sector, the City might “piggyback” on fliers sent out by various vendors to reach residents who do not have regular access to computers.

Assistant Director Rynard replied that while the City no longer sends out mass mailings, they may send flyers for specific programs or inside specific zip codes. Flyers for children’s activities are often sent to schools. She confirmed that the City creates “a flyer for every program.”

Mr. Mabson asked if there is any benefit to “greater Fort Lauderdale” knowing that specific programs are being held in other parts of the City, which they could then incorporate into other areas. Assistant Director Rynard advised that the City’s calendar lists dates of registration for various programs, including specific information about each facility. The calendar was not included in the 2010 budget, however.

Mr. Mabson also asked if partnerships with the private sector might include working with existing physical fitness programs. Assistant Director Rynard confirmed this, adding that the Department's programs at the Beach Community Center operate in conjunction with Broward Health. Trainers from Broward Health conduct many of the programs, and proceeds are divided between this organization and the Department. She noted that this has been a popular program, and has been expanded to other locations as well.

Mr. Bellavance asked if flyers and announcements regarding activities could be mailed out with local water bills. Assistant Director Rynard agreed that this is sometimes done, citing the holiday activities as an example.

Mr. Bellavance asked if impact fees from condominiums and other ventures are set aside for Department use, and how it is used. Assistant Director Rynard explained these funds are used to develop new parks purchased with County Park Bond money. She advised that the program was developed when "the economy was booming," and that the money coming in is currently significantly less.

Vice Chair Fee suggested using civic association newsletters to advertise community programs. Assistant Director Rynard replied that this information is sent in civic packets as well.

Mr. Berry proposed asking the Council of Fort Lauderdale Civic Associations to include this information in their newsletter. Ms. Shelley, who is a member of the Council, explained that the civic packets are transmitted by email to the presidents of homeowners' associations and to the Council, where the information is disseminated via newsletter.

Mr. Mabson asked if an estimate is available for monies spent on mailers. Assistant Director Rynard stated these monies come from the General Fund, and she could provide the Department's portion of these funds at the next meeting.

Chair Hartman stated that he had brought copies of Section 7 of the Plan, as it includes the steps involved in making the Long-Range Plan a reality. Program and policy initiatives must be put in place, along with budgeting and capital improvement planning. The recommendations in Section 7 are intended to meet the priorities identified in the needs assessment process, and are organized into the appropriate categories. The priorities are as follows:

- Enhanced partnerships and planning efforts;
- Maintaining what already exists;
- Improve trails and connectivity;
- Improve beach access;
- Protect natural resources and provide nature programming;

- Provide health, fitness, and wellness programs;
- Provide more neighborhood parks;
- Increase safety and security;
- Provide adequate and qualified staff;
- Enhance sustainability.

Assistant Director Rynard recalled that when the Long-Range Plan was first presented, it had contained a good deal of information but relatively few action items, and the Board had expressed concern with the document. The Department had viewed the Plan as “a vision in how to... prioritize our initiatives.” Since that time, they have taken action on several of the items listed in the Plan, such as the Neighborhood Heroes program. The Department presents this initiative to civic groups and businesses to solicit contributions to their trust, which helps offset the cost of programs for children who could not otherwise afford them.

The Department also sponsors after-school programs, and partners with the Red Cross to help train lifeguards; the Red Cross provides training for Department staff at no cost. Agreements with youth sports associations have been formalized, and there are eight Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with these programs.

The Department is cross-training and “re-purposing” staff, Assistant Director Rynard continued, which allows staff to experience more variety in their daily work. She explained a good deal of staff had been lost over the past two years, but the Department had been able to maintain their resources and services “at an able level.” She noted that this is greatly appreciated by the Department’s Directors, and thanked the Board for their consistent recognition of staff’s efforts as well.

Additional maintenance includes activity-based cost tracking, which allows the Department to compare its performance to previous cycles. If a trend shows that these costs are increasing or decreasing by District, the cause can be determined and adjustments made. Nature programming now includes a children’s ecology program at Snyder Park and a Junior Master Gardeners at Warfield Park, among others.

Chair Hartman added that the Department has made improvements in beach signage. Assistant Director Rynard noted that there are more improvements to come, and they are working with Parking and Fleet Services on additional signage.

Assistant Director Rynard continued that the Department now features a “Green Team,” with new policy, initiatives, and personnel to foster enhanced sustainability. They have developed new adult fitness programs, including flag

football leagues and walking clubs. An RFP will go out in 2010 for fitness programs on the beach, and the Department is partnering with the Riverwalk Trust to offer fitness activities in that area. There are 16 new parks in development, three of which opened in 2009 and three due to open in 2010; the remaining parks will open over the next few years.

The Department meets with the Police Department on a monthly basis to develop action plans for specific sites where safety and security issues have been identified. These have worked "very well," Assistant Director Rynard noted, and reported incidents have decreased with implementation of these action plans. This increased communication with neighborhoods has changed the public perception in some areas. Access to the Ranger phone number has also been improved, with positive results.

Mr. Mabson asked if there is a number the general public may use to call Rangers if an incident occurs. Assistant Director Rynard replied that this number is (954) 401-0800, and Rangers are available until 11:00 p.m. Mr. Mabson requested that this number be posted at public sites so the general public may access it.

Mr. Verkey asked how the Department handles cleaning of restrooms in park facilities. Assistant Director Rynard explained that this service is contracted to Brite Maintenance, who visit most facilities once a day. Facilities at Fort Lauderdale Beach Park are seen three times a day. Portable units are cleaned twice weekly.

Mr. Verkey stated the restrooms at Floyd Hall Park were cleaned by staff and/or volunteers during football season; he had raised the topic because some facilities seem "much cleaner" than others. Assistant Director Rynard advised only one restroom at Floyd Hall Park is under contract, and the other restrooms are maintained by the league. She encouraged Board members to communicate with her if they saw specific issues with cleanliness at any facilities.

Chair Hartman returned to Section 7, noting that "14 key agencies" with whom the Department could expand its association were listed, including schools. Increased promotion of programs, programming in natural areas, cross-marketing with the State and County, improved pedestrian and bicycle access, expansion of the Adopt-a-Park Program, green designing practices, and consistent development guidelines to promote "brand recognition" of the parks were also recommended in the Long-Range Plan. Some expenses were not practical at this time, such as expansion of field trip programs.

An action plan and summary for the Plan is included on p.156, he concluded.

Chair Hartman concluded that a final key strength of the Plan is its recommendation to expand neighborhood parks and special community events.

5. Board Comments/Communications to the City Commission – Chair Hartman

Chair Hartman distributed copies of articles from the *Sun-Sentinel*, regarding City cleanup efforts in parks and the jet located in Holiday Park. He advised the members of other periodicals they could receive free of charge as well.

Mr. Quailey stated he had considered what the Board might recommend to the City, noting the American Golf Course in particular. The parcel is roughly 210 acres, with American's ownership making up roughly 65 acres; Mr. Quailey stated he had considered what the Board might recommend to the City, noting the American Golf Course in particular. Most of the land is zoned "park", and it is included in the Broward County Land Use Amendment.

A 5-acre commercial piece of this facility is located on US-1, he continued. Mr. Quailey pointed out that "basically every major sport" is currently covered in the City's parks, with the exception of a public golf facility. He felt the property's present owners would like to re-zone this area and put in 69 home sites, eliminating the green space. He urged the City to "move quickly enough" and agree on a price with the property's owners for the 65 acres, which would be open to the general public.

He added while the City does not presently have a great deal of excess cash, he felt this is an opportune time to act to purchase the property. He noted that a parcel's zoning has a great effect on its purchase price; the front of the property is zoned commercial.

Chair Hartman advised that the Board may include this suggestion as a Communication to the City Commission, which will then be reviewed by that body. He suggested that Mr. Quailey phrase his recommendation in motion form for this purpose.

Motion made by Mr. Quailey, seconded by Ms. Markus, that the City explore any opportunity to look at the acquisition of American Golf Course for the citizens of Fort Lauderdale so the community can have a public golf course.

Mr. Berry suggested leasing the property with an option to purchase, which would take it off the owner's taxes. Mr. Weiss pointed out, however, that the owner is still obligated for taxes on the property.

Chair Hartman noted while this is a topic that could be addressed at length as a future Agenda Item, the purpose of the present discussion was "getting it in front

of the Commission succinctly.” He emphasized the need for the Board to return to this topic in the future, as it remains an important item.

In a voice vote, the **motion** carried unanimously. It was agreed to make this a Communication to the City Commission as well.

Mr. Mabson asked if the course could provide revenue for the City. Mr. Quailey advised that golf is presently hurt by the economic downturn, although he added that the former golf pro at the course had claimed it “was a money-making venture for years.” Dr. Landers noted that the City had owned a golf course at one time, and had given it away. Ms. Bucher recalled the City course had been built on the runway of the airport.

Mr. Mabson returned to the issue of restroom maintenance, and asked if consideration had been given to substituting air blowers for paper towels, as paper tended to accumulate as trash. He suggested it might be more cost-effective as well. Assistant Director Rynard advised blowers are in place at some locations, although they are sometimes vandalized. She reiterated that public restroom maintenance can be a constant issue.

Vice Chair Fee asked to know the City’s role in the upcoming St. Patrick’s Day Parade. Assistant Director Rynard stated the parade will be held on March 13, 2010, and the City is co-sponsor of the event with the Downtown Development Authority. She is also Co-Chair of the parade, and advised she would send applications to the Board members in case they would like to participate or inform others. There is no charge to enter the parade.

With regard to the 2010 Super Bowl, the City has several activities planned for the beach and A1A areas, including a proposed free concert on the beach for the night before the Super Bowl. Other private events are planned throughout the City.

6. Adjournment

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.]