

**PARKS, RECREATION, & BEACHES ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
100 NORTH ANDREWS AVENUE
CITY HALL, 8TH FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2010 – 7:00 P.M.**

October 2009- September 2010

| Board Members | Attendance | Present | Absent |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Mark Hartman, Chair | P | 3 | 0 |
| Sean Fee, Vice Chair (7:01) | P | 3 | 0 |
| Curtiss Berry | P | 3 | 0 |
| Betty Shelley | P | 3 | 0 |
| John Verkey (7:03) | P | 3 | 0 |
| Matthew Weiss | P | 3 | 0 |
| Robert Payne (7:08) | P | 2 | 1 |
| Ed Angelbello | P | 2 | 1 |
| Larry Mabson | A | 2 | 1 |
| Mark McCormick | A | 1 | 2 |
| Jeffrey Cannon (7:08) | P | 2 | 1 |
| Marilyn Markus | P | 3 | 0 |
| Bruce Quailey | P | 3 | 0 |
| Cindy Bucher | P | 2 | 0 |
| Joe Bellavance | P | 3 | 0 |
| R.L. Landers | P | 3 | 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
Gerry Roberts, Park Ranger Supervisor
Brigitte Chiappetta, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communications to City Commission

None at this time.

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.

Vice Chair Fee joined the meeting at this time (7:01 p.m.).

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Quailey noted a correction on p. 9: American Golf Course should be "approximately 65 acres" instead of "65%." In addition, he noted that the parcel described as "roughly 210 acres" should be clarified as including the Coral Ridge Country Club.

Also on p. 9, paragraph 2, "Broward County Land Use Administration" should be amended to "...Land Use amendment." He added that the zoning referred to as "Parks and Recreation" may be "Parks, Recreation, and Open Space."

He also felt paragraph 3 should note that the cities of Pompano Beach, Plantation, and Hollywood all have both municipal and public golf courses, while Fort Lauderdale has none.

Mr. Verkey joined the meeting at this time (7:03 p.m.).

Ms. Bucher recalled that she had been introduced as a member of the original Board of Directors of Sunset, and headed their Safety Committee (p. 2).

She added that on p. 10, paragraph 3, "...built near the airport" should clarify that the golf course had been located where the runway currently exists.

Motion made by Mr. Berry, seconded by Vice Chair Fee, to approve the December 2, 2009 minutes as corrected. In a voice vote, the **motion** carried unanimously.

Chair Hartman asked if a Board member could clarify the exact location of the golf course discussed the previous month. Mr. Quailey stated that its closest cross streets are NE 38th St. and US-1, in the northeast quadrant.

Mr. Cannon and Mr. Payne joined the meeting at this time (7:08 p.m.).

1. Department Report – Assistant Director Rynard

Assistant Director Rynard asked members would like the Department to email the meeting Agendas to them rather than using regular mail. It was noted that two members did not have email and would continue to receive the document through the U.S. mail. Ms. Daley added that members could expect the email by the Wednesday prior to the meeting, and should contact the Department if it is not received by that time.

Assistant Director Rynard referred to the previous month's discussion of American Golf, stating that the City's Real Estate Office had looked into the

Board's recommendation that it be purchased. The property is not for sale. She agreed to check into whether it is available for lease; should a member learn this information first, she asked that they let her or Director Phil Thornburg know.

She continued that Satori Apartments, located across from Holiday Park, have created a zen garden in lieu of impact fees. The garden needs to be named in order for the owner to recover these fees. She asked that the Board members consider possible names for the garden, which is located on Satori's property but will have public access and park hours. It will be maintained by Satori Apartments.

Assistant Director Rynard reported that the St. Patrick's Day Parade and Festival will be from 2:00-3:30 p.m. on Las Olas Boulevard between SE 8th Avenue and SE 1st Avenue. She encouraged all members to participate. Chair Hartman added that the City's website provides a link to the Parade's website, which contains an exact schedule of events.

Ms. Shelley noted that the Citizens Volunteer Corps (CVC) is looking for volunteers to work the Festival, and reminded the Board members that they may earn NCIP points for their neighborhoods in this way.

2. Super Bowl XLIV and 2010 Pro Bowl – Assistant Director Rynard

Assistant Director Rynard informed the Board that an open Pro Bowl practice will be held on Saturday, January 30, at Lockhart Stadium. The Pro Bowl will be held on Sunday, January 31, at Sun Life Stadium.

There will be a free concert on the beach on Saturday, February 6, the night before the Super Bowl. The concert is free and sponsored by the NFL. Its headliners are Barenaked Ladies and O.A.R.

Mr. Weiss asked if the NFL will reimburse the City for cleanup costs associated with the concert. Assistant Director Rynard confirmed this.

She continued that the Super Bowl's Roman numerals are displayed on the beach at the Las Olas portal, and encouraged the members to see this. It is also paid for by the NFL.

Chair Hartman advised that the City's website also contains information about the Super Bowl and associated events.

The following Item was taken out of order on the Agenda.

4. J. C. Carter Park Baseball – David Deal

Assistant Director Rynard introduced David Deal, who was present to discuss baseball at Carter Park. Mr. Deal recalled that from the 1960s through the 1980s, J. C. Carter Park was known as Sunland Park, and baseball there included Little League teams through adult competition. It was considered a “feeder” program for players from local high schools. However, when the Park was closed for renovations for a period of time, many baseball enthusiasts seemed to go elsewhere.

Four years ago, Mr. Deal continued, a youth baseball program was launched at Carter Park. There are currently four baseball diamonds, each with audio capabilities. There is a concession area, as well as seating for spectators, and an on-site grounds crew keeps the field in good condition.

Mr. Deal explained that Carter Park relies heavily on volunteers to run this program, including lead volunteer Matt Walters, who was also present at the meeting.

Mr. Walters stated that when the Park was closed for five years, an entire generation of baseball players was lost. As a result of this, Dillard High School did not field a baseball team in 2006-07. The program has since re-emerged as a feeder program for both Dillard and Stranahan High Schools’ baseball teams.

He advised that the program helps educate both children and parents about baseball as a viable alternative to other team sports. They also teach players sportsmanship. The program receives a great deal of support not only from the Parks and Recreation Department but from the community as well, including businesses, churches, and schools.

Mr. Walters noted that Carter Park features both a fall and a spring baseball season, which means baseball is played year-round. They serve just over 100 children in the area, and have set a goal of 150 participants. Their largest event was in 2009, when the Park hosted the P. E. Thurston AAA Invitational Tournament. Their focus was on inner-city baseball programs. The Tournament lasted for four days and was well-attended; it is planned again for April 2010. He noted that Carter Park’s facilities are “unmatched,” and visiting teams from other locations are impressed by them and are happy to return and play again.

Mr. Walters concluded that baseball at Carter Park is a growing program that educates people on how the game should be played, and has reintroduced baseball to its community. He emphasized that baseball is a family sport, and hoped that it will continue to grow and thrive at Carter Park. The program has received a Charter with the Babe Ruth League, and they are always looking for more volunteers who would like to be involved.

Mr. Berry asked where the team gets its revenue for uniforms and other expenses. Mr. Walters explained there are sponsorships and grants available to offset the players' expenses, as many of the participants cannot afford the prices often associated with baseball. The maximum fee associated with Carter Park baseball is \$49.

Mr. Weiss recalled that some years ago, the Park had received grant funds from major league baseball to purchase equipment; he asked if they have applied for this grant again. Mr. Walters stated they have applied for this grant again since that time.

He added that due to the size of the program, teams are playing against teams from other parks, which creates an atmosphere of "something going on" in the park. Mr. Walters asserted that this is helpful in building a program.

Mr. Angelbello asked if there has been any interest in a girls' softball program at Carter Park. Mr. Walters stated there has been interest, but additional help and expertise is needed in establishing such a program.

The Board recognized Mr. Deal's and Mr. Walters' work with a round of applause.

3. Food Distribution and Homelessness in the Parks – Chair Hartman

Chair Hartman stated that this issue has been addressed by the City Commission, the Parks and Recreation Department, and the press, and felt the Board may be able to contribute some ideas to the discussion. He pointed out that Park rules prohibit Parks for being used for activities of this nature, and asked Assistant Director Rynard to clarify this policy for the Board.

Assistant Director Rynard explained that Park rules state there are "no social services in parks," and list specific examples of prohibited activities, such as feeding. She noted that this was challenged by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) some years ago; the City's Legal Department has been in negotiations regarding the policy since that time. It was determined that if the City does not designate a site for this purpose that meets all the necessary criteria, feeding cannot be prohibited in a park.

The City Commission and City Manager established a Homeless Task Force approximately one year ago, comprised of members of the business community, the Police Department, community development, and other stakeholders. This Task Force plans to provide an update at the City Commission's Conference Agenda meeting on February 16.

She advised that the Department receives “good cooperation” from most groups that distribute food in the parks. Ranger Supervisor Roberts works closely with them to ensure the Department knows when and where they will meet, that trash is picked up, and other concerns. The groups providing food in parks are primarily church and nonprofit organizations, and have been willing to relocate to different areas of the parks depending upon the parks’ activities.

Mr. Weiss asked what criteria are required for a designated feeding site. Assistant Director Rynard stated the site must have bathroom facilities, running water, and shelter, among other considerations.

Mr. Bellavance commented that he had asked an acquaintance affiliated with the Women’s Club if feeding is still going on in Stranahan Park. He was informed that trash is left behind, and other situations occur that have created difficulties for both the Women’s Club and the public.

Assistant Director Rynard explained that the Homeless Task Force has taken these issues into consideration; the City has a large homeless population, but does not have “good short-term [or] long-term options” such as affordable housing. She pointed out that the Task Force has many issues to address as well as feeding, although it seems to be the largest issue at this time.

Mr. Berry suggested using an old fire station equipped with restroom and shower facilities for food distribution.

Chair Hartman agreed that something of this nature would address the problems, as the City is something of a “destination” for homeless individuals due to the urban area and relatively mild weather. He added that the downtown area is “where people are going to congregate,” and noted that some of the City’s more suburban neighborhoods would prefer not to be places where social services would respond to the homeless issue.

Ms. Bucher asked why the City’s homeless shelter cannot provide a solution. Chair Hartman replied this is because the shelter tries to “address individuals’ real problems in depth,” such as housing and health issues; however, many people do not want to commit to a program, but just want something to eat. Vice Chair Fee agreed that many of the people being fed in Holiday or Stranahan Park do not want to stay in a shelter.

Mr. Weiss added that the reason many homeless people are congregating in Stranahan Park is because “that’s where the feeding is.” Food cannot be distributed in many alternate locations because “the homeless people are downtown.”

Chair Hartman stated that Commissioner Rodstrom's suggestion is the parking lot on the southeast corner of SE 2nd Avenue and SE 2nd Street, on the ground floor. He recalled that another individual had recommended a model used in Seattle, in which various locations in the city serve as feeding sites in a round-robin fashion. This prevents a single permanent location from being identified with a feeding program.

He thanked the Board for their input from various neighborhoods and individuals, and advised that there is no easy solution to this issue and "it is not going away."

Motion made by Mr. Berry, seconded by Mr. Bellavance, to ask the City Commission on a six-month trial basis to use the fire truck bays at the old fire station across the street for homeless feedings.

Assistant Director Rynard advised she was not aware of details about the recommended building.

Mr. Cannon asked why the Board is seeking a solution to this problem. Chair Hartman explained that there are both appropriate and inappropriate times to use the City's parks as feeding sites, due to public safety and other issues; however, he also stated he saw the use of public land as an opportunity to be of assistance. He felt the use of Stranahan Park downtown is "a disaster," and asked the Board to take up the question because it directly affects the parks.

Mr. Quailey clarified that the fire station under discussion is located "on Andrews and 3rd."

In a voice vote, the **motion** carried 13-1 (Mr. Weiss dissenting).

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

Chair Hartman distributed news articles about the City's upcoming Centennial in 2011, and encouraged members to become involved with the Centennial Celebration Committee if they are interested.

Ms. Markus stated that the City should not "give up" on American Golf Course, pointing out that although it is not for sale, the property was recently turned down for development.

Chair Hartman recalled that although it was stated the property is not for sale, there is still the question of whether or not it may be leased. If it is available for lease, the issue could be placed on an upcoming Agenda.

Mr. Quailey emphasized that while the property is not currently for sale, this could easily change in the future. He felt it would be “for sale at some point” if the owners cannot develop the property, and the City should act to purchase it or “it’s going to be gone.” He concluded that the course is “the biggest open space available” in the City, and that the Board should do whatever they can to save the property for use by the City.

Chair Hartman agreed with this description, but pointed out that in some cases, a seller may not wish to proceed with a transaction. He felt, however, that Mr. Quailey’s point was well taken regarding the possibility of the property coming up for sale in the future.

Mr. Angelbello noted that the property’s owner had been denied the right to develop it, and asked where that owner might go to redress the issue. He felt the Board might want to make another advisory body aware of their interest in the property. It was noted that Planning and Zoning had denied development, and the owner would have to “go back through that process” as well as before the City Commission.

Chair Hartman observed that when an “entirely parks-related” issue arises, the City Commission typically asks the Board to take up the issue before they make a final decision. He felt confident that the City Commission would send an issue such as this one to the Board before taking action.

Ms. Markus added that it is also important for a neighborhood to agree with potential development. The neighborhood in which the golf course is located was opposed to plans for development.

Chair Hartman stated that he would like to thank City Staff for their hard work toward the Winterfest Boat Parade.

He invited additional comments from the Board at this time.

Mr. Payne observed he was “a little upset” that planned renovations on the gym, restrooms, and social center at Carter Park were halted when a contractor’s work stopped. He had been informed it would take an additional “six months to a year” for the project to be completed, and was frustrated that this continues to happen in that District.

Assistant Director Rynard explained that the contractor was not paying his subcontractors; due to a payment bond requirement, the contractor must be replaced when this occurs. The bonding agent has been informed that a new contractor is needed, although she cautioned that this is “not a fast process.” Public Services has been asked to look at where renovations stand on the gym to determine if they might be able to complete the work.

Mr. Payne asked if the gym will be closed down as a hazard. Assistant Director Rynard replied there would be no reason to do this, as the social center's bathrooms can be used.

Vice Chair Fee requested information on the lights at George English Park. Assistant Director Rynard answered that these have been delayed due to an FPL issue: a different transformer is required for the lights. No definite date has been set for this improvement.

Regarding the status of the Bermuda turf at Croissant Park, Assistant Director Rynard stated a staff meeting at this location has been called for the following week to decide what the Department would like to recommend. She added that renovations on Oswald Park are 50-60% complete, resulting in "a very nice multipurpose field."

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

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