

**PARKS, RECREATION, & BEACHES BOARD MINUTES  
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE  
100 NORTH ANDREWS AVENUE  
CITY HALL, 8<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM  
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 24, 2011 – 6:30 P.M.**

**Cumulative Attendance**

<b>Board Members</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Oct 2010- Sept 2011</b>	
		<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Matthew Weiss, Chair	P	9	0
Sean Fee, Vice Chair	P	7	2
Joseph Bellavance	P	9	0
Curtiss Berry	P	8	1
Cindy Bucher	P	8	1
Tommy Knapp	P	6	3
R. L. Landers	A	6	3
Larry Mabson (6:33)	P	8	1
Robert Payne (6:48)	P	8	1
Bruce Quailey	P	9	0
Betty Shelley	P	6	3
Richard Zaden	A	5	3

Currently there are 12 appointed members to the Board, which means 7 would constitute a quorum.

**Staff**

Stacey Daley, Administrative Assistant  
Phil Thornburg, Director, Parks and Recreation Department  
Lee Feldman, City Manager  
Susanne Torriente, Assistant City Manager  
Brigitte Chiappetta, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

**Communications to City Commission**

None.

**Roll Call**

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

Mr. Mabson arrived at 6:33 p.m.

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

## **2. Introduction of New City Manager**

Director Thornburg introduced City Manager Lee Feldman and Assistant City Manager Susanne Torriente to the Board. Mr. Feldman asserted that parks are an integral part of the City and contribute greatly to the quality of life in Fort Lauderdale's communities. New reorganization will increase the responsibility of the Parks and Recreation Department, as they will assume control of the War Memorial Auditorium, the Aquatics Complex, cemeteries, beach concessions, marine facilities, and other areas new to the Department.

Mr. Feldman continued that the accreditation site visit for the Parks and Recreation Department has been completed. The visit addressed 144 categories; the Department performed well in 142 of these categories. He emphasized that the Board's role is critical to the success of the Department, and thanked the members for contributing their time.

### **Approval of Minutes**

**Motion** made by Ms. Shelley, seconded by Vice Chair Fee, to approve the minutes of the June 22, 2011 meeting. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

## **1. Department Report – Director Thornburg**

Director Thornburg distributed a handout showing the new additions for which Parks and Recreation will be responsible. The Department will be taking responsibility for several new areas, including those described by Mr. Feldman.

He noted that City Facilities, which was previously the responsibility of Public Works, includes the maintenance of all City buildings. Beach concessions include cabanas, chairs, and non-motorized watercraft. Real estate includes overseeing City leases, buying and selling properties, and maintaining City-owned properties. Director Thornburg advised that the City's stadiums and the Aquatics Complex are both expected to change substantially in the future. Cemeteries and marine facilities each retain their own advisory boards.

Vice Chair Fee asked if there were job losses associated with the consolidation of Departments. Director Thornburg replied that there have been no job losses at this point, although some salary issues may be addressed over time. He added that many of the responsibilities assumed by Parks and Recreation were formerly part of the Business Enterprises Department. The overall reorganization has reduced the number of City Departments from 15 to 9. He expressed confidence in the changes made.

Mr. Knapp asked to know the reason behind the City's reorganization. Director Thornburg explained that it reflects the new City Manager's overall style of management. Mr. Feldman places an emphasis on building teams, particularly "cross-sectional" teams that will involve individuals from various Departments and will bring a wider perspective to issues formerly given to specific Departments.

Mr. Payne arrived at 6:48 p.m.

Director Thornburg concluded that the changes in responsibility will be phased in from the present until the beginning of 2012.

Chair Weiss requested more information on the reorganization of other Departments. Director Thornburg said these changes include moving Purchasing to the Finance Department, Office of Professional Standards to the Human Resources Department, and Economic Development to Planning and Zoning.

Director Thornburg advised that the idea of placing concrete ping-pong tables on the beach was presented to the City Commission at their August 23 meeting. The intent would be to make the beach more family-friendly and create an active recreation area at Fort Lauderdale Beach Park. The cost would be approximately \$5000. It was determined that this would be discussed further at the next Board meeting.

He addressed the recent accreditation process, explaining that they will formally learn whether or not the Department receives accreditation at the upcoming National Conference in Atlanta. Only 100 cities and counties nationwide are currently accredited. Accreditation can be helpful when the Department applies for grants; it must be renewed every five years.

### **3. Update of City Code of Ordinance**

- **Article II – Parks, Recreation, and Beaches Board**

Director Thornburg explained that he has reviewed City Ordinances that affect Parks and Recreation; he has also reviewed park rules. He pointed out that neither the Board nor the City Commission may be involved in employment issues or in decisions regarding rates or public user fees. These are the only items he would recommend be removed from Article II. Director Thornburg asked the members to let him know if they have any concerns related to the Board's responsibility.

### **4. Update of Park Rules and Regulations**

Director Thornburg noted there are not many changes. He advised that the yardages included in beach regulations have been amended after discussions with the beach patrol: the 150 marker will now be used for SCUBA diving, spear guns, and non-motorized watercraft.

Another change was 6.4.a, addressing ground fires: the phrase “unless authorized by the Department Director” was added to a prohibition of these fires. Director Thornburg explained that some groups camp out in Snyder Park, and fires are allowed if they are strictly monitored.

Chair Weiss asked if 7.1.b, which prohibits individuals in long pants and shoes from entering the water, is a common problem. Director Thornburg advised that this is sometimes a safety issue, and is prohibited because clothing and shoes make it more difficult for an individual to get out of the water.

Mr. Knapp requested clarification of the age at which an individual is considered a child and must be accompanied by an adult. Director Thornburg said this regulation addresses groups that bring children to the park and leave them unattended. He said he would look into the age in question. While this is not a common issue in City parks, it has been necessary to address it in the regulations.

He encouraged the members to send him any further questions, and concluded that he would present these changes, along with the Ordinance changes, to the City Commission in the coming months.

## **5. Dr. Elizabeth Hays Civic Park**

Chair Weiss explained that this Item had been deferred from the June 2011 meeting so Board members would have the opportunity to read the backup material on the Item. He asked to know what the discussion was intended to accomplish. Ms. Bucher said members of the community in which the park is located had asked to have the original name of Civic People’s Park reinstated, and added that she did not feel the guidelines for naming a park were applied properly when the renaming occurred.

Chair Weiss opened the discussion to the members.

Mr. Mabson commented that he understood the Board’s purpose to be determining whether or not the park renaming followed proper procedure. Once this determination was made, the Board would try to make recommendations to the City Commission regarding what would be appropriate in future situations. He had also previously stated that if the Board had acted improperly, he felt it was incumbent upon them to change the name back to the original, and then pursue another alternative to honor Dr. Hays.

Director Thornburg offered his perspective on the issue. He recalled that following the discussions about the naming of the park, Commissioner Moore had felt he did not have consensus, as some animosity had seemed to exist between groups of individuals who wanted the park to have a different name. He had selected a more generic name in an effort to resolve the issue. The City Commission had approved the name that Commissioner Moore had recommended.

He continued that the renaming of the park in honor of Dr. Hays had been a similar issue, as former Commissioner Cindy Hutchinson had raised this possibility at a City Commission meeting. It was then brought to the Board, which discussed the renaming; when it was presented to the City Commission, they approved the name change. Director Thornburg concluded that the process passed legal scrutiny and nothing out of the ordinary had occurred.

Mr. Bellavance said he felt parks should be named on the initiative of their surrounding neighborhoods. He recalled from the previous information that the neighborhood had voted in favor of naming the park Bucher Park on two separate ballots. He felt the votes showed a clear consensus in favor of that name.

Chair Weiss stated that had the Board been aware that there was controversy involved in the original naming of the park, they would not have taken up the issue of renaming. He felt if they took any action at this point, they should advise the Commission against any future name changes to parks.

Dennis Ulmer, guest, said in order to rename a park, there is supposed to be a public meeting to discuss the matter. He suggested that future action could ensure that this process if followed, perhaps by asking that the minutes of that public meeting be submitted to show that it was held.

Director Thornburg pointed out that the public meetings have “almost morphed...into the Advisory Board,” as there has been difficulty in determining who comprises the public when it comes to naming a park. Even though a park may be in a particular neighborhood, a different neighborhood may be located adjacent to the park. There is a challenge in finding out the best way to get public input. Mr. Berry suggested that public notice could be posted when these discussions are going to be held.

Ms. Bucher recalled that members of the Sunset community had attended the District 3 meeting to present the idea of the park to their Commissioner. The park is located inside the Sunset community. She said the original park name had turned out to be “the perfect name.” She advised that the guidelines for naming parks were followed when the original name was selected, and her concern

regarding the name change centered on the fact that the change was proposed one month and voted upon the next, so members of the public were not aware of the change until it had already occurred.

She noted that the name change had been proposed by a Commissioner who was not from District 3, and added that bringing the issue of a name change directly to the City Commission should also be reconsidered. Ms. Bucher concluded that she did not feel the guidelines were followed when the name change occurred.

Mr. Mabson reported that he had discussed the issue with former Commissioner Moore following the June meeting, and described the problem before the Board. He explained that he had received the impression there were problems with the original consensus on the park name, and Commissioner Moore had selected the name of the park himself in an attempt to remedy the situation. He added that Commissioner Moore had not taken issue with the community's naming of the park, but had stepped in because there had been disagreement.

Mr. Mabson continued that he assumed the original process was done properly, as it was done by a City Commissioner; when the new name went before the City Commission for approval, it was not likely that they had a strong preference for either name. If this was the case, he felt the Board might consider rescinding the new name, restoring the original name, and finding an alternate means to honor Dr. Hays.

Mr. Qualey noted that while he had not been a Board member when the original name was chosen, he felt the community consensus in favor of Bucher Park was dramatic, as that name received over 500 points while the second most popular option had only 62 points. He asserted that this was "a landslide," and noted that a second vote was also heavily in favor of that name. Director Thornburg stated, however, that despite the appearance of consensus, the naming of the park had been strongly divisive in the community, which was why the Commissioner had made his recommendation.

Vice Chair Fee agreed with Mr. Mabson that the issue is the renaming of the park rather than its original naming, as well as ensuring this problem does not recur in the future. He was not certain, however, that changing the name back to Civic People's Park was the appropriate course of action.

Mr. Mabson said it appeared that the renaming of the park had led to unhappiness in the park's surrounding community; for this reason, he felt the Board should restore the original name.

Director Thornburg stated that in the future, the Board will need to ensure that they follow the naming guidelines closely. He noted that in the matter of the

renaming, they acted appropriately: the Commission asked that the proposal be brought before the Board, which would then weigh in and return their recommendation to the Commission. He agreed that it was possible they should have reached out to the community regarding the issue, but reiterated that they followed the process as asked.

Mr. Bellavance asked if the Board had requested information on the original naming of the park when the prospect of renaming was brought to them. The members from that time asserted that they had not seen the information.

Mr. Ulmer said he was a member of the Council for Fort Lauderdale Civic Organizations, which was one group requesting the name change. He recalled that he had attended the meeting to speak against the change; however, because a member of the Sunset community was in attendance and spoke in favor of the name change, he had not expressed an objection. He explained that he was a District 3 resident and had been aware of the original controversy over naming the park. He asserted that if there were objections, they should have been presented at that time rather than two years later, and felt it would be “an embarrassment” to change the name of the park back at this point.

Mr. Quailey asked if Dr. Hays had lived in the neighborhood where the park is located. It was clarified that Dr. Hays had lived in a nearby neighborhood rather than in Sunset.

**Motion** made by Mr. Mabson, seconded by Mr. Berry, that if the Board comes to the consensus that the process that they did in naming or renaming the park from Civic People’s Park to Dr. Hays, if it was done properly, that they go ahead and move forward.

Mr. Berry said he felt the issue should be left as is out of respect for the City Commission’s actions.

Chair Weiss apologized to Ms. Bucher for the situation, stating that he did not feel the way things had turned out was right at the time of both the naming and the renaming. However, since action has been taken to honor Dr. Hays, he did not wish to rescind what the City Commission had done. He agreed that the Board should address the issue of guidelines with the City Commission to ensure that this does not recur, and concluded that had the Board been provided with information on the park’s original naming, they would not have recommended the renaming.

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

Director Thornburg said he would take full responsibility for the Board not receiving full information at the time of renaming, and will work with Staff to develop further guidelines for naming parks, which will be brought to the Board.

Mr. Bellavance asked how the Board should ensure Mr. Bucher is honored in the park. Director Thornburg noted that there is a pavilion in the park that could be named after Mr. Bucher.

**Motion** made by Mr. Mabson, seconded by Ms. Qualey, that the Board pursue looking into honoring Mr. Bucher in a manner appropriate to the City of Fort Lauderdale.

Mr. Bellavance pointed out that there is a plaque in Mr. Bucher's honor in the park. Ms. Bucher said she was comfortable with this recognition.

Mr. Mabson withdrew his **motion**.

## **6. Park Ambassadors**

Mr. Bellavance advised that a damaged anchor on the Riverwalk has been repaired by the City.

Mr. Berry asked why Harbordale Park had been "ripped up." Director Thornburg explained that a pavilion and ornamental gates are being added to the park.

## **7. Board Comments**

Mr. Payne asked if City rules have been changed with regard to dogs in parks. He advised that animal waste is becoming an issue in a nearby park. Director Thornburg noted that regulating dogs can be a challenge in parks, and rangers are supposed to enforce rules regarding waste. He agreed that this was a problem, and said he would address it with the rangers.

Mr. Mabson noted that there are no signs regarding dogs waste in parks in his District. Director Thornburg explained that the City cannot put up signs prohibiting dogs in parks; they must instead use "Service Animals Only" signs due to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). He also noted that park Staff is not allowed to ask an individual if his or her dog is a service animal, and paperwork is not required to prove that a dog is a service animal. This has led to abuse of the system by some individuals.

Vice Chair Fee commented that there should be repercussions when dogs are not leashed, or if individuals do not clean up after their dogs. Mr. Payne observed that it would create issues for the City if a dog bites a person in a park. Director Thornburg asserted that there is a great deal of legal information regarding what

can and cannot be done regarding dogs; while he is an animal lover, he is also a believer in “no dogs in parks.”

The Board members discussed some of the issues related to dogs in parks, including what agencies may issue service animals and how service animals might be tagged for identification. Director Thornburg reiterated that the Health Information and Patient Privacy Act (HIPPA) and other restrictions prevent the City from asking if a dog is a service animal, as individuals may not be asked to prove their disability.

Mr. Bellavance asked how much authority is given to Park Rangers. Director Thornburg said a Ranger is authorized to ask an individual to clean up after his dog. In addition, a police officer can ticket an individual who does not clean up behind his dog. He explained that the most common action taken by Park Rangers is asking an individual to stop a particular action or leave the park; if the person does not leave, the Ranger can call the police and have that person arrested for trespassing.

Mr. Mabson said he would like to see greater parking enforcement, noting that at Carter Park, some vehicles block the flow of traffic and/or park illegally. He felt the Rangers should be empowered to ask these individuals to park properly or leave the area. Mr. Payne said the Rangers are trying to take steps to enforce these regulations.

## **8. Communications to the Commission**

None.

## **9. Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

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