

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

Cumulative Attendance

Board Members	Attendance	Oct 2011- Sept 2012	
		Present	Absent
Matthew Weiss, Chair	P	1	1
Sean Fee, Vice Chair	P	1	1
Joseph Bellavance	P	2	0
Curtiss Berry	P	2	0
Cindy Bucher	A	0	2
Brad Hubert	P	2	0
Tommy Knapp	P	2	0
R. L. Landers	A	1	1
Larry Mabson	P	2	0
JoAnn Medalie	P	2	0
Robert Payne	A	0	2
Bruce Quailey	P	2	0
Betty Shelley	P	1	1
Angela Ward	P	1	1
Richard Zaden	P	2	0

Currently there are 15 appointed members to the Board, which means 8 would constitute a quorum.

Staff

Stacey Daley, Administrative Assistant
Phil Thornburg, Director, Parks and Recreation
Gerry Roberts, Park Ranger Supervisor
Frank Snedaker, Chief City Architect
Brigitte Chiappetta, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communications to the 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. It was noted that a quorum was present.

Mr. Knapp arrived at 6:32 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Director Thornburg noted the following corrections:

- P.2, final paragraph: change Guthrie Park to Guthrie-Blake Park;
- P.3, paragraph 6: change “master plan for this park” to “master plan for Southside School;”
- P.6, paragraph 6: “back to the park” should be “back to the Board.”

Mr. Zaden and Mr. Qualey noted corrections to the attendance.

Motion made by Mr. Berry, seconded by Mr. Bellavance, to accept the minutes of the November 30, 2011 meeting as corrected. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

1. Department Report

Director Thornburg reported that the Bill Keith Preserve was recently dedicated. It is located on the river in the Shady Banks area of the City.

Light Up Riverwalk was held last week. This year’s display features fewer lights than in previous years.

Director Thornburg advised that the former River House restaurant in the Riverwalk area presents a challenge. The building, which has historic significance, has begun to show signs of neglect. An RFP has gone out for the building, and one bidder has responded thus far and is in discussions with Economic Development.

2. Elect Chairman and Vice-Chairman

Motion made by Mr. Berry, seconded by Ms. Medalie, to nominate Matthew Weiss for Chairman. In a voice vote, Chair Weiss was unanimously re-elected.

Motion made by Mr. Berry, seconded by Mr. Mabson, to nominate Sean Fee for Vice Chair. In a voice vote, Vice Chair Fee was unanimously re-elected.

3. Proposed Naming of Tunnel Top Park *Stranahan Landing*

Director Thornburg stated that members of the neighborhood in which Tunnel Top Park is located have proposed that it be named Stranahan Landing. He observed that notice of the proposed naming has been posted in the park. The Board’s vote will be presented to the City Commission.

Dr. Warren Sturman, president of the Rio Vista Civic Association, advised that the neighborhood has spent nearly a decade helping to develop the park, which is located directly across the river from the Stranahan House on the edge of the Riverwalk. The Rio Vista Civic Association has unanimously endorsed the naming of the park.

Gunnar Sturman, neighborhood resident, explained that Frank Stranahan was one of the first business owners in Fort Lauderdale and owned property on the north side of the river. The Rio Vista Civic Association has agreed that it would be a good idea to change the park's name to one of historic significance, especially due to the proximity of the Stranahan House. There have been discussions of having a ferry present at the park for large events.

Dr. Sturman added that the proposed name is also supported by the Downtown Development Authority and surrounding neighborhood associations.

Mr. Zaden asked if any other individuals have proposed alternate names for the park. Dr. Sturman said there had been discussion of naming the property Centennial Park, as it was to be opened during the Centennial year. He was not aware of any other suggested names.

Melinda Bowker, resident of New River Landing, said she had seen a sign posted regarding the naming of the park. She stated she liked the suggestion of Stranahan Landing, and had also considered recommending the name of Seminole Riverwalk Plaza to recognize the historic significance of the Seminole Tribe.

Mr. Mabson explained that there have previously been issues regarding the naming of parks, and asked if it would be unreasonable to request documentation from the individuals and associations who support the proposed name. Differences of opinion between groups of neighborhood residents have, in the past, created a difficult situation for the Board. Dr. Sturman said the issue had come before the Civic Association's Board and would appear in their newsletter within one to two weeks, as well as at an upcoming general meeting. He was not aware of any competing names, aside from Centennial Park. He advised that both the Civic Association's website and an email blast had been used to notify neighborhood residents.

Mr. Quailey asked if the Stranahan name appeared elsewhere in the City, aside from the Stranahan House and Stranahan High School. Director Thornburg said there is an existing Stranahan Park.

Motion made by Mr. Berry, seconded by Ms. Medalie, to accept the name Stranahan Landing.

Mr. Knapp asked when and how the park was originally named. Director Thornburg replied that the park has never had a name, but had been unofficially called Tunnel Top Park.

Mr. Bellavance recommended that the name be presented at the upcoming Rio Vista Civic Association annual party, or at their next general meeting, in order to make sure the entire membership approved of the prospective name. Ms. Ward said she did not believe this was necessary, as notice has been posted of tonight's meeting and representatives of the community were present. Chair Weiss explained that an issue had previously arisen because only a very few people in a community had made the decision to change a park's name. Ms. Medalie pointed out that the park does not currently have an official name.

April Kirk, Executive Director of the Stranahan House Museum, said she and the Board, staff, and volunteers at the Stranahan House were very supportive of the proposed name. She noted that the Seminole Tribe had not been on the park's side of the river, but on the same side as the Stranahan House and surrounding properties.

Mr. Bellavance said he would feel more comfortable if the name was brought before the general membership of the Civic Association. Director Thornburg suggested that any motion by the Board in favor of the name could be contingent upon the name being presented to the membership.

At this time Chair Weiss opened the public hearing.

Cari McCormack, resident of Rio Vista, stated while she was in favor of the proposed name, she and other neighbors had not been aware of its proposal prior to seeing posted notice of tonight's meeting. She noted that the sign had been very small and easy to overlook. She advised that she is not a member of the Rio Vista Civic Association.

Clay Wieland, resident of Rio Vista, said he had helped work on the park and was in favor of the name, but agreed that the public notice signs were very small and he had nearly missed seeing them.

Bob Redington, resident of Rio Vista, said he was also in favor of the name. He asked that the Board consider placing a plaque in the park in honor of neighborhood resident Sam Poole, who had been instrumental in its development.

Ms. Bowker asked that if the name was not recommended by the Board at tonight's meeting, she would like to inform her own neighborhood association of the potential names so they could discuss it as well.

As there were no other members of the public who wished to speak on the item, Chair Weiss closed the public hearing. He asked for further discussion of Mr. Berry's **motion** at this time.

Mr. Mabson said although he liked the proposed name, due to the information presented to the Board, he would advise voting against the name at this time due to the need for further procedure. Ms. Ward said she felt the appropriate procedures had been followed.

In a roll call vote, the **motion** failed 3-9 (Chair Weiss, Vice Chair Fee, Mr. Hubert, Mr. Knapp, Mr. Mabson, Ms. Medalie, Mr. Qualey, Ms. Shelley, and Mr. Zaden dissenting).

Motion made by Mr. Zaden to approve the name Stranahan Landing [and] recommend to the City Commission that they name this park Stranahan Landing after consensus of the Civic Association body's vote on this matter.

Mr. Qualey asked how long ago the park had been completed. Director Thornburg estimated it had been three to four months since completion. He explained that bringing the issue before the City Commission prior to January 2012 would allow time to publicize a dedication ceremony to officially open the park. Mr. Qualey noted that his concern was primarily with the potential for confusion between Stranahan Landing and Stranahan Park.

Director Thornburg explained that if the Board acted on Mr. Zaden's **motion**, he would include the consensus of the Civic Association's general membership, as well as any other issues, with the Board's recommendation to the City Commission.

Chair Weiss stated that he did not like the fact that the public notice signs were too small. It was determined that the new notice signs would instruct the public to contact Director Thornburg if they had any questions or comments on the issue, as well as the date of the City Commission meeting at which the proposed name would be presented.

Chair Weiss reiterated that he felt there was a flaw in the process if the public notice signs were not sufficiently large to be easily seen. Director Thornburg advised that the best way to disseminate information was to ask the Civic Association to get the word out; he did not know how to notify individuals who were not active in their neighborhood associations other than by posting the public notice signs.

Chair Weiss stated the process appeared to be in doubt, as the Board was not sure the meeting had been sufficiently noticed to the public; he also pointed out

that it could not be said everyone who was present from the public at tonight's meeting was in agreement on the proposed name. Ms. Ward said she was comfortable that the appropriate process had been followed, and the issue before the Board was the name itself rather than the process.

Mr. Mabson said the Board had challenged the previous procedure due to the previous issue that had arisen regarding the naming of a park. He said he had understood the Board was to discuss this issue and modify the process in order to minimize the potential for any future problems. He concluded that he did not feel they could vote on the proposed name when the process itself had been questioned once again.

Vice Chair Fee asked if the Downtown Fort Lauderdale Civic Association had been notified of the proposed name. Ms. Bowker said she was not aware if they had been notified.

Mr. Zaden asked when the proposed name would come before the City Commission. Director Thornburg said it would go before the Commission at their first meeting in January 2012. He stated that larger signs would be posted to give notice of that meeting.

Ms. Bowker clarified that she was a member of the Downtown Fort Lauderdale Civic Association, and had seen the notice while walking through the park. She advised that she felt other members of that Civic Association might be interested in weighing in on the proposed name, but pointed out that she had not discussed the issue with them.

Director Thornburg said he had been informed that the surrounding neighborhood associations had been notified as well as the Rio Vista Civic Association, and said he would look further into this for future reference.

Ms. Ward offered the following **amendment** to Mr. Zaden's **motion**: that by the time the Stranahan Landing name is presented to the Commission, that it will also be presented with the consensus or comments from the surrounding civic associations that show support for the name. Mr. Zaden accepted the **amendment**.

Mr. Mabson **seconded** the **motion**. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 11-1 (Vice Chair Fee dissenting).

Chair Weiss thanked the members of the public for their attendance.

4. Update on Southside School

Frank Snedaker, Chief City Architect, reported that the City Commission had entered into a tentative agreement with Nova Southeastern University (NSU) to operate this facility once it has been completed. Since that time, NSU has asked the City to make modifications to the building so it would better suit the University's programming. The project's contractor has estimated the cost of the modifications would be between \$400,000 and \$600,000. This is still being negotiated in hopes of getting a lower price.

Mr. Snedaker advised that the City Commission has chosen to dismiss the project's architect of record, although this issue has not yet been resolved. He explained that this has delayed much of the work on the project. In addition, NSU has since leased another facility in the meantime.

Chair Weiss asked if a mold problem exists on the property. Mr. Snedaker confirmed this. He explained that the building had been in disrepair for some time when the property was acquired, which contributed to the mold. This problem cannot be addressed until a new air conditioning system has been installed. The building also requires new exterior doors, windows, and a new roof.

Mr. Quailey asked if the City had leased the property to NSU. Mr. Snedaker said there was not a lease, but there had been an operating agreement that was never executed. The project is presently considered to be in limbo, and NSU has leased another facility in the meantime. It is believed that they may agree to use this facility once all issues have been resolved to their satisfaction.

Mr. Hubert asked how much would be spent on the property before it was determined whether or not there would be a tenant for it. Mr. Snedaker said the original plan had not been to have a tenant, but for Parks and Recreation to operate the facility with their own programs as well as outside programming. He pointed out that if NSU does not decide to use the facility, it was likely that Parks and Recreation would operate it according to the original intent.

Ms. Ward asked if the changes requested by NSU would have been made anyway. Mr. Snedaker advised that some of the changes were specific to programs at NSU, although these would not make the facility unusable. If they do not use the facility, these changes may not be made.

Motion made by Mr. Hubert, seconded by Mr. Mabson, that the Board receive a report from Staff every meeting on the status and the update of the remodeling going on at the Southside School, including any prospects for a tenant to lease the building and any status of that negotiation.

Chair Weiss observed that the Board should not micromanage the day-to-day operations of the Parks and Recreation Department.

Mr. Zaden asked if the City Manager was engaged in the process regarding the Southside School. Director Thornburg explained that while the building would be operated by Parks and Recreation, the issue with the facility belongs to Public Works and Engineering. He noted that the City Commission is also concerned about the project and has asked that its expenses be audited by the City Auditor.

Ms. Ward asked if a regular update on the project could be provided to the Board. Director Thornburg said the Board's charge is to advise the City Commission on policy issues; however, he could provide an update on the Southside School project as part of the monthly Director's Report.

In a roll call vote, the **motion** failed 5-7 (Chair Weiss, Vice Chair Fee, Mr. Bellavance, Mr. Knapp, Ms. Medalie, Ms. Shelley, and Ms. Ward dissenting).

5. Park Ambassadors

Mr. Bellavance said the parks he visited were in good shape.

Vice Chair Fee said the outside walls have been taken down from the hockey rinks at Holiday Park, and the facility looks much cleaner. Chair Weiss noted that the tables near the soccer field concession stands are black, and could be pressure cleaned.

Mr. Bellavance asked for an update on Hardy Park. Director Thornburg said a new multi-purpose field is being built at that facility and is expected to be complete in mid-January. He clarified that some of the other improvements to Hardy Park are part of the same project as Southside School.

Director Thornburg added that Fort Lauderdale Beach Park looks very good, and the final overlay and striping of the parking lot is expected to be complete soon.

Mr. Berry asked if work on Harbordale Park is complete. Director Thornburg replied that work on this park is ongoing every day.

Chair Weiss asked if the flooding in October had caused any damage to City parks. Director Thornburg said there was some water in the Croissant Park community center, but no long-term damage had occurred.

He concluded that a community building at Hottt Park is under construction and should be complete in spring 2012.

6. Board Comments

Mr. Mabson advised that he would like to see the City invest in a larger facility, such as a gymnasium, that would hold roughly 2000-3000 individuals. He pointed

out that there is currently no such City facility, and events that could be held in a building of this size instead go to Miami or the Broward Convention Center. He suggested a multi-purpose structure of this size could accommodate different sports.

Mr. Zaden asked if the prospective Grand Prix would come before the Board. Director Thornburg said it would come before the Board; its promoters are currently addressing advisory bodies located in the beach area. It is expected that the event would be held in 2013 if it could be determined that there would be no impact on the Boat Show.

Mr. Quailey requested an update on the proposed Air Show. Director Thornburg said this event's promoters have entered into an agreement with the City and are seeking sponsorships and performers.

Mr. Knapp asked if any additional research had been done on the possibility of ping-pong tables or soccer on the beach. Director Thornburg said Staff is in the process of putting together a master plan for the Fort Lauderdale Beach Park area. This would probably be presented to the Board at the January 2012 meeting.

7. Communications to the City Commission

None.

8. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

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