

City of Clearwater

*Main Library - Council Chambers
100 N. Osceola Avenue
Clearwater, FL 33755*



Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 23, 2024

6:30 PM

Main Library - Council Chambers

Parks and Recreation Board

Roll Call

Present 4 - Chair Patrick Raftery, Vice Chair Jason Hood, Board Member Martin Armstrong, and Board Member Angelica Lonesome

Absent 3 - Board Member Kelly S. Kelly, Board Member Mark Rodriguez, and Board Member Angela Tisdale

1. Call to Order – Chair Raftery

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes

2.1 Approve the Minutes of the January 23, 2024, Parks and Recreation Board Meeting

Board Member Armstrong said he was not present at the last meeting. He requested that the minutes be amended to reflect his absence under the Roll Call.

There was consensus to correct the Roll Call as requested.

Board Member Armstrong moved to approve the minutes of the January 23, 2024 Parks and Recreation Board meeting as amended. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

3. Citizens to be Heard Regarding Items Not on the Agenda

Jason Mastropietro encouraged all to attend the Friends of Moccasin Lake Nature Park's Earth Day event this coming Saturday and the Birds of Prey program in May. He said the Friends of Moccasin Lake toured the property abutting the Edenwood Street gate entrance; the property has been cleaned up and looks fantastic.

4. New Business Items

4.1 Discuss the Nuisance Species Survey of Clearwater Parks.

Board Member Armstrong said he has conducted nuisance control in the area since 1986. It is important that the City identify the problems throughout the 109 park lands in order to establish and implement a plan to address the invasive plants problem. He said if the

nuisance species are not taken care of, the species will take over.

Parks and Recreation Director Art Kader said, as it was reported during the last board meeting, staff addresses the weeds of noxious plants during winter. When the Department purchases or develops a property, staff takes the opportunity to clean out the invasive species. He said staff has provided the board members with a list of pesticides used for pest management and where the chemicals are used. The Pest Management and Pesticides Transparency page on the City's website includes the list and other helpful resources.

In response to questions, Mr. Kader said staff handles the landscaped areas in city park lands. Staff does not address the water bodies.

Discussion ensued with a concern expressed regarding the wasps and poisonous caterpillars in the playground area at Forest Run Park.

One individual questioned the amount of city park acreage affected by invasive species.

4.2 Discuss Power-Line Tree Trimming

Board Member Armstrong expressed concerns with how some of the utility companies are destroying trees. He said some are removing the crowns to make room for the powerlines, which makes the tree weaker. He said he would rather see the tree removed and replaced in a different location where there are no trees.

Chair Raftery said Duke's tree removal process has been raised at recent council meetings. He said he contacted Duke Energy and suggested a public forum be scheduled to seek public feedback in order to reach a compromise. Duke has promised to advise him or the City on their decision regarding a public forum.

One individual opposed Duke Energy's tree removal process.

4.3 Update on Activity of the Friends of Coachman Park Organization

Mr. Kader said the group has held three well-attended meetings thus far. The Friends of Coachman Park have been focusing on the park programming. He said staff has been sharing information regarding event

planning. The next meeting will be held on April 24, 2024.

One individual asked if staff was aware what recently attracted 120,000 visitors to Coachman Park.

Mr. Kader said the Sea-Blues Festival, the Market Marie, and other special event programming at the park has attracted 120,000 visitors.

4.4 Proposed Portable Restrooms at Enterprise Dog Park Status

Mr. Kader said a portable restroom facility was installed in March.

In response to questions, Mr. Kader said staff does not intend to install permanent or portable restroom facilities at other city parks. Many of the restrooms in neighborhood parks were closed in 2009/2010 due to the economic downturn. Mr. Kader said six of these restroom facilities remain closed. Additional staff is needed to open/close and maintain the restrooms.

It was stated individuals who schedule events at Woodgate via the Parks and Recreation Department may request to open the restrooms.

4.5 Contract Status of Tampa Bay Raptors Group with Moccasin Lake Nature Park

Mr. Kader said the contract has been completed and staff is waiting for the Group to sign the agreement.

4.6 Status of Teardown at Moccasin Lake Nature Park Pavilion and Trail Extension

Mr. Kader said the shelter has been demolished and removed, as well as the trash. The base material has been laid for the new trail, which will provide another loop in the park. He said staff anticipates completion by the second week in May.

5. Old Business Items

5.1 Discussion to Consider Naming One of the Softball Fields at Countryside Community Park.

The Countryside Little League has requested that one of the five softball fields at

Countryside Community Park be named after one of their long-time coaches and advocates for youth sports, Mr. Larry Dowd.

One individual spoke in support.

In response to questions, Mr. Kader said the neighborhood associations were notified of the naming request. Staff received one response from the associations supporting the request.

Board Member Lonesome moved to recommend naming one of the softball fields at Countryside Community Park after Larry Dowd. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

5.2 Overview of the Current Parks and Recreation Median Landscaping Plan and Future Initiatives

Bill Jonson provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding the City's median landscaping program. He expressed concerns with litter at the overpass on US 19 and Drew Street and urged the Board to recommend that Council approve a budget to landscape medians that lives up to the City's motto.

Mr. Kader said the Department received additional funding and staff to address the medians on Gulf to Bay Boulevard, Court Street, Drew Street, and Missouri Avenue. The medians along Gulf to Bay Boulevard were in poor shape; staff implemented a minimalist landscape with palms trees, grass and few plants. Staff met with FDOT last week regarding permissible plantings in order to develop a plant palette for the FDOT medians. Staff intends to landscape the medians with low maintenance plants. Mr. Kader said staff is considering applying for a grant to landscape Missouri Avenue. Staff will implement additional median landscaping on Gulf to Bay Boulevard in approximately 1.5 years, per the department's renovation schedule. He said money is available to landscape the medians, but the Department lacks the staff needed to do the work.

In response to questions, Mr. Kader said the City is financially responsible to maintain the landscaping in the FDOT medians. The landscaping budget was established two years ago in the Public Works Departments. He said due to staff changes, the implementation of the median landscaping program was delayed. The medians along Missouri Avenue will likely be replaced with the same plant material; using new plant species will require FDOT approval. He said the City has installed

irrigation at all the landscaped medians. Several palm trees have been lost due to disease; FDOT has not allowed the City to replant the palms.

One individual supported conserving green spaces and suggested the City consider weeding instead of using pesticides and using the ground cover used at CR 1 and Curlew Road.

5.3 Discuss the April Parks and Recreation Project Update Report

Mr. Kader reviewed the project update list.

6. Director's Report – None.

7. Board Members to be Heard

Board Member Armstrong encouraged staff to look at other plant species that may be suitable for median landscaping and cautioned against the use of plants that require a lot of maintenance if the desire is to design a low-maintenance landscaping palette.

Board Member Lonesome suggested holding a Science in the Park program at Coachman Park. She said science experiments are a fun way to engage kids.

Chair Raftery said Council recently approved \$532,873 for pavement milling and resurfacing at the following parks: Country Hollow, Forest Run, Glenn Oaks, Phillip Jones, Soule Road, and Woodgate and \$101,082 for the final design and construction of new structural and service improvements at Crest Lake Park.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Attest:

Chair, Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

City Clerk