

City of Clearwater

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



Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 28, 2020

6:30 PM

Main Library - Council Chambers

Parks and Recreation Board

Roll Call

Present 5 - Vice Chair Jennifer Wood, Board Member Norene M. Marlow, Board Member Jason Hood, Board Member Lisa Tuttle, and Board Member Patrick Raftery

Absent 1 - Chair Mark Rodriguez

Also Present - Art Kader – Interim Parks & Recreation Director, Michael Lavery – Parks Senior Manager, Patricia O. Sullivan - Board Reporter

Awaiting approval

1. Call To Order

The Vice Chair called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. at the Main Library.

To provide continuity for research, items are in agenda order although not necessarily discussed in that order.

2. Approval of Minutes

- 2.1 Approve the minutes of the October 22, 2019 Parks & Recreation Board Meeting and the November 5, 2019 Special Parks & Recreation Board Meeting.

Member Marlow moved to approve the minutes of the October 22, 2019 Parks & Recreation Board meeting as submitted in written summation. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

In reference to Item 3.2, November 5, 2019 minutes, Member Christou-Wood said as her questions were not answered re how the funding would benefit youth, in hindsight, she would have voted against the motion.

Member Marlow moved to approve the minutes of the November 5, 2019 Parks & Recreation Board Special meeting as submitted in written summation. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

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

Elizabeth Drayer proposed the Parks & Recreation Department inventory pesticides used in parks and public lands and identify those that caused negative health effects, specifically in children, and could be eliminated.

Member Marlow moved to request the Parks & Recreation Department to inventory pesticides it used and evaluate them for health effects on residents. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

Lisa Lanza requested information on votes at the November 5, 2019 meeting which was not videoed.

4. New Business Items

4.1 Discuss Imagine Clearwater - Michael Delk, Assistant City Manager

Assistant City Manager Michael Delk provided a PowerPoint presentation on Imagine Clearwater, being designed to invigorate downtown and activate the underutilized waterfront with a great public place; more than 700 people were involved in its planning. He reviewed proposed components for the 20-acre park, including artwork and a grand plaza entranceway, and events to attract the diverse preferences of all residents. With encouragement from Ruth Eckerd Hall, the City Council approved a 4,000 seat covered amphitheater with backstage operations; seats will be removed after performances to adhere to Charter restrictions.

Mr. Delk said City Council was responsible for naming the park. He thought "Coachman Commons" was catchy and would have promotional benefits when branding and marketing the park. "Coachman Commons" recognized the history of the Coachman family, reflected the common character of the multi-use, active regional destination, and reasserted Clearwater residents' ownership of the park. The project will triple the waterfront's green space; parking will be added a block or two away. The park's active edge will include retail, restaurants, and housing.

Discussion ensued regarding the Board's vote against the name "Coachman Commons" with concerns expressed that name did not include the word "park." It was recommended the City call the entire property Coachman Park and name each specific area as is done at Disney World. It was noted the Mayor opposed a board recommendation for a naming contest and the City Council had expressed a willingness to contract with a corporation or entity to purchase rights to name the amphitheater and/or entire park.

Concern was expressed re uses of the large amphitheater structure and awning when performances were not scheduled and it was questioned where equipment trucks and RVs for performances would unload and park. Concerns were expressed that the project was extremely expensive before adding costs for security, transportation, trash removal, etc. and considering negative impacts on the Intracoastal Waterway and Clearwater Harbor.

Mr. Delk said the amphitheater was estimated to cost \$14.5 million. Full-time employees will oversee operations. Estimates of amphitheater activity ranged from current levels, to a conservative 70 - 80 shows a year, and to an aggressive schedule of more than 100 events a year. Access to peripheral areas of the park will not be restricted during events. He did not know the logistics of removing seats following events; not every event will require 4,000 seats. The concert space will be wide open for the public between events. Farmer market activities will be at the grand plaza.

Concern was expressed that it was uncomfortable to walk in Coachman Park at night due to a large number of homeless. Mr. Delk said everyone

had a right to use the park but the City would not tolerate certain behaviors; homelessness was an all-City issue. The Police Department was anticipating its patrol needs. It was questioned if a woman will be safe jogging through the new park at night.

Mr. Delk said original estimates for Imagine Clearwater's basic infrastructure of the mid to high \$40-millions were increased by addition of the amphitheater and causeway bridge lighting to the high \$60-millions. After the 100% plan and construction documents are completed, value engineering and cost savings efforts will reduce the cost to approximately \$65 million.

Mr. Delk the City Council approved a \$30 million, 30-year bond to cover some Imagine Clearwater costs. A referendum was required to develop the Harborview Center and City Hall properties. An RFQ (Request for Qualifications) will be released in February to determine interest in developing the bluff properties. The City could offer long-term land leases for the Harborview Center, City Hall, and CMA (Clearwater Marine Aquarium) properties but the City did not have to retain ownership. City Hall could be rehabbed as a museum, providing a civic component to the park and its parking lot could be sold to a developer. The City Hall and CMA properties could be developed with residences that would keep eyes on the park.

It was recommended that the City retain ownership of its bluff properties so that Scientology, which owned the majority of downtown properties, does not purchase these key parcels.

Five residents spoke. Support was expressed to retain the Coachman Park name and opposition was expressed to the sale of City bluff properties and 4,000-seat amphitheater that would overwhelm the park, spoiling its atmosphere, creating endless deficits, and heavily burdening downtown infrastructure. Concern was expressed the expensive amphitheater was not mentioned in referendum language presented to voters and proposed flashing lights would create a theme park atmosphere.

Maria Douglas disagreed with the Imagine Clearwater plan and supported a boating atmosphere for the park. She said an amphitheater would cause atrocious traffic and parking problems. She recommended the City reconsider its plans.

It was suggested that the City engage its Sister City Nagano to design and finance the Japanese section. Concerns were expressed that park lighting and noise will distract Memorial Causeway drivers and the plan had not considered transportation needs for beach visitors or how amphitheater events would further compromise residents' beach access on a causeway that already experienced daily traffic jams; alternative ferry transportation was extremely limited. Concern was expressed re transportation and parking impacts when 4,000 people are seated in the

amphitheater and thousands more crowd into the park.

Mr. Delk did not think proposed lighting would impact causeway drivers. Traffic operations will continue to manage event traffic, which already was significant several times a year. Interim Parks & Recreation Director Art Kader said the park was not visible to westbound drivers or eastbound drivers from the bridge. The Fire Department limited park occupancy to 11,000; 14,000 people once attended 4th of July festivities. While maximum occupancy could be reduced to 10,000 after the amphitheater is built, many events would attract only 2,000 people.

Concern was expressed that large events only occurred several times a year but the amphitheater schedule would increase those numbers exponentially.

Mr. Delk said the City Council had approved the 4,000 seat amphitheater. All City departments were involved in the park planning process.

Concern was expressed a large number of planned events will attract significant traffic, increasing pollution and exacerbating environmental issues. It was recommended that the City begin planning for mass transportation capabilities. It was stated that ride share services such as Uber offered alternate transportation opportunities.

4.2 Election of Officers

Member Marlow moved to reappoint Mark Rodriguez as Chair. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

Member Marlow moved to reappoint Jennifer Christou-Wood as Vice Chair. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

5. Old Business Items: None.

6. Director's Report

Mr. Kader said the nationwide search for a Parks & Recreation Director was underway and he hoped a new director would be named by May.

In response to a question, Mr. Kader said to avoid fiscal management problems, the department had hired a comptroller and senior accountant who audited all events. Standard operating procedures were being rewritten and training was underway to make certain that all staff understood department procedures. The department also made changes recommended by the audit.

Concern was expressed a culture of honesty was necessary and employees who did not comply should be terminated.

Mr. Kader said Parks & Recreation Department staff were honest hardworking people with many overworked and underappreciated. He said with the exception of one person, department financial issues related to record keeping shortcomings, not dishonesty.

In response to a question, Mr. Kader discussed department processes to repair sidewalks, curbs and streets. The Parks & Recreation Department always needed additional funds to meet all of its sidewalk repair obligations.

In response to a concern that the playground sunshade at Coachman Ridge Park did not provide children adequate sun protection, Parks Senior Manager Michael Lavery said the sunshade was the largest available; no funding had been identified to install a second one. Mr. Kader said sunshades were expensive. Of 27 City playgrounds, only Coachman Ridge and Clearwater Beach parks had sunshades.

7. Board Members to be Heard: None.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Attest:

Chair
Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

Board Reporter