

City of Clearwater

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



Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 26, 2021

6:30 PM

Main Library - Council Chambers

Parks and Recreation Board

Roll Call

Present 5 - Chair Mark Rodriguez, Board Member Jason Hood, Board Member Lisa Tuttle, Board Member Scott Thomas, and Board Member Bruce Rector

Absent 2 - Vice Chair Jennifer Wood, and Board Member Patrick Raftery

Also Present - Michael Lavery – Parks Senior Manager, Patricia O. Sullivan - Board Reporter

Awaiting approval

1. Call To Order

The 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 27, 2020 Parks and Recreation Board Meeting.

Member Thomas moved to approve the minutes of the October 27, 2020 Parks & Recreation Board 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: None.

4. New Business Items

4.1 Review the Powers and Duties of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board as defined by city code.

Parks Senior Manager Michael Lavery said it was important that members submit discussion items for each meeting's agenda.

Mr. Lavery questioned if members recommended any changes to board powers and duties in the Code.

Consensus was to recommend no changes to the Board's powers and duties.

Councilmember Kathleen Beckman said she was a Clearwater resident and municipal officer, she wanted to hear from board members and she was available all of the time. She said members were appointed to the board to: 1) support City residents; 2) collaborate with the City Council; 3) engage with the City Council more frequently; and 4) become more familiar with individual Councilmembers. She said members had a great opportunity to touch residents' lives every day and challenged them to take a position and make positive actions to serve Clearwater residents. She thanked members for their service.

Councilmember Beckman requested board members talk with residents re the Council's \$25 million reduction to the Imagine Clearwater budget and report on resident and board member reactions. She reviewed the Parks & Recreation budget and department responsibilities. She said while tourism was appreciated, City parks primarily should serve residents.

Councilmember Beckman said Lake Belleview was a 30-acre spring fed lake and shared her ideas to: 1) enhance Ross Norton Recreation and Aquatic Complex programming with a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering And Mathematics) educational component; 2) construct a boardwalk; 3) add seating for residents to enjoy sunsets over the lake; and 4) host concerts in the park in partnership with the music and art nonprofit moving into Plumb House.

Councilmember Beckman questioned if there was equality between recreation centers, how each recreation center established its hours of operation, and who determined each facility's budget. She expressed concern some recreation centers closed on weekends when families were home, suggested they open up when residents can use them, and proposed adding nighttime basketball league programming for teens. She recommended new programs have sufficient time to develop before cancellation and to walk the perimeter of recreation center property to advise residents about programming and encourage participation. She said increasing recreation center use would take intentional effort.

4.2 Discuss the Parks and Recreation Board meeting frequency.

Support was expressed for the Board to meet more frequently to: 1) respond to issues and residents more quickly; 2) be proactive rather than reactive; 3) communicate more often; 4) be engaged; 5) know what is going on; 6) provide timely feedback to Council requests; and 7) improve community engagement by encouraging neighborhood group participation in Parks & Recreation Board meetings. It was noted that members who now miss one meeting were out of contact with the board for 6 months.

Discussion ensued regarding new members' learning curve when familiarizing themselves with Parks & Recreation programming, facilities, and parks. It was recommended board members be more engaged by visiting each park, meeting with residents there, being more creative and encouraging residents to become more engaged in park activities. Members were encouraged to provide community feedback to the City Council after knocking on doors and engaging the community. Concern was expressed children in some neighborhoods were not within walking distance of City parks and recreation facilities.

Member Thomas moved to amend the Parks & Recreation board schedule to meet monthly and to reevaluate the schedule after 6 months. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

Parks & Recreation Director Jim Halios said the City Manager had requested advisory boards to review Code sections to determine if their duties and responsibilities needed to be expanded, if members wanted to be more engaged, and the number of meetings necessary to achieve their duties. The City Council determined meeting frequency. He will request the City Clerk submit the board's request to the Council.

It was strongly requested that staff present this recommendation to the City Council for approval as soon as possible.

Councilmember Beckman supported more frequent board meetings and said she would weigh in on the request at the next City Council meeting.

4.3 Identify month for annual report to council.

Mr. Lavery said the board presented annual reports on their activities to the City Council and had been requested to choose a month for its annual presentations.

In response to a comment that the Board did not present a 2020 report, Mr. Lavery said none of the members submitted items for a report. It was recommended the board present its 2020 annual report in April. It was suggested the 2020/21 reports be combined in one presentation.

It was commented the Code did not require the board to present an annual report to the City Council. It was stated if the board did not know if it would meet prior to April, a decision on the month the board presents its annual report should be tabled.

Member Thomas moved to table the request to identify the month the board wishes to present its annual report to the City Council. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

4.4 Discuss the future of the Landings

Mr. Lavery said the City Council had not requested Parks & Recreation Board input on the referendum to amend the Landings property zoning; the referendum was not successful. Since then, Landings management worked with SWFWMD (Southwest Florida Water Management District) on a cost efficient way to obtain its permit and hookup to reclaimed water.

Mr. Halios said the current Parks & Recreation Master Plan had not considered the Landings property as the lease was not set to expire for years. Golf course improvements were underway. Management's intent was to continue the site's use as an active golf course; the City had no plans to modify the current lease.

Concern was expressed while Clearwater's green space attracts many tourists and new residents, the amount of green space in the City was quickly declining. It was stated it was important to preserve green space for future generations.

It was stated the 2013 Parks & Recreation Master Plan needed updating as many plan goals had been achieved.

Mr. Halios said consultants will be hired to develop a new Master Plan. The Parks & Recreation Board and residents will be extensively involved in the process. It would be ideal for the new Master Plan to consider future uses for the Landings property after its lease expires. The Master Plan will rank City needs based on a community needs assessment. The current Plan prioritized athletic fields.

Councilmember Beckman presented a map identifying City parks and facilities, noting some areas of the City lacked easy access. She said voter opposition to November's referendum indicated that residents valued the environment, quality of life, green space, and maintaining Clearwater as a great place to work, live and play. She said all City residents needed a nearby place to play and enjoy where they live.

4.5 Election of Officers

Member Thomas moved to appoint Bruce Rector as Chair. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

Member Thomas moved to appoint Mark Rodriguez as Vice-Chair. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

5. Old Business Items: None.

6. Director's Report

Mr. Halios said two Parks & Recreation Department CIPs (Capital Improvement Projects) neared completion. The Crest Lake Park Dog Park was open and work on the remainder of the park's improvements was 90% completed. A virtual grand opening was planned. Final renovations of the Barefoot Beach House bathrooms will be completed by Spring Break.

Mr. Halios said many City events were canceled due to the pandemic. The City was looking at opportunities to cosponsor other events this year with Protocols in place. The Phillies and Major League Baseball had not provided direction for Spring Training.

In response to a question, Mr. Halios said Coachman Park was effectively closed. Utility companies had started relocating lines. Imagine Clearwater groundbreaking will commence within 90 days of City Council approval of a guaranteed maximum price for the project. No permits have been issued.

7. Board Members to be Heard

Member Hood said he had strong ties to the tennis community and questioned when McMullen Tennis Complex afternoon hours would be reinstated as noon to 4:00 p.m. were prime hours for drop ins and clinics. Mr. Lavery will report.

Chair Rodriguez said he was happy the board was meeting in person again and complimented Clearwater's Citizens Academy for educating residents on City departments.

Board members complimented Parks & Recreation staff for their efforts during the pandemic and their maintenance of City beaches and parks.

Mr. Halios agreed Parks & Recreation beach staff were the City's unsung heroes, maintaining the beach every day of the year.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Chair
Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

Attest:

Board Reporter