

City of Clearwater

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



Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 27, 2021

6:30 PM

Main Library - Council Chambers

Parks and Recreation Board

Roll Call

Present 5 - Chair Bruce Rector, Vice Chair Mark Rodriguez, Board Member Jason Hood, Board Member Patrick Raftery, Board Member Scott Thomas

Absent 1 - Board Member Lisa Tuttle

Also Present – Jim Halios – Parks & Recreation Director, Nicole Sprague – Deputy City Clerk

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 January 26, 2021 Parks and Recreation Board Meeting

Member Thomas moved to approve the minutes of the January 26, 2021 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

City Councilmember Kathleen Beckman thanked board members for serving. She said Crest Lake Park, which just celebrated its grand opening, was a gem with numerous amenities attractive to all age groups and abilities. She said the Lake Belleview Homeowners Association had organized and started a petition advocating for more active uses of Lake Bellevue, some in conjunction with Ross Norton Recreation Center programs, and for the City to cleanup and maintain the lake. She said the Environmental Advisory Board recently signed a letter supporting the petition. She said while the City Council focused on Coachman Park, many residents were passionate about other City parks; only 5 City parks featured pavilions or covered picnic tables. She questioned how many of the 27 park restrooms were open and if the City's website provided information on the process to have them opened. She expressed concern the Ream Wilson Trail had no bathroom facilities.

4. New Business Items

4.1 Identify Date for Annual Report

Parks & Recreation Director Jim Halios said it was up to the board to decide to provide the City Council with an annual report. The board meets monthly for the next 6 months.

It was stated at the last meeting the board had questioned if the board's report should include 2020 and 2021 as no report was given in 2020. Support was expressed for the board to present a report to the Council to avoid reporting gaps, that the report should be provided in December to avoid a half year report, and the report should include 2020 as little occurred last year due to COVID.

Member Thomas moved for the Parks & Recreation Board to present their report for 2020/21 to the City Council at the first Council meeting in November. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

4.2 Discuss Board Support of Parks & Recreation Activities (Raftery)

It was noted staff provided the board with input and perspective and it was questioned how the board could assist the Parks & Recreation Department.

Mr. Halios said the advisory board's role was to be the eyes and ears of citizens, to present their observations to the department and City Council, to maintain lines of communication, and to bring issues of concern to his attention. One of his goals was to involve the board in more activities; monthly meetings will allow more action. Keeping the board informed of ongoing activities will provide board members an opportunity to gather resident feedback and report it to him. He will continue being the board's liaison. As the new department director, it was important for him to establish a positive relationship with the board.

A resident spoke in support of board members reaching out to a variety of citizens and reporting feedback to staff and the Council so that residents throughout the City would be represented in City Council discussions.

Discussion ensued with comments that monthly meetings will improve dialogue, it was important that City residents knew how well the City had managed COVID, that members were encouraged to educate themselves re Parks & Recreation programs, support and promote Parks & Recreation facilities, connect with the public, engage the community, and attend neighborhood meetings. It was recommended that members question residents re their experiences and levels of service provided at recreation facilities. One member reported he was visiting all of the City's parks.

4.3 Coachman Park Conservancy Discussion

Mr. Halios said the deadline was upcoming for the City's RFP (Request for Proposals) for a consultant to meet with various stakeholders to form a conservancy for Coachman Park. The consultant may engage with the board in May or June for feedback and opinions.

4.4 Crest Lake Park Grand Opening

Mr. Halios said yesterday's Crest Lake Park Grand Opening was wonderful; a soft opening occurred several weeks earlier. The park, which features a spray amenity and nature park elements in an urban setting, is overseen by a team of 3 active staff members; at least one staff member is onsite during park hours. FDEP (Florida Department of Environmental Protection) required daily compliance for water quality.

The City was complimented for its accomplishment redesigning the park and including amenities for multiple uses. It was stated local TV stations had provided the park and Skycrest residents with significant publicity. It was suggested the park, a City asset with natural beauty, provided a destination for residents breaking out of COVID isolation.

4.5 McMullen Tennis Complex New Hours

Mr. Halios said the City had limited resources for McMullen Tennis Complex with only 2 full-time staff; the remainder of staff worked part-time on staggered schedules. Based on input from tennis players, the complex will open additional hours on Saturdays and staff will investigate other opportunities to increase hours.

It was stated that tennis players supported increasing hours of operation on Saturdays and during the week for drop-ins and for those who did not want to schedule court times. Player feedback re which hours made sense will be shared.

4.6 Pickleball in the Clearwater Area

Mr. Halios said the City had received many requests for pickleball courts at neighborhood parks; the City did not have any permanent pickleball courts. A pilot program at Clearwater Beach Recreation Center, open from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. will modify one basketball court for pickleball; play would be complicated if both pickleball and basketball courts were in use. Staff was working to identify strategic accessible locations for pickleball within existing resources. Following completion of the new beach fire station, it may be possible to install a pickleball court at Bay Park. Time will be blocked off for Pickleball inside the Countryside Recreation Center.

It was stated that pickleball was a fast growing sport with large local demand. Support was expressed for constructing standalone pickleball courts wherever possible, including at the McMullen Tennis Complex. Opposition was expressed to reducing the number of tennis courts by modifying any for pickleball. Support was expressed for modifying basketball courts for pickleball play. It was suggested as pickleball attracted an older demographic, indoor play at recreation centers could be scheduled from 5:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m.

A resident said plans for pickleball at the North Greenwood and Ross Norton recreation centers were suspended when camp started.

Mr. Halios said recreation centers' first priority was to host scheduled programs such as summer camp, some funded via JWB (Juvenile Welfare Board) contract. Recreation centers did not usually open at 5:00 a.m.; staff and verified pickleball demand at that time would be necessary.

5. Old Business Items

5.1 Imagine Clearwater Project Update

Mr. Halios said Imagine Clearwater plans were moving forward.

5.2 Morningside Tennis Court Lighting

Mr. Halios said Morningside Tennis court lighting was installed as a test pilot program. New poles, supporting energy efficient LED lights, were thin and 50-feet tall, 15 feet taller than previous light poles. The City Manager and staff received some complaints from neighbors who moved in after the old light poles were removed and from others displeased by the poles' height. Some citizens complained to the City Council; the Council was supportive of the LED lighting and energy savings. The courts have reopened.

6. Director's Report

In response to a question, Mr. Halios said he would provide an update re the walking path behind Spectrum Field where the County was working on a project.

A resident questioned how the board followed-up on previous discussions such as a recommendation to standardize recreation center hours.

7. Board Members to be Heard

Member Raftery complimented staff re the impressive mural painted on the North Greenwood Recreation Center that was well received by the neighborhood.

Member Rector said now that the board meets monthly, members can schedule follow-up discussions on future agendas.

Member Rector said he recently volunteered for 2 park cleanups and a beach cleanup and learned the importance of neighborhood involvement, pride, and ownership of Clearwater's parks. He said North Beach had a community garden in a small triangle park. He hoped members would engage with residents, encourage neighborhood actions to maintain parks and report to the board on citizen responses.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Chair
Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

Attest:

Board Reporter