

VERO BEACH RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, JUNE 14, 2022 – 1:30 P.M.
City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida

PRESENT: Chairman, Brooke Steinkamp; Vice Chairman, Christopher Woodruff
Members: Rick Gillespie and Leonard Markir **Also Present:** Recreation Director, James O’Connell; Assistant Recreation Director, Patty Howard; Assistant City Attorney, Jenny Flanigan; and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Chartier

1. CALL TO ORDER

Today’s meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. and the Senior Administrative Assistant performed the roll call.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A) April 12, 2022 – Regular Meeting Minutes

Mrs. Steinkamp made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 12, 2022 Recreation Commission meeting. Mr. Markir seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

B) May 17, 2022 – Workshop Minutes

Mrs. Steinkamp made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 17, 2022 Recreation Commission Workshop meeting. Mr. Gillespie seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

4. NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Steinkamp stated that the workshop was fun and they were presented with some great ideas. She would like the Recreation Commission to discuss them and how they could move forward with them.

A) Bocce Ball

Mr. Jim O’Connell, Recreation Director, stated that he was asked about having a bocce ball court built in one (1) of the City Parks. He feels that it is possible and it is not a huge investment. He has not done any planning, but he likes both Riverside Park and Pocahontas Park since both Parks have staff available to handle checking out the bocce balls. He thinks it is a great idea and they will peruse it closer to the end of summer.

Mr. Markir asked Mr. O’Connell if he had an estimate on how much it would cost.

Mr. O’Connell stated he would guess it might cost \$2,000 to \$3,000. The materials are relatively inexpensive, which consists of some treated wood, dirt, and something to finish

off the surface. They don't have it budgeted for this year, but they might be able to build it with some miscellaneous funds or with funds left over from other projects. If the funds are not available, they can put it in next fiscal year's budget.

Mr. Markir commented that Pocahontas Park might be a more central location.

Mr. O'Connell said he agrees, because Pocahontas Park has more staff available during normal business hours. They might look at both locations over time, but his first choice would be at Pocahontas Park.

Mr. Gillespie asked if they have ever sought out contributions from individuals to sponsor projects or make donations to a nonprofit group that would accept it for the City.

Mr. O'Connell replied yes, they do take contributions and they do have an apparatus for people to donate money to the City for specific projects. He believes those contributions are still tax deductible.

Ms. Jenny Flanigan, Assistant City Attorney, noted that it is not a 501(c)3, but she believes it is tax deductible. She explained that another way of doing this is to have a nonprofit group raise the funds, complete the project, and then donate it back to the City. A nonprofit group would not be bound by the same procurement requirements as the City, so they will have a lot more leeway on getting better prices for the materials and construction costs.

Mrs. Patty Howard, Assistant Recreation Director, explained that Eagle Scouts are always looking for projects to complete, but the City would still have to provide the materials.

Mr. O'Connell explained that if people want to donate money to the City for a specific purpose then they would work with the Finance Department to make sure that happens.

Mr. Gillespie commented that he used to sit on a nonprofit 501(c)3 board in Pennsylvania called the *Mural Arts Advocates* and they raised millions of dollars each year. Most of it was from contributions, but they also did fundraising. He said the actual program was a City Agency and the people worked for the City, but the funding for the murals came from the nonprofit. To build something as modest as a bocce ball court might be a good first project to start raising money for and perhaps grow into even more aggressive projects.

Mr. O'Connell replied that they have had other entities who have raised money to build playgrounds in the City Parks and memorials at Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. At the completion of the project they are donated back to the City. He said after they look for a location and determine if they can get the work done in-house he will give the Commission an update.

Mrs. Howard said they will have to get with the Public Works Department regarding the location and with the Planning Department to obtain any required permits.

B) Homeschool Group for Gymnastics

Mrs. Steinkamp explained that the City wanted to know how to get in touch with the homeschool groups specifically for a gymnastics program, but she thinks tennis programs would be great too. She mentioned that she might have a lead on another group of homeschool children to see if there is an interest in gymnastics or tennis programs.

Mrs. Howard stated that she is currently reaching out to the homeschool groups to get their feedback on dates, times, how many children, etc. Hopefully they can get something started for them. Gymnastics would not be available in the summer, because the gymnastics building is booked all day for summer camp.

Mrs. Steinkamp said that she spoke with the Youth Sailing Foundation and they have two (2) groups specifically for homeschool children. Each group has 15 children and they meet twice a week from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. She thinks the gymnastics and tennis programs are possible, so they just need to get the word out and see where it goes.

C) Organized Senior Walks

Mrs. Steinkamp mentioned that someone made the suggestion to her about starting organized senior walks, so she brought it up at the workshop. With all of the members and people who go to Riverside Park she feels that would be an ideal location to organize a walking group. With this type of group all it would take is a volunteer to get it started. Perhaps the Recreation Department might know of someone who is a regular at Riverside Park that might want to start a walking club.

Mr. O'Connell noted that this might be something they could offer as a free program. They could advertise it in their next Recreation catalogue and list the meeting location, the days, and time. In the meantime, if there are volunteers who want to organize a walking group to meet at Riverside Park or Charles Park the Recreation Department will be happy to talk with them and offer any help. He said the walking paths at both Riverside Park and Charles Park are under the shade of the trees. There are also exercise stations along the trail that people can use based on their ability.

5. OLD BUSINESS

A) USTA Town Hall Meeting – June 20, 2022

Mrs. Steinkamp announced that the United States Tennis Association (USTA) Florida's Town Hall meeting is on June 20, 2022.

Mr. Markir said he wanted to make sure that the Recreation Commission members will be able to attend.

Mr. O'Connell stated that there will be two (2) sessions. The first one (1) will be at 12:00 p.m. and the second session will be at 6:00 p.m. They are looking forward to hearing what USTA Florida has to offer the City if they should proceed with some type of management agreement.

Mr. Markir asked if there have been any discussions about the terms of a lease agreement.

Mr. O’Connell replied no. USTA Florida wanted to have the Town Hall meeting before they started any negotiations.

Mr. Markir asked if there will be any interaction with the people who attend, or will it only be a presentation by USTA Florida.

Mr. O’Connell explained that USTA Florida will give their presentation and answer questions afterwards. It will be somewhat informal, but they want to make sure that everyone has a chance to be heard and that any misinformation or rumors are cleared up.

Mr. Markir asked if the Town Hall meeting will be televised.

Ms. Flanigan explained that this is a USTA Florida Town Hall meeting and not a City of Vero Beach meeting with a City Board, so minutes will not be taken and it will not be recorded or broadcast. She stated that even though it is not a City meeting the Florida Sunshine Law still applies to the Commission members who attend. The Sunshine Law applies to the Town Hall meeting or any function outside of the Council Chambers. If there are two (2) or more members of the same board present they should not discuss any matters that might come before them for a decision.

Mr. Gillespie said he will plan on attending as a resident of Vero Beach and not a representative of the Recreation Commission.

Ms. Flanigan said the Recreation Commission members are welcome to attend and make comments as members of the public.

6. RECREATION DIRECTOR’S MATTERS

Mr. O’Connell announced that the annual Fourth of July Celebration will take place on Monday, July 4, 2022 at Riverside Park. There will be food trucks, vendors, and entertainment starting at 5:00 p.m. and the fireworks will start at 9:00 p.m. He recommended that people arrive early, because the Park fills up quickly. He said there are other places to watch the fireworks, but they fill up too. He gave an advanced “Thank you” to the Public Works Department, the Police Department, and Mrs. Tammy Bursick, City Clerk, who is one (1) of the main organizers of this fun event.

Mr. O’Connell announced that they have entered into the summer hours for the lifeguards. The beaches are guarded from 9:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. daily and that will run through Labor Day. The Royal Palm Pointe fountain is also open daily from 9:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. except on Tuesdays. That schedule will stay in place until school starts back.

Mrs. Howard announced that their summer camps started last week and they are completely full. The staff and the children are amazing and they are having a great time. They had the summer gymnastics registration last Saturday and most of the classes are full. They will have a huge Aerial Antics Circus this year with three (3) performances, because they have so many participants. The shows are on August 4th, 5th, and 6th at St. Edwards School at 7:00 p.m. each evening. This year’s theme is *Heroes and Villains* and the children are having fun picking out the songs. It will be a great circus, so she hopes everyone will attend.

7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

Mrs. Steinkamp stated that they received an email from Mrs. Rosemary White regarding the rates at Riverside Park (attached to the original minutes) and this is not the first time this has been brought up by people in the community.

Mr. O'Connell announced that they are in the process of reviewing the rates for the entire Recreation Department. There was a review of the rates for Leisure Square done a couple of years ago, which was brought to the Recreation Commission and then to City Council and it was adopted. He brought recommended changes for some of the tennis fees to the previous Recreation Commission, but they recommended not to revise the rates at that time. If USTA Florida should come in they would look at the rate structure prior to them taking over, so either way they will have a review of the tennis rates.

Mr. Markir asked if his proposed rate structure will be presented to the Recreation Commission or does it go to City Council first.

Mr. O'Connell replied that when they have a proposal he brings it to the Recreation Commission first to ask for a recommendation to be made to City Council.

Mr. Markir asked if that will take place before the USTA Florida proposal.

Mr. O'Connell replied that he is not sure, but USTA Florida will not be allowed to set their own rates. The fee structure will continue to go through the Recreation Commission and be set by City Council. USTA Florida did an assessment of their fees and they felt that the daily fees were high, but the annual fees were kind of low.

Mr. Gillespie commented that the USTA Florida representatives mentioned the rates when they made their presentation. Even if USTA Florida takes over managing the tennis facility they can continue to give advice on the rates.

Mr. O'Connell stated that USTA Florida's mission is to promote tennis, whether that is through a management agreement or just answering questions and advising the City.

8. MEMBER'S MATTERS

Mr. Gillespie stated that last year the Mardy Fish Foundation published a conceptual rendering of a completely revamped Riverside Park Tennis Complex in the Vero Beach 32963 newspaper and he understands that USTA did the rendering. He said he spoke with Mr. Randy Walker and he reported there is no new information and no proposals or discussions have taken place since that publication last year. He noted that Mr. Walker is eager to see if USTA Florida will be part of the complex and at that point they can bring this concept back up. It was a very aggressive plan and it would definitely create a tremendous amount of interest among the residents and the users.

Mr. O'Connell stated that the Recreation Department has not had any discussions regarding that newspaper publication either. He explained that even under a management agreement, the City still owns the facility and any structural changes, improvements, etc. would only happen with the blessing of the City.

Mr. Woodruff asked about the Humiston Park lifeguard tower. He said he read in the workshop minutes that the City was denied a grant, so he would like to know if there is an alternate plan.

Mrs. Howard explained that they applied with the County for the Tourist Tax dollars to build a functioning lifeguard tower with an adjacent pavilion, but they were declined. Now, they are putting it in the upcoming budget and hopefully it will be approved.

Mr. Markir said a couple of years ago he spoke with Mr. Harry Howle, who was the Mayor, and helped him with some alteration to the layout of the lifeguard tower plan, but they have not done anything with it yet.

Mrs. Howard said there was an original plan done to build a tower and command center, but it was more elaborate than they need. When she was applying for the grant she worked with the grant writer and an architect to design a functioning lifeguard tower. The new design is what they will use in their proposal for the upcoming budget.

Ms. Flanigan explained that the City of Vero Beach is a special Sub-County tax district for the Tourist Tax dollars. About half of the money the County receives from the Tourist Tax dollars comes from the City of Vero Beach. They applied for this grant back in 2018 as well. While they were in the middle of applying for the grant this year the County changed their policy to state that no applications would be accepted from a municipality or government agency. That is a little out of step with the Florida Statue, because the purpose of the Tourist Tax dollars is to help with public projects. Throughout the State, the Tourist Tax dollars are used for great projects in partnerships between counties and cities. She said they are pursuing to challenge that policy and considering their legal options. If the County sticks with their policy the City will not be able to reapply. Almost all counties in Florida have some sort of tourist tax, but she could not find any other county that barred municipalities or government agencies from using that money for public projects.

Mrs. Steinkamp thanked Mrs. Howard for getting all of the information out on social media about the workshop meeting and the youth tennis clinics.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) July 12, 2022

The next Recreation Commission meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 12, 2022 at 1:30 p.m. in the City Hall, Council Chambers.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 2:27 p.m.

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