

## VERO BEACH RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES

Tuesday, November 9, 2021 – 1:30 p.m.

City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida

**PRESENT:** Chairman, Brooke Steinkamp; Members: Christopher Woodruff, Samuel Lapeyre, 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

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

Mrs. Tammy Bursick, City Clerk, swore in Mr. Samuel Lapeyre and Mr. Rick Gillespie.

### 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

#### A) October 12, 2021

**Mr. Markir made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 12, 2021 Recreation Commission meeting. Mr. Gillespie seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

### 3. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Mrs. Steinkamp said they need to do the election of Vice Chairman, which was tabled from their last meeting. She asked for nominations for Vice Chairman.

Mr. Lapeyre nominated Mr. Christopher Woodruff for Vice Chairman. With no other nominations, Mr. Woodruff was unanimously appointed as Vice Chairman of the Recreation Commission.

### 4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Rey Neville, Vice Mayor, said he would like to thank the Recreation Commission members for their service to the City. It is valuable and the Council relies on their guidance, recommendations, suggestions, and ideas to accomplish what they are doing in the City.

Mr. Steve Newman, City resident, thanked Vice Mayor Neville for his support of the tennis players and the battle over tennis courts versus Pickleball courts at Riverside Park. He said he was happy to see youth sports on the agenda and if he can help please let him know. He explained that there is a rumor at the Riverside Park Tennis Courts that the City is turning the Riverside Park Tennis Courts over to the United States Tennis Association (USTA). He would like to know if that is true and if so, what will be the impact on the City staff, the people who play tennis there, the financial impact, and the tennis pros who teach tennis.

Mr. O’Connell explained that they have had some preliminary discussions with the USTA Florida regarding the tennis facility, but there is nothing to discuss at this time.

Mr. Gillespie asked if there has been any scope of the engagement.

Mr. O'Connell replied not really. The discussions have been broad based, anywhere from management to partnering, or allowing the USTA Florida to do some programing. They are nowhere near any concrete proposal with them. They hope to work with them on some level, so they will see how that progresses. He said the Recreation Commission would definitely be involved when there are items to discuss. The City certainly supports what the USTA Florida does as an organization and some aspects of the USTA Florida could be beneficial to the City.

Mr. Markir asked if there are any implications with the contract they have with Saint Edwards School.

Mr. O'Connell replied that the USTA Florida is aware of the preexisting contractual obligations with Saint Edwards School and it would be included in any agreement. The City will honor the contract and the commitment they have made with the school.

Mr. Markir said currently, there are times that the residents can use the tennis courts without reservations or fees. He asked if that would still be maintained.

Mr. O'Connell replied yes. Those are all things they will try to keep as a part of any future contracts or arrangements. They want to keep some time available to the public at no cost and make sure the members are taken care of. Hopefully there would be little effect on anyone that is currently using the facility.

Mr. Markir asked if there are any statistics on how much the tennis courts are used during the week and on the weekends.

Mr. O'Connell said he does not have anything that would address that specifically.

Mr. Lapeyre asked if they could get that information, because that was a topic of discussion before.

Mr. O'Connell explained that they track the memberships, but he does not think he can give them figures for the amount of time the courts are used. He has some statistics of what they do track and he can provide them with a copy of that. The facility is open to the public from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily, but they do not track the use.

Mr. Markir asked if the USTA Florida negotiations are only for the tennis courts at Riverside Park.

Mr. O'Connell replied yes, because the only other City courts are the two (2) at Charles Park.

Mr. Gillespie stated that earlier in the year they saw the rendering from the Marty Fish Foundation proposal. He asked if the talks with the USTA Florida are related to that in any way. He also asked if there is any more information on the Marty Fish Foundation discussions.

Mr. O'Connell said they have not made any forward movement with the Marty Fish Foundation and the plan that was presented over two (2) years ago. The Marty Fish Foundation has expressed an interest in working with the USTA Florida and they have similar goals.

Mrs. Steinkamp said that previously Ms. Cindy Lawson, Finance Director, was working on the Recreation Department's cost centers. She asked if the Riverside Park tennis facility was done yet.

Mrs. Patty Howard, Assistant Recreation Director, replied that they finished Leisure Square and the Recreation programs and rentals, but she believes they are still working on the rest of the cost centers.

## **5. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A) Explore Opportunities for Grants through National Recreation and Park Association – Mrs. Brooke Steinkamp**

Mrs. Steinkamp said after she put this item on the agenda she discovered that there were no grants available at this time through the National Recreation and Park Association (NPRPA). However, she did find some opportunities available through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Agency. They have a few grants that are specific to recreational Parks. She explained that she just found out that the City is working on contracting with a grant writer.

Mrs. Howard announced that she is sitting on the Grant Writer Selection Committee and they will be selecting an organization or company to write and administer grants for the Recreation Department, the Marina, and Public Works. The interview process starts next week, so they should have something in place very soon.

Mrs. Steinkamp said that is very exciting. She asked if the company would be looking to the Recreation Commission for recommendations or suggestions on where they should start.

Mrs. Howard replied that during the interview, she could ask if that is something they would be interested in doing, or if that is something the Commission wants, she can bring it up.

Mrs. Steinkamp said perhaps they should come up with suggestions on where they would like to start based on what the Recreation Department needs are and go from there.

Mrs. Howard replied that would be great.

Mrs. Steinkamp said she thought it would be good to schedule a workshop to talk more specifically on where they would like to start, get a plan in place, etc. When they do set up the workshop she asked if they could please announce it on social media for the parents, students and the community, so if people are unable to attend they can still submit their recommendations and comments to the City Clerk's office.

Mr. Markir asked if there are categories of recreational grants that are available and are there people who are specialists in certain categories.

Mrs. Howard replied that there are specific grants for recreation. She explained that the organization that they select would be mainly responsible for finding them and making the City aware of what they are.

Mr. Markir suggested that if they are giving the grant writer direction, perhaps they should have a list of prioritized grants that they need the most and work their way down.

Mrs. Steinkamp replied that is something they would talk about and work on at a workshop.

Mr. Gillespie said he thinks a workshop is a great idea. Having this third party that is familiar with grant writing is a great resource for the City.

## **B) Youth Sports**

Mrs. Steinkamp said with youth sports, she would like to see the City start something small for the younger children to introduce them to sports. It could teach them the basics and not be expensive.

Mr. O'Connell said he put together a list of youth sports offered by the City and throughout the County. There are several dozen that are offered directly by the City, with partnerships with the City, or by private organizations. For a relatively small community, he feels that they offer quite a bit of youth sports for children age 3 and up. They have to keep in mind that there are staffing issues and that is why they work with other organizations to offer classes and programs.

Mrs. Steinkamp said at the workshop they need to ask the parents for feedback and what they would like to see the City offer and then look further into what people show the most interest in. They can also look at grant opportunities to improve the programs they currently have.

Mr. O'Connell stated that they don't always have the same resources as some communities. If there are grants available it would help, but they also need the staff and the facilities.

Mrs. Steinkamp replied that they need to find out if there is an interest from the community before they start asking for money to start programs or build facilities. If they could combine the fees with grant money it could help keep the cost low for families.

Mr. O'Connell explained that the City and the County both offer scholarships to reduce or fully cover the fees for those who need assistance. They try not to turn anyone away. The money for the scholarships is donated by businesses and people in the community.

Mr. Markir asked if they feel they are doing enough to actually notify the residents like using newspapers, radio, etc.

Mr. O'Connell replied that he believes they do a really good job with social media, they are well represented on the City's website and their catalog is a big part of their advertising.

Mrs. Howard explained that they have 18 pages on facebook just for the Recreation Department. They also have Twitter, Instagram, and Nextdoor.com accounts. She writes and submits press releases to all the newspapers and radio stations as well as submitting their information to online calendars. She is always looking for ways to advertise, so she welcomes any suggestions.

Mr. Newman suggested that it would be useful to have a meeting with the people who run the private recreation programs and organizations to find out what their issues and problems are. He

said social media is fine, but there are people who do not use those resources. They might not be reaching those people who think it is too expensive or they think they cannot afford it. They should make sure to get information to all the elementary schools and pre-k programs.

Mrs. Howard explained that anyone can get a hard copy of their program guide at any of the City's recreation facilities. They also submit everything to the School District's virtual backpack, so the children do have access to it.

Mr. Lapeyre asked if they distribute any printed informational flyers to places like the Boys and Girls Club, churches, or other types of youth programs.

Mrs. Howard replied no, but they do send out information to all the public schools and daycares.

Mrs. Steinkamp asked if they provide information to the private schools.

Mr. Howard replied no, but they could always reach out to the private schools.

Mrs. Steinkamp asked if they send the catalogues to the schools.

Mrs. Howard replied that they used to up until COVID hit and they were shut down.

Mr. Gillespie said he sees the Recreation Department's updates on social media all the time and it is well done. He believes it is up to the people who see that content to repurpose it and share it with others.

Mrs. Steinkamp announced that they received an email from Mrs. Rosemary White (on file in the City Clerk's office). It shared some information about Martin County, which has a Youth Advisory Board, so she thought maybe that is something they can look into.

Mr. O'Connell said he would be open to discussing that, because it is certainly a good idea. His experiences is that as children get older they tend to lose them from participating in organized sports. Sometimes as they get more specialized in a sport they are pushed in the direction of traveling programs, so they start losing the casual athletes.

## **6. RECREATION DIRECTOR'S MATTERS**

### **A) Recap of the Halloween Car Parade**

Mr. O'Connell reported that the Halloween car parade was on October 30<sup>th</sup>. He said for the last two (2) years they have done the car parade due to COVID, but they still had a good turnout of both participants and spectators. They appreciate all the help they received from their sponsors for this event. He said they might look at going back to their traditional walking parade like they have done in the past. He thanked the Recreation Department staff for all the work they did and for putting together a really cool float.

### **B) Aerial Antics Youth Circus Christmas Drama– December 5, 2021**

Mr. O'Connell reported that their Aerial Antics Youth Circus Christmas Drama is scheduled for December 5, 2021.

Mrs. Howard stated that their gymnastics sessions started about two (2) weeks ago and they have approximately 200 children performing in the show. This year's show is called *An Enchanted Christmas Ball* and it is brand new. She explained that the City's Recreation Department staff writes the scripts, makes the back drops, choreographs all the routines for 25 classes, and they make the programs, so they do everything in house. It is an amazing experience for the children and there is no pressure or competition, it is strictly a performance. The parents get to see their children and it is very rewarding to the staff because of all the work they put into it. She invited everyone to attend one (1) of the shows, which are at 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. on December 5th at the Vero Beach High School Performing Arts Center.

Mrs. Howard gave a special thank you to the Treasure Coast Women's Club for stuffing all the Halloween goody bags and helping with the car parade.

#### **7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS**

None

#### **8. MEMBER'S MATTERS**

None

#### **9. NEXT MEETING DATE**

##### **A) December 14, 2021**

The next meeting of the Recreation Commission is scheduled for December 14, 2021 at 1:30 p.m. in the City Hall, Council Chambers.

#### **10. ADJOURNMENT**

Today's meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

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