



**AGENDA
PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 10, 2023
5:00 PM
CITY HALL COMMISSION CHAMBERS
204 ASH STREET
FERNANDINA BEACH, FL 32034**

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. ROLL CALL**
- 3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- 4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
 - 4.1 December 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes
- 5. PUBLIC COMMENT REGARDING ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**
- 6. DISCUSSION ITEMS**
 - 6.1 Elect Chair and Vice Chair
 - 6.2 Current and Upcoming Projects
- 7. STAFF COMMENTS**
- 8. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**
- 9. ADJOURNMENT**

All members of the public are invited to be present and be heard. Persons with disabilities requiring accommodations in order to participate in this program or activity should contact the City Clerk at 904-310-3115 or TTY/TDD 711 (for the hearing or speech impaired).

The Parks and Recreation Advisory committee met for a regular meeting on Tuesday, December 13, 2022, at 5pm located in Commission Chambers at City Hall 204 Ash Street. Present were Member Chapman, Member Camera, Chair Grant, Vice Chair Pugh, Member Mountjoy, and Member Cocchi. Not present- Member Norris.

1. CALL TO ORDER – 5:03 PM

2. ROLL CALL

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

4.1 November 8, 2022, Workshop Minutes

Member Chapman made a motion to approve the Workshop Minutes. Second by Member Camera. All Ayes.

4.2 November 8, 2022, Regular Meeting Minutes

Member Chapman made a motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes. Second by Member Mountjoy. All Ayes.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT REGARDING ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

No Public Comment

6. DISCUSSION ITEMS

6.1 Director to Lead Input Session for Parks and Recreation Community Campaign

The Parks and Recreation Director, Catherine Vorrasi gave the committee a general overview of the different types of forums the Parks and Recreation staff have been hosting throughout the city. Miss Vorrasi stated that they will continue to meet with various groups including the skate community and golf course; having already met with such organizations as baseball, football, tennis and pickleball.

Miss Vorrasi would like to have the input from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee on each of the categories listed in the forums to add to the data being collected for future planning.

Member Cocchi asked Miss Vorrasi how the Parks and Recreation Department is compiling this information as well as how they plan to present it to the committee, and a timeline or deadline in which they hope to meet. Miss Vorrasi informed Member Cocchi that January is when she plans to have narrowed the list of tasks to the top 3 that seem most pertinent to the community.

Vice Chair Pugh asked Miss Vorrasi if validation of some community concerns has been necessary and Miss Vorrasi confirmed that her staff has researched several items that may have been previously regarded as word of mouth or from other resources, not directly from the Parks and Recreation department.

Miss Vorrasi did also confirm she would like the committee to now give their input on each of the categories for discussion.

DOWNTOWN LANDSCAPING:

Chair Grant inquired about any organizations that we currently work with or have worked with in the past to assist with the upkeep of any landscaping in the downtown area. Miss Vorrasi stated that the department partners with Flowering Fernandina to help with the gardens in the historic district. Parks and Recreation Deputy Director, Scott Mikelson added that the department is hoping to work with Fernandina Beach Main Street to “adopt a flower bed” (initiative not yet in place) and Miss Vorrasi added that this will all be apart of the Parks and Recreation “Streetscape” plan to be implemented.

Vice Chair Pugh wanted to know if there are funds coming from other entities that the Parks and Recreation Department are involved with. Miss Vorrasi informed the committee that the plan to work with Fernandina Beach Main Street could provide funding for some of the flower beds in the historic district, but primarily, these areas are the responsibility of the Parks Department.

Chair Grant brought the future of the downtown waterfront to the discussion. Miss Vorrasi asked the committee if they have any concerns with the way the waterfront is currently being used, would they like to change anything, or leave the construction/landscaping as is? Both Chair Grant and Member Mountjoy agreed that what is available now serves the community well but are cautious of the idea of building two story structures or blocking most of the waterfront views.

Member Chapman stated in the past as a commissioner, he had proposed the selling of the marina. He would like the idea to be revisited by the new commissioners so that the PRAC and the Parks and Recreation Department can see what possibilities are available to make the area more cost effective for the city. Miss Vorrasi did respond by listing the portions of the waterfront that are managed by the Parks and Recreation Department. She also thanked Member Chapman for his input on this matter but did not discuss the future of the waterfront outside of what the Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for.

Member Cocchi addressed the fact that with the city’s numerous festivals and events taking place, that almost always include some type of live entertainment (band, dance, etc.); there is always a reconstructing or recreating of a stage area for performances. She stated that many other comparable cities have something like a small amphitheater at their waterfront to better accommodate these events when they take place and would like to see something along those lines at our waterfront as well. Miss Vorrasi informed Member Cocchi that this exact matter has been brought to her attention at other forums.

Member Camera stated that one of the most important issues for downtown is the current parking situation and how the lack of sufficient parking is impacting locals and visitors when they are planning to attend one of our events. There is no convenient parking in the area to accommodate the number of people attending these events. Chair Grant and Member Cocchi agreed that parking on a regular basis does not seem to be an issue, however; Chair Grant stated that parking during events has become difficult for most. Member Cocchi stated she believed this to be more of an issue with perhaps those who just cannot walk an inconvenient distance to a special event. She added that she understood members of the community may not be able to walk, but we have other resources such as shuttles, trolleys, etc. Miss Vorrasi made note of all committee members' comments but asked the committee to please be mindful of only asking what she as the Parks and Recreation Director can do for the PRAC in terms of the park's vision.

RECREATION CENTERS:

Member Camera informed the committee that he attended two of Miss Vorrasi's forums. He stated that the community members present at the meeting want to keep their recreation centers where they are and would like to be involved in the future planning of all community programming offered within those facilities.

Vice Chair Pugh brought the structural integrity of the Atlantic Recreation Center to the committee's attention. She asked Miss Vorrasi what may need to be done regarding potential flooding, repairs, etc. Miss Vorrasi informed her that Parks and Recreation has received quotes for structural assessment but will not be able to make a decision until that information comes back to her from the assessment itself.

Chair Grant asked about the future of facilities and the addition of an Olympic sized pool, new locker rooms, and more aquatic programs. She also stated that fixing the present issues with the facilities we currently have is the bigger priority. Chair Grant added she would like to see more offerings for low-income members of the community as well.

Miss Vorrasi stated she has previously had these same ideas and questions brought to her attention at other meetings and will be discussing it internally with the department.

ATHLETIC FIELDS/SPORTS COURTS/AQUATICS

Member Cocchi mentioned she knew the lease for Hickory Park would be up for renewal in 2025 and asked if the Parks and Recreation Department had intended on keeping the park in continuing partnership with the schools. Miss Vorrasi confirmed this is the desired intention of the Parks and Recreation Department. Member Cocchi stated that the addition of bathrooms to the park should be considered. She personally has seen from where her home is located adjacent to the park, that usage has increased greatly in recent years. Miss Vorrasi agreed that is a valid point to be considered.

Member Mountjoy would like to have the children's splash pad at the Atlantic Recreation Center updated and/or expanded. She stated that having small children (3 and under) playing with slightly larger children (5-7) is something that needs to be mitigated as it seems to result in broken equipment, and lack of entertainment for the slightly older kids. Miss Vorrasi informed

her that equipment repair is underway and will be finished by the beginning of the splash pad season. She agreed that size and play between smaller and larger children is a concern and has spoken with the Aquatics and Youth manager about new element additions but cannot expand the footprint itself because of the plumbing. She also stated one remedy could be scheduling, which her team is currently looking into to accommodate more children.

Vice Chair Pugh mentioned there is an opportunity to drive revenue at the Central Park Pickleball Courts. She explained how many people are asking for lessons, round robins, etc. Miss Vorrasi agreed that this has been identified and has been discussed at previous meetings that were held specifically for tennis and pickleball. She and other members of the city and other entities will be following up with how to address all aspects of pickleball and the court space.

Member Cocchi informed the committee that she did attend a forum for tennis and pickleball. She would like to see some improvement in the availability of casual play as well as tournaments and league play, which she feels we lack in. She mentioned the probability of adding courts at the city golf course. Miss Vorrasi did agree that there is a strong contingent in the tennis and pickleball community bringing this same idea to her and will be following up with the golf course and other committees regarding said idea.

Community member Mr. Mike Meadows: Spoke on the Community Forums.

Vice Chair Pugh voiced her concerns with the absence of the County Parks and Recreation Department's presence on the island. She stated this has been an ongoing issue with city and county residents dividing the island and one not having access to the other's resources. Miss Vorrasi informed the committee that she has attended a meeting where the County Parks and Recreation Director was present, and they are working together to strengthen the relationship between city and county and devise a plan for the county to use island property for a parks and recreation element.

PARKS/PLAYGROUNDS/TRAILS/BEACHES

Member Chapman mentioned the land in front of the School Board building on Atlantic Avenue and how it is being utilized. He stated he would like the city to purchase this property. His reasoning is after years of the land being granted for "school related" activities, it has never been done and believes the city would find better use for the property. Miss Vorrasi asked Member Chapman if she may be given the opportunity to investigate this for him.

Member Camera would like to address the schools being impacted by the division of county and city. He stated his concern lies within the relationships the children build from elementary to high school and does not want to see this change. He said there has been an uptick in the participation in youth sports and those students come from all areas of the 32034-zip code as well as other parts of the county. He would like long-term planning to keep in mind how many of the students attending school in the city do not reside in the city and how to allow them to keep playing sports where they prefer to play.

Member Mountjoy believes that implementing an "adopt a park" program would benefit the city and park-goers. She stated the parks she frequently visits do need repairs in numerous areas and perhaps the addition of volunteers to help with maintenance would be great to investigate.

She also mentioned tax initiatives from tourists to help drive up revenue for the Parks and Recreation Department. Miss Vorrasi responded with the fact that the Parks and Recreation Department looks at multiple funding sources on a regular basis. Member Mountjoy reiterated that an amphitheater downtown or in another green space would attract all ages and be beneficial for the local youth. Miss Vorrasi informed the committee that we need to take better care of our current parks, and that we all will see changes.

Vice Chair Pugh asked Miss Vorrasi if they have a solidified maintenance plan for parks, and if the Central Park Rest Station is on the list for improvement. Miss Vorrasi did respond that they are looking at the maintenance contract and will follow up with what is needed in terms of cleanliness and infrastructure with the contractor and staff as well.

MULTIGENERATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Member Chapman stated that he would love to see a goal set to be sure that all the youth living on the island learn how to swim. Chair Grant agreed that this is an issue with rip current, beach swimming and potentially fatal incidences. Member Cocchi agreed and mentioned the number of retention ponds as well being a threat for drowning.

Chair Grant wants areas that are not fully utilized by one entity all the time, such as pocket park: getting the addition of elements like chess boards, concrete benches and bringing multiple generations together.

Vice Chair Pugh asked if the programs have been looked at in the aspect of what is available for the senior population. Miss Vorrasi informed the committee that she and the department have lots of ideas for programs suitable for all the age groups in our community. She stated the goal is to have enough program opportunities for all ages. She doesn't believe we are currently meeting all needs and will be meeting with organizations such as the Council on Aging to assist with planning.

7. STAFF REPORT

Miss Vorrasi stated that she would like this portion to be updated to say, "Staff Comments". There is a monthly report handed out that will be emailed to the committee with the necessary information.

8. BOARD COMMENTS

Member Chapman brought the issue with the Mobi Mats on the beach to the table. His concern was they were not removed before the last large storm. He stated the committee was assured that they would be removed before the storm, and they were not. Miss Vorrasi informed Member Chapman that there were some operational and safety concerns that prevented this and new mats had been purchased. She added that Parks and Recreation has also received a donation for more mats. Chair Grant mentioned maybe speaking with other organizations regarding people with disabilities.

9. NOTICE OF COMMUNICATION

Mr. Mikelson stated there is no communication that needs to be moved up to the City Commission.

PRAC MINUTES

12/13/2022

Vice Chair Pugh commended Miss Vorrasi and Mr. Mikelson for their efforts to improve the Parks and Recreation Department and believes the department is moving forward with great potential.

10. ADJOURNMENT – 6:33 PM