

MONROE COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

March 27, 2023

In-Person and Virtual Meeting

Minutes recorded by Naomi Pagidas, Executive Assistant, Monroe County Parks & Beaches

Meeting Called to Order at 6:05 pm

Board Members in-person attendance:

Steve Miller

Dr. Jim Boilini

Margie Smith

Matthew Babich

Media Present:

No Media Present

Monroe County was represented by:

John Allen - Director, Parks and Beaches

Tom Henry - Manager, Parks and Beaches

Suzi Rubio – Aide to Kevin G. Wilson, Senior Project and Budget Manager Administration

Kirrin Peart- Parks and Beaches Recreation Team Leader

Patricia Eables - Assistant County Attorney

Nathalia Archer - Assistant County Attorney

Jordan Salinger – Senior Project Manager

Tara Bursar – Project Manager

Jethon Williams – IT Media Manager

Public Attendees:

No Public Present

Meeting Minutes:

- The Board approved meeting via Zoom/CMT methods (Resolution 397-2020) and in person. Dr. Boilini made a motion to approve, and Matthew Babich seconded the motion. Motion was approved.

- **Agenda Changes/Approval of Agenda for March 27, 2023**

New Business:

Dr. Boilini added: Keys Kids Swim Program was added to Jacobs Aquatic Pool item

Steve Miller added: Update on Big Pine

John Allen added: Senior Centers

John Allen added: 200 Year 200 Mile

Old Business:

John Allen changed: Budget 2023 to Budget 2024

John Allen changed: Volunteer Days to Adopt-A-Park Program

Matthew Babich made the motion to approve, and Dr. Boilini seconded the motion. Motion was approved.

- **Approval of Board Meeting Minutes of November 7, 2022.** Board had no changes to the November 7, 2022, minutes. Margie Smith made a motion to approve, and Dr. Boilini seconded the motion. Motion was approved.

Election of Officers:

- Dr. Boilini made a motion to nominate Darcy Wadsworth as Chairman, and Steve Miller as Vice Chairman. Margie Smith seconded the motion. Margie Smith, Dr. Boilini, Steve Miller and Matthew Babich were all in favor of the new officers. Motion was approved.

Project Management Update: Jordan Salinger and Tara Bursar

Veterans Memorial Park (Irma repairs):

- Tiki huts have been completed.
- ADA Pavilion is on hold until auger piles are installed. Hoping to finalize the redesign to complete the pavilion before Memorial Day, 5/29/23.
- Bathroom repair plans exceeded FEMA's 50% rule and plans are back with permitting department.

Higgs Beach (Ian repairs): Damage repairs in total are classified as a FEMA "large project" and the cost estimate repair quantities are being tabulated to develop a larger cost estimate.

- Nathalia Archer: To extend the airport taxiway, the City of Key West has one year to provide conceptual drawings to the County that involve a recreation area at Higgs Beach.
- Jordan Salinger: The redirection of the roadbed to access the beach was identified to have ground penetration radar issues and Jordan will follow up with the project manager assigned to the project and report back.

Several park projects that use American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds are being programmed together and choosing one designer in an effort to expedite the projects.

Bay Point Park (ARPA):

- Reviewing a storm water management study to resolve flood issues.

Big Pine Community Park (ARPA):

- Reviewing sports field lighting with plans to expand Musco lighting in the soccer open field area.
- Musco vendor will develop lighting plans for Project Management to put out for bid.

Blue Heron Park (ARPA):

- The master plan and pickleball courts are being consolidated with several projects that are in the early stages of the design discussion.
- A high-level scope of work was developed with the designer, McFarland Johnson, and once the design cost proposal is received all the projects will move forward simultaneously.
- John Allen: Is proposing to have six total pickleball courts.

Bernstein Park (ARPA):

Resod Turf Project:

- An on-site meeting was held with the architect and the landscape architect to review scope of project.
- Construction documents are being worked on by project manager to move forward.
- John Allen: Plans are to level the ground and fix drainage to add sod instead of using artificial turf. The cost savings can be used towards repairs to make parks safe and accessible.

Higgs Beach (TDC):

- A restroom replacement construction contract should be on the April BOCC agenda for approval with Barracuda Builders, and construction will start after approval.

Pine Channel Nature Park (TDC):

- Received \$200,000 in TDC Funding. The RFP is pending legal review and will then be advertised for added landscaping amongst the nature trails.

Higgs Beach (TDC, FDOT-TAP):

- The Reynolds Street Pier pile repair project is funded with FDOT and TDC funds and is programmed into the FDOT 5-year work plan. Construction will begin fiscal year 2026-2027.

Rowell's Waterfront Park:

Phase I (TDC, FDOT, CAP):

- Phase I is complete, however, contractor began construction of the drainage pond and temporarily closed the park for safety reasons. To not affect the plans for Phase II, there was a redesign of the large retention pond, and the contractor has mobilized to finish the work.

Phase II (CDBG-CV, CAP):

- Phase II work is a CDBG Grant fund and is getting ready to be advertised. The RFP is being finalized.
- After the advertisement period and award is presented to the BOCC, the construction of another bathroom building, a larger parking lot, and added pathways around the park will begin.

Phase III (TDC):

- TDC funds were received to construct 3-4 Tiki huts around the beach area and currently waiting on a proposal for design services.
- The park will be closed during Phase II and Phase III. The 18-month clock starts once TDC grant is approved. There is a 9 to 11 months construction timeline where the park will be closed.
- John Allen is working with Project Management to minimize closing time. Details will be provided to the community once discussed with contractor.
- Dr. Boilini: A multipurpose area with the soccer field is of importance to avoid driving the distance to another park.
- John Allen: Islamorada will be using the Harry Harris Park field for their soccer team this year.

Suzi Rubio:

- Key Largo pickleball court: Still trying to get through permitting. There is a five(5) ft. set back on existing asphalt that must be removed. We requested a variance from the Monroe County Planning Department, and once approved we can move forward.

Parks & Beaches Director Update: John Allen

Higgs Beach:

- John Allen will send a copy of the Missile Hawk agreement to the committee.
- FEMA project:
 - Repairs must be replaced like for like unless we can show how to make significant changes.
 - When projects are completed, capital funds are requested to make enhancements.
 - Suzi Rubio: FEMA partial reimbursement is 75%/25%, but not guaranteed.
- Focusing on safety repairs in addition to other repairs.
- New water fountains are being installed at dog park with an access valve to cool off pets.
- Adding Pavers, fencing and sod which will require park closing during upgrades and construction.
- Artist restored artwork at the African Cemetery.
- Art mural project to begin in May near the racquetball court if approved at the April BOCC meeting.
- The sargassum is cleaned every morning by Beach Rakers with added services as needed.

Jacobs Aquatic Pool:

- Request for Proposal (RFP)
 - Upper Keys Community Pool, Inc. lease is ending with no extensions.
 - Tricia Eables is finishing the legal review to go into publication.
 - Possible May 31 bid opening day to meet the June BOCC agenda for approval.

Keys Kids Swim Program

- Dr. Boilini: Monroe County, Monroe County School District, and Jacob Aquatic Center entered into a partnership to offer free swim lessons to all kindergarten students countywide.
- A pilot program will start with the Key Largo Elementary School.
- Grades 1-8 will get a free voucher to learn how to swim.
- Some instructors are county employees, and will hire additional instructors if needed.

Budget 2024:

- Parks and Beaches 2023 operating budget is \$3.8 million with \$1.8 million budgeted for salaries.
- Requesting increase for 2024 operating budget to develop more recreation programs, increase staff, park security, and to help keep costs down at Jacobs Aquatic pool.

2023 Capital Improvements by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds:

- \$3.5 million were given to Parks and Beaches by the administration to make improvements throughout the county.
- Congress approved ARPA funds to support eligible counties or cities to improve parks and outside areas.
- Current project list:

- Bernstein Park: sod replacement
- Peace Park: repaired concrete
- Bay Point Park: engineer design plans to solve flooding issue
- Harry Harris Park: bring existing fence inside the light post
- Big Pine Community Park: irrigation improvements, new playground with rubber surface and shade
- Friendship Park: replacing playground sand with rubber surface
- Key Largo Community Park: replacing fitness equipment and added rubber ground surface
- Blue Heron Park: new pickleball courts
- Higgs African Cemetery: replace railing
- Old Settler's Park: playground replacement
- Wilhelmina Park: replacing sand with rubber surface

Reallocated Funds:

- Blue Heron Park: possible new playground
- Bernstein Park: replace flooring
- Palm Villa Park: replace shade structure with tiki hut
- Fireman's Park: new fitness equipment
- Big Pine Community Park: elevator repairs

Capital items for FY24: If funds are not used in FY24 they can be used in the future

- Rowell's Waterfront Park: add a dog park
 - Harry Harris Park: replace lighting with non-glaring lights
 - Big Pine Community Park: begin a pool plan design to get cost
 - Harry Harris Park: add new playground near ballfield
 - Big Pine Community Park: turf replacement
 - Bernstein Community Park: interior and exterior painting
 - Key Largo Community Park: LED lights and replace restrooms
 - Bay Point Park: complete redesign to solve flooding issue
 - Big Pine Community Park: skate park repairs
 - Higgs Beach: replace dog shelters with tiki huts
 - Harry Harris Park: replace restroom
 - Astro City: replace sand with ground rubber surface and shade structure
- Developing a master plan to add shade structure to Astro City, request MC Fleet Department for additional equipment, add artwork to the pet memorial, fence repairs, and accessible water fountains countywide.
 - Dr. Boilini: Asked about a fence on a property near Friendship Park as an option for a dog park. John Allen will investigate who owns that land with Project Management and report back to committee.

Summer Camp Fees: John Allen asking committee for a recommendation to get support at the April BOCC.

- \$100 week for the first child, plus \$50 for each additional child in the same household.
- Kirrin Peart: We will use the same platform as the Monroe County School District for free or reduced lunch plans based on income and the amount of people in the household.
- Margie Smith: Margie would like to know if an existing program in Key West can qualify for the waiver. To have a distribution site for meals for kids during the summer would be ideal. John Allen will research and report back.

Margie Smith made the motion to approve the recommendation, and Matthew Babich seconded the motion. Motion was approved.

Parking App:

- When the Parking App gets approved and implemented, John Allen would like to simplify the park entry and boat ramp fees at Harry Harris Park for non-residents, veterans, and seniors.
- The fees will potentially apply to Rowell's Waterfront Park, Veterans Memorial Park, Pine Channel Nature Park, and Higgs Beach.
- The Parking App will identify who is a resident and a non-resident from the registration information.
- Adding other parks will increase revenue that can be allocated back to the department.
- John Allen is looking to get a recommendation from the committee in future meetings.

Adopt-A-Park Program:

- Volunteer opportunities for the public to help upgrade certain areas of the parks.
- Will ask committee to help seek volunteers, such as the Key Largo Rotary Club.

Old Business:

Update on Status of Florida Communities Trust Agreement at Key Largo Park.

- Tricia Eables said it is in perpetuity.
- Reviewing all documentation to make sure we are not violating the grant.
- There is a requirement to follow an annual stewardship report.
- Tricia Eables will review the Big Pine Community Park community trust grant.

Reconfirm 2023 meeting dates: May 8, 2023, at Big Pine; July 10, 2023, at Key Largo; and October 16, 2023, at Bernstein (if Bernstein is not available, we can move to another location). Steve Miller is not available on 5/8. John Allen is not available on 7/10 and asked to consider moving the date.

New Business:

200 years-200 miles: Kirrin Peart

- A great opportunity to run the program challenge during the Florida Keys 200 Year Anniversary celebrations.
- Log any indoor or outdoor physical activity by the mile.
- Participants that submit their miles receive a certificate of completion.
- The first fifty finishers will receive a Monroe County 200 Year Anniversary coin and will be invited to the July 3rd Big Pine event.
- The submission deadline is June 30, 2023, in order to be recognized at the July 3rd event.

Electric Bikes: Nathalia Archer

- Drafting ordinance for electric bikes and amending language that an adult over the age of 14 must be accompanied by a child younger than the age of 14 at a playground.
- Prohibiting electric bikes except in areas where vehicular traffic is allowed.
- Making changes to commercial activity on Monroe County property to allow recreational activities.
- Dr. Boilini: Concerned about regular bikes. John Allen: Key Largo Community Park has designated areas for regular bikes and may consider painting a bike lane in the path.

Dogs on Leash: Dr. Boilini

- Received complaints about unleashed large dogs running through the infield especially during games.
- John Allen: Looking at alternatives to dog parks. Off duty officers help monitor the parks, but we need to have the community assist by following the rules.
- Tricia Eables: Chapter 18-27(k)(l)(m), references that dogs are allowed with an eight-foot leash.

Senior Centers:

- Leasing a Big Pine property shopping center unit by Winn-Dixie.
- Old Plantation Key courthouse is being renovated.
- Looking for potential location in Key West.

Additional Public Comments: No public present.

Board Comments:

Steve Miller:

- Lobster mini season: Suggested a program to shuttle people back and forth from Harry Harris Park to a participating school to avoid congestion.
- John Allen: Logistically it may take time for the boater to return to the park and can hold up the ramp line.
- John Allen: Restricted parking in the area can be revisited to learn if the spaces can be used. He will get back to the committee.
- Kirrin Peart: Will provide a historic report as to how many boaters entered the park and forward to committee.

Matthew Babich:

- Inquired about the slide warranty located at Higgs Beach.
- John Allen: It's a FEMA project. Checking warranty. Tom Henry is getting quotes.
- Matthew Babich: Is there a consideration to have maps to go along with the parks.
- John Allen: John will check with Kristen L.

Wisteria: No update.

Additional Comments:

Nathalia Archer:

- Hawks Missile: Need to have standard park rules set in place when the County receives the property.
- Matthew Babich: Inquired if planting trees is an option. Nathalia Archer will look into mitigation inquiry.
- The ordinance will be presented to the BOCC.

Motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Dr. Boilini and seconded by Margie Smith. All were in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:06 pm.