



Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

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[Monroe County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meetings](#)

MONROE COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

July 17, 2023

- In-Person and Virtual Meeting
- Minutes recorded by Naomi Pagidas, Executive Assistant, Monroe County Parks & Beaches
- Darcy Wadsworth, who was running late to the meeting, passed the gavel to Steve Miller. Upon her arrival Steve Miller handed the gavel back to Darcy Wadsworth.
- Meeting called to order at 6:06 p.m.
- Salute to Flag

Board Members in-person attendance:

Darcy Wadsworth, Chairperson
Dr. Jim Boilini
Margie Smith
Matthew Babich
Steve Miller

Media Present:

No Media Present.

Monroe County was represented by:

John Allen - Director, Parks and Beaches
Nathalia Archer - Assistant County Attorney
Suzi Rubio - Senior Project and Budget Manager, Parks and Beaches
Tom Henry - Manager, Parks and Beaches
Kirrin Peart - Sr. Recreation Team Leader, Parks and Beaches
Mike Piekenbrock - Recreation Team Leader, Parks and Beaches
Jethon Williams - IT Media Manager

Public Attendees: In attendance 29 in-person and 45 via Zoom. To view public attendees, please refer to the July 17, 2023, meeting recording. Link: [Monroe County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meetings](#)

Meeting Minutes:

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

• **Agenda Changes / Approval of Agenda**

Old Business:

John Allen added: Higgs beach restroom replacement plans handout.

- **Approval of Board Meeting Minutes of May 8, 2023:** Board had no changes to the May 8, 2023, meeting minutes. Dr. Jim Boilini made a motion to approve, and Matthew Babich seconded the motion. Motion was approved.

- **Matthew Babich, District 3, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Member opening comments:** Matthew's primary commitment and objective as a board member is to maximize the public benefit at the parks, beaches, and facilities while enhancing the lives, well-being, and recreational needs of the entire community. The addition of six pickleball courts on two tennis courts at Higgs beach aligns perfectly with these goals, as it will offer opportunities for people to enjoy life and energize their health.

The sport of pickleball is experiencing remarkable growth, with its existence in schools and a diverse range of users, including locals and visitors of all ages, from beginners to seasoned players competing at the national level. It's a positive impact on the health and well-being of everyone involved.

Matthew reported his observations of the courts at Higgs beach. He mentioned that he regularly visited the park and noted a higher volume number of pickleball players compared to tennis players using the courts. As a result, he is recommending the conversion of two tennis courts into six pickleball courts. This will help address the substantial waiting list of pickleball players looking for access to the existing courts.

Darcy Wadsworth arrived at the meeting location, and Steve Miller passed the gavel back to Darcy Wadsworth.

- **Parks and Beaches Director Update:**

- **In-House Projects – Higgs Beach Court Renovation:**

- The engineers advised to resurface the Higgs beach courts instead of replacing them, which will be a quicker process. This process is expected to be quite extensive, and we foresee reimbursement for the courts on a like-for-like basis. Any additional features or modifications will be funded from the County's budget. To move forward, it is necessary to secure a recommendation from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board committee, gain approval from the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) and initiate the submission of a Request for Proposal (RFP) to solicit bids from contractors for the project. John is interested in gathering input from the community regarding the renovation plans, and he intends to share updates on its progress.

The goal is to accommodate both pickleball and tennis players while staying focused on meeting the needs of the entire community. The City of Key West is in the process of renovating Bayview Park and will be resurfacing some of their tennis courts soon. Public use of tennis courts at Monroe County School District and Key West High School after school hours and off season is a possibility. Monroe County cannot be the sole source for both pickleball and tennis courts, the City of Marathon, City of Key West, and Islamorada discussed plans for their courts, and the public is encouraged to reach out to them.

John Allen asked the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board committee for recommendations in using the existing park layout for shared space.

Public Comments: Pickleball players have presented convincing reasons for the need to expand the number of pickleball courts, while tennis players are adamant about retaining their existing courts. To access public comments, please refer to the July 17, 2023, meeting recording. Link: [Monroe County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meetings](#)

Steve Miller Comments: Steve commended the public attendees for stating their cases. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board committee heard all concerns and approved a motion. *Dr. Jim Boilini made a motion to approve one tennis court from Higgs beach to be used for both sports, and Steve Miller seconded the motion. Steve Miller removed his motion. Steve Miller made a motion to use two tennis courts as joint use with a set schedule, and Dr. Jim Boilini seconded the motion. All were in favor.*

Matthew Babich Comments: Matthew recommended John Allen to continue discussions with Key West High School to open tennis courts to the public during after school hours.

Dr. Jim Boilini made a motion to approve for the County or the City of Key West to explore an interlocal agreement with Key West High School to open the tennis courts to the public with lights, and Matthew Babich seconded the motion. Motion was approved.

- **Update from Project Management on projects for Parks and Beaches:**

- No update.

- **Parks and Beaches Director Update - continued:**

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Projects:

- Big Pine Community Center: Installing a new playground, rubber surface, replacing elevator, adding iron gates, repairing skate park, and resurfacing bocce courts.
- Bernstein Community Park: Replaced new floors and painting interior.
- Bay Point Park: Meeting with engineers to go over the design regarding flooding issues.
- Friendship Park: Replacing sand with rubber surface.
- Key Largo Community Park: Replacing fitness equipment, adding artificial turf in batting cage, remodeling bathroom fixtures, and installing additional fencing.
- Blue Heron Park: Adding three new pickleball courts, installing new playground equipment, and fitness court.
- Old Settlers Park: Installing new playground equipment.
- Wilhelmina Park: Installing new playground rubber surface and shade structure.
- Palm Villa Park: Installing new tiki hut.
- Big Coppitt Park: Installing new fitness equipment.
- Harry Harris Park: Remodeling bathroom fixtures, installing new playground near ballfields, and additional ballfield fencing.

Higgs Beach Ian Repairs:

On-site inspections were completed, and we are in the procurement process.

Tourist Development Council (TDC) Grant:

TDC approved funding for the Big Pine Amphitheater and the Jacobs Aquatic Center pool liner.

Higgs Beach RFP:

Salute was the sole respondent to the RFP, and we will be putting forth their recommended lease agreement to the BOCC for approval.

Key West Agreement - Bernstein Park:

The County is seeking a recommendation from the board to renew the Bernstein Park agreement between the County and the City of Key West with some modifications. The changes will be to establish a more organized field usage schedule to ensure efficient maintenance to the grounds.

Steve Miller made a motion to renew the agreement with updates to the contract and seconded by Dr. Jim Boilini. All were in favor.

Summer Camp Program – Kirrin Peart:

The first ever Monroe County Summer Camp Program was held at Big Pine Community. In addition, Parks and Beaches took over the Sugarloaf School summer sports camp program. Both programs were successfully executed, with a goal to expand to other County parks in the future.

Keys Kids Swim Program – Kirrin Peart:

The Keys Kids Swim Program ended on May 12, 2023. Seventy percent of the students passed the American Red Cross Water Safety test after two weeks of training. The remainder of the students passed with assistance of a flotation device. When the program ended, it was evident that the students knew how to stay safe in and around the water. Students who declined or failed the swim test were offered vouchers for free swim lessons at Jacobs Aquatic Center from an American Red Cross Water Safety Instructor. One-hundred vouchers are available, and we anticipate using them by the end of August 2023. The hope is to expand the program in 2024.

- **Old Business:**

Hawk Missile Site update: Nathalia Archer discussed that the Hawk Missile site is functioning as a park, and the City of Key West has a year to provide conceptual plans to the County. The agreement terminates March 21, 2028.

Spiny Lobster Sport Season update: John Allen discussed that additional parking has not been established and we will use the same parking system that was used last year. There will be a sheriff present at Mike Forster Park, Harry Harris Park and SR-4A boat ramps. Information about the parks hours and ramp closings will be posted through social media. The charge of boat ramp fees at additional County ramps are being considered for the near future.

Higgs Beach Restroom Replacement Plans: Staff distributed a copy of the Higgs beach restroom replacement plans, which were requested by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board committee on May 8, 2023.

- **New Business:**

Jacobs Aquatic Center RFP update: The bid will be entered into DemandStar in mid-August 2023.

William Sobek: John Allen would like to have William Sobek, a pickleball professional player that plays at Higgs beach claiming gold and bronze medals at the U.S. Open to be recognized at the Key West BOCC meeting. Steve Miller made a motion to approve and seconded by Matthew Babich. All were in favor.

- **Additional Public Comments:**

No comments.

- **Board Comments:**

No comments.

Motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Darcy Wadsworth and seconded by Matthew Babich. All were in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.