

**MONROE COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

July 22, 2024

- In-Person and Virtual Meeting
- Minutes recorded by Erika Nodal, Executive Assistant, Monroe County Parks & Beaches
- Meeting called to order 6:15 p.m.
- Salute to Flag

Board Members in-person and via Zoom attendance:

Darcy Wadsworth, Chairperson
Dr. Jim Boilini
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
Scott Atkins - Operations Manager, Parks and Beaches
Dawn DeBrule - Recreation Event Specialist, Parks and Beaches
Kirrin Peart - Sr. Recreation Team Leader, Parks and Beaches
Mike Piekenbrock - Recreation Team Leader, Parks and Beaches
Naomi Pagidas – Community Center Specialist, Parks and Beaches
Cary Vick – Acting Director, Project Management
Jethon Williams - IT Media Manager

Public Attendees:

Cari Sanders

Meeting Minutes:

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

• **Agenda Changes / Approval of Agenda**

Nathalia Archer reported staff is requesting two changes, the first is a change to item Friends of Parks and Beaches Upper Keys amended to vote to support the BOCC agreement with Friends of Parks and Beaches of the Upper Keys, and the second is the Sunshine Laws review from Nathalia Archer changed to the next October 21, 2024, meeting. Steve Miller motions to change and Matthew Babich seconds the motion.

• **New Business:** Jacob's Aquatic Center Pool Management

• **Approval of Board Meeting Minutes of April 1, 2024:** Jim Boilini motions to approved board meeting minutes from April 1, 2024, Matthew Babich seconds the motion. The motion was approved.

• **Project Management Updates:** Cary Vick joined us today to provide updates.

- **Blue Heron**: Cary Vick reported that the installation of Blue Heron pickleball courts is moving along slowly but surely. He reported receiving a 100% construction drawing and will be moving forward to placing out an RFP. This does have funding, and he expects a completion in December. Updates include ten parking spaces.
- **Bernstein Park**: Cary Vick reported that the Bernstein project is one he has been working on for a while, and we are not going to have funding for this next year, but we should at least have the design completed. We expected to use ARPA funding, but due to other projects that were moving along quicker and had higher priority, the funding was reallocated. Cary Vick asked if anyone had any questions, and Matthew Babich wondered whether this project was to change the grass and add artificial turf; Cary Vick reported no, that we would stick to natural grass and stated he has a turf expert redesigning the subsoil, putting in more subsoil, better draining, and possibly adjust the irrigation and use a more appropriate natural turf. We went back and forth on natural or artificial turf and the final decision was natural. Cary Vick reported the design portion is to redesign the grade of all the grass fields to sloped more appropriately while still maintaining and adding enough soil to keep a healthy root system. Some maintenance issues and costs are involved, but the idea is to do what we can to keep the natural grass. We will need a way to shut down the fields and keep the teams off, once we need to do maintenance. We will redo some of the existing landscaping, add more native landscaping, and if budget allows, we will add more maintenance storage to that facility.
- **Bay Point Park**: Cary Vick had previous discussions with John Allen regarding a low area, in addition to the neighboring property, that is causing some additional runoff creating problems with the courts. John Allen's staff placed some sandbags, and that seems to have made a difference with the recent heavy rains. We will go that route and try to expand in the long-term to keep the drainage problems to a minimum.
- **Rowell's Waterfront**: Cary Vick reported we've made some progress recently. We had put that project out to bid. We had a fully funded CDBG community development block grant to add infrastructure, grading, new grass, and irrigation. Unfortunately, all bids came in well over the grant amount, and we asked the apparent low bidder to modify their proposal to meet the available funds. We had a good response and are amending the plans to remove several items. We should get a notice to proceed in the coming months. Again, grant funds fully fund this project, and as soon as we get a reduced scope proposal that everyone can agree on, including permitting, we will move forward. Steve Miller asked about the story behind the power pole issue that happened there recently. Cary Vick reported not knowing exactly what happened. He read the newspaper and is aware that the original contractor returned and improved the grounding under each pole. Cary Vick mentioned that several electricians worked on the poles to resolve the issue. They conducted multiple tests, beginning last Wednesday and completing the work on Friday.

- **Higgs Beach:** Cary Vick reported that the Higgs Beach restrooms are now open. There was no ribbon-cutting event for this. The new restrooms are beautiful and make the beach more attractive. The seawall update is still in the design process while we consider various options, including a complete replacement of the seawall. He reported not having any other updates on the design. Cary Vick reported Higgs Beach playground is being pursued by project management and it's being done separately from the overall hurricane Ian repair project because it had some warranty issues; the warranty was keeping the cost down, but additional items must be repaired, and we are moving forward with these. They are considered FEMA eligible. We are coordinating with the original manufacturer to reduce the overall replacement cost.
- **Key Largo Pickleball Courts:** Jim Boilini commented that the pickleball courts are looking good, and Cary Vick reported these are moving along and should be complete in the next couple of weeks.
- **Big Pine Community Park:** Steve Miller asked about the bandshell project in Big Pine, and Cary Vick reported that a revision was needed to upgrade the foundation. We have the funds for that change order. He noted last week, everyone was on site and laid out the location, which will be near the Big Pine Activity Center. Cary Vick reported the excavation will commence in the next few weeks. Steve Miller asked about adding additional outlets in the power poles that run along the post on the field. John Allen reported this is something that can be considered. Darcy Wadsworth also mentioned that having a few more outlets in this area would be a good idea.
- **Director Updates:**
 - **In-House Projects Updates:** John Allen reported a couple updates on projects being completed internally. We have issues with the post and cracks on the Higgs pickleball courts, which will be replaced this weekend or next if the company is able to find housing. We intend to repair the yoga platform that's on Higgs Beach in-house, although it will be covered through FEMA. John stated he is prepping the fields soon at Bernstein for the upcoming soccer season, and we are receiving a couple new mowers, which helps a lot.
 - **Summer Camp Review:** John Allen presented the custom-made welcome signs at the meeting, which were created by the campers and are now displayed on the wall. He noted that this year's summer camp has been a huge success and expressed interest in creating a presentation to highlight the progress since year one. John Allen also mentioned plans to expand the camp with additional dates, emphasizing the benefits for the community and easier access to affordable camps for parents. John Allen reported Sugarloaf School was a great help with the volleyball camp and offered their gym the last week at camp, which worked very well. Mike Piekenbrock added that nearly all camp sessions were fully booked, with many returning campers enjoying the program. John Allen thanked Nathalia Archer and the legal department for their help in creating forms and waivers for our school break camps, including field trips.
 - **Friends of Parks and Beaches Upper Keys:** John Allen reported that a new friends' group is working to help us with different purchases, advertising, and certain things that aren't currently possible. John Allen reported that he believes this is a great opportunity for the department and appreciates the community's desire to do this. John Allen reported working with Nathalia Archer to create a legal agreement with Friends of Parks and Beaches Upper Keys to bring to the Board of County Commissioners for approval. Darcy Wadsworth asked John Allen if he is looking for a motion to approve; John Allen mentioned Cari Sanders, president of the Friends group, joins us today as a speaker. Cari Sanders introduced herself and explained that parks and beaches are super important to her as she didn't have the opportunity to have them where she grew up. Cari Sanders reported she wants to make a difference and provide opportunities to support Parks and Beaches

where our community can gather. Cari Sanders asked if anyone had any specific questions for her, and no one had questions for her. Matt Babich asked if anyone knows of the friends' group from Higgs Beach established years ago. Steve Miller responded that it seems like that organization was dissolved on its own. Matt Babich also reported being interested in having a friend's group in the Lower Keys. John Allen reported going through that process now and how it has to be approved by the BOCC. Cari Sanders said she's willing to assist any future groups that wish to get involved; she reported following all the correct steps and being more than willing to help others who want to do the same. Steve Miller made a motion to support the Friends of Parks and Beaches Upper Keys and Jim Boilini seconded the motion; all in favor. Cari Sanders thanked the board members for their support and reported being excited for the future of Monroe County Parks and Beaches. Cari Sanders reported that the liaison from the county will always be invited to the friends' meetings and will work closely with the county to make sure we're on the same page.

- **Just Older Youth, Inc (JOY):** John Allen reported that this group has been trying to get a community center in the Upper Keys for a long time. He reported that the JOY Group is now at the Plantation Key Community Center and is pleased with the space, and he thanks everyone at the meeting for their continued support. Darcy Wadsworth asked if there are already programs set up at that location. John Allen responded that there are and advises all to stop by the next time they are in the area on a Tuesday or Wednesday as the classes are open to the public and very nice.
- **Public Speaker:**
 - **Additional Public Comments:** Steve Miller reported that he recently attended two events: the "I Love Stock Island" event and the Fourth of July celebration at Big Pine Community Park. He expressed his gratitude to Dawn DeBrule for her help throughout the event application process and extended his thanks to everyone involved. Steve Miller noted that the Parks and Beaches department truly shined in both events.
 - **Board Comments:** Jim Boilini shared that, in his opinion, StandGuard Aquatics has been doing an excellent job since taking over, especially with the camps and programs they offer to the community. John Allen agreed. John Allen expressed his gratitude to Jethon Williams from IT for all his support and assistance.

Motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Steve Miller and seconded by Jim Boilini. All were in favor. Meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.