

Parks and Rec Advisory Board Special Rowell's Public Meeting Minutes

August 28, 2017 6:00 PM
Murray Nelson Government Center Auditorium

Minutes recorded by Chris Rivera, Monroe County Project Management
Meeting began at 6:00 PM

Board Members in attendance:

Steve Miller
Dr. Jim Bolini
Margie Smith

Board Members not present:

Gayle Glover

Media Present:

Theresa Java – Free Press

Monroe County was represented by:

Chris Rivera - Project Management/Parks and Rec Liaison
Ray Sanders - Project Management
Cary Knight- Interim Director of Project Management
Willie DeSantis - Interim Facilities Maintenance Director
Chrissy Collins - Executive Administrator
Patricia Eables – Assistant County Attorney to the Board
Kevin Wilson – Assistant County Administrator
Sylvia Murphy - County Commissioner

There were about 60 members of the public in attendance.

Meeting Minutes:

- Steve Miller asked the public if they would like to speak they could sign in on the sheet and they would be called after the presentation. Steve also mentioned that a group representative would have five minutes of speaking time and individual citizens would be allowed two minutes.
- Chris Rivera gave a presentation on Rowell's Waterfront Park. Discussed that the County was moving forward with designs of the Park. The County has an FDOT grant to design a scenic overlook to include a restroom, parking and a walking/biking path. This project has a concept designed and in order to complete construction, the County would need to construct in phases. It was explained that Phase One would be what FDOT required (Overlook, restroom, parking and walking path). Phase Two could possibly be developing the open space and the beach area. Other phases could be developing the Kayak area and the water basin. Chris Rivera asked if there were any questions when the presentation was complete.
- Jim Bolini asked about the vegetation barrier on the North end of the property. He mentioned that the walking path could have a second line of vegetation on the inside of the path. Mentioned that adding a retaining wall close to the water could be used to level out some of the open area. Identify if there will be a dedicated area for the stage in an event.
- Kevin Wilson answered the question about the vegetation stating that the buffer that was installed was from an FDOT opportunity. Kevin also mentioned that in the earlier meetings there was a lot of discussion about not having a boat launch. The public wanted to have an open space park with no extra parking for boat trailers.
- Steve Miller spoke about the earlier meeting stating that his recollection was a big public out pour about not having a boat launch.
- A member of the public spoke out and asked if they could use a trailer to bring in Kayaks. Kevin Wilson responded saying that it was not yet determined. At the moment, there was no parking planned near the kayak launch.
- Question- Has this park been designed not to flood?
- Kevin- At the present time, the property does not flood. However, we are taking sea level rise and possible flooding into consideration as we design.
- Question- During events, there are noise issues. Suggestion of pointing the stage at the water.
- Kevin- The BOCC can set reasonable rules to be set for the park.
- Statement- There is a concern about noise and trespassing.
- Kevin- Walking path will go around the entire park and any noise will be from an event and not the walkers.
- Steve Miller spoke up and said that there was a long list of speakers and we should get through the list. Please remember that no one should make comment while there is a speaker at the podium. They have signed up to have their say. Please be respectful of them. Hold all questions to the end please.

Rob Stober- Tamarind Bay Club- 5 min.

We feel that most of our concerns have been addressed. The main concern is that noise and trespassing be addressed. A double buffer sounds like a great idea from the stand point of Tamarind Bay. It would help with noise and hopefully help with the trespassing. Please consider Tamarind Bay when designing this park. The County must enforce its rules at the park.

Bill Jones- public- 3 min.

He has lived here all his life. Key Largo deserves a public boat ramp. The people want it and about 14-15 parking spots for trailers. Free parking to locals and out of towners should pay \$20.

John Stuart- Rotary Club- 5 min.

The Rotary Club has used Rowell's for over 20 years. They have hosted events there in the past. Proper design and rules will make this park a benefit to the community. The Rotary has collected over \$300,000 from events at Rowell's. This is the only asset in that area. Design is crucial to be able to hold events.

Paula Friedman- Art Guild- 5 min.

We are asking that the Board consider including a community room that holds about 70-80 people. Founders Park has one that charges. Being the County, you don't have to charge for people to use it, they can just request it.

Jorge Miranda- public- 3 min.

Lives in Tamarind Bay. The fence is in bad shape and is in need of repair. The fence was either put up by the developer of Tamarind Bay or by the Marina owners, but not sure which group. We would like the County to put up a new 6' fence instead of the 5' fence that exists now. Having the boat ramp so close to our marina is a concern for us at Tamarind Bay. Also the noise from events is a major concern. If these things could be addressed, it would be appreciated.

Scott Baste- Public- 3 min.

Looking at the concept that was presented. The distance from the parking lot to the kayak launch is a long way. It would be really hard for a person to carry a 60lb kayak that far. If there is a way to design parking closer or even just move the kayak launch, it would be appreciated.

Pauline Klein- Public- 3 min.

Suggested the County rename the park to "Upper Keys Waterfront Park" since it was bought for \$5 million in tax dollars.

Dave Rettig- Public- 3 min.

He is the Tamarind Bay President. Moving the kayak launch is an excellent idea. Trespassing from swimmers in Tamarind Bay Marina is happening and they could get hit by boats going in and out of it. The sea wall at Rowell's is in bad shape for kids to be on. The landscape shrubs are not a good sound barrier or trespass barrier. People are still using the facilities at Tamarind Bay thinking that is part of the park. The fence is Tamarind Bay's and is in need of repair. In order to repair, it will cost more than just the fence. There are trees interwoven in the fence and the County is charging money to remove or mitigate each and every tree in the permit process. Have been there during the seafood festival and it was too noisy. A boat ramp, even with a fee, is not a good suggestion as far as Tamarind Bay is concerned. We need the tourists to use one of the other boat ramps.

Jim Aguer- Public- 3 min.

Tamarind Bay resident. Tamarind Bay is looking for privacy and security. We do not want to drive our boats out and possibly hit someone that is swimming. We would like a privacy/sound wall put up between us and the park. Trees will not stop the noise or stop people from trespassing on our property.

Jessica Dorkey- Public- 3 min.

She would like to see the Park be kid friendly and dog friendly. Recommends putting a splash pad at the Park. There is one in Homestead that can be used as an example. Lots of communities have them now. Please do not use or place sand down. The Keys are over done with sand and it needs to be more natural. Please consider a fenced in dog area where they can be off leash.

Betsy Baste- Public- 3 min.

She would like a community room at the Park and 70 person occupancy would be a great size.

Becky Collins- Public- 3 min.

The Park needs to be environmentally sustainable and have recycling bins near the restrooms. Set event rules to not allow the use of disposable plastic water bottles or bags.

Dottie Moses- Public- 3 min.

Please add shade structures to this Park. Structures should be designed to allow a breeze to pass through them. Park should have nature signs along the path to identify natural vegetation. If the power poles can be removed and maybe have underground service. Have a butterfly garden installed with educational signs. Music/noise is an issue. Any amplified noise should be addressed. The Park was shown as a possible place for a wedding venue. (Kevin Wilson mentioned that weddings are allowed at all county parks but probably not the receptions. All requests have to go through the County facilities department).

Andrew Bertucci- Public- 3 min.

He wants to ensure that we allow dogs at the Park and to use native plants on the buffer area.

Patrick Knotts- Public- 3 min.

He is a part of Sweetwater music and a local musician. The County should build a small permanent amphitheater and point it away from Tamarind Bay Resort. Key Largo needs a public boat launch, but this may not be the place for it. Need to fill in part of the swimming section to have a shallow end to it.

Beverly Middleton- Public- 3 min.

The Rotary needs a place to have their events and if a community center is there, it will give us a place to go. Founders Park is too far away. Agrees that the Park needs a new name. The County should install cameras and fine people who do not clean up after their dogs. Tamarind Bay is beautiful and the kayak launch should be moved to accommodate them.

Ron Miller- Upper Keys Citizens Association- 5 min.

Ron gave a presentation on a new Promenade feature that Rowell's can have included. By just having a 20' wide and 300' long bricked or paved area with trees for shade and benches on both sides would benefit all the public. The proposed area would also be ADA accessible.

Craig Beleker- Craigs Restaurant- 3 min.

Has done many festivals and suggests that a deceleration lane be put in for this Park. Parking is important and needs to be reviewed. Parking on the street is not a good alternative. Shuttle

from an offsite parking is best to fully utilize the whole Park. Traffic is inconvenient throughout the Keys. An amphitheater is great although the size does not need to be as large as Founders Park amphitheater.

Robby Majeslia- Public- 3 min.

The Park does not need a boat ramp or trailers. There needs to not only be a wall between Tamarind Bay and the Park, but also on the south side of the property. Enclose the whole Park for safety. There was mention of a second bathroom. Why not have the Kayak rental be near this one and not on the opposite side. Make pavilions for shade big. Promenade is a good suggestion.

Jason Kendall- Public- 3 min.

He has lived in Key Largo since 1982 and is surprised that nothing has happened at this marina before now. Would like to know the maintenance costs of this Park. Wants to ensure that long term maintenance is being taken into consideration. Please don't let this Park turn into a park for live-aboard boaters.

Marty Leoh- Public- 3 min.

He has lived in Key Largo for the past 18 years. Here to support Tamarind Bay in the request of a wall. Loves the idea of a Park at this site. Need to really look at the events and the traffic issues when developing here. How much will it cost to get into the Park or how much will it cost residents in taxes. Do not design this Park to be a money maker for the County.

All the public present has had a chance to be heard. The Board members spoke on what they have heard.

Board members mentioned that there is a Community room and a splash pad at Jacobs Aquatic Park.

Kevin Wilson agreed that a splash pad was a good idea and will consider it.

Board-How high could a wall possibly be if allowed between Tamarind Bay and the Park?

Kevin- 6' is code or 4' in some areas. Either of those walls will not stop noise.

Board- Dog Park? Have heard that public wants a dog park.

Kevin- We can consider it. There are many public County owned parks that have pet friendly rules.

Board- Who enforces those rules?

Kevin- Public Works staff enforces the rules when present. It is typically hard to enforce rules without 100% presence.

Board- Agreement on having a permanent amphitheater. Suggest moving it closer to the water.

Kevin- We will look into the possibility of an amphitheater.

Board- Will there be any fitness equipment?

Kevin- There will be something at the Park. Maybe Frisbee Golf will be installed. (Laughter from the public.) We don't know what will be there yet, but we have a few possibilities in mind.

Board- There was suggestion about moving the kayak launch, is that a possibility?

Kevin- It is always a possibility. We will look into it.

Board- What is the path going to be made of?

Kevin- The path material is not decided as of yet. Pavement is cheap and plexi-pave is pervious.

Commissioner Sylvia Murphy spoke.

This Park was purchased with County money from sales tax thanks to all residents. Suggest keeping a walking path close to the Tamarind Bay side to further put more sound distance in there. Does not suggest having the trail enclosed on both sides. Not in favor of renaming the Park after people, but this is called Rowell's after its original owner. It deserves to stay that way. A splash pad sounds great. Not in favor of a wall, however, removing the intertwined trees from the fence is doable. Liking the idea of a promenade with trees on both sides for shade. Moving the kayak launch is probably the best idea. Having a community center is not within budget and besides what is wrong with those entities using this room for their meetings (Murray Nelson Auditorium)?

Steve Miller asked what is the next step?

Chris Rivera- The next step is to design the restroom, parking, and trail as stated in Phase One.

Kevin- Mentioned that the second bathroom was needed for the sheer size of the Park. Phase one should be going out to bid for construction in 6- 12 months.

Meeting adjourned at 8:13 PM