Parks and Rec Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

November 8, 2021
Hybrid Meeting- via Zoom & Murray Nelson Government Center

Minutes recorded by Deb Martinez, Facilities/Parks & Beaches
Meeting Called to Order at 6:06 pm

Board Members in attendance:
Steve Miller
Margie Smith
Darcy Wadsworth (via Zoom)
Dr. Jim Boilini

Board Member not attending:
Gayle Glover

Media Present:
No Media Present

Monroe County was represented by:
Kevin Wilson - Assistant County Administrator
Willie DeSantis - Facilities Maintenance Director
John Allen - Parks & Beaches Director
Chrissy Collins - Executive Administrator
Patricia Eables - Assistant County Attorney
Cary Knight - Project Management Director

There were 13 members of the public that attended the meeting (8 in person/5 via zoom).

Meeting Minutes:

➢ The Board approved via Zoom/CMT methods (Resolution 397-2020) to conduct the Hybrid meeting.

➢ Approval of Agenda for November 8, 2021 meeting

Board had no changes and Agenda was approved.
Approval of July 19, 2021, Meeting Minutes

Board had no changes to the July 19, 2021, minutes. Darcy Wadsworth made a motion to approve, and Margie Smith seconded the motion. Minutes were approved.

Project Management Update - Cary Knight

Harry Harris

- Work is under contract for construction and the project is moving forward. The jetty and swim area will be put back together.

Blue Heron

- This project is finished and looks like it will become the new senior meal site in Big Pine. It will probably only be for the meal site and not the senior citizens center as space is very tight there. It may be looked into in the future to put something up in the building that is coming down, however, for now it has been suggested to use the Big Pine Community Park building.

Watson Field & Big Pine Park

- IRMA repairs are complete.

Veterans Park

- Restroom design is in process. The Tiki Hut and pavilion are in the process of getting approvals.

Higgs Beach

- No movement of relocation of the road.
- The sand renourishment is in process.

Rowell’s & Big Pine Swimming Hole

- Will be completed in March and May of 2022.

Swimming Hole- There is a lot of progress. There was a traffic study done and the way the project is designed as to the entrance and exit to the swimming hole, there is a triangular median that limits traffic turning into the park. So, it will be northbound traffic turning into the park and coming out you will be heading northbound again. There is talk about putting something into the FDOT long term budget to do turn lanes. There is concern about being able to turn on/off US 1. Some discussion on size of the canal and as to whether it will meet requirements to conduct swim meets at this location in the future.
• The foundations have been started on the bathrooms.
• The framing is down for all the platforms and walkways - they just need to get the decking boards.
• Due to the fact that this project is being overseen by a CEI and is granted funded, it is being built to FDOT standards.

Rowell’s

• Toppino’s are almost done or have finished the pathway. We were under budget and used the money to start designing phase 2. Phase 2 shall include:
  • A lower bathroom.
  • Parking lot expansion on the south side of the property.
  • Finishing the path - it will be a 360 walk around the park.
  • Lighting.

It is open for use during each phase of the work. The final paving and realignment of the entrance may cause a closure for a week or two.

Key Largo Park

• The design for the pickleball courts is being done now.
• Dr. Boilini has said that some of the residents are concerned about bikes on the walking path inside the park. Kevin took the opportunity to introduce the new Director of Parks and Beaches - John Allen. He also advised that John and Suzie Rubio were out walking the path. They are looking into replacement cost, and it is over $50,000. So, they are developing a scope work to replace the damaged area of the walking path for now.

Cheryl Roock - Advocate for Key Largo Community Park. Requesting cones to be put up where the sidewalk has not been repaired yet. She asked Kevin how long it would take once it went out for bids. Kevin advised that typically it took 2-3 months. Kevin said start of construction probably would not start until the first part of 2022.

West Martello

• The drainage project for the outside (Phase 2) is completed. The drainage project for the inside (Phase 3) is under design. The roof work is going out for bid. The last of the TDC money will seal the Papillo Gallery. After this last section is complete, the entire building will have a new roof that has a 30-year fluid applied membrane.
• There’s an HVAC project-funded by the TDC that seals up openings and introduces outside air so won’t be a stale smell. It will do a much better job of cooling and have much better air quality.
Old Business

- **Update on Sunset Park/Bay Drive**
  - Kevin advised that John Allen has seen the area and understands the background.
  - It is currently open Tuesday-Thursday from sunrise to sunset.
  - Kevin suggested to the Board that this issue should be on the December BOCC agenda since the meeting will be in Key Largo. His recommendation is to leave as is until the December meeting.
  - Moving forward the options are pretty much the same.
  - It is still a right of way - there is no parking in the neighborhood.
  - It has been asked that the no parking be changed to add spaces in front of the right of way and make that an acceptable parking area. However, that only gives you two (2) parking spaces.
  - Status quo until the December meeting.

**Patricia Eables** advised there is a Resolution on the agenda regarding adoption of rules and regulations for the Bay Drive area. However, this will be tabled until the December meeting. Kevin said it can stay on the November agenda.

**Boat Ramp**

- There are still issues. People behaving badly not sure how to solve that problem.
- The boat ramp is open and renamed as the Mike Forester Memorial Park and the sign is installed now.

Julia Casper (zoom) deferred her 3 minutes to Debra Owens who was attending the meeting.

Debra Owens –Gave a history of the Bay Drive access road.

Richard Brindle- (attendee) - Feels the park is a safety hazard. He states it is impossible to live comfortably in the neighborhood. He feels it doesn’t belong in a neighborhood.

Joe Biondoletti - (zoom) - A resident of Sunset Point for 20 years. He’s watched the progression of how it has come to this point. Rocks had been put up- then a fence- then rules had to be put up. September 25, 2000, the Board suggested to have park access turned over to the neighborhood. He feels the internet has a lot to do with the issues. There is no one to manage it- no parking- no bathroom facilities. He wanted to know if Rowell’s will be run the same way. He feels that the residents are doing what the Parks and Recreation Department should be doing.

Lysa Benami - (attendee) - There is 60 ft of grass that goes down to a little sandy beach. States it was not designated a park. Lysa said this doesn’t belong to the County per se- as a public facility. They are requesting that it be deeded back to the area homeowners.
Beth Bressier and Philip Schwartz - (zoom) - New owners in 2021, so they have not experienced all the drama that has been happening, but they support all the previous speakers 100%. They would like to see the neighborhood own the space, with no public access.

Chris and Vanessa Burns - (zoom) - They live directly across from the boat ramp. People utilize the community as a trash can. They agree with the previous speakers. This is not a park. It can’t support the number of people that are there on a weekly basis. It is noisy from early morning until late at night.

Sue Heim - (zoom) - She lives in Tavernier but utilizes the park and has done so since 2006 and doesn’t feel like it should be closed to the public. She wants to be part of the conversation and does not want to be excluded from using the park.

Reuven Benami - (attendee) - Feels they can work something out with Sue Heim so she can utilize it if the homeowners take it over.

Darcy Wadsworth - (board member) - Is this a Monroe County Park? Kevin responded that it is not a park. It’s a right-of-way dedicated to the perpetual use of the public.

Dr. Boilini - (board member) - Who owns the property? There is no deed to the County as it is platted and dedicated to the perpetual use of the public. It was asked if there could be no deed transfer since technically the County doesn’t own it. Kevin did not know all the details and has asked the County Attorney’s office to look at the available options.

Dr. Bolini made a motion to recommend to the Commission that this Bay Drive area is turned over under the purview of the new Parks and Recreation department. Long term goal is to transfer the park and use of the park to the two (2) homeowners associations, but the associations must have a way of allowing the rest of Monroe County residents access. Also, the motion was amended to add that the County Attorney provide guidance for the BOCC. Margie Smith seconded the amended motion. Motion carried.

Darcy abstained. She would like to hear more from legal first.

**New Business**

- **Lower Keys Scenic Viewing Area and Nature Center (a/k/a Big Pine Key Swimming Hole)**
  - Three (3) proposals (not contracts) were submitted for the kayak launch at the swimming hole. Patricia Eables said this should go out for proposals by using a Request for Proposals (RFP) to give others a chance to bid as we; Also, it needs to be decided what other amenities they would prefer at the Swimming Hole so it can all be included in the RFP.
  - **Big Pine Key Bocce** - The Big Pine Bocce League does not like the surface on the bocce courts and wants it changed to Georgia clay. Per Willie DeSantis, the type of surface will be changed to the Georgia clay, such as used at the Key West bocce courts, after the season is over.
Board Comments

Dr. Boilini had been contacted by Kara Carson who inquired about obtaining swim jackets for special needs citizens. John Allen advised he had obtained grants for such for the Tampa pools and to contact him on the matter.

Chairman Miller advised that the Big Pine community would like to have a splash pad at the Big Pine Community Park.

Additional discussion on the ILA with the Monroe County School Board and the joint use of the park at the Sugarloaf School. The issue of the locked gates at the park is being addressed. There are some long-range plans being discussed as to other facilities or equipment to add at this park. Kevin advised that this Board needs to make a recommendation to the Commission as to what they would propose, and it can be considered for inclusion in the capital plan.

Patricia Eables advised that there have been complaints about dogs being in certain areas of the Key Largo Park and this is being addressed to determine what changes may be necessary at that park.

The next meeting will be January 24, 2022, at the Big Pine Key Community Center at 6:00 pm.

Dr Boilin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:42pm, with a second by Darcy. Meeting adjourned.