

SUMMARY MINUTES

ISLAMORADA, VILLAGE OF ISLANDS PARKS & RECREATION CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

April 18, 2023

Meeting started at 4:01 p.m. at the Founders Park Community Center

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Alina Davis, Carolyn Wightman, Richard Russell, Lee Gannaway, Sharon Wampler, Claire Johnson, John Weare, Maria Bagiotti (IVOI), Anne Onsgard (IVOI), Alicia Mote (IVOI), Ted Yates (Village Manager IVOI)

ABSENT:

J.C. Mikula, Lesley Rhyne, James Brown, justified.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Chairwoman Carolyn Wightman asked Ted Yates to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Sharon Wampler moved to approve the minutes from January 24, 2023. Lee Gannaway seconded. Motion passed unanimously (7-0).

EMERGENCY AGENDA ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

NEW ORDINANCE – APPOINTMENTS FOR VILLAGE COMMITTEES – TED YATES:

Ted presented the proposed new application process for Village committees. He expressed that it will be a better way to get the community involved in being a part of our committees and is not meant to target existing Committee members. This format would allow for Committee seats to be open to the public, rather than members being solely appointed by Council members as they've been in the past. Committee members would also serve staggered terms of most likely one to two years with the possibility of reelection. The Council will have to decide how many members each committee will have, as there is typically not an even number of members on any given Committee for voting purposes, as well as decide the length of the staggered terms. This application process and the policies and procedures are still being discussed and finalized. The application will be accessible online on the Village website and will consist of a few simple questions. Sharon asked if there will be an interview process after an application is accepted. Ted explained there will be an interview process, but it may not need to be public unless candidates are interviewed by all Council members together. Carolyn asked Ted to consider that the Parks and Recreation Committee only meets four times a year, and limited terms may cause a loss of

continuity when new members are appointed. Richard suggested continuing to have a representative from Coral Shores High School on the Committee, to continue their symbiotic relationship as the baseball field located within Founders Park is a shared space for both entities.

CORAL SHORES BASEBALL FIELD IMPROVEMENTS – RICHARD RUSSELL:

Richard stated that Coral Shores High School is working with the Village and the Monroe County School Board and is currently going out to bid for contractors to build a turf baseball field at Founders Park within the next two years. The plan includes amenities such as a storage room, clubhouse/dugout, ~~restaurants~~ press box, and restrooms. The field location will stay where it is, but the out of play territory will be extended 17 feet. The project is estimated to cost around 4 million dollars. Richard also mentioned that he plans to step down as Athletic Director of Coral Shores High School in the near future, and will move into a more administrative role, which will include overseeing this renovation project. He commended Maria and staff for the cooperation and partnership they've had over the years while sharing the baseball field space. John Weare suggested that the baseball field be completely enclosed. As a frequent user of the park, he stated that he sees people and dogs using the outfield of the baseball field on a consistent basis and believes that it should be protected after the extensive renovation efforts, as a protection of the investment.

PARKS AND RECREATION DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

PRESENTATION – KELLY OWENS, SPRINGBOARD DIVE INSTRUCTOR: Kelly mentioned that she has been in Islamorada for five years and is a full-time teacher and the Dive Coach at Coral Shores Highschool. She coaches Springboard Diving at Founders Park as her second job. She has been involved in diving for close to 15 years, as an athlete through high school and coached through college and beyond. She stated that interest in her Springboard Dive program has spiked since COVID. She currently has 3-5 kids ranging from age 6 to 14 in her classes and accepts all skill and age levels. Maria added the Kelly offers Diving camps during the summer months as well. She works with Jon Olsen, who coaches the Swim Team at the high school as well as the Florida Keys Swim Club at Founders Park. They collaborate during the summer and offer a Swim and Dive combination summer camp. Richard added that Kelly was Teacher of the Year last year at Coral Shores, and just recently purchased a home in Plantation Key.

TDC GRANTS AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS – DOG PARK IMPROVEMENT AND TENNIS COURT RESURFACING PROJECT:

Maria presented a flyer update that was sent out to Park members as well as posted on our website and social media channels. This flyer showed images and had information on the progress of the Dog Park Improvement project. She mentioned that the project is now in the final stages, with Tiki huts and ADA Accessible pathways complete. The turf area is currently being installed, as well as water fountains, bathing stations, pet stations, signage, benches and agility equipment in both large and small dog park areas. The bonded mulch area should be installed in the next day or two, and the fencing for the second entrance located at the small dog park is incoming. She anticipates that it will be ready to reopen by

next week. She also mentioned that the dog park will be closing on Wednesday afternoons from 1:00pm to 3:00pm for maintenance, as the new turf and bonded mulch will need routine upkeep and cleaning. The majority of this project was funded by the TDC. Originally the project was split into a Phase 1 and Phase 2, but Maria stated that the two phases were combined to expedite the project.

Maria stated that the Tennis Court Resurfacing Project, which has also been funded by the TDC, will begin in July through August. The contractor that will work on this project is the same contractor that was used to create the current Pickleball courts. She mentioned that the idea of adding lines on the Tennis Courts for Pickleball had been brought up as well. Ted mentioned that he is an avid Pickleball player and is consistently being asked about the possibility of more Pickleball courts at Founders Park. He does not want to take away from the aesthetics of the park as they are now. From his experience in converting courts back in Ohio, he believes adding lines to existing tennis courts is the best way to satisfy the growth of the sport without taking anything away. Carolyn mentioned that it would be important to involve the current Tennis Pros Greg Pearson and Susie Jannach in this discussion, as they would most likely have input and opinions on how scheduling and use would be fair for both Tennis and Pickleball groups. Carolyn asked about the availability of the property down in Lower Matecumbe for Pickleball use. Ted mentioned that this property has been abandoned for a while and there have been discussions about acquiring it, but not much more progress has been made at the moment. Maria stated that the plan is to move forward with having a meeting with Susie and Greg, and gather ideas and input for the logistics of adding Pickleball lines on the Tennis Courts

TDC GRANT APPLICATION – SPLASH PAD RESURFACING 2023-2024:

Maria stated that the department has applied for TDC funding to resurface the existing Splash Pad at the Ron Levy Aquatic Center. The project will involve pulling up the existing surface and replacing it with new surfacing. She expects to hear from the TDC by June 27th. If this project is not funded by the TDC, then she plans on putting it into the Capital Fund for next year's budget.

NEW ORDINANCE – NO SMOKING IN VILLAGE PARKS AND BEACHES:

Annie stated that the Village Council recently passed an ordinance to ban smoking in all Village Parks and Beaches. Staff at Founders Park has implemented signage to make patrons aware and has gotten the Youth Council involved. The Youth Council group has created a campaign and video to promote the no smoking ordinance and show their involvement in the community. Ted mentioned that this ordinance stems from a Florida Statute that has given local governments the power to implement this new policy, as it affects the environment.

John spoke about a time when he was walking in the park and came upon a group of patrons becoming very aggressive with a member of park staff, because the staff member had told them that dogs are not allowed on the beach area. He noticed the patrons were heavily intoxicated and it looked as if one of the females was ready to physically assault the staff member, before she was pulled away by another patron in her group. He mentioned that

most patrons that choose to break park rules usually show up after 6:00-6:30pm because they know that park staff are usually no longer attending the gate at that time. He is ultimately concerned about the enforcement of the new no smoking rule and the safety of park staff. He also mentioned the new law in Florida where a person can carry a concealed weapon without a permit could add another layer of danger to these types of situations. Maria shared in those concerns and stated that staff is trained to deescalate situations and walk away and call the Sheriff's Department if things become too dangerous. The Sheriff's Department is aware of the rules of the park and the support that park staff may need if situations become escalated. Annie mentioned that so far, the no smoking enforcement has not caused many issues, the no alcohol in the park rule has created much more conflict when attempting to enforce.

UPDATE: BEATS ON THE BAY SERIES AND LASER LIGHT SHOW:

Annie stated that the Beats on the Bay Music Series consisted of four shows this season, which were all co-sponsored by Islamorada Community Entertainment and Dave Feder. The concerts were very successful, with ICE sponsoring the food and sound, coordinating the beer and wine booth and fundraising. The Village funded the band, provided concessions, coordinated food and art vendors, and coordinated parking and fees. Next season will most likely consist of raised parking fees, and sponsorship packages with different tiers and options for organizations. The first show was the Mishka show, with about 800 attendees. The second show was The Long Run – Eagles tribute band, with about 2500 attendees. The third show was PureHeart and Top Petty – Heart and Tom Petty tribute band with about 2500 attendees as well. The fourth show was Bay Jam with about 1500 attendees throughout the day, as it is a longer all-day event.

Next season we are looking to add more shows beginning in November, and the Upper Keys Rotary Club has expressed interest in sponsoring that show. In December, we plan to have a Family Friendly New Years Party and Laser Show, with kids activities and a DJ for the music aspect to go along with the laser show. January's event will be the Baygrass Bluegrass theme, February will be another cover band, March will be a special original artist, and we will finish up the series in April with the Bay Jam theme.

SUMMER CAMPS AND PROGRAMS UPDATE - ANNE ONSGARD:

Annie presented the first publication of the "Founders Park News Splash" newsletter that staff created to highlight all of the aquatics programs happening at the pool. This was a collaboration with Coach Jennifer Dutton and was sponsored by the Friends of the Pool group. She then presented the full line up for Summer Camp 2023, beginning with Summer Recreation Camp running June 5th through August 4th, taking a break for the week of 4th of July. Tennis Camp will be held for 4 weeks, before the resurfacing of the Tennis courts begins in July. There will also be three weeks of Synchronized Swimming Camp, Swim and Dive combination camp will be held for two weeks, Learn to Swim Group lessons will be held for two weeks as well, and Summer Swim camp will be held for one week. The new Counselor in Training program offers an opportunity for teens age 13-15 to help with

camp and give them something to do for the summer. It is also a feeder program into our Summer Camp Counselor staffing.

Annie also presented on other programs that happened this past season. Spring Fest Egg Hunt was very successful with about 400 attendees. Movie under the Stars was unfortunately not successful as it is an outdoor event, and the weather did not cooperate for any of the dates that were set. Staff is looking for a sturdier alternative to the inflatable movie screen for next year. Pops in the Park will be having their final concert on Saturday, the Giving it Back Barbeque put on by the Islamorada Firefighter Benevolent Association will also be held this Saturday, and the Florida Keys Swim Club swim meet will be held on Friday April 28th through Sunday April 30th. Bike to the Beach, an organization that raises awareness for Autism will be holding an event on May 6th at the park, and the I.CARE organization will be holding a Trash Terby and Festival on May 13th.

John asked Maria about the possibility of having an off-duty Deputy available at the park on holiday or busy weekends to help with enforcement of park rules and safety. Maria stated that she requests officers on holiday weekends, and officers make sure to be as present as they can be given staff availability, which has been a huge help during busy times.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION: None.

FUTURE ITEMS: Pickleball Court options.

TBA

ADJOURNMENT:

Chairwoman Carolyn Wightman set the next meeting date as TBD. Carolyn Wightman made a motion to adjourn, Alina Davis seconded. The meeting ended at 5:33 P.M.

Recording Secretary,

Alicia Mote

Minutes Approved by Committee on

Chairwoman Carolyn Wightman _____.