

PINELLAS COUNTY PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
October 15, 2015

PARK BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:	Ms. Mary Rogero Mr. Shelby Freeman Mr. Bill Bucolo Mr. Jackson Gillette Mr. David Kandz, Chair
PARKS & CONSERVATION RESOURCES DIRECTOR:	Mr. Paul Cozzie
ASSISTANT COUNTY ATTORNEY:	Mr. Brendan Mackesey
ADVISORY BOARD SECRETARY:	Ms. Cheryl DeCou
PARKS & CONSERVATION RESOURCES STAFF:	Mr. Lyle Fowler, South District Operations Mr. Curtis Spencer, North District Operations Mr. Steve Harper, Resource & Asset

A regular meeting of the Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources Advisory Board was held at the Parks and Conservation Resources Administration Office, located at 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo, FL 33774 on October 15, 2015.

I. Open Meeting / Introductions:

Chairman David Kandz opened the meeting at 9:35 a.m. Introductions were made by all participants present.

II. Approval of Minutes – April 16, 2015:

The minutes from the April 16, 2015 meeting were approved; motion by Mary Rogero to accept, second by Bill Bucolo and unanimous approval vote.

III. Citizens to be Heard:

None.

IV. Old Business:

A. Parks Ordinance:

Attorney Brendan Mackesey advised the board members that the ordinance presented to them today is the latest revision that had been vetted through the senior attorneys in the County Attorney's Office. Nothing of substance has changed except a few sections. Specifically, the changes he highlighted were the explicit prohibition of bounce houses without a permit, including trampolines.

Per staff's request, we have added a prohibition for grilling on the beach except where specifically permitted under a special event permit.

Most significantly, we have added language requiring citizens support organizations (CSO) which are defined in the ordinance, i.e., Friends of Weedon Island, Friends of Fort De Soto,

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Friends of Brooker Creek, to enter into a written agreement with the County for park operations. It's standard practice to define the relationships. Most of these groups already have agreements with us; a few do not and this causes some liability and insurance concerns. New agreements will be entered into and required by the Code. There are annual requirements mandated by the Code to be provided to the department by October 1 of each year. These requirements include a balance sheet budget for the upcoming year, a financial reporting, goals for the next fiscal year and a list of the current officers. This information will be published on the department's website annually. There needs to be total transparency, especially for the donors.

Mr. Jackson Gillette arrived at 9:37 a.m.

It is a work in progress and we have been in touch with our support organizations and they are on board and Mr. Mackesey does not foresee any controversy over asking them to enter into these agreements.

Upon question from Mr. Bucolo regarding the history of the groups in the County, Mr. Cozzie advised we have many organizations. With requiring the annual reports from the organizations, it creates the transparency that allows donors to know where their contributions are being used. The Code will require annual work plans in order for staff to be apprised of their efforts and be compatible with the County's plans. Further discussion was held regarding the formation of the groups and if there were any issues with regard to finances. There have not been financial issues, but we do receive public record requests and we need to have the information to adequately respond, thus the provision for the annual reporting. Mr. Bucolo asked about Honeymoon Island camping and the public response to that issue. Mr. Bucolo was advised that was a State issue. Mr. Bucolo will contact Mr. Mackesey if he has any other questions or concerns.

Mr. Cozzie informed the members that the park ordinance would be going to the Board of County Commissioners for public hearing and approval in January, 2016.

B. Renaming Philippe Park:

Mr. Lou Claudio brought this request to the Board in April. The Board did not take action on the request in April, and the July meeting had been cancelled. If the Park Board is or is not in favor of changing the name of the park, staff would be requested to take the background information to the County Administrator for further consideration.

Mr. Claudio gave a summary of his presentation to the Board from April to bring the new members. The village at the Tocobaga site marked in Philippe Park was the capital of the people and Mr. Claudio's presentation included an interesting and detailed history of the tribe's presence in Pinellas County from A.D. 900 to the late 1600's. Mr. Claudio will send the documentation to those who did not receive it. Discussion was held regarding the change of name of a park and what it would entail for staff. Mr. Claudio stated that the County has changed park names in the past, i.e., Boca Ciega to Boca Ciega Millennium. He stated he has the support of one of Mr. Philippe's descendants. Mr. Gillette inquired as to what the procedure is for a name change and Mr. Cozzie outlined what the steps would be.

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Mr. Gillette added to what Mr. Claudio shared with the Board and he advised that he had researched the Tocobaga tribe as well and believes the park should reflect the presence of the Native American people in Pinellas County. Further discussion was held regarding the tribe, the history and the fact that there are many tributes to other Native American people throughout the County as well as the European presence. Public support for this issue was discussed and Ms. Rogero shared that in her opinion, not all residents would be in agreement with the name change; it will always be Philippe Park to long time residents.

Mr. Cozzie advised that Mr. Claudio could present the item to the BCC as a citizen to be heard and he would most likely be directed to staff or this Advisory Board. At the recommendation of the Advisory Board, staff would prepare the research and information to be presented to the County Administrator. Discussion was held regarding the cost of the name change on the entrance sign and pamphlets.

Mr. Cozzie stated it would set a precedent, as all the other parks have been named by the Board of County Commissioners, with the exception of Eagle Lake which was named by a school group. Mr. Cozzie stated that he does believe that Mr. Claudio's research in the context of the history of the tribe falls into the mission of the Parks and Conservation Resources Department to preserve the history of Pinellas County.

A motion was made by Mr. Freeman to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners a name change be made from Philippe Park to Philippe-Tocobaga Park, seconded by Mr. Gillette. Being no further discussion, the motion passed 4 – 1. Mr. Cozzie advised he would take the recommendation to the County Administrator and follow any directions to staff from the Administrator's office.

V. New Business:

A. Gulf Adventures Proposal:

Mr. Tom Schlinkert of Gulf Adventures, Inc. gave the board a presentation on the park activities that his company facilities in Tennessee, North Carolina and Alabama. They operate rafting operations, aerial parks, zip lines and water sports concessions, mostly kayaks and paddleboards. He met with Paul in June to discuss this proposal and complimented the County on the parks in our system. He has done due diligence in visiting Fort DeSoto and Wall Springs Parks. He stated that Fort De Soto didn't need anything; it is visually beautiful and there wouldn't be anything his firm could do to enhance it.

Mr. Schlinkert showed a power point presentation depicting what his company has accomplished in Gulf State Park in Alabama. There were pictures of the aerial park tour, including the towers in the park and along the shoreline of a freshwater lake. The tour gives a park consumer the ability to evaluate the park from a perspective that they cannot get any other way. In response to questions, Mr. Schlinkert provided the Board members with information regarding operations of the towers, guides, pricing and guidelines they follow regarding environmental measures to ensure there is no disturbance to the natural resource. Discussion was held regarding construction costs and who would pay them, pricing, percentage that the County would make on sales and general operational questions.

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Mr. Schlinkert closed his presentation explaining that the guides on the aerial tour function as docents. Part of what they do is explain where participants are, what they are seeing and important features of the park with a focus on educating a consumer in this setting.

There is research to be done by both Mr. Mackesey and staff. Mr. Kandz stated the Board would take all the information under advisement and move forward and thanked Mr. Schlinkert for the presentation. Any further communication will be through Mr. Cozzie.

There being no items requiring a vote, Mary Rogero left the meeting at 11:55 a.m.

VI. Parks and Conservation Resources Director's Report:

A. Project 2017 Update:

Effective November 1, 2015, for the first time in over four years, we will have staff permanently assigned to all of our regional parks. Staff worked with Human Resources to consolidate six existing job descriptions into one now identified as Park Ranger and includes all the services rendered in each of the job classifications. There is a path for career enhancement requiring certifications; an employee can advance to Park Ranger II and III.

Staff assigned to each park will be able to take ownership and be more familiar with the park and the frequent visitors. There is an expectation of enhancing customer service, improving our maintenance efforts and utilizing more volunteers in the park. We are in the process of filling vacancies in the Ranger I position; not new positions but those opened up through attrition.

B. Strategic Plan:

Mr. Cozzie shared the new strategic plan with the Board members. It is anticipated that everything we do will align with the strategic plan. Even our board memos now indicate which element of the strategic plan pertains to the recommendations being made.

Mr. Jackson Gillette was introduced by Paul. Jackson is a junior at Largo High School. He gave some background information on his interest in civics and actually started a political group at his school. Wanted to get involved in civics through local government. Mr. Freeman asked how he heard about us. Mr. Gillette stated he is a member of the Youth Advisory Council and was apprised of this position being available and was nominated by Commissioner Long. Mr. Mackesey advised Mr. Gillette he would be contacting him regarding requirements of the Sunshine Law.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.