



PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
Palm Bay Regional Park Citizens Advisory Committee

SPECIAL MEETING
August 15, 2005

A special meeting of the Parks and Recreation Department, Palm Bay Regional Park Citizens Advisory Committee, was held on Monday, August 15, 2005, at 7:00 p.m. at the Palm Bay Community Center, Palm Bay, Florida.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Ted Whitlock, Chairman
Keiron Jackman, Member
Clifford Barber, Member
Dudley Anderson, Member
Everett Morris, Member
Joe Fazekas, Designee for Steve Riser, CPB
Referendum Rep.
Barry Morin, BARC Referendum Rep.

MEMBERS ABSENT

Bruce Wecshler, Member
Jerry Sandy, IRDTC Referendum Rep.
Vacant, Member, SAAB Rep.
Vacant, PAL Referendum Rep.

STAFF PRESENT

Jack Masson, Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation
Greg Minor, Construction Manager
Jeff Whitehead, South Area Parks Operations Manager
Jerry Gust, South Area Maintenance Superintendent
Rick Schuh, Supervisor, Palm Bay Regional Park
Lisa Nicholas, South Area Administrative Secretary

PUBLIC

Lawrence McCalla, Brevard Caribbean American Sports and Cultural Association (BCASCA)
George Tennant, BCASCA
Keith Lonquhast, BCASCA
Michael Cetman, BCASCA
Wayne Savage, BCASCA
Krystal Jackman
Charles Madge, Port Malabar Country Club Community Association

MEETING CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Whitlock called the joint meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Ms. Nicholas called the roll, and Mr. Whitlock noted that a quorum was present and the meeting would be conducted.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. Anderson made a **MOTION** to nominate Mr. Ted Whitlock for Chairman, and Mr. Barber seconded the motion. No other nominations were offered, debate was closed, and Mr. Whitlock accepted. **UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.** Mr. Whitlock made a **MOTION** to nominate Mr. Morin for the office of Vice Chairman, and Mr. Anderson seconded. No other nominations were offered, debate was closed, and Mr. Morin accepted. **UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.**

STAFF REPORTS

Mr. Whitlock noted the presence of Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation, Jack Masson. Mr. Whitehead noted for the record that Greg Minor, Jerry Gust and Rick Schuh were also present from the Parks and Recreation Department.

Mr. Schuh provided an update on the status of Palm Bay Regional Park, stating that the park has been progressing over the past four to five months and that projects were approximately 85% completed. Softball fences have been erected, and the dugouts are finished. Clay needs to be installed in the infield, and some grading is required on the soccer fields. The contractor will begin sprigging sometime in November. Mr. Schuh further noted that soccer season had begun the previous weekend and would be in full swing in a couple of weeks; the Caribbean Fest was also approaching; and, in general, all was going well at the park.

Mr. Whitehead commended Mr. Schuh for his efforts and said that the soccer league had been a great success and recognized the work of Al Genchi and Wayne Savage. Mr. Whitehead also commended Mr. Gust for his contributions.

Mr. Whitlock inquired as to whether the gates were open, and Mr. Schuh replied that they were, but staff was discouraging individuals from going back to the construction area, and, if they did, to use caution. Mr. Whitlock also asked if perimeter signs had been posted, and Mr. Schuh responded that "no trespassing" signs had been placed in the area. Mr. Schuh also informed Mr. Whitlock that there had not been any recent incidents of vandalism. Mr. Schuh did express concern with regard to securing the area once the pedestrian cross-over bridge is completed.

Mr. Jackman raised the issue of flooding, and Mr. Schuh responded that drains had been installed in the soccer fields and that having the drains in place has been working well. It was also noted that there are five or six new retention ponds, with one or two more left to dig.

In order to illustrate the progress that has been made at the park, Mr. Whitehead offered to provide a PowerPoint presentation at the next meeting, and Mr. Whitlock asked about the possibility of a site visit. It was determined that, at the next regular meeting on August 25, the Advisory Committee would meet at the park site, conduct any necessary business, and then conclude with a tour of the park.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion on construction of the new community center at Palm Bay Regional Park ensued. Mr. Masson explained that the Advisory Committee had participated in a joint meeting with the Palm Bay Recreation Advisory Board on August 2, 2005. Because the Central Florida YMCA and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Florida each has an interest in partnering with the County to operate the community center, both entities made presentations to provide background information and statistics on their organizations. At the August 2, 2005, meeting, Mr. Whitehead also gave an overview of what programs and services are available from the Brevard County Parks and Recreation Department. Mr. Masson reminded members that no official action was taken on August 2, 2005, by either body and that was the primary reason for calling the special meeting.

Mr. Whitlock provided a synopsis of the August 2, 2005, meeting. He informed members that, while both organizations had compelling needs and impressive statistics, he had concerns about deviating from what was originally proposed in the referendum. In approving the referendum, the voters determined that a community center would be built at Palm Bay Regional Park and be operated and maintained by the County. The Y would allow the public to use the facilities but not their equipment or gymnasium, thereby creating an inequality within the community center. Mr. Whitlock again cited the referendum, which provided that all citizens would be able to utilize the community center in whatever way they would choose to do so. Mr. Whitlock also expressed concerns with the time frame, noting that by using the current specifications on the building, construction was ready to commence. The Y had proposed increasing the size of the building by three to four thousand square feet, which would require all the permits to be revisited. Modifying the specifications would entail another six months to one year to be able to begin construction. Cost was also another concern mentioned by Mr. Whitlock. If the square footage were to be increased, then the cost, too, would skyrocket. It was noted that the park was acquired 16 years ago, and it took 16 years to get to this point (ready to break ground and build). The Y and the Boys and Girls Clubs could do great work somewhere within the City or the County, but not necessarily at the community center at Palm Bay Regional Park.

Mr. Whitlock stated that the Y charges an annual membership fee that ranges up to \$88, while the County charges no annual membership fees. There is only a fee for certain classes offered by the County, and that is for the purpose of paying the instructor. In addition, all citizens would have unlimited access to the center and its amenities.

Mr. Masson indicated that the cost of the structure would be \$2.7 million, up to \$3 million, due to upgrades that would allow the facility to be able to withstand 170 mile-per-hour winds and include a hard-wired generator.

Mr. Jackman requested clarification on whether the Y or the Boys and Girls Clubs would absorb the additional cost for a larger facility. Mr. Masson explained that the County had \$3 million, and that the Y was offering \$1 million, with a potential capital campaign to raise \$1 million additional dollars for a swimming pool. The Y expressed a desire for a larger facility, but there is concern that \$4 million will not be sufficient. Mr. Jackman further commented that citizens might be upset if they have to pay to join in order to use the facility, seeing as that was not the intent of the initiative when it was originally approved by the voters. Mr. Jackman inquired as to how effective the County would be in operating the community center. Mr. Masson replied that the County is extremely experienced and well-versed in such ventures, noting the current successful operation of 13 community centers throughout the County and citing a sincere interest in the community. Mr. Whitehead added that the County is able to reach a wider segment of the population and referenced the County's program for persons with disabilities as just one example. Mr. Jackman indicated that his concerns were primarily for the disadvantaged children and that a private entity may be more effective. It was countered that the County would be just as effective and less expensive, thereby serving the underprivileged population to an even greater degree.

Mr. Whitlock noted that, although there may be other partnership opportunities in the future, such as the City or the School Board, the County is set to begin construction now.

Mr. Anderson raised the issue of the Indian River Kennel Club and noted that, because it was County property, the County should be in charge of running the facility. Mr. Masson responded that it was a County building, not County property, and that the Kennel Club has priority usage. If the Y or the Boys and Girls Clubs wanted to come in and build, the possibility exists, but it would be difficult in Palm Bay Regional Park because there is a completed Master Plan and the northwest area is less developed.

Mr. Morris noted that he recently received correspondence raising two different fees and that the citizenry may not necessarily want to have to come up with additional money to be able to utilize a community center that should belong to them.

Mr. Barber remarked that YMCAs and Boys and Girls Clubs are typically situated in more densely populated areas and that they should perhaps consider locating in a more heavily inhabited area for their purposes, rather than Palm Bay Regional Park, which is somewhat more remote.

Mr. Fazekas asked about other leasing scenarios that the Y has entered into with government entities, and Mr. Whitlock responded that, in some situations, the leases were written for up to 99 years and further commented that the Y would not come in, expand the building, and then just stay for four or five years.

Mr. Jackman stated that any scenario that would lead to additional costs should not be considered and that perhaps the Committee could engage in such discussions sometime in the future. In the interest of time, the County should go on as planned and perhaps negotiate later. Mr. Fazekas concurred and commented that the center should be built and opened as soon as possible.

Mr. Charles Madge of the Port Malabar Country Club Community Association informed the Committee that, in an effort to save the Port Malabar County Club, his organization spoke with Y representatives in order to determine if they would be interested in turning the grounds into a park and converting the country club into a facility that would have all the amenities necessary for a Y. Mr. Masson inquired as to whether the Community Association had received a response, and Mr. Madge indicated that they had not.

Keith Lonquhast of the Brevard Caribbean American Sports and Cultural Association (BCASCA) indicated that his group had been out playing cricket two times a week for the past four years and have been anticipating the cricket pavilion for the entire time. He inquired as to when construction would begin and what the plans were. Mr. Masson assured Mr. Lonquhast that the structure would be constructed and that the Department was in the midst of finalizing the plans, which Department staff would want discuss one final time with the BCASCA. Mr. Masson stated that the project would be going out to bid the last quarter of this year.

Mr. Minor indicated that there were pre-qualified bidders lined up and that the project would be going out to bid in mid-September. For the cricket building, "Concept C" (Jack Rood Architects) was agreed upon, but Mr. Minor further noted the importance of having one final review with the BCASCA in order to ensure that all interested parties concur.

Mr. Lonquhast mentioned that parking had been rather limited for some time, and Mr. Schuh responded that there will be a designated parking area at the new cricket facility. Staff is in the process of grading the area and sodding. Mr. Gust commented that there are contingency plans to improve drainage and staff will ensure that does transpire. Mr. Schuh further explained that matters are complicated because of a swell and that individuals may have to walk an additional 500 feet because of the new design of the park. Individuals are not permitted to drive into an area that is not designated for parking. Mr. Gust added that the dry weather will help to advance efforts along these lines.

Wayne Savage, President of the BCASCA, remarked that he felt qualified to address this issue because he had been working with Parks and Recreation staff for many years. Mr. Savage expressed that he had concerns with an outside entity coming in to take over the operation of the community center and referenced the partnership with PAL, which was not a favorable experience. Mr. Savage further commented on the positive relationship that currently exists between the Department and the soccer leagues and informed the Committee that he felt it would be similarly positive with the baseball and softball leagues. If an outside entity were to come in, the relationship would not be as good because

another organization might be concerned with a national culture and not be as focused on the local community. Mr. Savage commended the Y for its work but expressed that it would not be a good fit for the community center at Palm Bay Regional Park.

Mr. Whitlock welcomed Mr. Minor back from Iraq and further stated that the goal for the evening was to make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners on how to proceed with the operation of the community center.

Mr. Everett made a **MOTION** to keep the community center under County control. Mr. Jackman seconded. **UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.**

Mr. Masson mentioned that the Palm Bay Recreation Advisory Board would be convening the following evening for the same purpose.

Mr. Savage invited the Committee and other attendees present at the meeting to visit the “Jamboree in the Park” on September 3 and 4.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Everett made a **MOTION** to adjourn, and Mr. Morin seconded. **UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.** Mr. Whitlock adjourned the meeting of the Palm Bay Regional Park Citizens Advisory Committee at 8:04 p.m. and noted that the next meeting would be held on August 25, 2005, at the site of Palm Bay Regional Park.