

VERO BEACH RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES
Tuesday, March 10, 2020 – 4:00 p.m.
City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida

PRESENT: Vice Chairman, Brooke Malone Members: Sue Dinunno, and James “Rock” Tonkel,
Also Present: Assistant Recreation Director, Patty Howard; City Attorney, John Turner and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Hawkins

Excused Absences: Richard Yemm, Greg Holtan, and Judy Jones

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairman Malone called today’s meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and the Senior Administrative Assistant performed the roll call.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A) February 11, 2020

Mrs. Dinunno made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2020 Recreation Commission meeting. Mr. Tonkel seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

4. NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Malone stated that Ms. Cindy Lawson, Finance Director, attended the meeting today and she is going to review the Recreation Department’s Quarterly Financial Report (attached to the original minutes).

Ms. Lawson explained that this is the first year they broke the Recreation Department into individual cost centers. Since they budgeted it this way, she added a Recreation Department by cost center breakdown so they can see how they are progressing against the budgets they adopted. It is easier to see it when it is all on one (1) page with the revenues and expenses. The third page has the same information, but it is shown in a graph. She said this information will be in every quarterly report going forward. She briefly went through the hand out and explained that the numbers in the report are the actual figures for the first quarter of the fiscal year. She explained that the majority of the money they take in for recreation programs and community events comes from the summer camps and that has not happened yet. In the second and third quarters, they will see the revenue increase. She continued by briefly explaining the graphs on page three (3).

Mr. Tonkel asked if the 20% of revenue shown for the first quarter coincides with prior budgets and will it reflect what the outcome will be for the year. He asked Ms. Lawson if she was comfortable using this as the main barometer.

Ms. Lawson replied yes, because when she does the budgets she drills down a little further into the revenues and compares actual figures from previous years. She explained that this is the first year they have budgeted the Recreation Department this way for both the revenue and the expenditures. Having it broken out by cost centers is very helpful for everyone. In the past, all the revenue was lumped together from all the sources. It will take a year or so before they develop a good history to help them with the budgets going forward. They might find some better metrics to include in the quarterly financial reports as they work through this new process.

Mrs. Malone asked what is the status on the point of sale system.

Ms. Lawson replied that they have narrowed it down to two (2). They initially started looking at systems that worked for Leisure Square and they were not concerned about the other cost centers. However, that has changed because these systems are very modular. If they start with the right system, they can build on it as they move onto the other cost centers to have some consistency. They are more expensive than what is budgeted, but they have two (2) systems that the Leisure Square staff, management, and herself like the best. They have it on hold until the new Recreation Director is on board so he can be a part of the conversation and decision. She would like to see them select a system that they can expand on as they move forward. If they do it correctly, they can develop an online feature for items like summer camp registration and facility rentals.

Ms. Lawson stated that this is just a part of the large Quarterly Financial Report that they publish. She did not think they would be interested in more than this piece of it.

Mrs. Malone stated that the expenditures are broken down for personal services, operating expenses, and capital expenditures, but she would like to know if it will ever show the realized percentage for each one (1), or will they always be grouped together.

Ms. Lawson explained that every individual line item is out of the accounting system's general ledger. They could take the annual budget amounts and drill it down to operating expenses, capital expenditures, and personal services if they think that would be helpful.

Mrs. Malone asked Ms. Lawson if she thought that would be helpful for the new Recreation Director.

Ms. Lawson replied that he will have access to the entire General Ledger and all the details behind it.

Mr. Tonkel asked the Commission members how these figures compare to past reports in generating revenue and controlling expenses.

Mrs. Malone said she believes this is the first time they have seen these metrics or anything this detailed. They do not have anything to measure the figures against at this point.

Mr. Tonkel stated that since he is not familiar with what has taken place he would like to know if the Recreation Department has been performing at an acceptable financial level.

Ms. Lawson explained that what prompted this was a conversation they had with the City Council at the last budget workshop. They specifically talked about Leisure Square and how much

revenue it was bringing in versus how much it was costing the City. As a result, they decided it would be useful to start budgeting for recreation and breaking it down into cost centers to provide them with the information they need when they have those discussions. In the past, it was always a given that the Recreation Department did not make enough money to cover itself, so that is why it was all lumped together. There was never a discussion about what elements of the Recreation Department were upside down or worth keeping for the community. This is the first year doing it this way, so they will have real data for half a year to help make better decisions when they get to the budget hearings this year. She said the Finance Department got more involved with the financial management of the Recreation Department and they made a commitment to start breaking them down one (1) cost center at a time. They looked at the rate structures to simplify them and new technology, like the point of sales systems.

Mrs. Malone asked how many line items were there last year.

Ms. Lawson said for revenues, there were only six (6) because the “Fees & Memberships” and the “Facilities Rental” were not broken down by where the revenue was generated. The expenditures were always broken down with cost centers, but not by individual facilities.

Mr. Tonkel asked if the part time salaries figure was high because of demand, or was there something that contributed to that in the first quarter.

Ms. Lawson said it might be that when they looked at what they spent for part time lifeguards at Leisure Square and the beaches last year it was not clear on what was spent at each location. They are looking at it to see what is driving it.

Mrs. Dinunno asked if the large expenditure under Leisure Square for landscape was from cleaning up the property near the road to make Leisure Square and the sign more visible.

Ms. Lawson replied that she was not sure, but every facility that receives landscaping maintenance services from the Grounds Maintenance Department is charged with a portion of that expense.

Mrs. Malone thanked Ms. Lawson for her report.

A) Committee Members to Introduce Themselves and Discuss Their Personal Goals and why they want to be a part of the Recreation Commission

Mrs. Malone stated that they have a new member on the Recreation Commission, so she thought it would be nice if they each introduced themselves, discuss why they are part of the Recreation Commission, and if they have any personal goals they would like the Recreation Commission to accomplish.

Mrs. Dinunno said she had an interest in being on the Recreation Commission because of her involvement with the art community and other outdoor activities on City properties and City Parks. The City has always been good to organizations holding community events, so she thought it would be her way of giving back to the City. She hopes that the new Recreation Director is familiar with the type of venues the City has. They just had huge price jumps for community events and using the Parks, so she hopes he will take the time to understand those figures before he implements any more rate hikes.

Mrs. Malone stated that she joined the Recreation Commission in 2018. At the time, she was a Board member for the Vero Beach Skate Park Alliance, but she stepped down and now she is only a volunteer. She explained that the City has had four (4) Alliances since the late 1970's trying to establish a Skate Park. She kept asking herself why the City Parks, programs, and facilities did not have the money to do what they wanted to accomplish, so she started asking some financial questions. It amazes her that much smaller cities with less resources are investing so much more in the health, wellness, and play in their communities. Her goal is that they can pick one (1) awesome project this year to draw people to their Parks and beaches. It could be anything, just something forward thinking, beautiful, and amazing in regards to outdoor community play in the City.

Mrs. Dinunno stated that most of the recent upgrades in the City are 501(c)3 funded. The Pickleball courts, the Dog Park, and many of the playground upgrades are community funded.

Mr. Tonkel asked if they have spoken to the new Recreation Director about what they have seen as potential challenges for him and the department. He asked if they have also addressed the City Council.

Mrs. Malone replied that to her knowledge, none of the Commission members have met the new Recreation Director yet. She said he starts on Monday, March 16, 2020.

Ms. Lawson explained that the City Manager, the Human Resources Director, and herself conducted the interviews for the new Recreation Director. The Recreation Commission members were not involved with that process.

Mr. Tonkel said he is interested in Mrs. Malone's comment about wanting a project with a big impact during his first year. That will need support from a variety of people and departments from the City. He asked if it is an open aspiration and the specific initiative has not been identified.

Mrs. Malone replied that is correct.

Mr. Tonkel stated that he and his wife have been residents of Vero Beach for 20 years and fulltime residents for the last three (3) years. He said he was the first Executive Director of the Hospital District in Indian River County and a former Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of major medical centers throughout the Country. He did have some exposure to the Recreation Department many years ago. He was a mentor at Beachland Elementary School and he would bring the children to the recreation center. He also served on the Utilities Commission for two (2) terms and he was an advocate for the sale of the electric.

Mrs. Howard stated that she was born and raised in Vero Beach and went to Methodist University in Fayetteville, North Carolina. She explained that right after she graduated she started working for the Vero Beach Recreation Department. She was in all of the Recreation Department programs as a child and she really believes in recreation. When she was offered the position as the Gymnastic Coordinator she jumped on it right away and then she worked her way up to become the Assistant Recreation Director.

B) New Recreation Director's Background (His starting date is March 16, 2020)

Mrs. Malone stated that they received a copy of the resume for the new Recreation Director, Mr. James O'Connell (on file in the City Clerk's office). She asked Ms. Lawson and Mrs. Howard for some information about him since they were involved in the hiring process.

Mrs. Howard stated that Mr. Monte Falls, City Manager, was supposed to be at today's meeting to provide a summary.

Ms. Lawson said based on his resume, they can see that he has an extensive background with recreation and he was working in a community that was similar to Vero Beach. They interviewed him on the phone initially and then invited him here so they could meet him in person. They are very excited about him coming on board and they feel he is the right person for the job based on what challenges they have before them right now.

Mrs. Dinunno asked where is he in his career path, because he was not in his last job very long.

Ms. Lawson said she would prefer those types of questions be answered by the City Manager, but his resume states that he has been with the Parks and Recreation Department in Peachtree City since 2002.

Mrs. Howard stated that she gave him a tour of all the City facilities and Parks and he had a lot of interesting questions. She said he is very personable and easy to talk to, so she is very excited.

Mrs. Malone said that the past few years have been very hard and they all appreciate everything the Recreation Department has done, even though it has been rough. If Mr. O'Connell is even remotely as passionate about recreation as Mrs. Howard is, then good things will happen for the children and the play spaces for the City.

Mr. Tonkel said that there is always a progression in most careers. It looks like this gentleman is interested in taking the next step. He probably has the energy, vision, and new ideas, which will be well received. It sounds like he has a lot potential and hearing that Ms. Lawson and Mrs. Howard hold him in high regard after meeting him says a lot.

Ms. Lawson stated that they were all very impressed with him and she thinks the Recreation Commission will like him and his enthusiasm of recreation.

5. OLD BUSINESS

Mrs. Malone reported that she received a phone call from Mrs. Tammy Bursick, City Clerk, in regards to the cancelation of today's meeting. She said Mrs. Bursick informed her that the City Council requested they not cancel their meetings and have them on a monthly basis. She said she believes that the discussion or vote took place at a City Council meeting.

Mr. John Turner, City Attorney, replied that is correct. He said the City Council gave the Recreation Commission direction to meet at their scheduled times.

Mrs. Dinunno asked if they were speaking about all of the Commissions, or just the Recreation Commission.

Mr. Turner replied that it was specifically about the Recreation Commission.

6. RECREATION DIRECTOR'S MATTERS

A) Gymnastics Registration – March 21st

Mrs. Howard announced that the City has again been working with Go Play Vero and they will have a brand new playground at Troy Moody Park, which should be completed sometime in May.

Mrs. Howard reported that the next gymnastics registration will be on March 21st starting at 8:00 a.m. at Leisure Square. They still have parents lining up early to get their children registered, but when they get their point of sale system that will probably change.

Mrs. Dineno asked if the parent viewing room ever got expanded.

Mrs. Howard replied not yet. She said she believes there is some money in the budget for next fiscal year to revisit that.

B) Spring Break Cheer Camp – March 23rd – 27th

Mrs. Howard stated the next program is the Spring Break Cheer Camp. The camp runs from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. for a week and it is open to all children ages seven (7) to 13. Right now, they are about half way filled.

C) Easter Egg Hunt – April 4th

Mrs. Howard announced that the 60th Annual Easter Egg Hunt will take place on April 4th on the beach at Mulligan's Beach House starting at 10:00 a.m. They usually have 400 to 700 people that attend.

Mrs. Malone said she recently heard of a Recreation Department north of here that has a free children's egg hunt in the morning and then an evening adult only egg hunt/race. It is sponsored by a restaurant and there is a small fee to participate. It is on the beach and the adults hunt Easter eggs with flashlights.

Mrs. Howard stated that this year's Easter egg hunt is kind of in connection with another event. She said Coastal Connection will be holding their Topsy Turtle race right before the Easter egg hunt in the same area.

Mr. Tonkel asked if they have a vision about changes that have been offered to the City for additional programs and do they have the capacity and the recourses to accommodate any more activities. He said he does not know, but he assumes that just the current activities maximize staff's duties and they probably do not have the resources to expand the current programs. That becomes a challenge for the City, so ultimately this might need to be addressed in the future.

Mrs. Howard replied that is correct. She said it has been a challenge to come in with a flat budget for many years. There has been no funding to add additional staff so that they can expand the programs. She explained that with the exception of the programs at Center Stage and summer

camp, every other program that they have is either a rental or is contracted out. She would love to revisit that subject, but she does not know what the budget will look like this year.

Mr. Tonkel said it is a challenge and they have realistic opposing limitations. He senses that the leadership here feels that they could do more with more resources, assets, financial support, employees, etc., but is that what they City is prepared to do giving their other challenges. At some point they will have to deal with that issue.

Mrs. Malone said something that stands out in Mr. O'Connell's resume is "developing efficiency strategies". When people do things the same way for a very long time it is difficult to see what might be working and what changes need to be made to maximize efficiency. The other thing on his resume is that he "seeks sponsorships and writes grants". Having a grant writer on their team will change the face of where the Recreation Department is going. She wants to hear his primary goals and key objectives for his first year and what he has done for efficiency strategies.

Mr. Tonkel stated that they need to give him a little time to get acclimated. He asked if they have sought state funds through grants for any of the City programs.

Mrs. Howard replied yes, they have applied for several grants over the years. She explained that the Center Stage building was paid for by grants, portions of Veterans Memorial Island, and a few years ago she wrote a historical grant for the Community Center, but it was not awarded to the City.

Mr. Tonkel asked if there are any grants that are effective today that are providing funds for any programs.

Mrs. Howard replied that there are some, but this is something she will need to speak with Mr. O'Connell about.

7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

None

8. MEMBER'S MATTERS

Mrs. Malone said she is anxious for them to meet the new Recreation Director, let him introduce himself, and hear what his goals and objectives are. She wants to know what he would like to address right from the start and what his overall vision is for the Recreation Department.

Mrs. Dinunno asked Mrs. Howard if she received a copy of a report that a citizen put together that included pictures of the degradation of the pavilions in the City's Parks.

Mrs. Howard replied she did not get that report, but she knows the Public Works Department is working on them now. She said work is being done at all the Parks where there are issues.

Mrs. Dinunno stated that the Recreation Commission was initially involved in the discussions and ideas for the old Power Plant property. That land as it sits right now can only be used for recreation, unless there is a referendum and a vote by the public. At one (1) point the Recreation Department

wanted to move the big blue warehouse building that is on the Power Plant property over to Leisure Square to expand the programs there.

Mrs. Howard replied that it was cost prohibited. She still has the plans and she would still like to have that building.

Ms. Lawson explained that over the next five (5) years in the capital improvements report they will see that there is \$2 million set aside for recreation facilities. The money has been dedicated and there are engineers working on plans and contracts. Part of Mr. O'Connell's background and experience is capital improvement projects, so that should all fit together nicely.

Mrs. Malone asked Mr. Turner for clarification on the allocation of the Power Plant property.

Mr. Turner replied that there is a list of several City properties that cannot be sold, unless there is an approved referendum. However, another section states they can be leased if it is for recreational or public use, unless there is a referendum allowing them to be leased for other things. If it not going to be strictly recreational, artistic, cultural purposes, including concessions, it has to go to a referendum.

Mrs. Malone stated that it would be nice to think that the Recreation Commission actually had some voice on what actually happened, but there was input from many different areas.

Mrs. Dinunno announced that Friday through Sunday the Under the Oaks Art Festival will be taking place at Riverside Park. At Pocahontas Park, Pickleball University will hold their annual tournament from Friday through Tuesday.

Mr. Tonkel asked if it is imperative that they meet monthly.

Mrs. Malone stated that it has been asked of them, because they canceled so many meetings over the course of a year.

Mr. Turner said that is correct. He said there is also another request for the Recreation Commission to start their meetings earlier in the day so that staff can have more input and contribute more.

Mrs. Malone stated that any time before 2:00 p.m. on Tuesdays would be impossible for her to attend.

The Commission Members discussed what day and time worked best for their meetings.

Mr. Tonkel said that he does not object to meeting monthly, but with the financials only being quarterly, they will not be able to make much of a determination about the financial outlook for the quarter, the semester, and the year. He said he believes in giving management time to generate the kind of recommendations and ideas they should be considering. He does not know if by meeting monthly would resolve that.

Mrs. Dinunno explained that they do more than just review the Financial Reports. She said the community comes to their meetings when they have proposals for the Recreation Commission to

consider, like the fishing pier, the Cal Ripken field, the Dog Park, etc. They all start with the Recreation Commission and then they make recommendations to the City Council.

Mrs. Malone stated that part of the problem is that there has been a shake up and there are many open-ended questions. Some of the City Council members come to the Recreation Commission meetings, but they need to find ways to draw the public in on a regular basis. This place is packed when they talk about something that is possibly disruptive to the community. If they are not consistently available to the public then they are missing opportunities from those people who would like to be involved.

Mrs. Dinunno made a motion to hold the Recreation Commission meetings on the second Tuesday of each month at 2:00 p.m. Mr. Tonkel seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The Commission members and Mr. Turner discussed the Commission member's attendance and filling positions on the Recreation Commission.

Mrs. Malone made a motion recommending that the City Council make seats available for interested parties to serve on the Recreation Commission. Mrs. Dinunno seconded the motion.

Mr. Turner stated that if she is asking the City Council to remove certain members he would like to come back to this and address this subject at their next meeting.

Mrs. Malone said that is fine. They will put this on their next agenda.

The motion passed unanimously.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) April 14, 2020

The next Recreation Commission meeting is scheduled for April 14, 2020 at 2:00 p.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 5:21 p.m.

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