

BEAUFORT COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

County Council Chambers

Thursday, May 6, 2021

2:30 PM

Board Members Present: Bruce Yeager, Phil Kiser, Will McCullough, Bill Brown, Ron Campbell, James Mack

Board Members Absent: Mike Manesiotis, Carlos Cave, Erac Priester

Staff Present: Charles Atkinson (Director of Community Services), Shannon Loper (Parks and Recreation Director), Matt Watts (Parks and Recreation Deputy Director), Amanda Snead (Senior Administrative Assistant), Antoinette Binette (Parks and Recreation Pool Manager), Justin Petock (Athletic Supervisor), Ethan Harris (Athletic Supervisor), Darrell Ketola (Athletic Supervisor), Kevin Reynolds (Athletic Supervisor), Ryan Ruarks (Athletic Supervisor), Frank Soule (Executive Director of Hilton Head Island Rec)

Guests Present: No guest present

Call to Order

The Pledge of Allegiance was said by all present. Bruce Yeager called the meeting to order at 2:45 PM. Ms. Loper introduced a new organization chart for PAR. The announcement stated that Phil Foot was no longer over PAR. Assistant County Administrator Charles Atkins has now assumed this role. Ms. Loper introduced Mr. Atkins and gave him an opportunity to give an introduction. Mr. Atkins had been part of Parks and Leisure Services board 24 years ago. Coming out of Covid the first part of this year, there has been a lot of momentum and a lot of push for increased services at PAR and bringing things up to a high standard as far as the facilities are concerned. A lot of money has been allocated and Council is dedicated to moving things forward in PAR. Mr. Yeager proceeded with introductions around the room. Mr. McCullough motioned for the agenda to be approved, Mr. Brown second the motion, the motion was approved.

Public Comment: No public comment

Review and approval of January 9, 2020 Minutes:

Phil Kaiser motioned for the minutes to approved, Mr. Brown second the motion, the motion was approved.

Island Recreation Update

- Frank Soule gave information concerning Island Rec's re-opening. They re-opened a year ago based on the requirements put on by the CDC and governor. Island Rec was also a site for virtual learning, which had about 50 kids coming in on a daily basis. When schools went back to face-to-face learning, we transitioned to after school programs. The Senior Center was opened in September. It's going really well. There's a new director (Sherry Bronski), and they're creating new fitness programs at the Senior

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Center and taking a new approach to it. Sherry worked at Sun City for 20 years. It's been slow moving when it comes to fitness component due to mask ordinance and some other things to deal with. Frank spoke about memberships remaining consistent and that classes have been at the same level in January as they were before we shut down. Fastest growing sport is fencing. It's an opportunity to offer something from traditional sports. Frank states that basketball program grew from 250 pre-Covid to 300 kids this year. Frank mentions that indoor activities were growing a little and actually getting above that pre-Covid level. Soccer numbers were at 500 before shutdown, then only 300 kids signed up in the fall, but they are now back to 500 in the spring. Frank gives an update on the pool. Says has been going great ever since we opened up. Decided not to put the dome up this year, which worked out really well. Taking the dome down requires a company to come out to facilitate that, but they couldn't send anyone out due to Covid. It worked out pretty well since we were able to swim all winter. Swim lessons were full this spring. We anticipate them being full in the fall. This summer we hosted the H2A swim team. Also hosted the high school swim teams and others out there. Frank mentions pickleball courts being full and having 70-75 people play on a daily basis. Frank gives an update on starting to put on events again, which started in October. Hosted a couple of drive-by-events that included handing out candy during Halloween, and similar things like that for Christmas as well. For Turkey Trot, took 500 runners but plan on being back to full field. They had "Snow Day" and that worked out really well with around 1,000 people attending, and also held a Daddy-Daughter dance with a limited audience. Put on two oyster roasts, one in November and one in February. Frank mentions the opening of Lowcountry Celebration Park, and their first little event was handing out Easter egg bags. Frank is hoping to be back hosting Summer Jams this summer, which is a Tuesday night event, along with hosting a Thursday night event at The Low Country Celebration Park. Frank says they're planning a full schedule for the summer, which includes continuing with kid's day camp. Before Covid, they had 200-220 kids at day camp, but will reduce that down to 140. Frank mentions The Town of Hilton Head is working on three master plans for Crossings Park, Chaplin Park, and Mid-Island Park. Some of my concerns moving forward is staffing, specifically part time people to work along with the cost going up to do business. Frank notes that they are a fee driven organization as a non-profit. They are trying to balance what can parents afford coming out of Covid versus their operational costs. How they're going to expand moving forward will be challenging. Bruce Yeager mentions that Island Rec is a very well run organization. He asks how they weathered the storm with increased expenses and not being able to fundraise as they normally have. Frank says they were able to keep all the full time people employed, and that they had a reserve that we were able to tap into along with some commitments, not only from the County and the Town, to help fund their budget. They budgeted staff very tightly. The next six months will be interesting with sponsorships. Those are the types of things they will be challenged with on a regular basis. They were lucky a lot of refunds were not requested, instead they received a credit. They are now beginning to receive new payments, but a lot of payments were with credits this spring.

Director's Report:

- **PAR Covid Events:** Shannon Loper begins with staff operations during Covid. Full time staff stayed on, with some staff working in Grounds Maintenance. The other staff, were cleaning different areas. Photos shown of staff with truckloads of items that were cleaned out of the closets over at Bluffton Center and hauled off to the dump, cleaning bounce houses, cleaning indoor batting cages, and pressure washing sidewalks and walkways. Matt Watts rented a grinding machine and between Matt and Joe, they grinded, prepped, then painted bathroom floors at each indoor pool. Photos shown of floor in the bathroom completely repainted, along with the walls. Lind Brown has been in need of an overhaul for quite some time. Staff stripped the bathroom floors to prep for paint. Photos shown of the floors being finished. Offices at Lind Brown were cleaned out, discarded old furniture. Shannon mentions they also painted the gym walls at Lind Brown. She then states one of the biggest projects to tackle was pumping 55 gallon barrels of hand sanitizer and disinfectant. Staff went to work on filling plastic spray bottles to distribute throughout Beaufort County.

- Software Update – Rec Desk:** Shannon says that after five years of using MaxGalaxy for our registration software, she received an email back in late October or November informing us that MaxGalaxy would no longer be operational in October 2021. After vesting IT and security measures, the department officially settled on Rec Desk. The first phase of it will start June 1st for fall registration. Wanting to start with our official membership registration in July. It will be a busy next few weeks getting information into the new software, but it will be better in the long run.
- Master Plan Update:** The overall master plan for the Parks and Recreation department was approved to be completed. Council approved \$173,190 as a contract with Wood + Partners. Community meetings will take place, which one has already been held at Booker T Washington. They will actually go out into the communities, have meetings, tour the facilities, and make recommendations. Shannon mentions it will be yearlong process. At the end of the day, it's going to be a huge asset to us at Parks and Rec. Bruce Yeager asks if \$173,190 is the cost of to update the plan. Shannon says there is no overall county wide Parks and Rec master plan. The last County Administrator met with us and wanted it done. At the time, \$125,000 was budgeted. Bruce asks if it will include current facility master plans. Shannon confirms they will be included, but they'll go out to the parks and centers and recommend potential parks/center upgrades, closing of certain centers, and future purchase of land and land development. Shannon says both the community and the department will have input, and all details will be included. There was five of us on the committee who decided to up the budgeted amount for the plan. Bruce asks about a timeline and how long the process will take. Shannon says it will be a twelve month process. The contract was just written yesterday, it has not been signed yet, but has been approved through council.
- Tennis Court Update:** ATAX funding will help with upgrading some of our tennis courts. Downtown Tennis Courts are going to get a complete overhaul. The project was approved for \$384,741. Some will be paid through a USTA grant. Drainage issues will be addressed first, which they're looking into now. We've got an engineering firm that's looking at it, but nothing has been finalized. The streetscape put in by the City of Beaufort causes storm water to run to the tennis courts. All courts will be demolished, then dirt brought in to raise the area, then the new courts will be built. Looking to add more handicap accessibility, depending on funding. PARD funding has been applied for in hopes to improve lighting and install paved parking. All the fencing is going to be replaced. Bruce brings up the grant update in last meeting minutes that \$431,000 was applied for. Shannon says that grant was pushed back for a year due to Covid. She says we were unable to get the information together that we needed to reapply for that grant, so ATAX funding is route at this time. Shannon says the PARD grant applied for was for \$170,000 and it hasn't been awarded yet. Once the legislative delegation meets, they'll decide who gets awarded and we'll know what additional funding we may have. Shannon mentions the thought process behind it is we know what we want to do. The fencing needs to be replaced, the drainage needs to be fixed, and the courts need to be re-done. If we run short on funds, we do have the money from the sale of Bob Jones that we could pull from. Bruce asks about the motion in past meeting naming the courts after Arthur Middleton. Shannon says she will talk about that topic later in the meeting.
- Buckwalter Update:** Shannon brings up the BRACE Project, which is the Buckwalter expansion project. Wood + Partners is in the process of signing the contract, then we will start once they do that. Turf fields will possibly be added. Shannon says that as of right now, we're looking at starting the tennis complex with the funding that we have. She is currently unsure on the amount of impact fees will come in by the time the project begins, so we're looking at maybe four tennis courts and two pickle ball courts. Bruce asks about the pickleball project at Burton Wells. Shannon says that funding was going to come through the land and water conservation as well. That funding was pushed back as well, and the project is very expensive. We are looking at applying for ATAX funding next year and hoping to be so we can pursue the pickleball complex at Burton Wells.

- **Time Change For Facilities:** Shannon mentions staff shortage. We're still short staffed and until we get that filled, we can't go back to normal operating hours at Buckwalter or Burton Wells. The pools are the same, and will see when we get to the employee update. Bluffton Pool is open, Monday through Friday 8am-1pm, closing for lunch and then opening back up from 2pm – 6pm. On the Beaufort side, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday we're opening the Beaufort Pool. Tuesday's and Thursday's we're opening Battery Creek Pool. Once we get staffing, we will expand the hours. We just have to get the staffing to be able to do that.
- **Annual Report:** Each of you got a copy of the annual report, took us a little, but we did get that out and it is awesome.
- **Fees:** I also included in your packet, the fees and voting on the fees. Some possible changes that we'd like to look at, that's on the second page.
- **FINS:** The FINS Swim Team uses the Bluffton Pool once it closes to the public, from 7:00pm-8:15pm. USA Swimming requirements keep them from being able to swim during regular hours due to Covid regulations. The rate for them is \$60 (\$10 per lane) per hour. Shannon says since we're closed to the public, the charge should technically be the pool rental rate of \$600, just like any other group would have to do to rent the pool. Bruce asks how many hours that rate would give, in which Shannon told was for three hours. Shannon then says we value the FINS, but they are a for profit swim team. She said she got with Anny Binette and they feel a \$100 rate is fair considering we do lose the ability to schedule private swim lessons with them using the pool during that time. Will McCullough asks how many days do they use the pool. Anny says they are there Monday-Friday, year round. Bruce asks where have they formerly been. Shannon says they have used Shell Hall along with Island Rec. Frank says they used four lanes at their facility, charging them \$100 a week because it was a bonus since they weren't filling the pool at the time. He says he feels the rate suggested was fair. Phil Kiser asks if the FINS have been informed of the possible rate increase. Shannon said they have been informed that they would be suggesting a new rate to the board. Will motioned to raise the FINS daily rate from \$60 to \$110, of which Bruce asked for discussion. Phil asked if we would lose the FINS over the increase. Shannon stated probably not. Bruce mentions the department subsidizing the pools, and that this increase could run off a long term tenant. Bruce suggests getting a commitment of a period of time from the FINS so the board can revisit to see how it's working. Shannon mentions different programs that we could offer for those getting off work after 5:00pm. Bill Brown mentions that it won't affect our programs greatly, but could hurt the bottom line some. Bruce says he agrees with Will, but a minimum of six months commitment should be given. Will says he is satisfied with the motion he gave, in which Bruce asks for an addition to the motion to include a period of time. **Will amends his motion to raise the FINS daily rate from \$60 to \$110 for the next six months to be revisited by the board. Bill seconds the motion. MOTION PASSED.**
- **Food Truck Fees:** Shannon says we've been approached by citizens that are interested in putting on food truck events. We don't currently have any fees on our fee schedule for this. One group in particular would like to have food trucks on site to attract people to these events. Shannon spoke with the purchasing department, and they said we would have to advertise this and invite all parties. We have to set a rate or percentage of sales from each truck, of which we don't have either. Bill says the military base does a percentage split, but that a flat fee is the norm. Bruce asks if it's something we want to provide people coming to the parks or more event driven. Shannon says she doesn't want to hold us to just events in case we wanted to provide if for certain sports. Bruce brings up the conflict with concessions. Shannon said it would typically be for events, but that if it seems beneficial because of a specific product, such as Kona Ice, we may want to allow it for programs we provide. Bruce brings up the issue with putting a fee or percentage in place without having

a policy for food trucks. There could be other extra considerations concerning clean up and providing power they need to be in place. Bill suggests to have a policy in place and the endorsement of a \$100 rate with the review, put a date on it for the first couple of events. Bruce mentions that putting something out there could be opening ourselves up for issues. Will says that he believes the topic should be tabled. **Will motions to temporarily table the topic until our next board meeting to be able to address something specifically at that time. Bill seconds the motion. MOTION PASSED.**

- **Non Resident Center and Rooms:** In the process of implementing the RecDesk software, the idea of a non-resident fee for rentals was brought up. We have non-resident rates for memberships, but not for any center or field rentals. Bruce discusses the uniqueness of how close we are to the state line, along with it affecting tournaments. Shannon mentions Jasper County citizens do not pay Beaufort County taxes, but they can currently rent our multi-purpose rooms, and pay the same as a Beaufort County taxpayer. **Will motions to assess an additional 25% increase for non-residents for all rentals across the board. Bill seconds the motion. MOTION PASSED.**
- **Parking Lot Fees:** Requests are made asking to only rent parking lots at certain locations. Typically we do have to shut down the facility as well, so it's normally fallen under the special event rental rate. Shannon suggested to keep the rental rate the same as the special event, but to specifically identify the parking lot rental rate. Bruce and Will question the assumption that the facility is shut down due to an event like this. Shannon stated that it would. **Will motions that if an entities wishes to rent a certain parking lot, the rental fee would be the same as the special event fee. Bill seconds the motion. MOTION PASSED.**
- **Adult Baseball:** The registration fee for Adult Baseball is currently \$50 per participant. Cost of operating the program has increased due to higher numbers, along with the addition of another umpire on the field. Shannon says she met with Matt about the fee, and considering the Youth Baseball fee is \$65, we feel that \$75 is appropriate fee for Adult Baseball. Umpires are not cheap. To include the second umpire for the games would increase the price \$75 per player. **Phil motions to make the fee \$75. Bill seconds the motion. MOTION PASSED.**
- **Out of State Family Rates:** Occasionally we have families from out of state come by our recreation centers or pools. The current out of state rate is \$10 per person. Shannon says Anny has asked if we could look at a reduced rate for out of state families. She suggested an out of state family rate of \$30 for a family of four, with \$5 added for each additional family member. **Ron Campbell motioned to charge \$30 for an out of state family of four and \$5 for each additional family member. Phil seconds the motion. MOTION PASSED.**
- **Lacrosse Fee and Deposit:** The current fee for Youth Lacrosse is \$60 per participant. They receive a jersey, helmet, and shoulder pads. Shannon suggests a fee increase to \$70 per participant to include adding shorts, along with offsetting the cost of reconditioning of equipment. Shannon also states that her and Matt discussed a deposit for equipment that is given out, which has also been brought up by some of our lacrosse coaches. Will asks if we used to take deposits when we issued football equipment, in which Shannon stated no. Bruce then suggested that a deposit should be taken, but that a deposit or fee increase for lost equipment should be implemented. Shannon and Kevin Reynolds discuss the high deposit fee, and if it would keep some from participating. Kevin also mentions that an increase \$5 per participant, and if we had the same number of participants as this season, the revenue would not even cover the replacement of four helmets. Will asks how much equipment was returned during the spring, which Kevin replied that equipment return was not until that evening. Matt mentions the rising cost of having equipment reconditioned. **Will motions to raise the Youth Lacrosse participant fee to \$70, to include shorts and the equipment reconditioning, and that we hold off on any additional deposit or other fees. However, at the next board meeting, a report of how much equipment was**

returned needs to be presented so that the board can assess if it's an issue or not. Bill seconds the motion. Bruce comments that for capital intensive sports there should be an annual fee template to cover replacement equipment on an ongoing basis. **MOTION PASSED.**

- **Pool Resurface Update:** The Beaufort Pool has already been resurfaced. The Bluffton pool starts on June 1st. Battery Creek resurfacing is out to bid.
- **Lind Brown Pool Naming:** Shannon stated that she received an email from Mr. Fred Washington Jr. concerning the passing of Alvin Settles, who was our pool manager at the outdoor pool for many years. Mr. Settles taught many of the kids, including some of our lifeguards, to swim. He sent me the email, and called, asking about naming the Lind Brown pool after Alvin Settles. We still have it in the minutes for Arthur Middleton for the Downtown Tennis Courts, but Shannon say per County Council a person must be deceased for ten years before they can have a park or facility named after them. Shannon wanted it noted since there have been citizens approach us about naming the Downtown Tennis Courts after another member of the community. Shannon let them know that the board as already voted to name the courts after Arthur Middleton. Bruce says he knows there have been baseball field named after those that haven't been deceased ten years. Shannon said it's specific to entire facilities or parks. Bruce asked if there's different rulings for naming a court or field. Shannon asks Chuck Atkinson to provide input, in which Chuck said he could take suggestions to the Community Services Committee concerning the naming of a court or field. Shannon said that the naming of Downtown Tennis Courts was going to be brought to County Council, then Covid shut everything down. She would like to bring naming of both facilities when they get the next opportunity. Bill encouraged that this be done. Shannon says they will pursue that avenue.
- **Pickeball Update:** In the process of getting the requisition for pickleball lines being put down at Shell Point Park. We are going to have one court there for tennis, and the have two pickle ball courts. There will be a four foot fence in between, along with a walk around on each side. That will give the park more flexibility and people will have more use out of the park than just tennis.
- **Bingo:** It has come as a request that we host bingo nights. A lot of military bases do it, including the air station. One of our staff, Amanda Snead, gives information concerning bingo nights on the base. People of all ages enjoy it. Bill mentions that Jacksonville does really well with their bingo nights, including paying for their entire rec operations with the profits made. Bruce asks if this is something we would get a group to come in and run, or would it be a program we would add. Shannon said it would be something we would run, and hopefully do more activities such as this at various centers. Phil brings up if there's any issues under state regulations. Shannon says she will check to ensure there aren't any issues.

Deputy Director Report

- **Effects of Covid:** Matt says the spring was tough for us as it was for everybody else, especially for the rec departments and sports. All programming was shut down on March 13, 2020. Luckily enough, we were able to get kids back playing in June. The only sport that we didn't restart was Youth Lacrosse. Many families decided not to participate once we restarted the season. We gave out roughly 763 refunds or credits, which would probably equate close to \$45,000 in lost profits. With the issues with indoor sports, we decided not to have Youth Basketball in the summer. For the fall, obviously we're getting better at some sort of normalcy, but numbers obviously were low. That was still at a point where some parents weren't safe with letting their kids play. Plus with the mask mandates by the CDC along with our state, even with it being outdoors, parents still had to wear masks. Our staff had a tough time.

They had to deal with a lot of angry parents and patrons coming to the parks. Didn't want to go over the numbers from 2019 versus the Fall 2020, it was going to be really skewed. Some of the numbers were still pretty good, but compared to previous years, it was still rather lacking.

- **Registration Numbers:**

- a. **2021 Winter Youth Basketball:** We only allowed one parent or guardian to enter the facility with participants. If they had siblings, they could come in as well. It affected our numbers a little bit but we still had a good size program. Beaufort was only short 2 kids from where it was the previous year and Bluffton was only short 16 kids.
- b. **2021 Spring Athletic Programs:** Numbers really started to pick back in in the Spring 2021. Matt gives a rundown of youth and adult participation for spring athletic programs. One new program that we started a partnership with in Bluffton is a football club called Gaelic football. I never hear of it before until we were approached by Niall Archibold. He's a native of Ireland and evidently is the most popular sport in Ireland. He is passionate about it and if you out to Oscar Frazier on Saturdays, he has youth clinics going on. Then behind MC Riley #3 on Tuesday nights, he has a group of 30 adults right now. Adult softball is still growing. We have an increase of 132 adults playing softball this spring than the previous season. We have actually added a senior league. We have six teams in the senior league. That's where we've seen a big increase in numbers. Bruce asks about the age range for the senior league. Matt says 55 & Up based on how the South Senior Sports Classic runs their program.

- **Tournaments:**

- a. **2020:** We had a couple of tournaments that we were going to host. The Georgia-South Carolina Border Battle from the state championships and the 12U from Georgia and South Carolina were going to play. That was cancelled, that was going to be the inaugural event. We were able to host the 2020 SCAP Soccer State Tournament in December here at Buckwalter. It turned out very well. We still had the mask mandate, but we had teams coming from all over the state.
- b. **2021:** We did end up getting to host the border battle again in March 2021. Fortunately the county channel came and recorded the games for everybody. Ethan Harris did play by play for us. We have two tournaments that we have booked for the summer. We're moving away from Dixie softball for a few different reasons. SCAP has decided as a board to try to add softball as a program. So we're going to host their inaugural state tournament. It'll be for ages from 8U/10U/12U. It'll be June 24th – 27th at Burton Wells. We're hosting Dixie Boys and Junior Boys State Tournament again July 9th – 14th. We'll host that as well at Burton Wells.

Aquatics Report

- **Programs:** We have our BOGA classes on Tuesday's and Thursday's at 5:30pm. We have our group lessons. The current ones is May 11th – June 3rd, and that's Tuesday's and Thursday's. We have a lifeguard class going on right now until tomorrow, Friday. Then we have our water aerobics and our swim teams. We currently do not have anything at Battery Creek due to covid. Hopefully we will have that up and running soon. Our Beaufort pool, we have our BOGA classes on Monday and Wednesday's at 5:30. Our group lessons just started and its Monday, Wednesday and Friday's, May 3rd – May 26th. We have our lifeguarding class, which is at our Battery Creek pool, then water aerobics and swim team as well. For our Bluffton pool, we have water aerobics at 9:30am Monday, Wednesday and Friday's. Our group swim lessons are May 10th – May 26th. That's Monday, Wednesday and Friday's as well. Our

lifeguarding class, again is at Battery Creek pool and then we have currently have no BOGA classes at the Bluffton pool just because of everything else going on. Our FINS swim team is from 6pm to 8pm. We have CPR classes that we offer year round, stroke improvement classes, normally those are for adults. We have private lessons and our school swim lessons, they are not going on right now, hopefully will go on next school year.

Employee Update

- **Admin:** Still have the one part time position to fill. This should get the recreation centers back open on Saturdays. It's been posted, we haven't really had anyone apply.
- **Athletics:** Athletic Manager, Evan (Christian) was promoted from Athletic Supervisor. Now we actually have a full staff with our Athletic Supervisors. We have Darrell (Ketola), Justin (Petock) and Kevin (Reynolds) over here and then Ethan (Harris) and Ryan (Ruarks) are on the Burton Wells side.
- **Maintenance:** New Assistant Superintendent is Ernest Busby, who was promoted from his position as Crew Leader. Still have eight positions left to fill and those are not being filled easily.
- **Rec Aides:** Seven positions left to fill. Getting help the guys need at the fields and the staffing and the centers.
- **Lifeguards:** Commercial was made on Tuesday with the County Channel to advertise lifeguard positions. Only have seven seasonal, six full time and three part time at the moment. The only thing that is going to save us right now with opening the outdoor pool by Memorial Day weekend is the fact that June the 1st we close the Bluffton pool to resurface, and that is going to buy us three weeks. May have to reevaluate pool times because the outdoor pool is such a busy pool. Mr. Brown mentions the lifeguard class coming up on Friday, along with the fact that he's having issues finding lifeguards too.

Announcements

- Next meeting is Thursday, July 1st. Bruce asks if there's any way to push that meeting since it's Fourth of July weekend. Shannon says that's not possible due to tournaments. Shannon said she will look at moving it to a week earlier if possible. Bruce asks about the shape of Bluffton Pool. Shannon says it will be resurface but that discussions are still being had concerning the future of the pools.

Adjourned: Phil Kiser motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Bill Brown.