

Call to Order

Roll Call

Present 7 - Chairperson Rand Hicks, Vice Chair Maranda Sword, Renee Borden, Antonio Bruni, David Del Gallo, Alejandra Escobar-Ryan, and Michael Wolf

Absent 1 - Leah Harrison

Approval of Minutes

We had a motion to approve the minutes from the May 2021 meeting from Antonio Bruni, seconded by Maranda Sword, and approved unanimously.

The minutes for the August 2021 were motioned for approval by Alejandra Escobar-Ryan, seconded by David DelGallo, and approved unanimously.

Director's Report

Director Cooper noted that the Mayor working with Governor DeSantis assigned the Bayview Center as a monoclonal antibody site to fight coronavirus, so it is closed to the public at this time, except for the outdoor pursuits area. Our Magee Field project is coming along well. The house adjacent to the field has been acquired, and will be used as an educational component to the kids who use the field. We've completed the installation of new playgrounds at Estramadura and Operto Square and volunteers. It's hoped that we'll complete the installation of new playgrounds at Granada Square and Longhollow Park by month's end. A new merry-go-round has been installed at Lavellet, and storm repairs have been finished at Springdale and Tierra Verde. For 2022, we are purchasing three playgrounds for Bayview, Sanders Beach, and Mallory Heights I. Renovations at Bayview's water park to repair Hurricane Sally damage are well underway, including boat launches. The Dragon Boat festival and Oar Fest are coming soon, and Paul Pipes is in the area daily. Work at Sanders Beach, Maritime Park, and Plaza de Luna is coming up to repair storm damage. At the time of our meeting, the Escambia County Commissioners were meeting and were to consider providing \$1.3 million to help fund the Roger Scott Tennis Center construction. Approval would let us take the next steps in renovation there. Mayor Robinson worked diligently with Commissioner Bender to place the Roger Scott project on the EOCC agenda. Bids will soon come to rebuild the Hunter Pool building. We've met with the contractor on the Kiwanis Dog Park to adjust the footage of the park and remove the chainlink fence, taking the light poles out, installing a split-rail fence if acquirable through Pride in the state prison system. We're meeting with HDR, the firm designing the Skate Park for the Hollice T. Williams corridor. The skatepark will be the first to launch either late in 2021 or early in 2022. We are wrapping up Hitzman Park, and have more work to do with the engineering firm on stormwater management that addresses ongoing drainage issues in the ponds. The rest of the park and soccer fields have been turned over to P&R, so those programs are getting started. Deja Dowdell is working with the Mayor and the Scenic Heights Neighborhood president to set up the final ribbon-cutting date for Hitzman in the next 4-5 weeks. Director Cooper then introduced Kendra Weekley, our new Budget Manager and Specialist in the Parks & Recreation Department. She replaces Melinda Meola, who retired from the City after thirty years of service. We'll miss Melinda, but are excited to have Kendra onboard. She'll bring our board periodic financial reports.

We had a question from Mr. Bruni about Mallory Heights II, which is not an LOST program. The repair work there is to re-level the area to ensure safety. It's used as a practice field for soccer and for remote control airplane groups. Parking is currently situated on the right flank of the park.

Mr. Bruni's next question was about the spillway draining out of the soccer complex. In his experience it can gather to an 18-inch depth right into the disc golf area. Mr. Cooper noted that an engineered plan is in the works to get the water into the ground or direct it out somehow.

Mr. Hicks noted that he and the director had visited Hitzman after receiving an email from a councilperson about drainage issues and ADA concerns there. Each issue was addressed, and Mr. Cooper is developing timely. The City will look at the issue and take remedial steps as necessary. Ms. Borden wondered if these issues arose during the punch-out phase, to which Mr. Cooper responded that the councilperson's issues were not all related to construction. Because of the councilperson's note, he identified missing locks on the new fences and drainage problems, ADA turn-radius for a picnic table, etc., and is addressing those now. The construction firm had indeed met all the outstanding items on the punch list. Landscaping issues that remained are also being addressed. We're looking forward to the grand opening.

Staff Reports

STAFF PRESENTATION - PAUL PIPES - OUTDOOR PURSUITS AND VOLUNTEER PROJECTS

Paul Pipes, Outdoor Pursuits and Volunteer Coordinator, then offered us a fine presentation of P&R's outdoor programs. We have 93 parks and green spaces to manage. Paul coordinates and brings in volunteers who work in the parks as well as steering Keep Pensacola Beautiful, and he interfaces with the community's businesses and coordinates our summer camps. He's also in charge of the outdoor pursuits program from Bayview Community Resource Center, which is off to a great start. Boy Scout programs are a standout. Paul addressed the volunteer program first. Since he began, Paul has brought in 4,477 volunteers who offered 10,447 hours of service, which converts into \$249,062.24 in value. Despite COVID-19, in 2021 they completed 102 park projects (including Easter, Halloween, etc.). Among our partnerships are Keep Pensacola Beautiful and the Adopt a Park program with quarterly cleanups that now includes 18 parks; Ocean Hour, working cleanup with another 9 on a bimonthly basis; Eagle Scout programs; and still more. An enormous number of city partners and volunteer groups are involved. Paul then talked about our Outdoor Pursuits program, which include beginning and advanced fishing camps, standup paddle board and kayak camps, adventure camps, fishing and archery days, and a program advancing outdoor survival skills. Bayview Outdoor Pursuits Center opened in May 2021, and we had a great summer with rentals for boats, kayaks, paddle board, bicycles, camping gear, outdoor backpacking, etc. He's working on some adult programming too. We have numerous property loan agreements, so we get substantial support from FYCCN. The Oar Fest has taken 2 years to develop in partnership with Visit Pensacola and others to promote all approaches to the water. It's a free community event that will be held on Saturday, 23 October 2021 from 10 to 2 with competitive family and fun races. Ms. Borden asked about grant funding, and Paul noted that we'd received 5 or 6 since he joined the department. The rentals do produce some income stream for the department. Kayak rentals have produced about \$10K. Ms. Escobar-Ryan asked about how volunteers can come forward and what is needed. There's a volunteer interest form on the website. He sends updated activity lists to those who've expressed interest so they can find a current fit. Ms. Escobar-Ryan then asked how many kids are we serving and how can we make it bigger. Overall, there are roughly 400 people enrolled. Mr. Cooper noted that Paul's confined by space demands. If we had more, we could serve more. For instance, we have access to only 2 vans to transport kids, and are trying to secure more for future use. An aging bus might be replaced with vans. Mr. Bruni drew attention again to the limits of our resources, like the courts at Roger Scott. There is significant unmet demand. Mr. Hicks noted that if Paul Epstein were present, he'd tell us that in business, you never want to run out of your number 1 and 2 items. In the P&R system, if there's more demand for soccer fields, tennis courts, water sports, disc golf, then we need to meet it. Mr. Cooper is aware of the areas of growing demand. Tim Land began a program that Paul Pipes has significantly furthered. As part of the Rec Fund, the Outdoor Pursuits program has to break even. It'll continue to grow, and we'll need extra staff. Board members can accentuate volunteer opportunities at neighborhood association meetings they're attending.

NEW BUSINESS

COMPLETE STREETS AND THE ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Mr. Hicks drew attention to the promotion of David Forte to Deputy City Administrator and the hire of Caitlin Cerame to be the City's Transportation Planner. We're hoping that Caitlin can attend next month's meeting to present a picture of what complete streets might look like in Pensacola. The Council has approved an Active Transportation Plan with \$166,000 of funding towards these ideas. What the board might do to help promote recreational hiking, walking, and cycling brings this topic forward. A few years ago, we formed a Bicycle Advisory Committee as an extension of the P&R board which applied to be designated as a Bicycle Friendly Community (awarded an honorable mention). Mr. Bruni commented that in his observation, the City in complete streets consideration focuses on the downtown core and ignores areas outside. We should be able to take several routes to reach the downtown area. He isn't interested in Davis Highway as an avenue for his six-year old child, and would like to see complete streets brought to Langley, Summit, Bayou Boulevard. If Langley had been converted into a complete street, it could have connected with the Leap Trail. Mr. Wolf noted the partnership between the County and the City to convert West Jackson from A to Fairfield into a complete street with bike lanes, etc. The board expressed interest in working with the administration and council to promote this theme. Ms. Borden offered that a map on our website noting where bike trails/hiking trails are would be a real help. Mr. Hicks mentioned that Caitlin Cerame would present the developing ideas (maybe with visuals) at our next meeting. He referred also to two safe biking routes posted on our website that were created by Christian Wagley with Bike Pensacola through funding from Councilwoman Sherri Myers. Ms. Borden asked if there was a way to connect these with Visit Pensacola, with whom she connects her visiting clients, as well as with our P&R website. Mr. Hicks agreed, and suggested a more dynamic engagement with all social media currently relevant, sharing information everywhere possible in every way possible. So we'll try to share all our information, current and forthcoming, with Visit Pensacola.

David Forte, Deputy City Administrator, formally introduced us to Caitlin Cerame, our new Transportation Planner, who is coming to the City from the Emerald Coast Resource Council. The Active Transportation Plan is different from complete streets, and it's in more robust state of development: it addresses how we build a transportation network to accommodate all users outside of motorized vehicles. They'll present the Active Transportation Plan next month and highlight how they are using complete street theory to flesh it out. She's here from the ECRC, which did regional transportation planning for our Florida/Alabama region (TPO). She was present when the City sent its list in 2018 to the TPO for the bike/ped plan. Caitlin is beginning with a description of the services with the ATP and what the deliverables will be and what the engagement will be with boards and the public. They're glad for the early opportunity to work with the P&R board and develop desired outcomes with safety and connectivity. Cohesion and directness are key to cyclists, and they understand that. To a question from Mr. Wolf about her job regarding motorized traffic, Caitlin replied that they would be looking at traffic volumes: stress levels for pedestrians will be gauged as a service. On street parking is an element of complete streets. LDCs will be reviewed, impact analyses, and parking regulations may enter too. Mr. Wolf asked if she'll be seeking grants to implement plans. Mr. Forte noted that first plans will be developed and afterwards they'll seek grants. Grant awards are based on submitted plans. (For instance, Lake Wales was recently awarded \$800,000 on the basis of their submitted Active Transportation Plan.)

PARK AMENITY DEDICATION - ELWOOD

Thomas Zam addressed the board in support of his request that his dog, the Great Elwood (an English mastiff brindle), be memorialized at Bayview. He shared a touching story about Elwood's life with him as a professional skateboarder. When Elwood passed away from cancer, a Viking funeral was held in St. Petersburg. Here in Pensacola, Thomas would like to place a

plaque in Bayview Park with a basket for tennis balls that will be filled every Friday for the dogs that want to play. East Hill Neighborhood Association will maintain the site. Mr. Wolf motioned to approve, and was seconded by Ms. Escobar-Ryan, and the vote to approve was unanimous. It will go next to the Council Executive, then to the Council for an October approval.

FURTHER DISCUSSION OF PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD DUTIES

Mr. Hicks summarized the board's redefined duties as to engage, review, and report, and suggested we approach the park system comprehensively with a view to what we can achieve, and how we can serve administration staff, the Mayor, and the City Council. To collect all our voices and ideas and work through the Council Executive in solidarity with the Director and Superintendents. We could review, for instance, the nature and state of park equipment and amenities, which recreational activities are on the ascendent. The future installation of playground equipment is within the board's review. To survey the state of the park system and how we move forward is the opening question. Regarding the third element, Ms. Borden asked if we've heard from the Council about if they're looking for a report. Mr. Hicks replied that the Council will get back to us about how frequently they want reports and whether in oral or written presentations. [Comprehensive look and then drill down into specific subjects.] Alternatively, Mr. Hicks as chair could consult with Don Kraher, Council Executive, and bring back as early as next month an approach to seek Council's guidance on their will. Ms. Escobar-Ryan wants to establish a means by which we can assess a park and share that documentation. To centralize information so that it's accessible to all, including council members, would be key. Mr. Hicks agreed, noting that we can consolidate what comes from our engagement with neighborhood associations and utilize the assessment tools provided by herself and Mr. Wolf. All such data could be collected and made accessible on our website. Mr. Bruni would like to see us engage more in policy issues and leave the day-to-day to Mr. Cooper and staff, and cited a number of possibilities, like allowing parks to age out if they're not really needed. Mr. Hicks suggested that policy direction and park review are both part of our defined duties. We could use the needs assessment from UWF's Matt Ruckman in 2016 as a beginning guide (distributed to us in May 2021). Perhaps we keep the parks but redirect what our goals are in parks themselves: one of the takeaways from the study was that parks are mostly used for walking. One consideration then is whether we need more trees and less unused playground equipment in areas where we have mature populations and fewer families. Mr. Cooper agreed, noting that in one case staff took a lot of fire when a playground was reduced in size. This is a policy decision. We as board members can engage the neighborhood associations and explain situations and developing decisions as we go along. It would encourage neighborhood engagement, and our board members are willing to do this. Ms. Sword agreed, and Mr. Wolf expressed concern if a park is simply neglected. Our intent is simply not to replace playground equipment it ages out and isn't really needed. Mr. Cooper noted that Councilwoman Brahier successfully moved \$500,000 towards a repair fund for P&R. Ms. Escobar-Ryan supported the comprehensive review suggested earlier as well as the retirement of unused playground areas. Ms. Borden suggested a masterplan beyond what we achieved with the UWF study. Soccer was a main theme, and soccer was developed at Hitzman based on that plan. The question is how and when do we update a masterplan that reviews comprehensively the park system. Mr. Cooper agreed. A longterm masterplan would be a great benefit, but would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. It would be a matter of council priorities to hire a consultant who would address the public and every neighborhood association. It would go beyond the three plans that currently guide P&R decision-making. Mr. Bruni suggested we ask the City Council to authorize a masterplan for P&R. Mr. DelGallo agreed that a masterplan might be nice, even if it's unlikely. He asked if we could have a list of upcoming park renovations and which neighborhoods they're in, and address the association where relevant. The monies saved could be spent on summer programs, where kids clearly need more resources. Mr. Cooper agreed he could extend such appraisals to us. Mr. Hicks came back to the earlier point that we can go to the Council Executive seeking a

comprehensive review which we could present to the Council on how we survey the parks and advise the Council and Mayor. Mr. Wolf said it's a great idea, but the only way to do it is to have public engagement through a masterplan, which is then presented to the Council and accepted. Mr. Wolf made a motion that we approach the Council Executive to explore options in developing a parks masterplan for the City of Pensacola which would be extended to the City Council. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bruni. The vote to approve was unanimous.

Mr. Hicks encouraged all board members to continue to attend the neighborhood association meetings.

The last item was postponed to next month's agenda.

Mr. Cooper noted that this was Heidi Thorsen's last day assisting the board. She has been promoted to the Airport. Lauren Williams will be the new Assistant to the Director.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.