



Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources Advisory Board Minutes of the Meeting on August 18, 2022

PARK BOARD MEMBERS:	Mr. Bryan Beckman, Mr. Steven Ochsner Mr. Miles Croom, Ms. Peg Cummings, Ms. Cynthia Grizzle, Mr. Brian Scott
PARKS & CONSERVATION RESOURCES STAFF:	Mr. Paul Cozzie, Director Mr. Spencer Curtis, North County Operations Mgr. Mr. Lyle Fowler, South County Operations Mgr. Dr. Steve Harper, Resource and Asset Mgr. Mr. Matthew Tolnay, Assistant County Atty. Ms. Deann Baker, Administrative Support Spec.
VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE:	Ms. Debbie Chayet

A regular meeting of the Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources (PCR) Advisory Board was held at the Pinellas County Extension Building, located at 12520 Ulmerton Rd. Largo, FL 33774 on August 18, 2022.

- I. **Open Meeting/Introductions**
Vice Chair Peg Cummings called the meeting to order at 9:30 am. Introductions were then made by all participants present.
- II. **Approval of Minutes**
There was not a quorum at the May 19, 2022 meeting, therefore the meeting minutes are for informational purposes only.
- III. **Citizens to be heard**
 - None
- IV. **Old Business**
 - Final Recommendation on Off Leash dog Hours
 - Background: In March, a citizen had a dog off leash. The park ranger approached him letting him know that his dog should be leashed unless they're in a dog park. The citizen came to the PCR Advisory Board meeting in May & asked us to look at the rule. We were directed to see how other county & municipalities are addressing dogs off leash. The City of Dunedin allows for off leash dogs in a certain space at Hammock Park. We were asked to see if there could be a compromise.
 - Chapter 90 addresses dogs in two different parts of the code. One is the leash law, which states dogs shall be on a leash no longer than 6' in length. Pets can't be left unattended. There are restrictions on where dogs can be while leashed, such as playgrounds, board walks and swimming areas. Dogs are also prohibited in preserves and management areas. Chapter 14 is referenced, which is an animal ordinance generally addressing the Animal Services Dept.

PCR does not allow dogs off leash in county parks due to the following: there's a greater risk of conflict amongst dog owners, patrons who have a fear of dogs, and an increased risk of dog bites. Dogs can also harass wildlife with negative impacts.

- The county has 7 dog parks and a dog beach at Ft. De Soto. Dog parks are segregated for small and large dogs with a total of 12 acres. Belleair Beach Causeway is an "unofficial" dog beach. There are signs posted stating that dogs must be on a leash.
- A Peer Survey of Florida county parks was conducted. We're the only agency that we can identify allowing dogs off leash in parks, outside of a dedicated dog park. Numerous counties in the state were part of the survey.
- Prior to February 2022, under Chapter 14, the definition of physical control read ***"the immediate continuous physical control of a dog or cat at all times, such as by means of a leash, cord or chain of such strength to restrain the dog or cat or physical control which shall also include visual signals or oral commands by the owner of a dog which has been trained to consistently and effectively respond to such signals and commands if such dog is at all times within the unobstructed site of the dog's owner"***. The code has been updated to remove everything after the "physical control" from the code, due to the number of incidents occurring with dogs that were under visual or oral commands from the owner. This reflects what our Chapter 90 code requires.
- Paul requested a recommendation from this board to be included in the presentation to the BCC Board in September. 3 options for this board to consider are: ***1) No changes to the current policy relating to leashing of dogs in county parks 2) Further investigate the legitimacy of dogs being off leash in county parks 3) Allow dogs to be off leash during certain hours.***
- A motion was made by Bryan Beckman and seconded by Miles Croom to support the current rules and ordinances that are in place. The motion passed unanimously.

V. New Business

- Recommendation on Potential Smoking Ban for County Beach Park
 - This is the second item to be addressed at the September BCC Work Session.
 - On July 1, 2022, the Governor signed into law House Bill 105 and amended Florida Statute Chapter 386, which was previously known as the Florida Clean Indoor Air Act and has now been renamed the Florida Clean Air Act. ***The amendment allows counties and municipalities to further restrict smoking within the boundaries of any public beaches and public parks that they own, except that they may not further restrict the smoking of unfiltered cigars. A municipality may further restrict smoking within the boundaries of public beaches and parks that are within its jurisdiction but are owned by the county unless such restriction conflicts with the County Ordinance.***
 - Reasons to institute a smoking ban on county beaches include litter reduction, reducing microplastics in the water, elimination of secondhand smoke and the protection of wildlife.
 - PCR looked at multiple peer beach counties. Miami Dade and Manatee are both looking at smoking bans. Beach municipalities in Pinellas are waiting to see what the county is going to do. Paul will be attending the Coastal Communities meeting on August 31 to see what direction they'll be taking as we have beach access parks that we co-manage with the municipalities on the barrier islands. The City of Indian Harbor Beach and the town of Palm Beach have passed ordinances restricting smoking at municipal parks and beaches. Other municipalities considering a smoking ban are St. Petersburg, Sarasota, Miami Beach, Vero Beach, Boca Raton and Delray Beach. Any ban that we put in place would only affect the beach parks managed by the county, which are Sand Key, Ft. De Soto and Fred Howard. Restrictions would be limited to just the sandy part of the beach and the dune environment.

Beach access parks that are co-managed with municipalities will set their own rules. We cannot regulate any part of the beach that is privately owned. This will require an update to the Chapter 90 Ordinance. Paul will be speaking with Steve Hayes (Executive Director of Visit St. Pete) and Dr. Beach (Stephen Leatherman) who is in favor of a smoking ban on beaches.

- A suggestion was made to put receptacles on the beach for the public to deposit their cigarette butts. Signage was also suggested as part of educating the public. This is a litter and environmental issue.
- ***Bryan Beckman made a motion to support a smoking ban on the beaches managed by the county, Ft. De Soto, Sand Key & Fred Howard, limited to the sandy beach and the dune environment. The emphasis will be placed on education not enforcement. The motion was seconded by Miles Croom and was passed 5 to 1.***

VI. Director's Report

- FY23 Budget Update

- Two public hearings will be held in September on the 8th and 22nd regarding the FY23 budget. PCR will continue the LOS position increases, to include 2 additional Park Rangers at Weedon Island and three additional Trades employees (1 electrician & 2 craft workers) will also be added for park maintenance and repairs. At the Weedon Island Education Center, we will be converting 2 part time positions to full time educators. The Operating Budget remains flat. The budget increase was approximately \$200,000K.
- PCR has 2 budgets, an Operating budget (day to day operations such as staff) and a Capital budget (major construction projects or CIP projects) funded by the Penny & other Grants. We also receive funds from the Tree Bank Fund which is money collected from the development projects and fines assessed for violating the county's tree ordinance. While both are approved, they're brought to the BCC separately. The Operating budget is done annually. The Capital budget is done in a 6-year window. The FY23 Operating budget is roughly around \$22.8 M. 60-65% of the budget is related to personnel costs.
- PCR's budget was presented in a Work Session to the Board. There has been no push back with regards to the Decision Package positions from the LOS study.
- Bee City has approved our draft resolution. This will be taken to the Board for approval. We will then become the largest Bee City USA government entity in Florida.

VII. Other Business

- This will be Matthew Tolnays' last meeting as our attorney.

Adjournment

With no further business, Miles Croom made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Bryan Beckman. The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 a.m.

The next meeting of the PCR Advisory Board is scheduled for April 20, 2023