



Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources Advisory Board Minutes of the Meeting on April 20, 2023

PARK BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Bryan Beckman, Mr. Miles Croom
Ms. Cynthia Grizzle, Mr. Steven Ochsner
Mr. Alan Shapiro, Ms. Heather Vernillo

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.
Cody Ward, Assistant County Atty.
Ms. Deann Baker, Administrative Support Spec.

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 April 20, 2023.

I. Open Meeting/Introductions

II. Approval of Minutes – January 19, 2023

- With no Chair or Vice Chair representation, the minutes could not be approved. No edits or comments were made by the board.
- Chair, Debbie Chayet's term has expired. Vice Chair Peg Cummings is not available for this meeting. Paul offered to Chair the meeting. The Advisory Board agreed.

III. Citizens to be heard

- None present.

IV. Old Business

Chapter 90 Park Ordinance Update

Items that will be brought to the public hearing which will be held in June or July:

- Recommending a change in terms for the Advisory Board appointments. The term will go from 1 year to 2 years. They will align with the appointing Commissioners appointment.
- Adopting the state definition of bicycles according to the state statutes, Class 1, 2 & 3 electric bikes on page 3. Adding the definition of "motorized" on page 4.

- Page 5, correcting the statute number for a vehicle definition.
- Page 7, #6: adding the word and/or suspend from buildings, facilities, etc.
- Page 7, section b., #2 regarding attaching rope, etc. to trees will now add and address the tree diameter to be a minimum of 12 inches in diameter using a 1" strap for purposes of setting up a temporary hammock.
- Page 8, section 90-7, c., #7 regarding frying, adding "or any other apparatus which uses or produces hot oil".
- Page 9, Item #6 – change in the verbiage for the smoking ban in Environmental Lands and County owned public beaches, Florida Botanical Gardens and Heritage Village.
 - Alan asked if this is specific to the County – Yes, cities are doing their own bans.
 - Bryan stated that the City of Clearwater is considering a smoking ban.
- P&CR will work with Marketing and Communications to spread the word about the smoking ban. The goal is to obtain cooperation through education and not need to issue citations.
- Bryan requested that we share the proposed language with the cities. The cities are welcome to contact Paul for information.
- Page 9, Item #6, e., regarding fishing being prohibited from beaches in any area designated for bathing or swimming rather than "where bathing and swimming are permitted."
- Page 9, Item #6, f., Bathing and Swimming – this is trying to keep people from using the shower towers for actual bathing. The verbiage has been updated to reflect only rinsing off sand only and not bringing any soap or phosphates.
- Page 11, s., adding suspending to the diving or jumping from bridges or catwalks. Striking helium filled and using only possessing balloons.
- Page 11, t., Addressing litter and verbiage. No person shall throw, discard, place or deposit any trash, garbage, junk, debris, refuse, or rubbish in any county-owned or managed land or its facilities that are not specifically designated for such trash/garbage disposal.
- Section 90-16, item g. 4 & 5 strike all verbiage. Old item #8, now #6 will add "No fueling of any vessels on any docks or boat ramps".
- Section 90-16, item g. old item #9, now #7 add "For purposes of this Section "storage" shall mean one of the following: a. an unattached trailer, with or without a boat. b. an attached trailer with a boat. c. an oversized vehicle or trailer not intended for the space, e.g. recreational vehicle, camper, landscape or cargo trailer.
- Page 17, Section 90-18, c., Changing reporting for financials from the Friends groups. Dates will change from September 15 and September 30 to October 1 and October 30.

V. New Business

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

- a) Paul announced that Peg Cummings would be willing to accept the role of Chair or Vice Chair. The floor was opened for nominations. Bryan Beckman was open to the Chair or Vice Chair positions. Steve Ochsner proposed Cynthia Grizzle as Chair and was seconded by Bryan Beckman. Cynthia then accepted the Chair position. Bryan Beckman was proposed as Vice Chair and seconded by Miles Croom. Bryan then accepted the Vice Chair position. Cynthia took over the Chair position from this point on.

VI. Bee City USA Report

- a) A requirement of Bee City USA is to have an advisory group. One of the duties of the P&CR Advisory Board is to serve as the advisory group to the Bee City USA affiliate. On March 16, 2023 we became a Bee City USA county. This means we need to fulfill our responsibilities as such. We're required to hold 1 educational event or pollinator habitat planting or restoration each year to show our commitment. We collaborate with the Friends of Brooker Creek for the Wildflower Festival. The county also has a Honey and Arts Festival in Lealman which will be held yearly. We're working with Extension to increase pollinator plantings. In addition, we provide apiary areas in our parks. We would like to increase the area of pollinators on our lands, such as wildflower plantings. We're required to have Bee City USA signs at prominent entry points into the county. There will also be signs in the Unincorporated areas of the county as well as the areas where Pasco and Pinellas meet. We must also have a web page. We're currently working with Marketing & Communications department now to post information related to how citizens can increase pollinators in their homes & what types of plants to purchase and plant in our area. We also need to have a pollinator friendly pest management program, which is our Integrated Vegetation Management program.
- Bryan asked what they could be doing individually. P&CR has a working group that will be preparing reports for future meetings to keep you informed and to solicit your feedback for what we might be able to do for the Bee City USA program.
 - Bryan suggested a yearly report be provided to the board on the health of the bees. USF interns have been hired to inventory the various pollinators within Pinellas County. They will work with the SPC bee group. At our first meeting, we discussed being able to identify the native bees and the honeybees and the differences between them.
 - Heather is part of the Brooker Creek Friend's Group. At an apiary a couple of miles from Brooker Creek, on the last Sunday of the month, at 9:00 a.m., they hold training on how to become a beekeeper. The cost is \$25.

VII. Parks and Conservation Resources Director's Report

- FY24 Budget – we were instructed to keep our budget flat. This means keeping our budget consistent with the current numbers. We have a 2.947% increase in personnel cost. There are significant utility increases for water and sewer. To get to the flat budget, we've got roughly \$700,000 that we must take out of areas we have control of, such as contractual services or operating supplies. P&CR will be meeting with the Office of Management and Budget on the 24th of April 2024 and the County Administrator on May 16. The final budget will then be brought before the BCC for consideration. We've prepared scenarios to illustrate how we might offset these increases.
 - Miles – how will this effect hiring? We've hired all but 6 of the 31 positions from the Level of Service study. A Craftworker was recently hired for Ft. De Soto. Hiring will be delayed for the remaining positions.
 - Bryan – higher energy costs? The City of Clearwater took an action following in the footsteps of the Pinellas County School Board who is partnering with a company to reduce their energy bills.
 - P&CR is also going electric with our golf carts and will be receiving an electric F150.

- Cynthia – Regarding the sustainability action plan in the county. There needs to be the infrastructure in place to support the efforts made by the county.
- Jolanda reported a 15 ½% total increase in utility accounts which equates to \$266K.
- The City of Clearwater has \$3M in Grants for solar panels. The Clearwater Aquarium has installed solar panels on top of their garage.
- ARPA Projects
 - Ray Neri construction will begin in May, 2024. Currently dealing with building and permitting issues. Design is 100% complete.
 - High Point Elementary school. The project should be ready for bid by late 2023 or early 2024. This is a partnership with the school board. The City of Largo will operate and maintain it, with the County having some ongoing capital replacement responsibilities. Entails active recreation that will have multi-purpose fields, a basketball court, walking paths, a playground, and a picnic shelter.
 - Playground replacements – begins with Taylor Park, then on to Ft. De Soto and Philippe. The first round of playground replacements will be done by mid to late summer 2024. This is part of a \$4 ½ M ARPA fund that we expect to do potentially 11 playgrounds with these funds.
 - The civil design for the Lake Seminole trail project that will allow the public to enter Lake Seminole from Park Blvd without having to enter from the roadway.
- Land Acquisition Update
 - P&CR is actively involved in 2 land acquisitions now. One is the W. Klosterman property. We are working with the W. Klosterman Preservation Group and the school board. An announcement should be made soon about the county contributing a match to the Preservation Group to acquire the property. The Real Estate department is in negotiations with the Whitesell family. The Whitesell property is roughly 15 acres that they're currently willing to sell, with the county being the first right of refusal. The property runs adjacent to the Botanical Gardens and along the banks of McKay creek. Once we receive a boundary survey and more information from their attorney, the information will be shared with this board.

VIII. Other Business

- Heather – Can we reduce our carbon footprint by not printing the documents for each of the P&CR Advisory Board meetings? We can share the documents with the board and use the De Soto Teams room to project the documents on screen.
- Heather – What jurisdiction does P&CR have over the Pinellas Trail? We are the managing entity of the Pinellas Trail. At the last 2 Pinellas Trail meetings, there was discussion regarding changing the ordinance to allow bikers to yield at stop signs while at a crossing, rather than stop. Lyle – this has been brought up by one of the trail volunteers at the BPAC meeting. This is known as the Idaho Law, and it basically allows bicyclist to treat a stop sign as a yield sign and a stop light as a stop sign. This means coming to a complete stop, unclipping & putting a foot down.
We would see this as part of the state uniform traffic code. This would require legislation at the state level. This volunteer will be steered in that direction. This would be a proposal to change the state Statute. Numerous states across the country that have adopted this law.

At the Trails Security Task Force meeting, there was no interest shown by the Sheriff. The claim that the Sheriff cannot enforce the Chapter 90 ordinance is inaccurate.

- Cynthia – What is the status of the Gladys Douglas property? The property belongs to the City of Dunedin. We have specific responsibilities that we must fulfill as part of the FCT Grant. This includes fencing of the conservation area, which is done. We're awaiting a new contract for invasive plant management. There is a specific amount of area where we must remove invasive exotics and then complete a planting of native plants. There is a requirement to convert a recreational building on site, near the tennis court into a classroom/concession building for the kayak concessionaire at Jerry Lake. This money is allocated in the FY24 Capital budget. The city has opened up the west side of the property. Mr. Hackworth and his caretakers still live on the property, so some things can't be done now. P&CR will always have specific responsibilities for the Rosemary bald areas in the long-term management of the property.
- Heather – What is the status of the Anclote Stauffer property? Currently there's a developer that is buying the property. It's on P&CR's land acquisition list and our Brownsfield coordinator has had preliminary discussions. The property has very limited use because of the emissions manufacturing that went on in previous years. There is a total of 72 acres and the county has an interest in about 9 to 12 acres of it to provide a north county boat ramp. We're waiting to hear back from the developers. It's not restorable for the purposes of ecological restoration because of the cap and what's underneath the surface. A parking lot or boat ramp which would cover the cap would be allowable.
- Heather - What has happened to the Brooker Creek house that was going to be a Biological Research Station? Steve Harper reported that it was a field station for years. Researchers came from in and out of state and lodged there. With the reduction in force in 2008, it was converted to office space. The land manager and the environmental specialist use it as office space. A sister facility administered by AWARE is located at Weedon Island in the maintenance yard. It's currently operated as a field station by AWARE. Research equipment is still on location.
- Ft. De Soto – The Bay Pier was torn down and a new pier has been built. It should open late summer.

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

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