

BEAUFORT COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

County Council Chambers
Thursday, September 2, 2021
2:30 PM

Board Members Present:

Bruce Yeager, *Chairman*,
Eric Priester, *Bluffton*
Mike Manesiotis, *Hilton Head Island*
Phil Kiser, *Bluffton*
Logan Cunningham, *District 7*
William McCullough, *Beaufort*
Carlos Cave, *School District Administration*

Board Members Absent:

Bill Brown
Ronald Campbell
James Mack

Staff Members Present:

Heather Clint, *Senior Administrative Specialist, Parks and Recreation*
Matt Watts, *Deputy Director, Parks and Recreation*
Antoinette Binette, *Aquatics Manager, Parks and Recreation*
Frank Soule, *Executive Director, Hilton Head Island Recreation Association*
Chuck Atkinson, *Beaufort County Development & Recreation Division*
Shannon Loper, *Director, Parks and Recreation*

Guests Present:

Victor Tirado, *Citizen of Bluffton*
Eric Nelson, *Resident*
Andrea Gluck, *Citizen*
Heather Gordon, *Citizen*

Sandra Lomeli, *Citizen and FINS Parent*

Jennifer Montero, *Citizen and FINS Parent*

Lucia Milton, *Citizen and FINS Parent*

Chip Holland, *Director of Development, South Carolina Swim*

Phil Weiss, *Citizen*

Ken Easty, *Citizen*

Michael Dixon, *Citizen*

Tierra Gibson, *Citizen*

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by **Bruce Yeager**.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions were completed.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Shannon Loper requests a change to the agenda. After the item "Booker T", "Softball Tournament" needs to be added. **William McCullough** motions that the agenda be approved as written, with the addition of letter "I. Softball Tournament". **Phil Kiser** seconds. Motion carries to make change and approve agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Bruce Yeager gives parameters for public comment portion of meeting: Public comment is limited to three minutes per person. Each subject is limited to fifteen minutes. Address the Chairman. Avoid disrespectful comments toward Parks and Recreation staff and Parks and Recreation Board members. Confine questions to those which are under jurisdiction of the Parks and Recreation Board. Be mindful and respectful of all people in attendance and watching on television.

- **Tierra Gibson** introduces herself for public comment. She is an eleven-year resident of Lady's Island. She became interested in Parks and Recreation after reading the "Together for Beaufort" (put out by the Human Service Alliance, which is a part of Human Services Department) report. She states that according to this report, one of the issues in Beaufort County is obesity. She states that a recommendation in the report is that people get up and moving and have open spaces. She states that it is difficult to find parks and open spaces on Lady's Island and St. Helena Island. She states that she has reviewed Parks and Recreation Board minutes online and cannot find anything in the minutes regarding Lady's Island or St. Helena in the past two years. She asks for more attention to be paid to these areas. She states that it is difficult to find parks, and that there are no signs or directions. She states that a list of parks and their addresses posted at the visitors' center would be helpful. **Shannon Loper** states that there is a list of parks and their addresses on the Parks and Recreation website. **Bruce Yeager** states that Parks and Recreation has been working to change signage from "Parks and Leisure" to "Parks and Rec". **Shannon Loper** states that state signage has special requirements and often undergoes damage, but she will reach out to find out if more can be added.
- **Michael Dixon** introduces himself for public comment. He has lived in Beaufort for twenty years. He asks about the breakdown of the board; specifically, how many members are from south of the Broad and from north of the Broad and asks about disparities in distribution of facilities in these two areas. He also asks why the Green Street gym has been sitting vacant for over a year. He says he is the director of the Beaufort Volleyball Club and struggles to find gyms to use. **Bruce Yeager** informs him of the board makeup, and that the north and south of the Broad areas are equally

represented. He also states that the construction of facilities is funded by impact fees, which is why some disparity exists. He has no specifics as to why the Green Street Gym may be closed. He states that Covid and staffing has created issues with some facilities being open. He states that the fee structure the same for all facilities. **Michael Dixon** says he looks forward to hearing the directors report regarding some of these issues. He says there is a lack of gym space and a lack of things for kids to do in Beaufort.

- **Jennifer Montero** introduces herself for public comment and as a spokesperson for FINS. A presentation packet has been given to all in attendance. She states that FINS are currently being charged \$5 per lane and that FINS is utilizing the pool from 4-7 PM. FINS uses four lanes for a period and three lanes and are allowed to use additional lanes depending on whether or not they are needed for public use. Currently, FINS are paying approximately \$1190 per month. The previous pricing was for after-hours use was \$60, for a monthly total of approximately \$1300. If the proposed price increase goes into effect, FINS pricing will be \$10 per lane/per hour, for a total of approximately \$2300 monthly. After hours pricing would go up to \$110 per hour, for an approximate monthly cost of \$5954-\$7143. She states that if these price increases go into effect, FINS swim team will not be able to continue functioning. She states that FINS should be able to continue being charged the current rates, and that this affects 60 kids in the community. She states that other swim teams in the area are paying approximately \$3 per lane per hour. She states that the Bluffton Pool is in dire need of repair. She states that another area swim team called H2A is paying \$2.70 per lane per hour. She states that FINS would like the following: utilize four lanes from 4-7 PM at the price that is currently being paid by FINS, and that they would like a contract stating as such. **Bruce Yeager** states that the board is aware of the condition of the Bluffton Pool, but that it is a work in progress. **Jennifer Montero** asks if a decision will be made today. **Bruce Yeager** states that he is uncertain whether a decision will be made today.
- **Lucia Milton** introduces herself for public comment. She states her appreciation for FINS and for George. She states her son was struggling, especially with Covid isolation, and that FINS was instrumental in helping her son come out of his shell.
- **Ken Easty** introduces himself for public comment. He states he represents South Carolina Swimming. He says they support getting the pool up to speed and making FINS viable again without a large rate increase. He states that there are 11 swimmers are on scholarships, thanks to FINS. He says FINS needs to grow more.
- **Victor Tirado** introduces himself for public comment. He states his appreciation for the athletic director at Bluffton High School and his appreciation for the board and Parks and Recreation. He says that the FINS program is very good.
- **Sandra Lomeli** introduces herself for public comment. She says that all three of her children have swum at Bluffton Pool, as well as have been on the FINS swim team. She states that the team feels like a family and is important in giving her kids confidence in themselves. She questions the board on why the Bluffton Pool is in a state of disrepair. She states that there has been rust on the bottom of the pool and sometimes the doors are not allowed to be open, and that she sees these as safety issues. **Bruce Yeager** states that the state of the pool has been an issue for many years and is being reviewed and that money is being sought to fix the issues. He states that the Bluffton Pool has unique attributes. He states that the pools are operated under an agreement with the school district, as a public service to teach the public how to swim for safety purposes.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF AUGUST MINUTES

Eric Priester has a change request on page four, second bullet point, of August minutes. He states that he made that motion and asks that the correction be made. **Phil Kiser motions to approve August minutes with corrections. William McCullough seconds. All in favor. Motion passes.**

ISLAND RECREATION UPDATES

Frank Soule speaks. Full fall schedule is in effect, and after school programs are up and running. He states that we have about 60 kids a day, and 80 kids registered. This is an increase from last year. Soccer program is up and running and teams should be on the field in the next couple of weeks, with 500 kids. He states that there is a youth basketball clinic running. Pool hours have been maintained, but unfortunately haven't been able to do programming due to staffing issues. He states that Island Rec is hosting the Hilton Head Island High School and Christian Academy swim teams for swim meets. Needs are for staffing for swim instructors, although Island Rec does have water aerobics instructors, and there are approximately 35 participants. Fitness programs have been moved to the gym and morning hours due to Covid. Senior center is still open. He states that he would like the management of Barker Field to go to the Town of Hilton Head, and that this would help with the master plan process. He mentions that there was conversation with the Sheriff's Department about 18 months ago about how all of that would work out. **Mike Manesiotis** states that the Barker Field turnover should be a separate issue from the Sheriff's Department. **Bruce Yeager** notes this. **Bruce Yeager** asks **Frank Soule** how he envisions the Barker Field plan going forward. **Frank Soule** states that he

would like to have Barker Field under Town of Hilton Head, and that the town include that in their master planning. He would like to see Crossings Park become a baseball facility and Barker Field a field facility.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Shannon Loper:

- **Software Update-Rec Desk:** The Rec Desk software update is going amazingly well and is in the membership and registration phase, and the pools will be next, followed by the rental phase. Members can be contacted via the software, and this software manages waitlists; so, there is longer a need for pen and pencil waitlists.
- **Pickleball Update:** At South Side and Shell Point: each location has one tennis and two pickleball courts. Work has begun on Bluffton Center, which will also be one tennis and two pickleball courts.
- **Fees:**
 - **Lane Rental Fee:** In 2016, a motion was brought before the board to increase lane rental fees from \$5 per lane per hour to \$10 per lane per hour. This was agreed upon, but never recorded in the minutes, so it was never made 'official'. This needs to be revisited and a decision needs to be made on whether we stay at \$5 or move to \$10. **Bruce Yeager** states that this was already decided five years ago. **Shannon Loper** states that currently the FINS are being charged the \$5 rate and other groups are being charged the \$10 rate. **Chuck Atkinson** states that a fee structure should not be based on any one group. He states there are other parties interested in pool use that are awaiting quotes. He states that we are a governmental agency, therefore fees should be consistent for all groups. **Bruce Yeager** states that he is open to discussion on this matter, but that the fee was decided upon five years ago and perhaps the question should be: is \$10 enough? **William McCullough** asks if other groups have already been charged the \$10 fee rental. **Shannon Loper** states that others have been charged the \$10. **Erac Priester recommends and offers to make a motion that we move from the \$5 lane fee to the \$10 lane fee, given that this had already been decided previously. Mike Manesiotis seconds the motion. The motion passes.**
 - **Visitor Fee:** Previously, a visitor fee had been agreed upon where a grandparent could bring their grandchild into a facility for the in-state fee of \$5. **Shannon Loper** asks that this \$5 fee also be granted to siblings of taxpaying citizens who are visiting from out of town. **William McCullough motions that the language be changed to "sibling or other relative" instead of "grandchild" for \$5 visitor fee. Phil Kiser seconds. Bruce Yeager** offers discussion that perhaps a week or two-week visitor pass be created. **Shannon Loper** will look into this and bring information to the next board meeting. **The motion passes.**
 - **College Kids Fee:** Currently the kids free policy extends only up to high school kids. **Shannon Loper** states that there are many students who attend local colleges and live here with their parents and would like to see the kids free policy extended to these local college students. **Bruce Yeager** states that USCB has campuses in many locations and wonders how it can be known for sure that the college student is local. He states that, in his opinion, the center fees are already adequate.
- **Pool Resurface Update:** The Bluffton Pool was resurfaced. The day it was scheduled to reopen, the hot water heater exploded. The pool was opened to the public without showers, in order to continue operations. The water heater was fixed the next day. The doors at the pool have been opened back up. The doors were shut for a period, due to patrons and swim team members come in through the side doors and avoiding checking into the building. A fence has been installed in order to mitigate this. The Bluffton Pool has more rust issues than the other two Beaufort County pools due to higher usage, per Parks and Rec engineering department. \$500,000 had been previously allocated to pools. \$150,000 has been used to resurface all three pools, so there is \$350,000 left to allocate. The ballpark timeline for the completion of the next engineering report is approximately three months from now, per **Chuck Atkinson**. He states that he hopes we will have a consultant's report by Thanksgiving, in order to bring pool options to the board.
- **Inflatable Extension:** Due to staffing shortages, the proposed Saturday pool days have not yet started. An extension is requested until the next board meeting, in order to accurately report how well the inflatables are doing.
- **FINS:** Previously, the board had approved \$110 for an hour and fifteen minutes for after hours pricing. Due to an outcry from FINS, **Shannon Loper** added an extra forty-five minutes to be included at the \$110 rate. FINS then decided to stop after hours operations and return to the \$5 per lane fee. The FINS were granted four lanes for practice from 4-5:30 PM, to be expanded to five lanes if the public was not using the rest of the pool. From 5:30 to 7PM, the FINS were granted three lanes to use, with the option of expanding into empty lanes if the staff deems it appropriate. These fees were agreed upon until today's board meeting. There have been emails requesting pool space for water aerobics, as well as a request for pool space from the Lowcountry Autism Foundation. The Bluffton Pool revenue has been included in a packet given to the board members. The numbers show that the FINS provide approximately 20-30% of the Bluffton Pool revenue. **Bruce Yeager** asks if the FINS are using the pool at peak times. **Shannon Loper** replies that

the afternoons are the most difficult. She also states that there are 75 children on a waiting list for swim lessons. She says that pool programming has not taken place due to waiting for this board meeting to decide FINS pool usage and fees, and to a lesser degree, staffing issues. **Matt Watts** has done a comparative investigation into the fee structure of similar pools in various South Carolina locations. In North Charleston, one pool, for which a swim team has exclusive access, costs that team \$4000 per month, and the shared pool costs them \$3600 per month. In Mt. Pleasant, the swim team pays from \$4000 to \$8000 per month. In the City of Myrtle Beach, there is a \$10 per lane per hour rental, and there is a larger fee for after-hours usage. **Bruce Yeager** states that he reached out to a swim team coach that states he pays as much as \$25 per lane per hour in Fairfax County, VA., and \$7 per lane per hour in Texas. He states that the facilities exist to meet the need of all citizens. He says that we have a long history with FINS, and that there was an outcry in 2013 when fees were slated to increase. He makes the point that any team, regardless of which sport it may be, does not receive usage of fields, gyms, or pools at peak hours and/or at reduced costs. **Frank Soule** says that the H2A swim team pays lower fees because of a contract that was entered into after H2A purchased an expensive dome for the pool and had it installed at their cost. **Carlos Cave** discusses the merits of swim teams and FINS, stating that it does help area high schools. **Shannon Loper** confirms that we do allow the high school swim teams access to our pools at no charge. She also clarifies that the joint contract with Parks and Recreation and the Beaufort County School District spells out that the pools are for teaching children of Beaufort County taxpayers to swim. She states that we will be closing the pools from 9 AM until 12 PM daily, starting next month, for the school children who currently need to take swim lessons, and for those children who missed out on swim lessons last year due to Covid (second graders and third graders). She states that Parks and Rec is not opposed to FINS utilizing the pool after hours. **Will McCullough** questions the affect that a swim team has on public use of the pool, and also raises the question of the cost of staffing for keeping the pool open after hours. **Shannon Loper** states that this could be done with one staff member, because the FINS coaches are certified. **Bruce Yeager** states that the Bluffton pool usage is high, which contributes to the need for repairs. He states that revenues of the pool show that a minimum of 70% of revenues come from the public, and that the FINS were using the pool during peak pool hours. He states that the need of the community needs to come first. He also mentions the option of 70/30 programs. He states that he wants any group to pay a fair market rate, and that he does not want the group to take time away from the community. His opinion is that the FINS move to a non-peak hours relationship and a reasonable rental rate. **Will McCullough makes a motion that the FINS utilize three lanes maximum during regular pool hours at \$10 per lane/per hour. Additional lanes could be added at staff discretion, based on availability and potential conflict with, or lack of same, of other programs. For after-hours usage, the rate is \$110 per hour, all inclusive, subject to staff availability. This will be effective immediately and have an end date of the next board meeting; November 2, 2021, and will be reassessed at that time. Erac Priester seconds the motion. The motion passes.**

- **Lind Brown:** Lind Brown will be opening within the next couple of weeks. Currently, there is an effort to obtain staff, and to connect computers, phones, and other items. The plan is to open Lind Brown from 12 PM until 8 PM. Last Saturday, there was a Fun Day at Lind Brown, which included the Lind Brown task force, the City of Beaufort manager, Chuck Atkinson, Parks and Recreation staff, and the fire department. There were games and carnival type fun for kids and adults alike. Lind Brown will be open similarly to Burton Wells and Buckwalter Rec Center, with memberships, workout equipment and open gym. Lind Brown is within walking distance of USCB. Gyms are open to all members. Gyms are not rented out, per policy. **Michael Dixon** has the option to form a volleyball league with Parks and Recreation, as opposed to renting a gym.
- **Booker T.:** There were concerned citizens at the previous board meeting who spoke about the Booker T. Washington Center being underutilized. Since that board meeting, there was a second community meeting with the councilman from that area. The proposed options for Booker T. are as follows:
 - **Option 1:** Community takes complete ownership of the facility
 - **Option 2:** Community conveys complete ownership of the property over to the County (Recreational Use and Programming)
 - **Option 3:** Community conveys complete ownership of the property over to the County (Satellite Library – Civic Gatherings, literacy Programming, and Digital Services Programming)
 - **Option 4:** Community takes partial control of the center's programming via a lease agreement
 - **Option 5:** Community takes complete control of the center's programming via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Facility Use Agreement

This proposal is included in the packet for the board to review. Also, these options were given to Councilman Dawson to take to the community, discuss their needs, and give feedback to Parks and Recreation. This discussion summary was sent to Councilman Dawson during the last week of August.

- **Softball Tournament:** Longtime resident Dawn Fidele's family has lost everything in the disaster of Hurricane Ida in Louisiana. **Shannon Loper** requests that a softball tournament be organized in order to benefit the family of Dawn Fidele. The benefit would be hosted at either Oscar Frazier or Michael C. Riley, depending on the number of teams, and would most likely occur on a Sunday. The request to the board is that a field rental fee be waived. **Phil Kiser motions to allow the tournament. The motion is seconded. The motion passes.**

DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Matt Watts:

- **Registration Numbers:** Fall registration numbers have increased. Beaufort youth participation increased by 208 kids since fall of 2019. Bluffton youth participation increased by 90 kids since fall of 2019. There is a lot of growth in the soccer program, especially in the younger age groups, and for the 9–10-year-old age group for baseball. Youth flag football has increased greatly. Beaufort adult baseball registration is currently open. Bluffton adult softball has increased by 10 teams since fall of 2019. Bluffton adult volleyball is the same as fall of 2019. Matt states that before next spring, it would be prudent to implement an equipment deposit during sports sign ups, in order to mitigate losses on unreturned equipment. **Carlos Cave** discusses the idea of utilizing the area high school fields for adult baseball and softball games. He suggests that Parks and Recreation reach out to Robert, as his opinion is that high school coaches would be open to entering into some type of an agreement with Parks and Recreation for field usage. **Matt Watts** explains that outreach to school children is somewhat inhibited by the use of Peach Jar and would appreciate the assistant offered by **Carlos Cave** in helping to get the word out to school aged children about youth sports programs.

AQUATICS

Shannon Loper:

- **Program Updates:**
 - **Battery Creek Pool:** BOGA classes and BC high school swim team ongoing, no group swim lesson due to staffing shortage, school lesson to begin in October, inflatables to begin September 18, and lifeguard classes from September 7 through September 11.
 - **Beaufort Pool:** BOGA classes and swim team ongoing, no group swim lessons due to staffing shortage, and school lessons to begin September 13
 - **Bluffton Pool:** School swim teams and FINS ongoing, no group swim lessons due to staffing shortage, and school lessons to begin September 13.
 - **Lind Brown Pool:** Labor Day weekend is the last open weekend of the pool season. Dog Day is September 11. Dogs are allowed to swim, then the pool will be cleaned and closed for the season.
 - **All Pools:** New hours for the public begin on September 13, 2021. The hours are Monday through Thursday, from 1 PM until 7 PM. CPR, stroke improvement, and private lessons are still being offered at the pools.

EMPLOYEE UPDATE

Shannon Loper: There is 1 assistant aquatic manager position to fill. There are 7 full time and 6 part time lifeguard positions to fill. There are 7 maintenance positions to fill, and 6 rec aide positions to fill.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next board meeting is Thursday, November 4, 2021, in Bluffton. *

QUESTIONS

There are no questions.

ADJOURN

Phil Kiser motions to adjourn. The motion is seconded. The meeting is adjourned.

*ADDENDUM

Due to various conflicts, no meeting was held in November of 2021.