

FREEPORT RECREATION BOARD

February 21, 2017 Meeting Minutes

I. Meeting Called to Order

The February 21, 2017 Freeport Recreation Board Meeting was called to order by Chair Michael Strickland at 6:02 pm. The meeting was held in the Council Chambers of Freeport City Hall.

Recreation Board members present: Racyne Diggs (Vice-Chair), Monnie Mixon and Michael Strickland (Chair).

Staff present: Clay Adkinson/Board Attorney, Latilda Hughes-Neel/Planning Director-Board Liaison, Dana Weiler/Parks & Recreation Director.

II. Invocation / Pledge of Allegiance

The Invocation was given by Chairman Strickland, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

III. Approval of January 11, 2017 Organizational Meeting Minutes

The January 11, 2017 Recreation Board Organizational Meeting Minutes were presented for review and approval.

Board Action: Motion by Mixon to approve the minutes as presented. Second to motion by Diggs. All ayes; motion carried.

IV. Presentation: FLDEP Recreational Trails Program Grant

Director Hughes-Neel introduced this agenda item and invited City Councilwoman Cuchens and Parks Director Weiler to present.

Councilwoman Cuchens thanked the Board for taking the time to meet and review the material for the grant proposal. She explained the point system of the grant application and the elements of the proposed site plan that are tied to points to be achieved. Ms. Cuchens then turned the presentation over to Weiler to discuss the specifics of the proposal.

Director Weiler explained that the proposal being discussed was still conceptual. The proposed nature walk and other elements are also part of the Recreation Master Plan workshop discussions. The closing date for the grant application to be submitted is February 28, 2017. Weiler discussed the bullet list of information regarding the grant application (Attachment A) and the site plan (Attachment B) which were provided to the Recreation Board prior to the meeting. Weiler also

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distributed an additional location map (Attachment C) to provide additional clarification regarding the planned improvements.

Board Discussion:

Chairman Strickland asked if the parking for the planned improvements would be on Hammock Trail. Weiler stated that the parking would be provided on the service road area west and adjacent to the conceptual plan boundaries.

Planning Director Hughes-Neel asked about a blue depiction of trails shown in the planning area. Weiler stated that the blue lines were the original concept for the trail layout on the original conceptual plan. The red lines depicted the new concept. Hughes-Neel asked about using small man-made bridges to across wetland areas. Weiler stated that it was a possibility but not included in the planned proposal. The group discussed how that future construction could be a project for the technical school, the Eagle Scouts, etc. Hughes-Neel asked if the City's ROA designation was an advantage for the application requirements. Councilwoman Cuchens stated that this grant program does not reduce or waive the required match for RAO communities.

Board Member Diggs asked about the specific amounts of funding being sought. Weiler stated that the current amount of grant funding being sought was \$196,880. The City would be required to make a 20% match of \$32,347 in funding and in-kind services, such as labor or private donations. Weiler explained that as the plan was still being refined and revised, the numbers would change somewhat. Diggs asked about security for the new area; how much (law enforcement) patrolling would be in that area and if solar lighting was being considered. Weiler stated that until they had final layout, they wouldn't know where lighting is needed, but at this point, the area is planned to be open only during daylight hours. Councilwoman Cuchens stated that the Sheriff's Dept. was working closely with the Council on reducing vandalism in the park and adding areas with surveillance. Weiler stated that the bathrooms would be lit and other areas if necessary. Weiler also commented that the Sheriff's Dept. had stepped up patrols and drive-throughs. Diggs asked about maintenance and labor to maintain the new facilities and how would the costs be covered. Councilwoman Cuchens stated that the City has adequate staff to maintain this new area of the Regional Sports Complex. Weiler stated that Parks and Recreation would maintain the new area and the costs would be reflected in the Parks and Recreation Budget. Diggs asked where the new proposed Cultural Arts Center would be located in

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relationship to this proposed trail system. Weiler indicated that the future Cultural Arts Center was being planned for the overflow field west of the soccer/football fields.

Hughes-Neel asked Weiler to give some detail regarding the sensory centers and their purpose. Weiler explained that children with unique abilities such as autism or Downs Syndrome have difficulty with sensory overload; being presented with too many choices or too much color or movement in standardized play areas. The sensory centers would be geared to provide natural elements to touch, smell, see and hear. Councilwoman Cuchens stated that if the City is awarded the grant, the sensory station elements will be designed with assistance from experts in the field of unique abilities.

The group discussed various resources available at the schools and other sources for assistance with the unique abilities aspect of the conceptual plan. Weiler stated that additional meetings and workshops will be held regarding the conceptual plan.

Councilwoman Cuchens thanked the Board for allowing them (Cuchens and Weiler) to present the conceptual plan.

Audience Discussion:

Dan Curry asked about the possibility of creating a “Park Watch” like a “Neighborhood Watch” to try and cut down on vandalism. His request was generally deferred to the City Council. The group discussed the various strategies in place to catch and prevent vandalism at the Park.

V. Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

VI. Adjournment

Chairman Strickland called for a motion to adjourn. Motion by Diggs to adjourn. Second to motion by Diggs. All ayes; meeting adjourned at 6:33 pm.