

**FREEPORT RECREATION BOARD**  
February 9, 2022 Bi-Annual Meeting Minutes  
6:00 pm /Freeport City Hall Council Chambers

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I. Meeting Called to Order

The meeting was called to order by Staff Liaison Latilda Neel at 6:04 pm.

Board Members present: Larry Cato, Jeff Weller, Monnie Mixon and Trent Dimaggio.

Staff present: Latilda Neel/Planning Director, Samantha Graves/Planning Technician, Summer Ammirata-Mall/Planning Intern, and Travis Digges/Parks & Recreation Director.

II. Invocation / Pledge of Allegiance

The Invocation was given by Director Neel, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

III. Introduction – Travis Digges, Parks and Recreation Director

IV. Election of new Board Chair

Jeff Weller made a motion to elect Trent Dimaggio as Board Chair and Monnie Mixon seconded the motion. The members voted unanimously to elect Trent Dimaggio as Board Chair.

V. Election of new Vice Chair

Monnie Mixon made a motion to elect Jeff Weller as Vice Chair and Larry Cato seconded the motion. The members voted unanimously to elect Jeff Weller as Vice Chair.

VI. City Parks Updates

Director Digges updated the Board on new additions and projects that the Parks and Recreation department has accomplished since the last meeting.

- 1,000sf seating area with a solar shade was added at the City Pool. The outside area was sodded and refurbished.
- The Casey Park restrooms were refurbished and reopened.
- The dock at Marse Landing was extended.
- A pavilion was constructed over the workout equipment at the trails at the sports park.

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- New goal posts were installed at the football fields.
- A new PA system was purchased for the fields.
- A directional Kiosk and new signs were installed on the disc golf course.

Kristine Bacon asked for the open hours for the Casey Park restrooms. Director Digges explained that they have been open 24 hours per day, and there have been no issues.

VII. Future Plans for City Parks

Director Digges informed the Board of future projects that are planned for the City Parks.

- The Barrier-Free Park is currently under construction. This 5-acre park will provide 1,600ft of walking trails, a pavilion, and parking.
- The city will be installing a soft surface in the playground at the Sports Complex; this will help to make it more ADA compliant. It will be done in sections over several years. Funds have been set aside and staff is currently determining the type of product that will be used where to purchase it. A turf estimate will be given sometime next week
- The parking lot at Marse Landing will be expanded to provide more space for the fishing pier.
- The Parks and Recreation page on the City website will be updated to enable online reservations for the sports fields, recreation areas, pool, etc.
- The shed by Concession #1 will be expanded by 12ft and roll-up garage doors will be installed to enable more storage.

Board Member Weller asked for a time frame for the Barrier-Free Park construction. Travis said that it will be approximately 1 ½ more years until it is complete.

A member of the public asked if dogs would be allowed in the park. Director Neel said probably not, with the exception of service animals; the park is focused on providing access for persons with unique needs, of all generations. Travis added that staff is considering installing fruit trees. Latilda Hughes-Neel added flora and fauna plaques will be implemented for educational purposes.

Kristine Bacon asked if there would be a community garden. Director Digges stated that would only be possible if an organization agreed to take care of it; the city does not have staff available to keep up a community garden.

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Kristine Bacon asked about pricing for swimming pool related activities. Travis replied that they will be available close to March or April and a possible search for swim instructors will be taking place.

VIII. Refresher on Sunshine Law/Ex-Parte Contact/Clay Adkinson

Latilda Neel told the Board Members that Attorney Adkinson was unable to attend the meeting. He would instead be contacting each of the members individually to provide a review of the Sunshine Law Information.

Latilda then updated the Board on some new items happening in the city. She explained that the City and County were working with the TPO on a plan to extend Marquis Way East to Highway 20 and West to intersect with Shipyard Road. This would enable residents living south of Highway 20 to get to Highway 331 and the adjacent businesses without going through the Highway 20/Highway 331 intersection. They hope to have this done within the next two years. Also, as a part of this project, all of Shipyard Road would be improved and resurfaced.

Director Neel then gave a summary of all the planned sewer improvements. She reviewed the plans to begin moving neighborhoods from septic onto city sewer. The city is working with various environmental organizations on projects to improve the quality of the bay, which will in turn improve the quality of life and preserve the culture and identity of the community.

IX. Public Comment

Carolyn Grawi from the Center for Independent Living (CIL) addressed the Board. Her organization provides services for persons with disabilities in an area spanning Escambia to Walton Counties. She saw a post on the City's Facebook page regarding the Barrier-Free Park. Her office is located in Pensacola, but the organization has staff locally in Freeport and DeFuniak. They would like to provide information to the city on ways to make the park more accessible.

Carolyn distributed fliers and cards to the Board members and staff. She invited them to attend the Walton County ADA committee meeting on February 17<sup>th</sup>, from 10am – 11am. It will be held in the alternate Public Works conference room in Grayton Beach.

Trey Morris addressed the Board. He is a local boat captain and said that he was happy to hear what Freeport was doing to improve the quality of the bay. Latilda said that there is currently a need for shoreline restoration projects; they are currently looking for 5 locations to locate shoreline restoration projects in conjunction with the Choctawhatchee Bay Alliance. Director Neel is trying to

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establish a canoe trail From Black Creek to Choctaw Beach on the north shore of the Bay with the restoration projects marked as a feature of the trail.

Mr. Morris said that the Intercoastal Waterway needs a fish hatchery.

Jeff Weller commented that his children are involved with community service projects on the south side of the bay and suggested the north side of the bay be more active in community service opportunities so residents can contribute to the community in which they live.

X. Adjournment

Chair Dimaggio called for a motion to adjourn. Jeff Weller motioned to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 6:53 pm.

Minutes prepared by Samantha Graves, and adopted by the Freeport Recreation Board on August 31, 2022.

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Chairman Dimaggio

Attest:

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Kathie Gatewood, City Clerk