

**FREEPORT RECREATION BOARD**  
August 31, 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 Chairman Dimaggio at 6:02 pm.

Board Members present: Larry Cato, Jeff Weller, 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. Approval of Minutes – Regular meeting February 9, 2022

Jeff Weller made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Larry Cato and approved unanimously.

IV. 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.

- The parking lot at the Barrier Free Park has been completed and the pavilion has been delivered. It will be set up in the next few weeks. The environmental survey is in process; once it is complete the trails will be paved.
- A 12x20 addition to the storage shed at the Sports Park has been completed.
- Cameras have been installed on every building at the Sports Park.
- A new P.A. system has been installed at the Sports Park.
- The tennis and volleyball nets at the Sports Park have been replaced.

Director Digges then reviewed the changes planned for the new budget year.

- A new P.A system for fields 4 and 5 at the Sports Park
- Two new pitching mounds
- A new employee for the Parks Department
- Three pickleball courts (location TBD)
- Replacement of the safety netting at the Sports Park playground

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- Composite decking on the Four-Mile Creek side of Marse Landing
- A Community Garden at the Government complex

Larry Cato asked if there is any plan to add storage for disc golf. Travis replied that nothing is budgeted for this coming year, but he will look into it. Mr. Cato then asked if the pickleball courts could be located near the entrance to the Sports Park. Director Digges explained that it could, but he feels it would be better to locate it in an underused area such as the old basketball court by the pool or the shuffleboard courts at the Sports Park. Director Hughes-Neel added that if it were located at the entrance to the Sports Park it would interfere with the Rodeo.

Jeff Weller asked if the trails at the Barrier Free Park will be raised; Travis replied that the paved trails will not be raised. Director Hughes Neel explained that some boardwalk areas in a later phase would be raised.

Trent Dimaggio asked if the outdoor gym equipment at the Sports Park gets used. Director Digges answered that it does get a lot of use; the pavilion, however, is not well utilized. He feels that adding lights would increase use; he is considering adding lights this year. Trent then asked if the cameras have helped; Travis said they have, especially with the arrests made by the Sheriff's Department. Chair Dimaggio said that if the cameras have helped lighting would probably help as well; he would like to recommend the Council include the lighting in the next budget year. The Recreation Board will look at suggestions for the next budget year at its next meeting.

V. Potential Future Projects

Director Digges reviewed for the Board of future projects being considered.

- Dog park
- Skate Park
- LED lighting update
- Kayak launch

Chair Dimaggio said that he feels it would be good to locate the dog park near Riverwalk, as that is the direction in which the City is experiencing the most growth. Travis emphasized that a dog park needs to be a stand-alone park and must be at least 2 acres. Latilda told the members that the City is currently in negotiations with the developers of Ashton Park for a location on Highway 331 business. They are also negotiating for the Marquis Way extension, part of which would include 10 acres on the north side of Marquis Way. Either or both of these could potentially be locations for a dog park.

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Board Member Weller asked if the city still owned land on Bay Loop that could be used for Recreation. Director Hughes-Neel said it does not; at one time the city received 6 acres on the water from the Corps of Engineers, but it was never developed and reverted back to the Corps. The city has been negotiating to try and get it back. She added that the Planning Department encourages new developments to include dog parks as part of their plans.

The Board discussed the Skate Park. Travis explained that it would be expensive to build, and there are not a lot of people requesting it. The members expressed that they feel the people who would use it would not call to request it. Director Digges said that it is low on the City Council's priority list because it is a high liability item with a high potential for vandalism. If the City ever did build a Skate Park, it would need to be at the Sports Park.

Director Digges reviewed the need to update the lighting at the Sports Park to LED. The current lighting has become obsolete, and parts are hard to obtain. Transitioning all the lights to LED is expensive at the outset, but it can be done in phases. The new lighting would have less maintenance costs and would also save energy. Latilda said that the City Council showed a lot of interest in this item.

Finally, Travis discussed the Kayak Launch. He said it could be located at either Laird Park or Marse Landing. Latilda offered to find out the cost of the one that was installed at the new County Park. Travis added that the size of what was needed would depend on the location chosen.

The Board then discussed the ranking. Director Digges proposed that they be ranked 1) Dog park, 2) LED lighting update, 3) Kayak launch, and 4) Skate Park. Latilda said that the Planning Department agrees with the ranking. Chair Dimaggio said he felt the lighting should be the highest priority. Travis pointed out that the Dog park may be donated, which is why it is first.

VI. Pedestrian Plan

Summer Ammirata-Mall gave the Board Members a quick update on the Pedestrian Master Plan that the city is currently working on. Director Hughes-Neel then gave an update on current sidewalk projects already in place and those forthcoming, as well as grants for sidewalks and multi-use paths.

VII. Adjournment

Chair Dimaggio called for a motion to adjourn. Jeff Weller motioned to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:17 pm.

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Minutes prepared by Samantha Graves, and adopted by the Freeport Recreation Board on \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman Dimaggio

Attest:

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Kathie Gatewood, City Clerk