

**MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
PARKS, RECREATION AND BEACHES ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
FIRE STATION # 2
528 NW 2ND STREET
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2024 – 6:30 P.M.**

Cumulative Attendance

Board Members	Attendance	Present	Absent
Alex Collazo	P	1	0
Ruchel Coetzee	P	1	0
Caleb Gunter, Chair	P	1	0
Mary Peloquin	P	1	0
Charlie Leikauf	P	1	0
Solomon Schoonover	A	0	1
Zillah Tarkoe	P	1	0
Idan Eckstein	P	1	0
Joy Oglesby	P	1	0
Marta Reczko	P	1	0
Barbara Magill	P	1	0
Samantha Sisler	P	1	0
Stacy Ritter	A	0	1

Oct 2024 - Sept 2025

As of this date, there are 13 appointed members to the Board, which means 7 would constitute a quorum. A quorum was present.

Staff

Ben Rogers – *Acting Assistant City Manager*
 Carl Williams – *Director of Parks and Recreation*
 Amy Jean-Baptiste -- *Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation*
 Leana Suarez – *Senior Administrative Assistant*
 Patricia SaintVil-Joseph – *Assistant City Attorney*

Others

Sheryl Woods, *CEO, YMCA of South Florida*
 Shayla Sanchez, *Executive Assistant, Ms. Woods*
 Scott Pukys, *Jimmy Evert Tennis Center Tennis Pro*
 Mark Russell, *Retired CEO, YMCA of South Florida*
 Jacqueline Howe, *YMCA South Florida Board Member and Victoria Park Resident*
 Jason Howe, *Assisting YMCA and Victoria Park Resident*
 Karen Cruitt, *Prototype-Inc.*

Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Gunter led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of the September 25, 2024, Meeting Minutes

Motion was made by Mary Peloquin and seconded by Ruchel Coetzee, to approve the September 25, 2024, meeting minutes, as distributed. In a voice vote, the motion

passed 12-0.

1. Department Update (Amy Jean Baptiste)

Ms. Jean-Baptiste updated the Board on the recent unveiling of the newly renovated DC Alexander Park and encouraged members to visit to see the improvements. Upcoming events included the Diwali Celebration on Saturday, October 28, from 6-9 PM at Las Olas Oceanside Park, and the Light Up Lauderdale event scheduled for November 7 at Esplanade Park. She reminded the Board the Dog Park Rules and Regulations, approved in the August meeting, would go before the City Commission on November 7 and requested the Chair or Vice Chair attend in case questions arose.

Ms. Peloquin stated she could not be present for the November 7 City Commission meeting and encouraged at least one other Board member to participate.

Ms. Coetzee commended the work done at the DC Alexander Park renovation.

2. Introduction of new Tennis Pro - Scott Pukys Park (Carl Williams)

Mr. Williams introduced Scott Pukys, the new Tennis Pro at Jimmy Evert Tennis Center, who began his role in July 2024.

Mr. Pukys provided an overview of his initial efforts to address court maintenance and improve customer service at the center. He highlighted the introduction of a Community Coaches Program, starting with two male and one female coach, to help balance the instructor-to-student ratio.

Mr. Collazo inquired whether Mr. Pukys' role was limited to the Jimmy Evert Tennis Center or if he would also be involved in tennis programs citywide. Mr. Pukys clarified while his primary focus would be the Jimmy Evert Tennis Center, he was eager to collaborate with other city facilities and help expand the city's tennis program.

Ms. Coetzee asked about the pricing for lessons and whether there had been any efforts to make the programs more affordable for residents. Mr. Pukys explained the new Community Coaches Program would not only improve the student-to-coach ratio but also allow the center to offer lessons at a more accessible price point. He added the center was exploring partnerships with local schools to offer discounted lessons for students.

Ms. Tarkoe raised a concern about the condition of the ball machines at the Jimmy Evert Tennis Center. She added her membership had expired without notification, which impacted her ability to use the facilities. Mr. Pukys acknowledged the maintenance issues and assured her staff members would address these equipment problems to ensure all machines are functional and up-to-date. He agreed to look into the membership issue.

Ms. Reczko praised the facility's improvements, but suggested maintenance could be improved. She also pointed out the quality of tennis balls had been inconsistent over recent weeks. Mr. Pukys responded the balls were supplied by the City, and he would review this issue to address any quality concerns.

Chair Gunter raised concerns about the maintenance of the tennis courts, noting there had been complaints about their condition in the past. Mr. Pukys reassured the Board addressing court maintenance was one of his top priorities and a team was already in place to carry out repairs and regular upkeep.

Discussion ensued about the tennis pro contract, revenue generation, and community coaches.

3. **YMCA Swimming Pool - Use of Bond Dollars (Carl Williams)**

Mr. Williams presented the proposal to allocate \$2 million from District 1 and District 2 Land Acquisition Funds to support the construction of a new swimming pool at the YMCA Holiday Park. He explained this would supplement the YMCA's \$2.5M contribution to the project, anticipated to begin in early 2025. Mr. Williams emphasized the community benefits of adding a public pool to the area, which has lacked such amenities.

Ms. Sheryl Woods, President of the YMCA of South Florida, provided additional project details, including the estimated total cost of \$4M to \$4.5M. She assured the Board the YMCA was committed to maintaining the pool once completed and highlighted the YMCA's partnership with the city for swim safety programs.

Ms. Howe, a YMCA board member, mentioned the YMCA has provisions for families unable to afford fees. She shared these provisions were essential for inclusive community access and were part of the YMCA's commitment to no one being turned away due to financial hardship.

Ms. Oglesby raised a concern about the availability of lifeguards, particularly at the Sistrunk YMCA location. Ms. Woods acknowledged staffing was an ongoing challenge but assured the Board safety remains a top priority, with additional resources allocated to ensure all public swim areas were staffed during peak hours.

Ms. Reczko asked for clarification on the pool's capacity, especially with the projected six-lane design. Mr. Mark Russell, YMCA, responded, explaining each lane would accommodate up to four swimmers for lap swimming, while a smaller beginner pool would handle up to eight children per session, ensuring a manageable swimmer-to-instructor ratio.

Ms. Tarkoe raised a question about weekend accessibility and whether the pool would remain available for general public use during times when programs or

lessons were in session. Ms. Woods assured her the facility's design includes separate zones to accommodate both private lessons and open swim, allowing greater flexibility for public access.

Ms. Coetzee inquired about potential increases in maintenance costs as the pool attracts more users. Mr. Williams responded, noting the YMCA had agreed to cover ongoing maintenance and operational costs, which reduced the City's financial burden. He also explained a partnership would allow the City to leverage YMCA resources and expertise in pool management.

Ms. Sisler highlighted programming for young children and toddlers, noting community feedback had indicated a need for more options catering to this age group. Mr. Williams responded, while the YMCA would manage indoor programs, the City would coordinate additional outdoor activities to ensure programming meets the diverse needs of local families.

Mr. Collazo asked if the pool and its programs would be available exclusively for residents. Ms. Woods clarified the facility would be open to everyone, not just Fort Lauderdale residents, reinforcing the YMCA's inclusive approach.

Vice Chair Leikauf expressed his support, describing the location as ideal and noting the facility would serve as "an island in the middle of the community." He added it would attract people from surrounding neighborhoods and create a central community hub.

Ms. Magill questioned the financial structure, asking if the project was a public-private partnership (P3) and if the land would be leased for \$1. Ms. Woods confirmed the lease was indeed \$1, describing it as a symbolic gesture to promote affordable community access.

Mr. Williams clarified, while leasing the land rather than purchasing it made financial sense, land availability was limited, and prices were high. He explained each commissioner had been allocated \$7.5M for community improvements, and this project was prioritized for Districts 1 and 2, while funding in other districts, such as Districts 3 and 4, had been directed toward projects like Carter Park and Isles.

Ms. Oglesby inquired about broader commissioner support, comparing the project to the support received for improvements at Carter Park. Ms. Reczko added she had heard some calls for additional funding for the project and asked about the possibility of securing further financial support.

Ms. Peloquin pointed out additional funding had been discussed in recent commission meetings. Mr. Williams explained, although there was enthusiasm, the City had a limited amount of funding, and last month's presentation was intended to inform the Board and gather support without exceeding financial commitments.

Chair Gunter asked if any funds were available in the park usage or impact fees

which could be applied toward the pool, expressing concern bond funding intended for future land preservation was being continuously redirected.

Mr. Collazo suggested, despite challenges in acquiring additional land, this \$2M allocation would directly benefit local children and families. He described the project as a worthy investment for the community's benefit.

Vice Chair Leikauf agreed, noting, with land prices being so high, the use of the acquisition fund for this project was justified. He stated, for \$2M, buying additional land would not be feasible, but this pool would serve the surrounding community.

Ms. Reczko expressed concerns about potentially over-relying on bond resources for the YMCA pool, suggesting alternative funding sources like impact fees. She proposed if funds could be secured elsewhere, the bond money could then be redirected to projects such as playground construction. Mr. Williams clarified land acquisition funds were specifically designated for purchasing property and did not cover construction or maintenance costs. He noted other bond projects had already been earmarked, including \$1M for playground and splash pad construction, with the main challenge remaining the identification of suitable land.

Ms. Woods concluded by emphasizing the YMCA's vision for the pool as a community gathering place. She described the project as a small investment to create a destination for East Fort Lauderdale, adding it would foster community engagement and bring families together.

Vice Chair Leikauf reiterated the urgency of securing the funds and adjusting priorities to meet immediate community needs, emphasizing the pool's benefits in the near term.

Motion was made by Charlie Leikauf and seconded by Idan Eckstein, to recommend allocating \$2M, split equally from District 1 and District 2's land acquisition funds, to the YMCA to facilitate pool construction. In a voice vote, the motion passed 11-0.

4. **Code of Conduct (Caleb Gunter)**

Chair Gunter reminded Board members to review, sign, and submit the Code of Conduct to Senior Administrative Assistant Leana Suarez if they had not already.

5. **New Business (Caleb Gunter)**

Ms. Oglesby requested an update on how park impact fees are allocated and used, particularly as new developments increase the need for open space. Assistant City Attorney SaintVil-Joseph responded she would provide a report on fee structures at a future meeting.

Ms. Coetzee inquired if fees for park services remain consistent across facilities.

Mr. Williams explained while efforts were made to standardize fees, variations occur based on facility usage, maintenance requirements, and community input.

Ms. Magill raised concerns about maintenance along A1A, specifically exposed wiring on light poles and deteriorated wave wall lighting. Mr. Williams acknowledged funding and vendor bids had been obstacles, with one recent bid coming in at \$5 million. He expected a resolution and repair work to start in Q1.

6. Adjournment (Caleb Gunter)

The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 P.M.

[Minutes prepared by TBaclawski, Prototype-Inc.]