

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

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**CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PARKS MEETING MINUTES**

**City Council Chamber, 1st floor, City Hall
November 8, 2017**

**10:00 a.m.**

**In attendance:** Council Members Scott Wilson (Chair), Danny Becton, Bill Gulliford, John Crescimbeni, Lori Boyer, Tommy Hazouri (arrived 10:15), Reggie Brown, and Anna Lopez Brosche

**Excused**: Council Member Doyle Carter

**Also**: Peggy Sidman – Office of General Counsel; Heather Reber – Council Auditor’s Office; Stacey Lopez – Legislative Services Division; Jordan Elsbury – Mayor’s Office; Colleen Hampsey – Council Research Division; Daryl Joseph – Parks, Recreation and Entertainment Department

**Meeting Convened**: 10:05 a.m.

Chairman Wilson called the meeting to order and the attendees introduced themselves for the record. Daryl Joseph, Director of Parks and Recreation Department, presented a PowerPoint overview of park amenities to the committee. The slides showed the locations of tennis courts, football/soccer/baseball fields, picnic areas, pools and playgrounds. Councilman Wilson asked about a needs assessment, which would indicate areas lacking in amenities or requiring repairs. Mr. Joseph said that to truly assess the public need for park locations and amenities, resident feedback and/or public meetings would be necessary. Councilman Gulliford mentioned the parks in the beach communities and coordination with beach municipalities regarding park facilities. Currently, there are many children who reside outside of the beaches who utilize the parks and sport fields. Mr. Joseph indicated that, while there is some collaboration between the City’s Parks Department and beach municipalities on programming, in other areas there could be better coordination.

Councilwoman Boyer asked several questions pertaining to the implementation of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, which includes quantifiable goals and standards for parks and amenities. Ms. Boyer also expressed frustration with the turnaround time on park maintenance and repairs, asking Mr. Joseph for suggestions on expediting the process. Mr. Joseph said that creating an inventory with commonly used and standardized equipment and crafting continuous service contracts with vendors may speed things along. Ms. Boyer suggested weekly park assessments to address maintenance issues.

Ms. Boyer noted that in the Comprehensive Plan there are specifications for new developments which stipulate open or recreational spaces be included or that the developers compensate the city for the impact on existing park resources. In Orlando, the fee is $825 per unit; in Melbourne it is $500 per unit. Mr. Joseph said that the Parks Department offers recommendations to the Planning Department on roughly one third of PUD applications. Councilman Becton added that some new private residential developments incorporate their own parks within the neighborhoods, which create semi-private recreational facilities and do not necessarily benefit the community at large.

According to the Comprehensive Plan, *all new non-residential land uses, except in the Central Business District, provide a minimum of 10% of the property in open space and a new residential subdivision development of 100 lots or more shall provide at least one acre of useable uplands for every 100 lots (and any fraction thereof), or 5% of the total useable uplands area for active recreation. A residential subdivision development of 25 lots to 99 lots shall pay a recreation and open space fee of two-hundred-fifty ($250) dollars per lot, or provide at least four hundred thirty-five (435) square feet of useable uplands for each lot (and any fraction thereof), to be dedicated as common area and set aside for active recreation* - City of Jacksonville 2030 Comprehensive Plan: Recreation and Open Space Element (Revised December 2013).

Councilman Reggie Brown asked about the budget for repairs and upgrades to older parks. Mr. Joseph told him that there are two funding sources, one for new park projects (in the CIP budget) and one for repairs and upgrades (which is the larger of the two funds). Mr. Brown also inquired about hurricane damage and whether those damages are documented differently than normal park repairs. Mr. Joseph said that after Hurricanes Matthew and Irma, repair lists were created separately from regular lists of needed maintenance. Councilman Brown also discussed park safety and the need for functional lighting, security personnel and possibly the installation of cameras to deter crime.

Councilman Crescimbeni asked about the possibility of having an independent park inventory, which has been done in the past. Such an inventory could provide a balanced apolitical assessment of various park qualities and needs. Mr. Crescimbeni described the high caliber parks he visited recently in Chicago and also suggested that Mr. Joseph utilize his network of other parks departments through state and national associations to get ideas about accelerating repairs and maintenance.

Council President Brosche spoke about the importance of updated signage in parks that show contact numbers for residents to report maintenance issues to the city. Ms. Brosche proposed cultivating sponsor relationships with private businesses to aid in funding park maintenance. Mr. Joseph reported that this week 60 employees from Mercedes Benz will be participating in a park cleanup near their warehouse, as a part of corporate-community outreach. Mr. Joseph said that there are additional similar events with other private entities that are in the works. Councilman Gulliford asked for the role of the parks committee to be clearly defined and said that, in his opinion, strengthening youth programming in parks should be a top priority. Mr. Gulliford also noted that an organization might be established to help maintain the city’s parks (Friends of the Parks, like Friends of the Library or Friends of Hemming Park).

At the conclusion of the meeting, Councilman Wilson said that he had compiled a list of topics based on the day’s discussion. He will circulate the list before the next meeting and incorporate it into the agenda. The floor was then opened to public comment. Mr. Middlebrook, of the Timucuan Foundation, offered his organization’s help in future projects. Mr. John Nooney commented on the lack of public restroom facilities along the kayak trail, which is a deterrent for those wishing to enjoy that activity.

**Meeting adjourned:** 11:30 a.m.

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research Division

11.9.17 Posted 9:00 a.m.