



Taxation, Revenue, and Utilization of Expenditures (TRUE) Commission

Niki Brunson – Chair

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

March 13, 2019

1:00 p.m.

City Council Conference Room B

Suite 425, City Hall

Attendance: Commissioners John Roberts (Chair), Jim Mazur

Excused: Commissioner Niki Brunson

Also: Jeff Clements – Council Research Division

See attached sign-in sheet for additional attendees.

The meeting was called to order at 1:01 p.m. and the attendees introduced themselves for the record.

Commissioner Roberts said that he has had very limited success in getting park value information from other jurisdictions for comparative purposes. In fact it has been difficult to reach people in some cities by telephone or e-mail to even pose the questions about data in which the committee is interested. Staff is being asked to send letters requesting the information to several cities to see if that produces a better response.

Mr. Roberts said that Jacksonville ranks 85th in the United States (100 largest cities) in per capita park expenditures and near the bottom of the large cities in Florida as well. He has done a number of park inspections to evaluate conditions and found a number of shortcomings. The City Council apparently recognizes the condition problems in the parks because they appropriated an additional \$2 million in the FY18-19 budget to address park maintenance needs and have announced a plan to allocate \$1 million in FY19-20. Mr. Roberts reviewed the committee's previous work and discussions with the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department for the benefit of Commissioner Mazur who is new to the committee. He learned that the park-related entries in the City's CARE complaint system fall into 2 categories – citizen-initiated complaints and department-initiated tickets that require skilled trades (electrician, plumber, etc.) to address.

The committee has considered several possible avenues for judging park maintenance funding needs. Since it has been very difficult to get comparative data from other jurisdictions, it may be impossible to do benchmarking ratios based on expenditures per park acre or expenditures as a percentage of park system value or parks budget.

Another alternative may be to develop the annual maintenance funding need by expensing the volume and type of work that needs to be done on a regular basis, combining historical trends and an inflation factor to come up with a reasonable projection for each future year's costs, and then cross-checking the results against other benchmark cities from time to time for accuracy. Another factor can be added to account for regularly scheduled capital replacement needs (picnic tables, fences, ballfield backstops, etc.).

The committee discussed the advisability of establishing sequestered reserve funds that could be invested to generate income until applied to future needs. Establishing a “sinking fund” or earmarked replacement fund guarantees that funds are available in the future to meet predictable needs. Support for this practice somewhat of a philosophical call – some think it’s the sensible thing to do to provide for guaranteed funding availability, others think there’s no sense in setting aside pots of money for future use and prefer to budget each year as needed.

Commissioner Roberts will develop a first draft of a committee report for consideration at the next meeting.

The committee will meet again on Wednesday, April 10th.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:28 p.m.

Jeff Clements, City Council Research Division
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Posted 3.13.19 4:30 p.m.

Tape –3.13.19 TRUE Parks and Recreation Committee – Legislative Services Division