



Town of Southwest Ranches Parks, Recreation, Forestry and Natural Resources Advisory Board Minutes

September 10, 2024
7:10 pm

Board Members

Chris Brownlow, Dena Butler, Debbie Green, Ron Martinez,
Laurie Morse, Marie Nix

Emeritus

MaryGay Chaples, Aster Knight

Council Liaison

Gary Jablonski

Staff Liaison

December Lauretano-Haines

Members present:

Chris Brownlow
Debbie Green
Laurie Morse
Marie Nix
Ron Martinez

Council present:

Gary Jablonski
Jim Allbritton
Steve Breitzkreuz
David Kuczenski

RFNRAB Members absent:

Dena Butler

Others present:

Russell Muniz
John Garate

Staff present:

December Lauretano-Haines

Call to order at 7:10 PM

The members present reviewed the minutes of the April 2024 meeting.

The Chair briefed the members present about the recent Pollinator Certification the Town has achieved. This program supports and is supported by the Town's other environmental certifications and outreach.

Staff briefed the members present regarding the new FRDAP (Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program) grant application cycle. Applicants may submit up to two applications, but a new rule precludes application for grants on sites where previously-awarded FRDAP grants are still pending. Thus, although staff would like to be able to concentrate our efforts toward the Southwest Meadows Sanctuary improvements which need significant funding, we cannot apply for more funding toward that site until our currently pending FRDAP project is completed.

Staff briefed the members on other projects staff would recommend for funding this cycle, including:

1. Sunshine Ranches Equestrian Park Playground renovation: This resource has been in service for 19 years. Staff has planned upgrades within the next 4 fiscal years. FRDAP support would allow this timeline to be reduced significantly.
2. Country Estates Fishing Hole fishing amenities: A grant commitment for this location which has yet to be developed and would bring the Town closer to completion of commitments on this site.
3. Calusa Corners Playground expansion: The play area consists only of swing sets and shade. The footprint ultimately can be expanded to include climbers and other components.

The members present discussed the proposed projects for the impending FRDAP grant cycle.

Debbie Green motioned to recommend to Council to approve FRDAP funding requests for proposed projects prioritized as follows:

1. Sunshine Ranches Equestrian Park Playground renovation
2. Country Estates Fishing Hole Park fishing amenities.
3. Calusa Corners Playground Expansion

Laurie Morse seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Staff briefed the members present regarding the impending Southwest Meadows Sanctuary improvements, which have been reviewed and prioritized by Council without much Board input in the time since the Board was last able to meet. Improvements that the Board has been briefed on for the past year were illustrated via renderings prepared by the Town's Architecture/Engineering team. The location for proposed amenities was prioritized into 3 different options, with #1 being the original location, #2 siting the building a bit further away from the adjacent property's horse arena, and #3 siting the building along the edge of existing wetlands. Council had deliberated on this subject and selected option #2 at their June 27, 2024 meeting.

Marie Nix motioned to support the Council's selection of Option #2 location site for the restroom and picnic shelter. Ron Martinez seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Staff briefed the members present regarding items on the maintenance report and upcoming events. Youth sports leagues are coming to Country Estates Park and Rolling Oaks barn in October, the Town is hosting a monthly open play chess event on the 3rd Saturday of each month at Town hall from 10 am to 2 pm, and our official Mayors' Chess Challenge date is October 19th. This Saturday is Aster Knight Parks Foundation Bingo at the barn. Tickets are available.

Debbie Green briefed the board regarding recycling outreach and education volunteers she has set up. The board discussed where and when to put these volunteers into place to help the public learn the important points of recycling. Staff suggested creating a script with talking points, and Board members suggested providing the volunteers with a form of identification, such as a shirt to help the public accept their information as official.

Staff introduced the Town Administrator, present to brief the members regarding a proposed opportunity for funding on the Town-owned 5 acres of the Southwest Meadows Preserve site. The current request (one of many the Town receives routinely) is for a car dealer to use one acre of the site as storage during the construction of their nearby facility. The proposed agreement could provide a significant potential funding impact for parks over its proposed 2-year course. Input from the community is needed to understand impacts on surrounding residents and the need for an alternate site for a 2-week period each year when the carnival takes place (Sunshine Ranches Equestrian Park is proposed), as well as site security.

Board members discussed the opportunity. The Chair requested consideration be equitably distributed, contributing at least one month's proposed income each year to the Scholarship fund. Other conversation included information from Mr. Garate about his experience with auto dealerships and what he believes may be more realistic expectations of time and the amount of funding the proposer can afford.

Mayor Breitreuz and Council members feel very cautious about this opportunity as they must ensure our rural lifestyle can be protected. Gary Jablonski suggested adding into the proposed agreement that the dealer would provide overnight security for the duration of the lease.

The Town Administrator made clear that he is obliged to make the Council aware of opportunities. The community and council must weigh the options and ultimately decide if benefits are worth any impacts.

Vice Mayor Kuczenski briefed the members present regarding the upcoming Halloween Home decorating contest. Additionally, he has asked for information about designating official trails on Mustang and Luray Roads. Staff briefed the members about the work this board has done in the past on Townwide Recreational Trail designations. Perhaps signage could be improved if the community would like to make the existing trails more visible.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:38 PM.