

**MINUTES OF THE
PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
MEETING DESTIN CITY HALL BOARDROOM
MARCH 25, 2025, - 4:00 PM**

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairwoman Weidenhamer called the Parks & Recreation meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. on Tuesday, March 25, 2025, in the Destin City Hall Boardroom.

2. ROLL CALL:

Members Present

Autumn Weidenhamer
Bryan Otto
Jessica Julian
Jan McGraw

Members Absent

Allison Stephens

Staff Present

Lisa Firth Parks & Recreation Director
Ryan Reed P&R Deputy Director
Bryan Kellar Recreation Supervisor
Joe Bodi Deputy Director Public Works
Sharon Gardner Records Mgmt. Specialist

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A.) February 25, 2025, Parks and Recreation Committee Meeting Minutes.

Motion made by Vice Chairman Bryan Otto and seconded by Committee member Jessica Julian to approve the minutes from February 25, 2025. The motion passed 4-0.

Chairwoman Weidenhamer announced the new members of the committee and asked for a motion to add the introductions to the Agenda. The motion was made by Vice Chairman Bryan Otto with Committee member Jessica Jullian providing the second. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

New committee members Jessica Julian and Jan McGraw introduced themselves, each expressing their interest and excitement at being involved in the decision-making process for the city and how happy they were to be here. Vice Chairman Bryan Otto provided a brief introduction of himself to the new members and welcomed them on the committee. Chairwoman Autumn Weidenhamer noted this was her first meeting as the chairwoman, and she thanked the group for their patience as she learned the role.

Parks and Recreation Director Lisa Firth approached the committee with a digital proof she had just received regarding the signage for the upcoming Pooch Palooza and asked for approval to order the signs.

Motion made by Vice Chairman Otto to approve the signage, with Committee member Jessica Jullian providing the second. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

4. NEW BUSINESS

A.) Committee Training

B.) Captain Royal Melvin Park Sidewalk

Councilwoman Trammell who was present at the meeting to provide the Committee Training asked Chairwoman Weidenhamer to change the order of the day and have Public Works Deputy Director Joe Bodi present his item regarding Captain Royal Melvin Park Sidewalk first as his presentation wouldn't be as lengthy as the Committee Training. Chairwoman Weidenhamer approved the change and welcomed Mr. Bodi to the dais.

Joe Bodi, Deputy Director for Public Works, presented details on the sidewalk project for Captain Royal Melvin Park, which includes replacing a 5-foot sidewalk with a 10-foot multi-use pathway. He explained this change is necessary to comply with the city's multimodal transportation requirements, and this project will also involve relocating the bike rack, removing an old driveway cut, and installing raised curbing. This project is moving through the development order process and will be presented to the City Council for approval at their first meeting in April. Vice Chairman Bryan Otto asked why the project was necessary, given that the park had been recently built. Mr. Bodi explained that the original sidewalk didn't meet the required code, and there are other necessary repairs and upgrades, including the relocation of the bike lane and repairs to damaged sections due to electrical upgrades. Councilwoman Trammell inquired if the \$34,000 for the project was budgeted, and Mr. Bodi confirmed that parts of it were, but additional funds would need to be found to cover some of the repairs. Committee member Otto expressed concern about preventing such oversights in the future. Mr. Bodi noted that requiring a development order for each project would help ensure that all requirements are met in the future.

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Bryan Otto that the Parks & Recreation Committee recommend that City Council approve the Captain Royal Melvin Park, a Minor Development Order, as presented. Committee member Jessica Jullian provided the second and the motion passed unanimously 4-0.

B. Sunshine Laws/Public Records Act Presentation – Council member Sandy Trammell

- Discussion of Sunshine Laws and its implications for committee members.
- Explanation of communication restrictions between committee members outside of a public meeting.
- Emphasis on avoiding any informal discussions regarding committee matters outside of public meetings.
- Provided guidance on Public Records Act compliance, including maintaining emails, text messages, and social media interactions.
 - Cautionary examples were provided, highlighting past violations and their consequences, including having all personal devices confiscated and possible removal from office with legal repercussions.

- Discussion on ethics standards and avoiding conflicts of interest and how meetings generally follow Robert’s Rules of Order.
 - Members were reminded not to use their positions for personal advantage and once a motion has passed, even if they are not in agreement and voted against the motion, they need to support it, when it goes forward to City Council.
 - Clarification on interactions with applicants and public officials to ensure unbiased decision-making.

5. OLD BUSINESS

A.) Workplans

1. Park Inspections and Reporting:

The committee’s discussion about work plans emphasized the importance of early planning for maintenance, especially for large projects, to ensure they are included in the budget for the following year. If significant repairs or equipment additions are needed, the committee must decide whether to fund them through the budget or through fundraising efforts. Committee members are expected to submit their park evaluations to Director Firth who coordinates the follow-up with the maintenance team. Vice Chairman Otto asked for someone to take the month of April to inspect the dog park, and that the committee will split the list of the remaining parks to be inspected the rest of the year. Committee member Jessica Jullian agreed to inspect the dog park for the month of April.

Parks & Recreation Director Lisa Firth spoke about how her team was really excited to see some extra maintenance happening at the parks and recreation fields. Eight non-park properties have been reassigned to other staff, which has allowed park maintenance teams to focus more on the recreation fields and parks. This shift in staffing has resulted in more dedicated resources for the parks, which has improved overall maintenance. Staff morale has improved as workers, who previously handled non-park properties, are now more involved with recreational fields and maintenance tasks they’ve never had the opportunity to handle before.

6. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

A.) Autumn Weidenhamer-Chairwoman

1. Pooch Palooza-Flyers have been distributed, and updates have been shared on social media (Friends of the Destin Dog Park, Destinites, and others), along with a radio promotion on Destin FM. Chairwoman Weidenhamer suggested further sharing the information on Facebook and Director Firth confirmed some cross-posting had been done.

Vendor setup was discussed as was event space setup for demonstrations and other activities that will require more space. Special arrangements will be made to ensure that areas are appropriately closed off or open for the public to safely participate in the event. The Blessing of the Dogs and raffle prizes are also major highlights of this event,

and the team is close to finalizing the event preparations, with a clear plan for set-up and day-of operations.

2. Parks and Recreation Committee Expectations-Chairwoman Weidenhamer reminded the members that if anyone wants to own or create a work plan, that it can be brought forward at any time and the committee can review it.

B.) Bryan Otto-Vice Chairman-

Vice Chairman Otto welcomed the new members again.

C.) Jessica Jullian-

Expressed appreciation for the collaboration between the committee and the staff and acknowledged the role of the committee in assisting the staff with various tasks, emphasizing her willingness to support them in any way possible.

D.) Jan McGraw-

Commented she hasn't been to all the parks yet but is excited to go and see them, as well as taking her grandkids to them.

7. STAFF REPORTS

A.) Arbor Day- Ryan Reed, Parks & Recreation Deputy Director

Deputy Director Reed announced that April 25th will be Arbor Day 2025, and that they still needed to decide on a location for the tree planting. The group discussed the timeline, including ensuring that everything is ready before the event. Vice Chairman Otto and staff discussed the costs of donating a tree, dedicating a tree or bench in honor of someone, and the application process for this. It was discussed that tree prices ranged from \$350-\$500, and the application process for dedicating a tree or bench would have had to begin by January for this year's event.

The Kell-Air South neighborhood near the park was discussed as the location for Arbor Day 2025.

Motion made by Vice-Chairman Otto to approve the Kell-Air South location with Committee member Jessica Jullian providing the second. Unanimously approved 4-0.

Director Firth suggested that Aubrey Santucci, who has expertise as an arborist, be invited to speak at the event as she is familiar with the process of tree planting and can contribute valuable insights. Director Firth and other staff and committee members expressed a willingness to speak if needed. There were questions about involving children in the event, as it was noted that the involvement of schoolchildren could add to the ceremony's success, as it had in previous years. However, challenges related to transportation for the children were raised, with suggestions to reach out to local schools for participation.

B.) Easter Egg Hunt

April 19th is the Easter Egg Hunt at Morgans Sport Center beginning at 9a.m. Director Firth asked the committee members to let her, or Recreation Supervisor Bryan Kellar know if they will be there.

Director Firth also mentioned that May 3rd, the first Saturday in May, is Founders Day, and they always need volunteers for that. She noted that the Primrose Boat will be 100 years old this year, and the Destin Fishing and History Museum will have a birthday party for it that day.

8. COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE -None

9. CLOSING REMARKS & ADJOURNMENT

Chairwoman Weidenhamer announced the next meeting will be April 22nd.

10. PUBLIC COMMENTS- None

ADJOURNMENT:

Having no further discussions, the meeting adjourned at 5:57 PM

Adopted and approved this 22nd day of April 2025.

Autumn Weidenhamer
Autumn Weidenhamer, Chairwoman

Sharon Gardner
Sharon Gardner Records Mgmt. Specialist