

## Minutes of the Fairhope Recreation Board

June 18, 2014

The Fairhope Recreation Board met Wednesday, June 18, 2014 at 5:15 p.m. in the meeting room at the Recreation Center, 803 N Greeno Rd.

Present were Derek Thomas, Charlie Langham, Bob Keyser, Vann Saltz, Diana Brewer, Cathy Hudson, Tom Kuhl and Sherry Sullivan. Absent were Mike Ford, Michelle Smith, Diana Brewer and Jenny Douglass. Gayle Fogarty took the minutes. Guest: Laura Kelly of Baldwin County Sports & Tournament Guides

The minutes of the April meeting were considered and approved on a motion by Charlie Langham, seconded by Bob Keyser, none opposed.

Guest: Laura Kelly of Baldwin County Sports & Tournament Guides shared information with the group on an advertising/recreation/tournament guide. She would like to produce and offer to the public at upcoming Fairhope sporting events, this would be free of charge and would assist in sharing pertinent information with visitors to the area. Vann Slatz made a motion on behalf of the Recreation Board to propose this guide be presented to the City Council for further approval. A motion was made by Cathy Hudson and seconded by Bob Keyser, motion was approved and none opposed.

**Recreation Update** – Tom Kuhl provided an update to the group on the softball tournament held this past weekend. He stated that it was a success, 52 teams on five fields over four days. He said, parking was managed well and nearly all the cars were parked within in the park. Also, adding that he has received a lot of positive feedback on this tournament. In addition, Tom stated to the group that the softball league has requested a few upgrades to the park. He also mentioned that the City of Fairhope Summer Program is going well, over 50 children enrolled in the program this year.

**Rotary/Football Concession** – Sherry Sullivan provided an update to the group, stating that the Fairhope-Point Clear Rotary Club mentioned possibility providing some funding for the Recreation Department. The funding would be used for a new football concession stand. Once Sherry is aware of the amount the Club may donate, then she will request the remaining money from the City to complete the project. She will update the group, once more information is available. Other items that she mentioned were: Manley bids have gone out and the Community Park is on track to open the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of August 2014. Sherry will contact Governor Bentley regarding attending the grand re-opening ceremony. She is also working on getting costs for adding 6 additional tennis courts at Stimpson Park.

**Review of 5 year plan** – Bob Keyser reviewed the 5 year plan with the group. There was also discussion of installing a brick facade to the stadium seating; the estimated cost is \$15,000. There was also discussion of bringing the handicap areas of the stadium up to code, the cost would be \$100,000. . There was general discussion of the plan. Vann Saltz stated that the 5 year plan needs to be updated and taken back to the City Council for their review. Bob stated that he will update the plan and send out to the group a week prior to the next meeting. The group plans to present the updated 5 Year Plan to the City Council at the July 28 meeting.

**New Business** - Cathy Hudson stated that summer swim team is going well. Also, mentioned that 130 kids attended the dive-in movie on June 17. Bob Keyser stated that opening day for soccer is September 20, 2014. The club program has 26 teams; he added that the Spring numbers are up 75% higher than in the past with 550 participants. He also mentioned that he contacted Michael Hays of the Spring Hill College Ultimate Frisbee Club to inform them that they will need to pay field fees during the Ultimate Frisbee Tournament set for October 4-5, 2014, although has not received a response at this time.

Sherry Sullivan stated that she is requesting another full-time janitor for the upcoming budget year. She also would like to add two more employees to being in March of 2015.

Dates to remember:

June 28, 2014, 10 a.m., Fairhope-Point Clear Rotary Club dedication of Fitness Trail at Stimpson Park

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

(See next page for 5 year plan)

## **Fairhope Recreation Board Five Year Plan (2012-2017)**

The Fairhope Recreation Board has developed a Five Year Plan to provide recommendations to the Fairhope City Council on capital investments in recreational facilities. The Plan was developed with input from the recreational community, including concerned individuals and league officials operating sanctioned recreational programs at recreational areas. Among organizations providing input were Fairhope Youth Football, Fairhope Youth Baseball, Fairhope Tennis Association, Fairhope Soccer League, Fairhope Youth Softball, Fairhope Master Swimmers, Fairhope Youth Basketball, and the Fairhope Pirate Booster Club.

While the Five Year Plan laid out below identifies a potential path forward for investment in capital improvements in recreation facilities, it should be noted that progress in this arena has been ongoing. In the past year, the following investments have been made:

1. Leveling of soccer fields 5, 6 and 7 at Founders Park to create a single large field that has a greater capacity and versatility for supporting games and practices.
2. In partnership with the Blast Soccer Club and Fairhope Soccer League, acquisition of 6 new pairs of goals to support program growth at Founders Park soccer fields.
3. Allocation of funds to perform a topographic survey and develop a conceptual master plan for the development of the 40 acres on Manley Road into a new soccer complex.
4. Purchase of goalposts for two youth football fields at Barnwell.
5. Purchase of new handicap-accessible bleachers for youth football at Barnwell.
6. Upgrades to landscaping, drainage, bleacher pads, fencing repairs and field improvements at Volanta youth baseball fields in support of State Championship tournament hosted over the summer.
7. In partnership with Fairhope High School, construction of a new field house and dugout at the high school baseball field at Volanta.
8. In partnership with the Fairhope Pirate Booster Club, installation of new air conditioning units in the main concession stand at Majors Field, and in the high school baseball concession stand.
9. Acquisition of adjustable, lightweight basketball goals to support young age youth basketball.

Routine operation and maintenance activities continue to be strained by program growth within the city's recreation programs. Current registrations show baseball with over 800 participants, soccer with over 900, football with over 250, softball over 200, and basketball over 150. The Fairhope Area Swim Team, Fairhope Master Swimmers and Fairhope High School Swim Team keep the city pool in constant demand. The high volume of users of facilities has produced a nearly year round need for facilities. The Volanta baseball and Founders softball fields are used throughout the spring and early summer, and resume in September with fall ball. The Barnwell football fields are used from mid-summer to early winter, and then are used in the early spring to support high school and middle school soccer tournaments hosted in Fairhope. The soccer fields at Founders Park are used year round with approximate 2 week breaks in June and December for maintenance and refurbishment. This heavy usage drives more frequent mowing, painting and minor repair of equipment, which will be difficult, if not unsustainable, given level or diminishing resources.

In recognition of program growth, as well as opportunities for recreational tourism, the Recreation Board recommends the following investments be made in recreational facilities. The investments have been prioritized based on what the board believes to be both the most urgent needs as well as greatest potential benefit. Costs are estimated.

**Priority 1. Construction of a new soccer complex at the Manley Road Property.** Project start date Fall 2012. Estimated cost - \$1,750,000. The city purchased 40 acres of land at the corner of Manley Road and County Road 13 approximately 4 years ago, with the ultimate intent to develop the space into a new soccer complex. The soccer program in Fairhope has grown to an average of approximately 1,000 participants over the past 3 years. This growth has exceeded the field capacity and resulted in teams finding green space wherever they can to hold practices and training. Annual tournaments that are hosted at Founders Park in the Fall and Spring are forced to move games to Daphne due to limited field space, allowing potential revenue dollars to be spent outside the city. The fall tournament held on 27/28 October brought 124 teams and over 1,500 players to the Eastern Shore. Approximately 60% of the participants were able to play on Fairhope fields, but the remainder played in Daphne. In addition to supporting the youth and high school soccer programs, the new complex would also allow Fairhope to host events such as the State High School championships, the NAIA championships, the SEC Women's championship and multiple Alabama Youth Soccer Association tournaments. As previously noted, money has already been obligated to complete a topographic survey of the site and develop a conceptual plan for the new complex.

**Priority 2. Complete an engineering study of Volanta Park.** Projected start date 2013. Estimated cost \$125,000. Youth baseball participation has exceeded field capacity at Volanta Park. However, topography, proximity of both the new dog park and the disc golf course, and parking limit the current feasibility of expansion. An engineering study is needed to assess the existing property and identify modifications and improvements that would allow for the addition of at least one baseball field, additional parking, and improved drainage and storm water management, without compromising the aesthetic qualities that make Volanta Park such an attractive venue. It would also improve the safety of the site.

**Priority 3. Expansion of Tennis Facilities at Stimpson Field.** Projected start date 2013. Estimated cost \$200,000. The construction of the new Fairhope Recreation Center started a series of moves of recreation facilities. The recreation center was constructed on the site of the former city tennis courts. The tennis courts were consequently moved to Stimpson Field, where 6 new courts and an administrative building were constructed. The adult softball fields at Stimpson were relocated to leased property in Barnwell. The new tennis facility at Stimpson has enjoyed steady usage by residents, in addition to hosting the Fairhope High School tennis team. There are frequently people waiting to play, reflecting a need for more court space. The addition of 6 new all weather surface tennis courts, along with a shuffleboard court, bleachers and additional parking would better accommodate the playing public and allow the venue to be used to host competitions and tournaments.

**Priority 4. Renovate Volanta Park consistent with results of the engineering study.** Projected start date 2014. Estimated cost – unknown. As a follow-on to our Priority 2 project, this project would implement the recommendations of the engineering study previously performed. Anticipated outcomes from this project would be the addition of at least one more field to accommodate program growth, relocation of an isolated field which currently presents safety issues due to being surrounded by parking and driveways, additional parking to support events both at the baseball fields as well as at the

municipal stadium, and improved drainage and storm water management. The study may also recommend modifications to the existing disc golf course to accommodate field expansion.

**Priority 5. Improvements/Expansion of Disc Golf Course.** Projected start date 2014. Estimated cost – unknown. The Volanta Park disc golf course continues to grow in popularity and recently hosted a tournament in conjunction with an event at the skate park. The engineering study may recommend alteration of the existing course, but with the activity’s growing popularity, the need for additional facilities seems imminent. A considerable amount of open land surrounds the Scout building at the corner of Twin Beech Rd and County Road 13, which would provide an excellent location for a new disc golf course in a different venue.

**Priority 6. Rebuild the home and visitors concession stands at Majors Field.** Projected start date – summer 2014. Estimated cost - \$105,000. The existing concession stands in the municipal stadium are undersized, underpowered, outdated and unfinished. During home football games, a volunteer staff of approximately 15 work the home concession. This presents a crowded condition, which does not allow the staff to keep up with consumer demand. A typical game will have lines of more than 20 people at each of the three windows from about 30 minutes before kickoff until midway through the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. The volume of heat lamps, cookers, coolers and coffee makers regularly trip the circuit breakers in the stand, further disrupting the frenetic operations. At the visitors concession, there is no air conditioning, no running water, and limited space to stock items for sale. The recommendation is to build out the home stand to 30x30, and the visitor stand to 15x20. The a/c unit that the Booster Club installed in the home stand should be capable of being re-used in the new visitor stand. The larger, more efficiently spaced stands should reduce crowding during operation, improve functionality and profitability for the operating organization, and make the experience of attending events in the stadium more enjoyable.

**Priority 7. Construct a splash pad at the municipal pool.** Projected start date 2016. Estimated cost - \$100,000. The municipal pool remains a popular venue during the summer months. Splash pads have become attractive additions at parks, and would allow individuals to cool off without actually climbing into a pool, which would be particularly appealing to families with small children. The splash pad would also help reduce some of the crowding of the pools.

**Priority 8. Expand the Recreation Center to add class space, training rooms and new racquetball court.** Projected start date 2017. Estimated cost - \$500,000. The new recreation center has become crowded during classes, and the racquetball court is difficult to schedule due to its popularity. Given anticipated growth, additional space for more fitness/training classes as well as a second racquetball court is expected to be needed by 2017. Additional space will also allow for greater flexibility and additional offerings in the activities that take place at the facility, e.g. team handball, indoor soccer.