MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE

PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

Naples, Florida

July 17, 2024

LET IT BE REMEMBERED, the Collier County Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, in and for the County of Collier, having conducted business herein, met on this date at 2 p.m. in REGULAR SESSION at North Collier Regional Park, 15000 Livingston Road, Naples, with the following members present:

CHAIRMAN: Edward “Ski” Olesky

VICE CHAIR: Joshua Fruth

Jessica Bergel (excused)

Lee Dixon (absent)

Rebecca Gibson-Laemel

Kristina Heuser

Eric Kelly (excused)

Donna Fiala (excused/alternate)

ALSO PRESENT: James Hanrahan, Assistant Director, Parks & Recreation

Miguel Rojas Jr., Admin. Assistant, Parks & Recreation

Ed Finn, Deputy County Manager

Mike Ossorio, Region 1 Parks Manager

Randi Swinderman, Region 3 and 4 Parks Manager

Said Gomez, Region 2 and 5 Interim Parks Manager

Sidney Kittila, Region 5 Interim Parks Manager

Patricia Rosen, Senior Program Leader, Sugden Park

***Anyone who needs a verbatim record of the meeting may request a copy of the recording and PowerPoint presentations from the Collier County Parks & Recreation Department.***

# Call to Order

**Chairman Olesky** called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

# Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation

The board recited the Pledge of Allegiance and observed an invocation/moment of silence.

1. **Welcome by the Director**

**Mr. Hanrahan** welcomed everyone, asked anyone who wanted to speak to sign in and read the Parks & Rec mission statement:

*The Parks & Recreation Advisory Board serves as a vital bridge between the community and Collier County’s Parks & Rec division and is dedicated to enhancing local recreation facilities. Working hand-in-hand with staff, our board members actively contribute to programming, fundraising, special events, maintenance, and recommendations for physical improvements. Our primary goal is to continuously elevate recreation services for all residents of Collier County.*

*Through careful evaluation and thoughtful analysis, PARAB provides recommendations to Collier County Parks & Rec, striving to improve, modify or develop services to better meet the diverse needs of our community. As outlined in our ordinance, PARAB’s functions include evaluating park property acquisition, analyzing development of Parks & Recreation facilities, reviewing programs and special events and providing input on the Parks & Recreation Master Plan. We actively seek input from the public to inform our decisions and recommendations.*

*Additionally, PARAB may provide recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners on relevant issues. Public participation is encouraged, with members of the public being allowed three minutes to be heard on any proposition before the board, ensuring that community voices are heard and valued in the decision-making process.*

1. **Roll Call**
2. **Verification of Quorum**

The roll call was taken and a quorum of four was established.

# Approval of the Agenda

# (No changes)

***Ms. Laemel made a motion to approve the agenda. Ms. Heuser seconded it. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.***

# Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

***Ms. Laemel made a motion to approve the June 16, 2024, meeting minutes. Vice Chair Fruth seconded it. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.***

**V**. **New Business**

**Mr. Hanrahan** said thenew owners of Spirit Promotions, which run the U.S. Open Pickleball Championships, will introduce themselves, give an update on how the 2024 U.S. Open went, and their plans for the future. Mike Dee, owner of Spirit Promotions and CEO and co-founder of Pickleball4America, will provide the presentation.

**a. U.S. Open Pickleball Championship Presentation**

***Mr. Dee told the PARAB:***

* He’s a new Collier County resident, as of 2023, when he and his wife moved here full time.
* He and his partner, Bob Bowman, acquired the U.S. Open Pickleball Championship in December 2022 from the founders, Chris Evon and Terri Graham, who had a great vision in 2016, when they created and formed the biggest, best pickleball tournament in the entire sport. They had a lot of help from volunteers, business leaders, community partners and Collier County.
* Back then, East Naples Community Park had no pickleball courts. It started with one or two and Jim Ludwig got the county interested. Jim joined Spirit Promotions and will be working closely with us on the U.S. Open.
* In 2016, pickleball was more of a game than a sport. In the years since the U.S. Open was created, the sport and game evolved into a full-blown sport and the U.S. Open is a big part of that.
* He’s not as avid a player as his partner, Bowman, who also is a full-time Collier County resident. He frequently goes to East Naples Community Park, which is how we decided to acquire the U.S. Open.
* Chris and Terri felt they’d taken the event as far as they could and there’s a huge boom in pickleball, with competing leagues, teams and celebrity owners that has changed the landscape.
* He and Bob have extensive backgrounds in professional sports. Most of his experience was in Major League Baseball, including the Red Sox. and he also worked closely with Lee County on the development of JetBlue Park. Bob was a Major League Baseball executive, which is how we met.
* We wanted to own the U.S. Open Pickleball Championship to make it bigger and better while preserving what’s working well. There’s a great opportunity to make it bigger and better, so we’ve been working extensively with county staff, the Board of County Commissioners, County Manager Amy Patterson and her staff on extending our lease.
* The BCC extended the lease through 2025 and we’re in conversations now to extend it on a long-term basis.
* That includes the upkeep of East Naples Community Park, not just the investments that were made, but the human touch that goes into keeping the park friendly, accessible for the local community and visitors. James, his team and onsite team at East Naples are critical to this event. As a newcomer, he’s tremendously impressed with Collier County Parks & Recreation’s facilities, diversity and oversight.
* Spirit Promotions owns all the intellectual property for the U.S. Open Pickleball Championships, so no one can use that term. We want to keep it here and believe that over time it can grow to be even more of a community asset.

*[He played a video of the U.S. Open 2024 recap.]*

***Mr. Dee detailed a PowerPoint presentation:***

* That week set every record, including sunshine and no clouds or rain. That made a difference.
* We had over 5,200 matches and 3,200 participants. Of those, 460 were professionals and nearly 2,800 were amateurs. That’s what makes the U.S. Open unique. We have the best pros in the world, including No. 1 Annalee Waters, but amateurs are what makes this event different.
* For the 2,800 amateur spots, 5,400 people nationwide and worldwide registered in a lottery to play. They represented 32 countries and all 50 states.
* 65% of entrants, 5,200, were from outside Florida, with the three largest origins being California, Michigan and New York.
* 35%, roughly 1,500 of registrants, came from Florida, with two-thirds coming from outside Collier and Lee counties.
* This is a boost to tourism. These people stay here, with the average hotel stay at three nights. They’re spending money and going out to eat. Because it comes after Easter, hotels love this event because it moves the needle for them at the beginning of the slower shoulder season.
* There were 600 volunteers this year, a new record. We couldn’t do the event without volunteers, many of whom have been a part of the U.S. Open since the beginning. They take ownership of the event and make it their own.
* In 2016, there were only 850 players and 6,000 spectators, but in 2023, it grew to over 3,000 players and 40,000 spectators.
* Based on our card counts and transactions, preliminary counts show that 50,000 people attended during the seven days.
* We own a pickleball software company that runs tournaments and is highly efficient so you won’t see dead court time next year. We’ve already raised those 3,250 players to 3,600 for next year.
* Our only limitation is parking so we’re working with the community on that.
* This event has become so well-known that it was a question on Jeopardy.
* Pickleball isn’t just about people over 50, it’s about kids, a huge area of growth for us.
* At the U.S. Open Pickleball Academy, we want to train kids who have an interest in pickleball so they can become the next generation of elite professional players. Because kids are growing up here in this environment and facility, the top players should come from Collier County.
* Wheelchair pickleball is one of the most emotional parts of the week. We have wheelchair matches throughout the week and a championship day. They get two bounces, the only difference.
* The event attracts big media coverage, with millions of views.
* It’s on CBS Sports Network for seven hours live and there are many rebroadcasts. CBS takes great matches, repurposes them and replays them throughout the year.
* The Welcome Center has been a game changer. We have a big screen TV so folks who don’t have paid tickets for the championship court can watch. Admission is free. The only place that requires a ticket is the championship court area. We have three buyers for every ticket.
* There are many local partnerships. Kiwanis Club handles the parking. This year, we gave them a $50,000 check. They park cars under challenging circumstances. We also have a great partnership with St. Matthew’s House, our food partner.
* It’s a big social media sport and people love pickleball highlights. When you get a great point, people worldwide check it out.
* The largest age group for participants is 50 years and older, 73%, a fairly even split between men and women.
* Participants ages 18-49 make up 25%. A big area of growth for us is international play and youth. More kids are playing. Games are being created at the high school level. We want to work with the Collier County school system to help develop pickleball programs around the park and invite schools, not just Avalon Elementary, our neighbor. We want to put a paddle in a kid’s hand for the first time.
* There’s only one U.S. Open Pickleball Championship and we want to be stewards of that.

***Mr. Dee detailed a PowerPoint, “Vision for the Future”:***

* Part of his role with sports teams was redesigning ballparks, so he looked at this park as a great opportunity to take something great and make it better. Some say the U.S. Open has outgrown this park because it’s a community park. But there are 64 pickleball courts and the county has invested $5 million dollars over the last 10 years to create it so let’s work together to make it more efficient, more community accessible and introduce new elements by working with James and his team so the community doesn’t feel like it’s a place where visitors go for pickleball.
* At the county manager’s direction, we were asked to come up with a master plan. It’s 74 slides and we’re showing seven today.
* We want to create a main gate, an official entrance to the U.S. Open. This would utilize dead/underutilized space.
* We want to create the U.S. Open Pickleball Academy, with 12 courts on the rear parking lot. That would enable us to create a championship court three times the size of the current championship court.
* We’re considering moving the community center to make it twice the size of the current community center, which would be more appealing for residents for non-pickleball uses. It would free up a huge artery to double our parking.
* We plan a private-public partnership, with private investment leading the way. We’re in negotiations with county staff, but we’re willing to shoulder the most significant part of the investment to make this happen as part of a long-term agreement.
* The current championship court is fantastic, but it’s not waterproof and two years ago we did not have seven days of sunshine. Three hours were wiped out on live television, so we have a proposal to add a second canopy and we would fund the majority of that.
* We’ve put in an application with James to lease six courts beginning in September to create the U.S. Open Academy, a year-round facility to create the professionals of tomorrow. It would be for local kids, but could draw kids from other states who want to improve their game with the best instructors and equipment.
* That would be a great feature to bring in another 20,000 people year-round, including July 16th or 17th. We can get people to come here in the summer if we create the right kind of brand and academy.

**Ms. Laemel** asked if the parking options will suffice for the future, with no need for a parking garage.

***Mr. Dee responded:***

* We will not need a garage. There are off-site options. There’s a property owned by Reverend Paul of the Haitian Church and we’d like to speak with the church about leasing the back half of that property for parking.
* There’s already a bridge connecting the streets.
* People are parking there now and there are probably 100 cars a day over there today. People park there and walk around the lake.
* We would formalize that and create an experience coming around the lake.
* That would take some pressure off Thomasson Drive, where residents say there’s heavy traffic. They do earn $25 a day by charging event-goers to park in their front yards.
* We can divert some traffic onto Bayshore Drive, which would help balance some ingress and egress.

***Mr. Hanrahan told the PARAB:***

* He’s worked with Terri and Chris since 2017 and has worked with Mike since they took over and it’s been an easy and wonderful relationship.
* One of the most important things that Commissioner Kowal said that Mike and Bob understand – and that we care about – is that East Naples continues to be a community park that’s highlighted in a new and beautiful way. That’s been at the forefront of conversations with Deputy County Manager Dan Rodriguez and County Manager Amy Patterson.
* It’s been easy working with Mike and Bob, who should not be confused with Bob Strommen, head of Naples Pickleball Center. The U.S. Open Academy does not compete with the county NPC contract.
* The county and tourism division have made an investment in the U.S. Open since 2016 and this is an enhancement. Mike and Bob were asked what they’d do with the other 51 weeks.
* The allure of the U.S. Open Academy will attract people nationwide. The six rental tennis courts have been approved and will be rented during county time, under the covered area shown in blue. There still will be enough courts for the community.
* He lives in the Isles of Collier Preserve and rides his bike to work. As community concerns come up, he’s an East Naples resident, so we want to be sensitive to that and make sure that we’re being active participants in the community and community organizations. We’ve already met with the Botanical Garden.

**Mr. Dee** said one of the options we presented to the county is taking over Parks & Rec’s capital maintenance for the pickleball courts. That’s a big line item in James’s budget. Parks & Rec will still handle the park and the grounds, but everything with the pickleball facilities, such as nets, windscreens, resurfacing the courts, we’re willing to take that on as part of a long-term lease extension.

**Ms. Laemel** said that’s a biggie for her.

**Chairman Olesky** asked if they had spray misters for players.

**Mr. Dee** said they don’t, but have talked about installing them. The shaded courts get a lot of action in the summer so if we were to do this principally for the U.S. Open, we’d double the number of shaded courts for residents who use the park daily so they’d be more comfortable during hotter months.

**Vice Chair Fruth** asked if he could provide the PARAB with the PowerPoint slides.

**Mr. Dee** said he’d do that, and sit down with him to walk him through it.

***Action Item: Provide Mr. Dee’s PowerPoint presentation to PARAB members.***

**Ms. Laemel** noted that Jim Ludwig was the first president about 10 years ago and so much has changed since then.

**Mr. Dee** said many others have now figured out the vision Collier County had then. There are seven pickleball courts this year that have either opened with 40 courts or will open around the country. We get phone calls all the time about moving the U.S. Open. Many people come into the sport with wrong intention, to make a quick buck. When we talk about concepts and a future vision, it’s not just because we want to make it look nice. It’s because we’ve got to stay on top of our game.

**Mr. Hanrahan** said he will provide updates when the U.S. Open Academy begins in September.

**b. Non-motorized use on Lake Avalon [Duke Vassey]**

*[Mr. Vassey provided PARAB members with a handout detailing his presentation.]*

* Marsh Paddles was formed in this room to take the administrative load off of all the paddlers. We have about 2,000 paddlers and sometimes what they’re looking for doesn’t come across well, so we formed a group.
* Marsh Paddlers’ sole role is to work with the parks director. We try to convince James that there are things we could do to improve kayaking.
* When we began, Sugden Park was the only place we had to put basic kayakers in the water. It’s an ideal place. It has a pier on one end that boaters can’t go into, and a swim area on the other end that boaters can’t go into. We’re here to ask to create a formal kayak area.
* That means a series of national signs that tell you what a swim area is and that boats are prohibited. For kayak areas, there would be about 10 signs that would go down the line.
* We’re currently looking at a safety checklist. Powered and non-powered boats are a big safety problem.
* We’re training instructor trainers now. We have two instructors in school and three already qualified American Canoe Association (ACA) instructors, the only ones who work with the Coast Guard which has an ongoing program.
* Years ago, when we spoke with parks director Barry Williams, we told him there were challenges with restricted-access conflicts. There’s confusion for kayakers and safety concerns due to shared water space.
* Many kids drive power boats but they don’t go in a straight line. Kids just want to have fun.
* When you look at the Sugden Park activities calendar, it shows no kayak activities are planned. Same with swimming. The only time there’s a planned activity is when they block space for sailboats or water skiing. That just blocks time and doesn’t mean anybody will be in the water.
* The safety concern is that the areas are not prevalent. Every boater born after 1988 must have a boater ID and must pass the boater ID test with an 80% score. With a voter ID, they’d know all these signs we install prohibit boat operations in certain areas. That’s a safety concern we believe can be solved easily.
* He’s a seasoned kayaker who has paddled since 1947 and wakes up at 6 a.m. twice a week to meet a group. Sometimes he goes to Sugden Park to practice activities, but he can’t block time for that because it’s already blocked out and nobody’s using the lake. That’s a problem because he wants to put the boat in safely, use it and get back out of the water.
* More than 1,000 paddlers support this proposal.
* Sugden has a more than 60-acre lake with all the amenities but it has two paid programs and sometimes there are others who won’t let us use the lake.
* The swimming area does not have an official swimming area sign. The bobbers are supposed to be white. This is a technicality.
* We want to train paddlers learn maneuvers that are required before you get in a boat. Our team can teach these maneuvers to county residents. Our equipment operators are well trained and want to work with people. But a glitch in the system says that no commercial activity can take place.
* We sometimes draw 25-40 people. You have to do these maneuvers on the ground to get familiar with them before you can do them in the water.
* Lake Avalon is about 120 feet and you can’t operate a boat in this area, which is prohibited, but it’s unmarked.
* We’re proposing that from this gazebo on down to the pier in this swimming area, we’d put markers there for about 1,000 feet, so the boating community stays in the other 68-70 acres of the lake and doesn’t infiltrate within the markers. We’ve laid this out and provided James and his team with this information. We’ve agreed to install and maintain the markers.

**Public Speakers**

***Stan Chrzanowski told the PARAB:***

* He lived in Golden Gate City on a canal and the first thing he did was buy a canoe. He hasn’t managed to learn how to roll it yet, but he’s working on that.
* Kayakers and canoers launch all over the county. We don’t need a large area to launch from, but at most places we launch, you can’t practice these skills.
* We launch up and down U.S. 41. (He provided photos.).
* Lake Avalon is a very safe area to do this. Many other places are not safe because there are power boats in the open water. The swamps we go into are too shallow to work on those skills.
* This proposal is a good idea, and if you have any doubt, you should go out and look at it.

***Karin Rush, former president of Gulf Coast Paddlers Club, told the PARAB:***

* She’s a member of Marsh Paddlers, the Florida Paddlers Trail Association and a liaison for other Florida groups.
* We need a place like this. We have been paddling there for years, but it’s been difficult to get a safe area.
* We promote safety and we need to promote skills. You’ve read about kayakers who died in the water. The Gulf is not a good place to train.
* She’s an avid roller and the lake is great to practice rolling and other maneuvers versus the Gulf.
* To ensure paddlers are safe, we need to train them in a safe area.
* This won’t cost a lot. It’s minuscule and we’ve got over 1,000 people in our clubs.
* She implores the PARAB to get this done. It would be easy for a community park to incorporate kayaking, fun and safety to help people in the area.

***Mike Devlin, of Paradise Coast Kayak Tours, told the PARAB:***

* He trains people how to kayak and how to roll.
* The Gulf isn’t good for that due to waves and swimmers.
* We need that strip but were told we can’t use it. He’d been using it for 10 years.
* He’s trying to pass on traditions. He’s a traditional-style paddler and uses Greenland sticks (wooden paddles).
* He’s trained people to pass the ACA. He’s not an ACA because he doesn’t like it. He doesn’t like being told what to do, but he’s trained people from over the world.
* All we want is that strip to use any time we want.

**Mr. Vasey** said he left his card with everyone in case they have questions. He also is the Florida Paddling Trails Association’s Region F (Paradise Coast) co-director of the Circumnavigational Trail, which was started 20 years ago. We can have this project done within two hours next week so boaters with boater IDs understand they cannot go into those areas.

**Mr. Devlin** said he’s been here since 1997 and started the Paradise Coast Paddlers Club in 2005 and it now has 1,000 members. It’s not like we’re trying to take over the lake. We just want a little strip. If nobody’s out there, we’d like to just paddle around.

**Chairman Olesky** asked what the main problem was in getting this started.

**Ms. Laemel** asked if there were any downsides.

***Ms. Kittala told the PARAB:***

* She’s been working on this with James, Sugden Parks Program Senior Leader Patricia Rosen and Parks Supervisor Michael Toolan. This conversation has been going on for 22 years. The main issue is safety.
* Sugden is unique, a beautiful site that’s great for everybody to use. This site was donated to the county several years ago.
* In the management plan, the county programs takes precedence. No one has said the issue is commercial versus recreational.
* If she’s on the baseball field running a program at Max Hasse Park, and somebody wants to use the outfield, she won’t let them because she doesn’t want them to get hit. It’s a paid program. When we’re off the field, it’s available.
* For about 50% of the time on the lake, it’s available for any group, kayaks, paddleboards and canoeing. It’s available when park programs are not on the water. Several park programs use the lake at different times and they do change if there’s a rain delay or too much wind. It may be changed to the next day. It is hard to schedule and hard to say when they’re not there, but we started posting the schedule for park programs there.
* You can’t have canoes, kayaks and paddleboards in the swimming area. It’s not safe. We could rope off an area like they’re proposing for their instructional use.
* This area is unique due to safety. It’s used for adaptive training and at-risk veterans. It’s a specialized lake for those programs that have been developed, and it’s the only one out of over 71 parks. That’s why we use it for water skiing and sailing.
* When you’ve got three motorboats and sailboats on the lake, when you’re driving the boat, you don’t want to worry about running over a kayaker or paddleboarder. It’s a safety issue. We could lose those programs.
* Other groups have asked for this and we’ve explained the ordinance and that we can’t share the lake while they’re on the water. These are park programs, and it’s for safety reasons. We’ve got adaptive sailing, adaptive skiing, and people with no disability in these programs. We also have lessons, private lessons and high school teams using it. Others use it on the weekends.
* Generally, the lake is available after 3 p.m. Why would you rope off just this area when the lake is free to everybody when we are not running programs?
* These programs have won awards and the sailing program has been to conferences worldwide. There’s no other place we can run that program.
* It’s a unique park and many people probably would want it, but it’s the only place we can operate these programs.
* The ordinance says you can’t make money and we know that people have done that. They’ve probably taken money off-site, not this particular group, and bring their students there so they’re using our amenity to run their business.
* Boaters are scared they could run somebody over. In 2017, a kayaker rolled in the middle and almost got run over. Risk management looked at that incident and again in 2020, and said we can’t allow kayaks, paddlers or any others outside park programs to go on the water at the same time. It’s too much of a safety risk for staff and the community.
* We have over 44 people with disabilities in our weekly program and up to 15 for Wounded Warriors, as well as at-risk youth and teens.
* For about 50% of the time you can go anywhere on the lake when there aren’t programs. There are other parks you can go to, such as Conner Park Beach.

***A discussion with Mr. Vassey ensued and the following points were made:***

* The swimming area is roped off 24/7.
* No one has been running the operations.
* Paddlers just want a small area roped off.
* They won’t be charging fees and can work with Parks & Rec to resolve this.
* Mr. Vassey contended Ms. Kittala isn’t qualified to speak about boater safety. Boaters have the ultimate responsibility for a crash.
* If anything happened in 2017, Risk Management would have provided further guidelines to prevent more incidents.
* A good risk management program would have told you right away your swimming area is incorrectly marked and your lake is incorrectly marked under U.S. Coast Guard standards.
* The problem is people who are not certified are driving programs.
* The park was purchased for and given to all county residents and part of it could be used safely without interrupting scheduled programs. There’s no schedule for swimming, bicycling, walking or anything, except the two programs people pay for, sail boating and water skiing.
* There’s no assurance that any outside powerboat that comes into Sugden Park has been cleaned thoroughly, as required by statute.
* The county’s ordinance language doesn’t focus on the importance of safety. It should be revised.

***Mr. Hanrahan told the board:***

* We’re open to having discussions to come to a compromise.
* Risk Management says non-motorized and motorized boats cannot be on that lake at the same time. If the board wants us to have Risk Management come out again, we can do that.
* Staff reviewed what Mr. Vassey discussed. We like the idea of blocking it off to allow them to have that area for training. We see the importance, but it cannot happen when motorized boats are using the lake.
* We can readdress that and set up a meeting with Risk Management Director Michael Quigley to discuss it.
* We want to make it available and love the idea of blocking it off with set times or times listed on a calendar.

***Ms. Rush told the board:***

* We have repeatedly asked for a schedule and never get it.
* She offers a free safety clinic and has never charged anyone.
* The ordinance language shows there’s preference for people who are paying.
* We’re trying to organize classes to make people safe and practice maneuvers and we can’t do it when you suggest, after 3, in the afternoons. It usually rains and it doesn’t work on Saturdays and Sundays.
* We just want an area blocked off like the swimming area.

**Vice Chair Fruth** said he interrupted Sidney to ask a question. Can she finish her presentation?

***Ms. Kittila told the board:***

* This is the only place they can run the sailing and water skiing programs. They can’t go to state parks like you can, they can’t go to the beach. There’s nowhere else for this unique program. Adaptive sailing is one of the only ones in the world.
* Kayakers can use the lake the other 50% of the time.
* She doesn’t need a boaters certificate to talk about this subject. She’s been in Parks & Rec for 40 years. This is about sharing space. If you want to come in and rope off an area, that’s your space.
* People have gone outside roped areas in the past, and it’s been a safety issue, but we can look at that for the future.
* There’s absolutely no commercial usage allowed. Patrons take precedence. You can teach in other areas. They cannot do sailing and water skiing programs, Wounded Warriors and summer camp in other areas.

***Mr. Ossorio told the board:***

* He was in the U.S. Navy and knows boats.
* If you dream it, they will come, like the Field of Dreams.
* You folks are 100% in accordance with the rules, but there are thousands of Kmart boat buyers coming out there and they’re not going to stay between those lines.
* Duke is not going to sit and order them to stay within those lines.
* Kids are on parents’ shoulders and if there are boats, there could be an accident.
* 2017 taught us a lesson that this won’t work. We need to find alternatives. You can’t put that responsibility on the boater. He gets it, he’s responsible but it’s a county park and that’s a liability.
* Commercial activity shouldn’t be there. But we know it is and we work toward compliance, so we’re going to consider alternatives. What about a pool?

**Ms. Kittila** said we talked about aquatic facilities for training. You can rent those facilities.

**Mr. Devlin** said we don’t charge and we don’t want it.

***Mr. Ossorio told the board and speakers:***

* If you really wanted to teach someone in a safe setting, you can use a pool.
* If you’re a non-profit, this cold work.
* We can’t build something and think that everyone who buys a boat at Walmart will follow the rules.
* Our employees are trying to teach children. If a kayak comes along, it’s in the way.
* We’re going to make it work. We’re going to find new solutions, but 50% of the time, it’s open for anyone to use.

***Ms. Rosen, the park’s senior program leader, told the board:***

* She started sailing in 2002. This lake should be able to be used by everyone, kayak, canoe, paddleboard, sailing, water skiing, etc.
* She was there when the incident occurred in 2017. It involved a very experienced kayaker and a very experienced ski boat driver. It was a very unusual situation.
* A person launched from the back ski area. The instructor was looking back, heading into the sunset. It was the last pull of the day to drop the person off at the beach. The person wore a camo life jacket that wasn’t bright orange or fluorescent. If it hadn’t been for the experienced ski boat driver, it would have been horrific.
* You need to be off by 9 during summer. After 3 p.m. is when we stop.
* We end lessons on Aug. 2 and resume Oct. 8. We’re not on the lake unless it’s a private lesson, a rental or group lesson.
* We follow Coast Guard regulations. We don’t have to. She doesn’t have to mark the swim area. We used to have six lifeguards before budget cuts.
* We need to come up with a plan for sharing the lake that works for everyone. She’s always tried to do that. She’s never changed her schedule in 22 years.
* She’s never tried to encroach on over 50% of the daylight hours.
* When you have 250 on the wait list for water skiing, we could have stadium lights and run 24/7 if they lit the place up. There’s such a demand.
* We try to keep it available for the public, the proposed area.
* She has 44 sailboats with 10 from Australia that are designed for the disabled. The proposed area goes to the pier. She personally paid a lot of money for the Hoyer lift to lift people in and out at that floating dock.

**Mr. Vassey** said his proposed area is all within one line and is marked on his presentation.

**Mr. Hanrahan** told the PARAB that if they support this proposal, Mr. Vassey can work with staff to bring it back for your consideration.

***Mr. Vassey told the board:***

* You have rules that govern the lake. The only time you don’t need to have markings on the lake is if it’s a private lake. That’s in the Coast Guard regulations.
* Many things need to be worked out.
* We understand that the programs are important and Pat does a great job. We’ve worked with her.
* The idea behind this is safety. We need to be able to use selective parks safely for many activities and not exclude its use just because something terrible might happen. That’s where risk analysis comes in.
* Sugden Park is not being used fully for the community. It’s being used for other things that are great. We should support them, but you have a group of people who don’t fit that category who like to use the lake and it should be open.
* If the lake is open, the kayaker could go out on it.
* The current calendar is inadequate. You shouldn’t have to scroll through 17 activities. The Sugden Park calendar should come up and the activity should populate.
* He drives a 60-mile roundtrip to come to Sugden Park and a Park Ranger once told him it’s closed. We need to improve the schedule.

**Vice Chair Fruth** suggested a motion to have Mr. Vassey and the clubs work with staff and return to the PARAB in September.

*[Staff said Ms. Rosen hadn’t finished speaking.]*

***Ms. Rosen told the board:***

* The program and schedule has been the same since she started 30 years ago. Titles may have changed but programs haven’t.
* You can come to an agreement and make things work for everyone. It’s a beautiful lake and should be available for everyone.
* Everyone has to be aware of what’s going on at that park because it would only take one to shut it down.
* This park is one of the best kept secrets in Collier County. It’s a gem and everyone should have the opportunity to enjoy it.
* If everyone has a schedule, it should work.

***Vice Chair Fruth made a motion to ask Mr. Vassey and the paddling clubs to work with staff to come up with a solution and return to the PARAB in September. Second by Ms. Laemel. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.***

**Mr. Hanrahan** said we’ll come back to the PARAB with a plan.

**Vice Chair Fruth** said he’s a strong believer in common sense and evolving. He’s comfortable with his 7-year-old paddleboarding while motorboats are on an 800-acre lake, but this is a 60-acre lake. Things need to evolve but we need to have Risk Management be involved.

**c. Summer intern presentation [Tyler XXX]**

***Tyler detailed a PowerPoint presentation:***

* He started his internship on May 20th and got a lot of hands-on experience in various activities that showed him park employees’ daily responsibilities. It helped him reconsider his career path and aspirations.
* On the first week, he worked at the fitness center front desk, signing people in and paying for memberships. He helped clean equipment, adjusted basketball hoops, etc., and got insight on how to operate and manage a gym.
* The second week, he worked with Park Rangers, walking on the beach, filling out beach reports, patrolling other areas, such as playground parks. He rode a John Deere Gator to Marco Island and Barefoot Beach. It was nice to get outdoors.
* For the third week, he was there at 6 a.m. to walk with the sea turtle nesting team. Eggs hadn’t hatched yet so we were looking for nests by following their tracks. There are false crawls where they decided against a nest. We had to put cages around some nests because raccoons eat the eggs. He learned a lot about sea turtle nesting season.
* He saw an alligator at Lake Trafford, which got him interested in environmental science and volunteering for environmental protection.
* For week five, he was involved in project management. There were heavy rains for two days, so they weren’t able to conduct inspections. Instead, he helped Miguel with administrative work.
* On the third day, when the rain stopped, they checked a kiddie pool with a drainage issue, and some broken staircases. He learned how the bidding and permitting processes worked, reviewed blueprints for future projects, went on site inspections, to budget and bid meetings.
* He went to Immokalee Sports Complex, where wires got caught up while they were drilling in a pool. The wires power the water features, so that was an issue. The inspection caught that.
* During his administration week, he worked a lot with Miguel, and helped Patricia with field trips to movies, and getting kids seated. He got to see how the office works and PARAB meetings.
* He worked with the Sports Camp and helped on the bus with a field trip to a bowling alley. We also set up an obstacle course.
* On week seven, he went to Big Corkscrew Island Regional Park, the county’s newest park. He worked with the recreation sports camp leader and went to a bowling alley with the kids. He helped set up sports for kids at sports camp at North Collier, where he went when he was a kid. We went mini golfing for a field trip and he played dodgeball, soccer and baseball with the kids. It reminded him of camp when he was a kid.
* Last week, he worked on photos to market the parks. We often don’t have photos of neighborhood parks and others, so he went out in a truck to take shots and visited many parks.
* Marcus told him he could return to check sea turtle nests, so he went back. They dug up nests to evaluate the success, how many eggs hatched, how many are still not hatched and collected the data. One issue is that when they hatch, they move toward the brightest light so artificial lighting interferes with how they walk and they can get disoriented.
* At La Playa on Vanderbilt Beach, they saw the light at La Playa and swam into the pool so we had to gather those turtles in a bucket and released 22 turtles into the Gulf.
* We found a nest under a catamaran that had hatched. We take disoriented turtles and release them in the ocean. Unfortunately, some turtles come out underdeveloped, which is called pipped, where their back flippers might be too small, so they’ll have a harder time surviving.
* We replaced any caution tape that came off the nests.
* The internship gave him a lot of clarity and showed him how a real job works.

*[The board applauded his presentation.]*

**Vice Chair Fruth** told him he did a nice job.

**Mr. Hanrahan** said Tyler has been game to do anything we’ve thrown at him. He had a particular liking to sea turtles and not administration. Miguel was very involved with the internship so kudos to him. We’d love for Tyler to come back or work for us full time.

# Public Comments

# (None)

# Staff Reports

**Region 1 [Mike Ossorio]**

* During sea turtle season, 16-17 temporary employees walk the beaches. Maura Krauss used to be the sea turtle manager, but she retired. They had a good succession plan and know what they’re doing. Environmental Specialist Mary Toro is now in charge and is teaching people how to learn to do this versus doing it herself. Maura for many years tried to do it herself.
* Mary is a great leader and took a board exam for the job. Her season is going full forward and the SOP is in force .
* Since he last presented, when Park Rangers had one senior and 11 Park Rangers, James helped increase that to 13 Park Rangers, including another senior position. That brings us up to nearly the level of service we were at three years ago. We still have three to go and we’re working on that.
* Park Rangers work seven days a week in two shifts, so we’re making it work.
* The transition of marine contracts to BluWater Florida has gone seamlessly after nearly a year. BluWater operates in Cocohatchee, Port of the Islands and Goodland. There have been hiccups, mostly on our part, due to air conditioning and refrigeration problems and roof leaks. goes, roof leaks, etc.
* All signs are up for the T2 beach parking mobile app. There are no more meters. That’s been seamless and is running smoothly. Our next venture is to work on the marinas and determine a pay schedule.
* We had a great one-week fishing camp with 18 kids. They do freshwater for two days, saltwater for two days and then they go deep-sea fishing. They learn about casting, shelling and turtles. It’s a great program headed by Christina.

**Region 2 [Said Gomez]**

* Region 2 covers Max Hasse Jr. Community Park, Golden Gate Community Park, Golden Gate Community Center and AIR therapeutic recreation.
* Max Hasse Jr. Community Park is in week seven of summer camp. Kids are having a great time with activities and field trips.
* This year’s camp theme is Summer games.
* For sports-specific agreements, we’ve extended the field usage for kids as the teams have made it to nationals. They’re opening the fields and keeping them open to keep up maintenance.
* The same is occurring at Golden Gate Community Center, where we’re still seeing 100-plus kids. The middle school alone has more than 100 kids.
* Golden Gate Community Park has 200 kids of all ages taking swim lessons. They’re also working with Grace Place to teach parents how to be safe in the water and how to teach their kids. The team does a phenomenal job.
* Therapeutic recreation, AIR, and AIR Too kids are getting the attention they need, especially with field trips. The staff has the skills to work with them. Monica is a professional and earned her degree in that, so camp runs smoothly.

**Region 3 [Randi Swinderman]**

* She oversees eastern Collier County, which is Big Corkscrew Island Regional Park, Immokalee South Park, Immokalee Community Park and Immokalee Sports Complex.
* In six weeks Immokalee will have six new treadmills, which has been a problem at the Sports Complex.
* They’ve done many renovations, cleaned out vents, repainted and added new equipment.
* Kyle Price has done a great job communicating with a company we’ve ordered from. They said they couldn’t send anything until October but he worked with them and now we can get equipment ahead of time, before the new fiscal year.
* They are moving forward on the fields.
* Summer camp is going great. It’s the most kids we’ve had in six or seven years at Immokalee Community Park. The Boys & Girls Club is really cheap, so everybody went there, but now they’re seeing the value and quality in our programming and they’re starting to come back.
* South Park is running its camp alongside Community Park at the same location and we have 75 kids. For the last couple of years, we’ve had about 50 between the two camps so we’re excited that they’ve grown a lot this year. Ashley is doing a great job as interim supervisor and made a lot of changes.
* They’re in the final stages of renovating the outdoor restroom so they’re in better shape. They renovated the indoor restrooms and gutted the walls, so it looks much better. The last thing it needs is a roof, which she’s working on.
* We’re gearing up for after-school and VPK.
* South Park’s camp is at Community Park and they’re busy with rentals Friday, Saturday and Sunday. We’re not typically open Sundays, but there aren’t many meeting places in Immokalee, so they’re booked from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. They often have two rentals within one day. That staff switches in the middle of the day. It’s often the same with Community Park.
* Things are going well in Immokalee. Zach is doing an awesome job.
* Big Corkscrew Island Regional Park is doing well. The basketball hoops, which were mistakenly residential not commercial, are being replaced because they were bending and couldn’t withstand that use.
* Community Park’s fields are busy until dusk, with the public coming in to use the fields.
* Aquatics numbers. For the Fourth of July week, there were 2,700 people at Big Corkscrew and the next highest was Eagle Lakes at 2,100. Golden Gate had about 800 and Immokalee had 400. With Sun-N-Fun closed, we’re experiencing a big push, especially with Big Corkcrew. On the pool deck during one day last week, there were 300 campers there, but the team did a good job handling that.
* They’re learning how to schedule Big Corkscrew and the community is enjoying having that facility open for the summer.

**Region 4 [Randi Swinderman]**

* Region 4 is Vineyards, Veterans and North Collier Regional Park.
* Numbers for Vineyards and Vets are about the same. The fire truck has been coming every week and spraying the kids down. Roads & Bridges was there today and had all their trucks lined up in the loop.
* We’ve worked with other county organizations to teach kids what it’s like to work for the county, what opportunities are there for a career, like Tyler saw.
* We’re already scheduling tournaments for Big Corkscrew through Paradise Coast. We have big soccer tournaments coming in, as well as lacrosse and field hockey. We aren’t doing football this year. Those dates are already on our calendar for next year. We’re in a planning phase for fall and winter.
* RecPlex just got a little facelift. We used to have a half wall in the back. That’s been taken out to provide more room for people to move. It got a new paint job, so there’s no more purple paint. They’re going to get new equipment in three to six months. We got the PO and are waiting for everything to be shipped to us.

# Region 5 [Sidney Kittala]

* Region 5 covers Donna Fiala Eagle Lakes Park, East Naples Community Park and Southern Regional.
* Aquatics facilities staff has done a great job and everybody has been helping everyone out. Sun-N-Fun staff has been terrific.
* She’s in charge of over 200 KeyStaff temporary employees. She supervises the hiring, moving, transferring, switching, resigning and returning.
* Most of our lifeguards are KeyStaff.
* East Naples. She hopes to get to know the U.S. Open team better. They’ve mostly dealt with James.
* For summer camp programming, we had volunteers come in to work with the kids. Kathy, the supervisor, was able to offer clinics that utilized the pickleball courts to get young kids interested. They used covered courts, so it was cool.
* Summer camp is in full force. They still have Zumba, karate and other programs in the evening. The courts get utilized a lot in the evening.
* Bob Strommen handles NPC during the day. It’s park time at night and we do many rentals.
* Eagle Lakes is getting some work done. Dane will detail that. The aquatic facility is getting a face lift using some budget money we had for capital projects. Some areas will be resurfaced and the pool decking area needs it. With Sun-N-Fun closed, we had to schedule the work in the summer, so we’ve been strategic in scheduling that.
* We’re having a capital project meeting tomorrow about all the regions and our wish list. We might get one or two things if we’re lucky. But we try to stretch the money to use it to the best of our ability.
* At Sugden, Patricia for years has helped and coordinated summer camp field trips. She’s the main liaison with the school system, where we get the buses that we pay for. Patricia speaks with all the locations to schedule trips and pickups.
* In June, Patricia was able to get a sailboat donated from a family who wanted to buy a new sailboat. They wanted to donate it because they think very highly of Sugden’s programming. We now have a nearly 17-foot, more than $12,000 donated sailboat It was only a couple of years old and is beautiful.
* There are waiting lists for Sugden’s sailing and water skiing camps. They fill up within the first five minutes of summer camp opening. Each week is usually a new group so we service many kids there.

**Aquatics Facilities and Project Updates [Dane Atkinson]**

* At Golden Gate, the geothermal change-out is complete, so we’re going to have cool water this summer for everybody to swim in. That was a big issue last summer. We’re waiting to close out the project now and to get permits closed out. The vendors did a good job and we’re doing final inspections Friday. They’re working on it today and tomorrow.
* The rest of the work will be on the stairs. Once that’s complete, we can call the state to have them say the stairs are good to use and hopefully be fully functional.
* For the capital project, we are in full design on slides. The pump house and pool were already designed, so we’re waiting for new slides, new infrastructure and for the design to be complete. Construction probably won’t start until early next year.
* In Immokalee, the concrete at the kiddie pool is done. They’re doing finishing work, caulking, putting the depth tiles back. He hopes to have that up and running before the end of the week. Everything will be functional there.
* We’re working with Stantec, the design consultant. We’re awaiting final proposals. We’ve worked with Stantec before on a previous work order so they’ve done most of the design. It should not take long to get them back on board to check those plans.
* The pool will take longer because we pivoted from putting back what was there to design an entirely new pool, a combination pool that will be almost a resort-style pool. They’ll also be able to use the competition pool.
* We have a different vendor now. They’re really good and have done a lot of work at Sun-N-Fun. We’re moving forward there.
* We’re moving forward at Big Corkscrew. Next month will be the one-year anniversary, so we’ll do a warranty walk-through in August, but everything is working. There were some issues with heaters and coolers, but they’ve been repaired.
* Eagle Lakes’ amenities are all working. Unfortunately, the deck coping was not done properly the first time, so we had to redo it. It will be phased and remain open. We have to phase what we’re going to start after the kids go back to school so it won’t impact anything.
* The slide stairs need to be sandblasted and repainted because they’re showing some wear. That’s a fall project that we’re looking to get bids on. The features also need to be taken down, reprimed and repainted. We plan to do that in the fall.
* We plan to standardize the pump house. We have seven different sized pumps and will standardize to two sizes to make it easier for maintenance and care. As a result, they don’t have to wait to order, but will have one on the shelf.
* We got approval to do Vineyards and had a design kickoff meeting last week. We’re going to redo the pump house. The manifold and other equipment doesn’t make sense. It’s far more complicated than it needs to be so we’ll simplify it. We’re going away from using liquid chlorine and acid to a simpler soft-tablet system. Due to its proximity next to the playground, it’s good to do that for safety. We’ve already done that transition.
* The pump house will have a new look. We kicked off the design for that last week and expect a design by October.
* For Sun-N-Fun, we ordered 70 pumps for Pump House 1. We’ve got the two big ones in and we did all the piping so we’re going to turn those on. They’re for Lazy River. We have five more pumps coming. We need a total of 12 pumps, but we’re more than halfway there. Five are due before the end of this month. All the pump house work is going well.
* At Pump House 3, for Lazy River, all the pumps were renovated or purchased and look good.
* In Pump House 1, we’re starting the standardization there. We’re going to all 20 horsepower or 60 hp pumps with the VFP, the variable frequency drive, which gives us the ability to modulate how we operate.
* He called it a design flaw, but the way it worked before was we had to operate all the pumps at 100% to meet minimum Department of Health requirements. It didn’t give us any room for flexibility. If one pump wasn’t operating at 100%, we had to shut down. Now we’re upsizing the pumps with the VFPs so it gives us a lot more flexibility in operations.
* If we can operate both pumps at 70%, if one is not operating correctly, we just ramp one up or we bring one down. Once this is done, our shutdown time should drop tremendously because we won’t have to shut down features if a pump is not operating correctly.
* Last week, he got the new plans for the IWF (interactive water feature). We have a design review meeting tomorrow to go over those plans so they can go to permitting in August. He also received design plans for the slide pool and renovations. We’ll be reviewing those tomorrow and putting them into permitting if everything is good.
* We received the stair tower repair plans on Monday. That will be part of the design review tomorrow. For creating amenities, we got those design plans for review within the last week.
* The main drain and Lazy River, the main project, are with Procurement. They’re working on that today and it should go out to bid in the next two to three weeks. Everything is moving forward.

**Ms. Laemel** asked how many pumps there are at Sun-N-Fun.

**Mr. Atkinson** said there were 12 pumps spread over several pump houses.

***Mr. Atkinson continued his presentation:***

* We’re working on a SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) system. It’s similar to what we have at the Water & Wastewater Plant. They have huge control rooms where you can see everything going on in the plant from one location. We’re going to do a mini version of that with all our pools and all our facilities to the point where we’ll be able to pull it up on the phone, even if we’re offsite. We’re in the process of doing that now.
* Sun-N-Fun is almost set up. It’s not operational, but we are going to start on Big Corkscrew next. That’s the next big one.
* One of the big things that came out of the Board of County Commissioners meeting is how do we navigate here again? This will go a long way toward navigating regular maintenance and keeping an eye on everything in real time. Hopefully, we’ll never get to the point where we’re here again.
* He’s also working on contracts. The bids came in and we’re going to have a vendor that will be on contract with the county for a minimum twice yearly maintenance in all pump houses. Every pump, at least twice a year, will have bearings, valves, pumps broken down and cleaned. It’s like changing oil in your car. It has to be done for proper maintenance. We’re working on that contract and it should go to the board in September for approval.
* He’s working on another contract for pool repairs. We don’t have a vendor on board now that does pool repairs, so every time a pool needs work, we have to get three bids, a process that takes months. Now we’ll have someone we can call to come out. Part of the bigger maintenance goal is to start scheduling regular maintenance so we never get to this point again.
* That’s the whole point of standardization. They would never allow us to keep seven different size pumps as spares due to the cost, but if we have all 24 hp pumps, he can keep one or two at different locations and pull them off the shelf while waiting for one to be repaired. Having seven different sized pumps in one pump house is ridiculous.

# Director’s Report [James Hanrahan]

***Mr. Hanrahan reported:***

* Kristina asked about the logo last month and he has an update. They are giving Parks & Rec and other departments a variation of the new logo. He will get to review it and he’ll show the PARAB. The new one is nice, so this will be a variation, with a touch of parks.
* Peg Ruby, in communications, has it and they’re leading the charge on that. Then the directors will get to see it.
* When Olema was made director, she added a fifth regional manager to match the five commissioners. Since we had changes and he was promoted, two regional managers left the county and we’re operating with four. Thanks to Randi for being in charge of two regions. He doesn’t want to continue that, so he and staff went off campus for two days and had a workshop to review working with only four regional managers. We did that with the county manager’s approval.
* On Aug. 5th, we will start with the new assignments. We will make the supervisors aware tomorrow.
* Said will now be in charge of Immokalee. Randi will oversee Big Corkscrew, North Collier, Vineyards, and Veterans, the north parks. She’s been instrumental with the Big Corkscrew project and North Collier and those go together when it comes to tournaments and she has that experience. Sid will have almost a completely new region. She will have Golden Gate, Golden Gate AIR, and will keep Eagle Lakes. Mike Ossorio will oversee Beach and Water, but that also will include Sugden and East Naples. East Naples is managing that contract.
* The director position is vacant. Deputy County Manager Dan Rodriguez will be retiring on Aug. 2nd so he’s working with Amy Patterson, Ed Finn, Jamie French, Ian Barnwell and Chairman Olesky to ensure everything is covered.
* He thanked Deputy County Manager Dan Rodriguez, who has been very supportive in this transition. He fought to open some positions so we could hire.
* The process of finding a new director is shifting and he’s waiting to hear from the county manager. He will remain as interim until someone is hired.
* For the superintendent of maintenance position, he and Miguel are working on reclassifying it. Compared with other departments, the classification is lower than it should be. We’re also working with the county manager on that.
* He will be on vacation from Friday until Aug. 5. Randi will hold down the fort.
* He had another presentation before the East of 951 Committee. Said also was there. We met in Immokalee and it was very positive, with a lot of community support. Commissioner McDaniel also was there, as well as the Immokalee Fire Department.
* We assisted Eric Short and Sid, our representatives for the drone show. It was the largest event for Collier County at over 8,000 people.
* Our sea turtle staff will be moving to Coastal Zone for fiscal year 2025 because they work with sea turtles.
* The county manager and the board are looking at where can we streamline departments and staffing to make sense, so we’re still going to assist, but they will move over like Conservation Collier did.
* We’re hiring for Mary’s old position. We’re going to do it as a joint team. He met with their leadership and division director last week and it went very well. Mary, Mike Ossorio and Coastal Zone is on board with that.
* Tyler set the bar for a Parks & Rec intern.

# IX. Adjournment

# Next Meeting Date:

# Aug. 21, 2024, 2 p.m. – Golden Gate Community Park

**There being no further business for the good of the county, the meeting was adjourned by order of the chairman at 4:22 p.m.**

**COLLIER COUNTY**

**PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Edward “Ski” Olesky, Chairman**

These minutes were approved by the board on , (check one) as presented, \_\_ or as amended \_\_\_.