

St. Johns County Civic Roundtable

July 11, 2016

President Lofgren called the meeting to order at 9:00am.

Secretary's Report: The minutes of May 9, 2016 were accepted as read.

Treasurer's Report: The balance in the Civic Roundtable account was reported to be \$912.89

President Lofgren introduced Will Smith, Director of St. Johns County Parks and Recreation Dept.

Will Smith discussed the "Master Plan" of 2004 that focused on Youth Activities, Waterways, and Beach Access.

Many developers have integrated recreation facilities into their infrastructure. For example: Nocatee, Durbin and Aberdeen. In general developers limit the use of facilities to residents.

The recession of 2007 and beyond caused a significant drop in funding and a need to re-prioritize programs. Will noted that Parks and Recreation is not considered an "essential" service, but it contributes to the health of

our citizens. St Johns county is rated the most healthy in the state.

The county needs to expand the availability of sports fields to accommodate soccer, lacrosse, and other team sports. Working with COA, Athletic Associations and other non-profits to improve field availability. Many would like lighted fields to expand usage time. This of course requires more capital and maintenance expense.

Some Activities:

- 1) Triple Crown Youth Baseball Tournament. Brings 120 teams into St. Johns County. Costs \$166,000 to run but brings \$13.9 million to county through bed tax etc.
- 2) Diva Run. 4000 women in all female half-marathon.
- 3) Hastings Summer Camp. Scholarships available to families who cannot afford the program.
- 4) Davis Park – 83 acres developed. Can rent pavilions for user fee.

In some areas the County School District Board has approved the joint use of sports fields (Fruit Cove) with Parks & Recreation. Maximizing field usage can reduce the need for expensive new fields. One soccer field can cost \$300,000 to construct. Pacetti field – Lost after investing \$100,000 due to space needed for portable classrooms. No use of school fields during the summer.

St. Augustine Shores Pier: Cost to replace \$14 million. Currently there is no funding source.

Will noted that structured youth activity can play a big role in reducing juvenile detention. Keep kids busy! The middle school to high school transition loses 80% of the kids participating in organized baseball.

Youth sports has become a business with paid one on one coaches. Julington Creek Athletic Assn. has 6,000 kids playing youth soccer. All run by volunteers that maintain the fields etc.

Beach Parking: 4x4 use only most days and parking along A1A is very risky. Paid parking on state land not successful due to land use restrictions. Guana beach parking lots full even on weekdays.

Motion: A motion was made and seconded to support retaining Architectural Review Board approvals as a necessary link in the process of obtaining construction permits from St. Johns County.(See letter from Civic Roundtable for details)

Motion was Approved.

Jane Tuten was invited to voice her concerns over a residential to commercial zoning change request by property developer Watermark LLC . The property is

on the site of the now removed Beachcomber Hotel in Vilano. Plans have been offered to build a large hotel and conference center on the site. Concerns over traffic congestion, emergency evacuation and changing the nature of an almost exclusively residential neighborhood were voiced. Ms. Tuten pointed out that Jane West has been contracted as an attorney to represent the "Save Our Vilano" organization and that public support and funds are needed to oppose the zoning change.

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis Froio, Secretary