

Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

June 9, 2026 – 4:00PM

City Hall – 2nd Floor – Open Planning Area

Present: Patt Sned, Mary Murphy, Perry
Douglass, Jill Merrell, Commissioner
Stephen Sylvester

Staff Present: Leah Rockwell, Erin Paige, Linda
Madigan, Lorenzo Rivero

Absent: Phil Growick, Jacquelyn Taylor

Guest(s): Kurt Allen – Cox Science Center and
Aquarium, Jason Webber – Kimley Horn,
Rena Blades – Delos Consulting, Andrew
Van Der Kwast – Gardiner & Theobald
LLC, Claudia Smith – SMI Landscape
Architecture.

Topic

Discussion / Action / Follow Up

Call to Order

Meeting called to order by *Patt Sned* at 4:00 p.m.

Motion made to approve May 12, 2026, meeting minutes; made by *Patt Sned* with a first by *Jill Merrell* and a second motion by *Mary Murphy*. All in favor.

New Business

— A presentation was given by *Jason Webber* of Kimley Horn, after an introduction by *Kurt Allen*, President and CEO of The Cox Science Center, on the proposed changes to the configuration of the roadway at Dreher Park to accommodate future projects and evening events by the Science Center. *Leah Rockwell* further stated that the Science Center were given a directive from the Mayor to put a plan together for consideration by the City Commission. They have met the neighborhood association and had meetings with the city staff to get the design to meet everyone's requirements. *Jason Webber* stated the area we are looking at is at the north end of the park by I95 and Southern Boulevard. They plan to remove the roundabouts, straighten the road, add speed humps, add fifty-seven parking spaces, add dry retention areas to meet State water quality requirements, and green space. The landscape impacts to this plan involve adding a tenth of an acre of the green space, and the relocation of fourteen trees. The tree relocation will be reviewed by a certified arborist. Agency review and permitting is complete. *Patt Sned* stated she is glad to hear we are getting some green space back even if it is small. She asked *Kurt Allen* what he meant about future projects. *Kurt Allen* stated that the Cox Science Center would like to see better wayfinding signs, and better lighting, as they plan on having more evening events. *Jill Merrell* asked if there are any other physical structures planned by the Cox Science Center that would take away from greenspace. *Kurt Allen* stated they have no future building planned. *Patt Sned* stated that the night events would have to be coordinated with the Department of Parks and Recreation as the parks are locked at night and there could be security issues. *Leah Rockwell* stated that in 2006 or 2008 the Science Center asked if we could open the Southern Boulevard entrance to make it easier for their customer base to come off the I95 and come through the park from Southern Boulevard. It was never meant to be an entrance to the park. The park entrance is from Summit where the Dreher Park signs are located. The park has gates that closed off the park on the north end and south end for evening traffic so there is no lighting to accommodate the lighting that the Science Center feels they are going to need to make the park safe at night for their customer for evening events, unless they come off the Summit entrance as the park was originally designed. The Cox Science Center

will have to bring their request to the governing body. *Kurt Allen* stated that there are three major tenants in the park and the lighting may have to be addressed to accommodate coming in from the north end for all future evening events. He believes the use of the park will change in years to come because people will utilize the park more once the Cox Science Center building is complete and events can be planned. *Patt Sned* stated that our budget is slim and it may not be possible to fund additional lighting in the future. She stated that the Cox Science Center may have to fund the lighting. *Kurt Allen* stated they are not opposed to discussing this. *Leah Rockwell* stated that she would like to share the history of Dreher Park and to make it known that it is supposed to be a rural environment like Grassy Waters within an urban setting. If we continue to put signs, buildings and lights to make it more attractive for our growing residents it changes why the park was originally designed. The park was meant to bring a part of the Everglades to the City, to be a quieter, less traveled space where people can find respite, can go for a walk and feel like they're out in nature in Grassy Waters not walking along Flagler Drive. This was the original intent of *Paul Dreher*. *Leah Rockwell* stated she is not opposed to change, but she would just like everyone to understand why Dreher Park exists the way that it does. The roundabouts are there because they didn't want it to be a roadway, they wanted people to take their time and meander through the park to see the trees and beautiful water. *Perry Douglass* stated that this information is good to know. *Jill Merrell* stated that in theory that sounds lovely, but she never sees anyone meandering there in the years she's lived in the City. *Leah Rockwell* stated that people in the neighborhood walk the park all the time. *Jill Merrell* stated that she appreciates *Leah Rockwell* sharing why Dreher Park was originally created and that it helps to try to ensure that progress doesn't take away from the original concept. *Kurt Allen* stated that they are not opposed to keeping Dreher Park in the way that it was intended but to incorporate change also. He stated that wayfinding signs can be subtle to help with that. He thanked *Leah Rockwell* for her comments and stated that is good for them to understand the history of the park. *Leah Rockwell* added that the colors of the playground we are currently building were chosen by the Neighborhood Association and that they are brown and green, and muted to blend into nature. This shows where the Neighborhood Association is when it comes to how they would like the park. *Leah Rockwell* stated that as a part of The Cox Science Center's presentation to the City Commission they will need the PRAC Committee to recommend approval of the redesign of the roadway. *Patt Sned* made a motion to approve with a first by *Perry Douglass* and a second by *Jill Merrell*, all were in favor, provided no changes were made to the plan that was presented.

Old Business

Bond Projects Update –

- *Currie Park* – *Lorenzo Rivero* stated that phase one will be completed by Feb 2027 which is the south end, from the resiliency hub to MLK. Phase two, which is the parking lot, boat ramps and the tennis courts, will be completed by Sept 2027. We are on schedule and do not anticipate any delays weather permitting. *Jill Merrell* asked about the restaurant. *Lorenzo Rivero* stated that the restaurant is being done through the CRA. *Leah Rockwell* stated that there is a meeting tomorrow afternoon for the selection recommendation for negotiations for the restaurant. There are three responses to the RFP for the restaurant being considered. *Leah Rockwell* stated we probably won't see a restaurant there until the Fall or Winter of 2028. *Patt Sned* asked if the CRA were making the decision. *Leah Rockwell* stated that the City Commission will make the decision based on negotiations.

- Dreher Park Playground – No update.
- Gaines Park – Community Center & Tennis Center – *Lorenzo Rivero* stated that the Tennis Center is almost complete. We are going through some final changes and are trying to get the Certificate of Occupancy for the Tennis Center within the next week. The punch list walkthrough is scheduled for next week. The Community Center has a completion date of August.
- South Olive – Tennis Courts and Parking Lot – *Lorenzo Rivero* stated that the tennis courts and parking lot have been completed. We have three banks of courts on the south end that have cracks because of the Winter weather. We have scheduled to close those three courts for two weeks to repair the cracks. The other nine courts will remain open.
- Warren Hawkins Aquatic Center – *Lorenzo Rivero* stated we are in the design and permitting process. We are at ninety percent on design. We have sent it to PPRC, Plans and Plate Review Committee. *Leah Rockwell* stated there is going to be an add alternate in the design for the slide. Because of the increased cost of construction, we don't know if we can afford to do it right now. The design team believes that many pool vendors are hungry for business so we are hopeful that we will get a bid price where we can afford to add the slide. The budget was set in 2019, and prices have gone up since then. *Lorenzo Rivero* stated that the prices exceed the budgets set pre-Covid by twenty to thirty per cent. *Jill Merrell* asked if there was an opportunity to ask for sponsorship money to get the slide included. *Leah Rockwell* stated that the opportunity is there, but the city staff cannot ask for sponsorship. An example of how this could happen would be a neighborhood association asking a developer in their neighborhood to donate to one of our parks or if there is a philanthropic foundation that the "ask" meets their mission.
- Brian Chappell Park Fishing Pier – *Lorenzo Rivero* stated that we are on schedule for final inspection on Friday. *Lorenzo Rivero* is working with the maintenance team to pour concrete onto the area where the seawall meets the pier. The park will hopefully open in mid-June.
- Howard Park Tennis Courts – *Lorenzo Rivero* stated all is complete.
- Village Paws Park – *Lorenzo Rivero* stated that it is almost complete, we are adding sod and the final inspection will be next week.
- Lincoln Park Lighting – *Lorenzo Rivero* stated we are working with HCD, Housing and Community Development, who has Community Development Block Grant funds available for projects like this one. Should we be able to meet all the necessary requirements then we will be able to put this project out to bid. *Jason Webber* asked for a copy of the plans, as Kimley Horn designed the Ball Park of the Palm Beaches next to Lincoln Park. *Lorenzo Rivero* said he would provide the plans. *Kurt Allen* asked what was the total bond amount that was given for all the bond projects. *Leah Rockwell* stated it was \$30 million. *Leah Rockwell* stated that we had to add ARPA funds fortunately to add to the bond funds to make the projects whole because of the increasing costs since Covid.

Penny Sales Tax –

- Howard Park Community Center – *Leah Rockwell* stated she received a draft of the contract for the contractor on Friday. She reviewed it, sent notes back to the Attorney and the engineering project manager, specifically about meeting the deadline for completion. The updated version was returned and was sent to the contractor to review for execution. Once we receive the signed contract we can move ahead with approvals on the city's end. After the contract is executed by the Mayor we will prepare a requisition for Purchase Order, then an official notice to proceed is sent to the contractor. We hope to have a shovel in the ground by August 2026, depending on

permitting. *Kurt Allen* asked where the Penny Sales Tax was charged. *Leah Rockwell* stated that the Penny Sales Tax was part of our taxes from the County which has since sunsetted. *Leah Rockwell* stated that the project originally had \$5 million to renovate the Community Center in 2017. With the cost of construction today we had to scale back the project. The amount received from the Penny tax was more than projected. The additional funding received provided the opportunity to put an alternate design with a small commercial kitchen which had to be removed initially, back into the construction plans. Out of nine bidders, seven were in our budget. We hope to have the community center completed by Fall 2027. *Commissioner Sylvester* asked how many bidders were local. *Leah Rockwell* stated that she would provide a list of vendors registered in our Small Minority Business Program. *Perry Douglass* asked, with the Bond funding and Penny Sales Tax funding, if there was any other source to get funding. *Leah Rockwell* stated that right now there is none. The County was considering a very large Parks Bond but as of today following a meeting with their Board of Commissioners, they don't know if this is the right time to ask because of the reduction in homestead property tax proposal by the Governor.

General Fund –

- *Bill Moss* – *Leah Rockwell* stated the field project is complete. The contractor we had maintaining it has now entered into a new contract with us for them to continue maintaining it. *Patt Sned* asked if they would be maintaining other fields. *Leah Rockwell* stated they are not; however, we are going to put out an invitation to bid for field maintenance. We hope they submit repose to the bid as they have been doing a wonderful job.

Parks Maintenance -

- *Petty Park*– No update.
- *Leah Rockwell* stated with the summer rains starting we have been maintaining and cutting grass, there is good growth and things are greening back up after the drought we have been having.

The TREEmendous WPB Program –

- *Leah Rockwell* stated she will be meeting *Gerry Marcelo* from the Mayor's office on Friday to discuss the program, he has received direction from *Kathleen Joy*, our Director of Communications, in relation to doing a podcast about the history of the parks. *Leah Rockwell* asked the Committee if they had parks that they wanted to prioritize. *Jill Merrell* suggested Howard Park. *Patt Sned* suggested Dreher Park.
- **Recreation Programs** – *Erin Paige* stated:
 - *Skate Park* – Skate camp started this week.
 - *Sailing* – Sailing camp started this week.
 - *Summer Camps* – All camps are full and some have waitlists. All camps are fully staffed.
 - *Splashpads* - Our splashpads are open for rental by summer camps and are open for use by the public.
 - *Vedado Park* – The center is being used by The Arc of PBC offering summer camp for children with special needs.
 - *Brochure* – Our Fall Brochure which shares information about programs, activities and facility rental opportunities is going to the printer this week.
 - *Gaines Park Community Center and Tennis Center*– We are working on selection and procurement of the furnishings the newly renovated Community Center.
 - *Fall Afterschool Programs* – We are finalizing programming for the upcoming Fall season. Registration is opening.
 - *Youth Basketball* – We are in our second week of the program be held at South Olive.

**Staff
Comments**

- Soccer – Registration for our Fall Soccer season is open.
- Swimming – Our summer swimming programs are underway. *Patt Sned* asked if there are any toddler lessons, *Erin Paige* replied that there is Mommy and Me lessons as well as one on one lessons.
- **Community Events –**
- Green Market – Leah Rockwell stated that we are already planning next seasons Green Market.
- 4th on Flager – Leah Rockwell stated that we are currently preparing for this event.
- BBQ, Brews and Blues – Leah Rockwell stated that we are not doing BBQ, Brews and Blues the day before the 4th of July at the Heart and Soul Park this year as it's not possible for our staff to do this and 4th on Flagler the following day. Instead, we will have BBQ, Blues and Blues in September around Labor Day.

**Board
Comments**

- Trinity Park – *Jill Merrell* asked what Is happening with Trinity Park. *Leah Rockwell* stated we are currently working on the contract with Related Ross. *Patt Sned* asked what the terms of the lease are. *Leah Rockwell* stated that it is a maintenance agreement not a lease agreement and she thinks it may be ten years, but she will have to check.
- Mary Murphy stated she spoke to the developer on the 5400 N. Flagler Drive project regarding the seawall. He said he will have his engineers look at it.
- None.

**Public
Comment**

Next Meeting

Tuesday, July 14, 2026, at 4 p.m. 2nd Floor Open Planning Area, City Hall.

**Meeting
Adjourned**

Patt Sned made a motion to adjourn at 5:14 p.m. First by *Mary Murphy* with a second by Perry Douglass. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 5:14p.m.