

SUMMARY MINUTES

ISLAMORADA, VILLAGE OF ISLANDS PARKS & RECREATION CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, September 18, 2024
Meeting started at 5:05 p.m. at the Founders Park Community Center

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Alina Davis, Carolyn Wightman, Christy Hughes, Richard Russell, Ted Benbow, John Weare, Joseph Jannach, Maria Bagiotti (IVOI), Alicia Mote (IVOI)

ABSENT:

David Epstein, Shannon Cary, Eduardo Suarez, Natasha Early - Justified

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Vice Chairman Richard Russell asked community member Steve Friedman to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Islamorada Resident and Captain Steve Friedman thanked the Committee for volunteering their time and effort into making a better community.

FOUNDERS PARK MASTER PLAN FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION:

Liudmila "Lumy" Fuentes spoke in representation of Miller Legg and Associates, a multidisciplinary firm focusing on recreation planning and landscape design. Jack Kardys also introduced himself as a recreation planner with Miller Legg. Lumy gave an update on where the firm is in the process of creating the Founders Park Master Plan. Initial kick off meetings were previously held to set the vision and goal for the Master Plan. Right now, they are in the collection phase of the plan and will be having focus group meetings with individual user groups, including Village and park staff, civic groups, program instructors, school groups and youth sports that utilize the park. Moving forward they will be conducting a statistically valid public survey as well as a public workshop to gather information to propose recommendations on the final Master Plan.

Christy asked Lumy if they have a timeline for finalizing the Master Plan. Lumy stated that it will be early 2025, before summer. Alina asked how many public workshops they plan to have. Lumy stated that there will be two workshops, the first being for information gathering. Christy mentioned that many winter residents are not yet in town and asked if they would be able to participate outside of the workshops. Lumy assured her that they will be able to participate through the public survey. The public survey advertisement will be mailed out to targeted households, which is the statistically valid portion of the process, but there will also be an open access version of the survey that will be posted on the Village website and emailed.

Lumy asked the Committee for their opinion on what the overall significant issues are Founders Park. Alina mentioned parking is sometimes an issue during events like swim meets, or when multiple programs are happening in the park. John believes the biggest challenge is hard surface courts to accommodate the tennis, pickleball and youth basketball communities. Ted mentioned that park closures are an issue for people who want to use certain amenities, and during events it also causes traffic on US-1. Christy mentioned that often there is a long line of cars waiting to enter the park, and she would like to see an option for two lanes to enter, one specifically for residents. Ted stated that the trailer parking down at the Marina is limited. He also felt that many of the spots were taken up by Marina Residents boats and trailers, leaving less space for the public. Alina feels that pickleball courts would fit perfectly in the trailer parking area. Richard asked Maria about the arrangement with the Department of Transportation regarding the usage of the median between US-1 and the Old Road. Maria said it is allowed for parking. Richard suggested it could be used for trailer parking. Carolyn asked Lumy if there is an opportunity to stack boat trailers in order to make more space. Lumy said yes, they have considered this as an option. Ted mentioned he would like to see a putting green in the area near the Golf Driving Cage. He believes this would benefit the local high school golf team and the community, since there is no other similar area in the keys. He also mentioned he would like to see sail shades go up near the Golf Driving Cage to provide more shade in the area. John stated he would like to see the expansion of adult fitness programs during the wintertime. Joe asked if the Miller Legg team is aware of previous discussions regarding the opportunity for a separate Council Chambers and Public Works building. Lumy said yes, it is being taken into consideration, however it is up to the Village to make a recommendation on where they would be relocated.

Alina asked if anything could be done with the adjacent property Plantation Hammock Preserve. John recalled that Peter Frezza presented these properties to the committee and stated that they are conservation land and off limits for this type of development. Lumy suggested the possibility of better access to the area from Founders Park as an option they can consider. Maria asked Lumy if the other park options could be brought up in meetings between the firm and Council. Lumy explained that it would change the Master Plan's scope of work, and they are currently only focused on Founders Park. Carolyn asked Maria if a report could be brought to the Committee with information on the other Islamorada parks and their usage restrictions. Christy mentioned the idea of having parking in different areas outside of the current gravel parking by the pool building, because it tends to become full quickly when events and programs are happening in the area. Lumy explained that in addition to facility recommendations, they will also be giving recommendations on policies and procedures to make parking and park usage most efficient. Alina suggested the green space behind the Amphitheater as additional parking. Jack mentioned that different building materials other than concrete can be used to create parking and still achieve the "green space" or a more natural look. Christy asked Lumy if they are suggesting to expand the current pickleball courts or to place additional courts elsewhere in the park. Lumy explained that both of those options are on the table. Christy also mentioned that the current layout of the pickleball courts is not ideal, as they are facing east and west which causes

issues for players with the sunrise and sunset. In regard to the Public Works building relocation, Carolyn asked if other parks within Islamorada would be considered. Lumy stated that it would be a Village decision but that they will be recommending the Public Works building be relocated outside of Founders Park, and to use that existing area for storage and space for Park staff and Park maintenance.

Lumy explained that they will be conducting the last of the focus groups tomorrow, September 19th and they still have Council member meetings as well. The next step will be to put together a list of questions that will be given to staff for review within the next month. After that, the final list of questions will be sent out to the public within the survey. In the meantime, they will be setting up a public workshop date and information on the Village website.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: Park fees, information on Islamorada Park restrictions, update on Jetty usage.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chairwoman Carolyn Wightman set the next regular meeting date as Wednesday, October 23rd at 5:00pm. Carolyn made a motion to adjourn, Joe seconded. The meeting ended at 6:23 P.M.

Recording Secretary,

Alicia Mote

Minutes Approved by Committee on
Chairwoman Carolyn Wightman _____.