

**GREATER BOCA RATON BEACH & PARK DISTRICT**  
MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
SUGAR SAND PARK - 300 SOUTH MILITARY TRAIL  
**February 2, 2015**

The MEETING was called to order by CHAIRMAN Vogelgesang at approximately 5:15 p.m.

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Steven M. Engel  
Dennis R. Frisch  
Robert K. Rollins, Jr.  
Earl L. Starkoff  
Susan Vogelgesang

**CHANGES TO AGENDA:** None

**PUBLIC REQUESTS:**

Michele Peel  
7391 NE 8<sup>th</sup> Court, Boca Raton

Ms. Peel, Friends of Gumbo Limbo liaison to the District, advised that the recently held "Sea Coast Toast" fundraising event was very successful. To date, she has not received any feedback or contact with the City of Boca Raton on the next phase of the salt water tank life support system.

Tom Thayer  
4821 N. Dixie Highway, Boca Raton

Mr. Thayer, a former Vice-Chair of the Boca Raton Marine Advisory Board, made a request to the Board to consider floating docks in the lagoon at Red Reef Park. He extended an invitation to attend the Boca Raton Federation of Homeowners meeting on February 3 at 8:30 a.m. at the Boca Raton Community Center. The Federation is hosting a candidate forum.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS BOARD MEETINGS:**

**MOTION** was made by Commissioner Frisch and seconded by Commissioner Engel to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of January 20, 2015.

**MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED**

**REGULAR BUSINESS:**

**1. Public Input on artificial Turf vs. Natural Grass Report**

In his opening remarks, Mr. Arthur C. Koski, interim District Executive Director, noted that at the January 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Board received the report from its consultant, Motre, who reviewed the document and made a presentation to the Commissioners. The purpose of the meeting today is to allow for public input and commentary on the issue of artificial turf and natural grass.

The following individuals addressed the Board:

Victor Nocera – Director of TOPSoccer for the Soccer Association of Boca Raton  
4252 Gleneagles Drive, Boynton Beach

Mr. Nocera has been associated with the TOPSoccer special needs program for 15 years. As a Coach for his daughter's team, he noted that three injuries occurred at Sand Pine Park. He opposes artificial turf for youth soccer as it causes major burns when you fall on the surface. TOPSoccer plays at Woodlands Park where there is good maintenance and set-up, however, the fields are over used and consideration should be given to replacing the turf. Acknowledging that artificial turf would benefit players in wheelchairs and walkers, he advised that those users only make up 5% of the 154 players. Fearful of injuries, he felt that artificial turf would not be good for the special needs community.

Vahan Varian

851 NE 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Boca Raton

Mr. Varian has been coaching soccer for over 30 years. He plays soccer at Sand Pine Park at least three times a week - 52 weeks a year. When other fields are closed due to rain or severe conditions, Sand Pine is always open. Over a five-year period, he has conducted many "show of hands" surveys at Sand Pine Park as to who likes and who doesn't like artificial turf. Results: if 25 players are on the field, only 2 or 3 players would prefer grass. He stated that abrasion injuries occurring on artificial turf are not as infectious as those incurred on grass. Grass can be used 32 weeks a year and at the end of the season will have a lot of holes. Artificial turf is always the same; it never changes and is always available. Two projects in the community are installing artificial turf with organic infill. It is his understanding that playing on organic infill is not as hard as playing on crumb rubber. He asked the Commissioners to vote for artificial turf and then decide on the recommended infill.

Don Clinton

3350 NW 24<sup>th</sup> Terrace, Boca Raton

Mr. Clinton felt that there was a need for a two-sided dialogue. He stated that the City has stood steadfast in their request for artificial turf based on their decades of extensive training and experience. The City knows that turf is the only way to solve a long-range capacity problem. He believes that the Beach & Park District wants grass on Patch Reef fields because SABR Soccer would rather play on grass, and the District has every intention of using its influence to expand SABR back onto Patch Reef. The District purposely withheld \$2 million in beach funding to force the City to install grass at DeHoernle Park. The City remained resolute, and the District agreed to install artificial turf at Patch Reef Park in exchange for the City allowing the District to install grass at DeHoernle Park Phase II. The District is now renegeing on that compromise. In his opinion, political "shenanigans" are being played by several members of the District.

Mr. Clinton reiterated the conclusions of Dr. Phil Busey, the agronomist hired by the District which state that "additional capacity will only come from developing additional fields or installing artificial turf". Addressing health concerns, he stated that there are no specific research or case studies by any regulatory agency or university that supports a claim that crumb rubber will cause cancer. Over the last 8 years in their grass vs. turf debate, two Commissioners have stated that the two main reasons why they did not want turf at DeHoernle Park was the increased heat load and skin abrasions. However, the District specifically requested that the fenced in tot playground at DeHoernle be outfitted with turf. He felt that the contradiction opens up a credibility gap on whether some of the Commissioners truly have an issue with turf or are simply motivated to

provide grass fields for their favorite Boca Raton based soccer organization. In summation, Mr. Clinton urged the Commissioners not to let self-serving interests get in the way of making the right decision. Unfortunately, a large number of people believe that the decision has already been made.

Steve Finver

7601 N. Federal Highway, Boca Raton

Mr. Finver is President of Boca Jets/Lacrosse. He commented that the report was well done and showed a lot of pros and cons for both surfaces. Addressing Sand Pine Park, he stated that the existing turf is old, and that newer turf is actually more like grass – “you can’t tell the difference - it is better than the turf at Boca High”. He referred to a news article in the Sun Sentinel by the Cleveland Clinic relating to pesticides on grass and the possible link to autism. He believes that the risk of pesticides on grass and the risk of cancer on turf is 50-50. He observed that Patch Reef Park fields have a lot of holes and issues with the sprinklers. There are no variables with turf – its 100% all of the time. He recommends putting turf at Patch Reef so everyone can use the fields year round.

Children of Marc Geiseman

7956 Mandarin Drive, Boca Raton

Both children stated that they would prefer to play on grass fields.

Michael Schmidt

2200 Juana Road, Boca Raton

Mr. Schmidt, President of Boca Braves (Pop Warner Football), stated that he is a strong advocate of turf. There is no good evidence available that kids sustain more injuries on turf. The turfs today are high-quality. Turf provides increased field usage. There is a lot of down time with grass. The water drainage on existing grass fields is not adequate; players have to wait for the fields to dry. The drainage and the ability to use the fields more often is a good way to go. Over time, turf provides lower maintenance costs and more opportunities to play on the fields.

Jennifer Bielec

2459 NW 4<sup>th</sup> Way, Boca Raton

As the mother of three children, Ms. Bielec stated that her children have played on turf and they don’t like it – it hurts. As President of the Soccer Association of Boca Raton, representing over 2,500 children, she stated that the families that play soccer have concerns about turf; they want to play on grass fields. She feels the big problem is that we don’t have enough field space and that we are going to take fields that are grass and need repair and put in turf. That is not going to alleviate the many problems, because the community is growing and we need more field space in Boca Raton. She noted that SABR plays on fields all over the City. She supports natural grass.

Brian Clinton

99 SW 10<sup>th</sup> Drive, Boca Raton

Mr. Clinton remarked that members of his family have played soccer on the field at Boca High and have experienced no issues. Apologizing to Commissioners Engel and Frisch, Briann and

Maddy, he commented that the other individuals seemingly have one goal, and that is “I want to stamp my feet and have grass and I’ll do anything it takes to get grass and leave grass”. After waiting ten years to get fields at Patch Reef, his Board members were told by Commissioner Starkoff on the first night that they did not belong on the fields; they are soccer fields. He recounted a meeting with District staff wherein the first comments were “if we can give you Woodlands, would you give us back Patch Reef”. Historical usage indicates that over a two year period, SABR has played at Patch Reef only two days because they refused to play at Sand Pine Park due to health concerns. No scientific studies indicate that turf causes cancer. The individuals who have cancer did not play 100% of their soccer games on synthetic turf; the majority played on grass. In his opinion, the City of Boca Raton has the experts and experience to determine what the needs of the community are and how to best fill those needs. The agronomist report stated “build more fields and a lot of them, or start installing synthetic turf”. Politics should not play a part in making decisions that benefit every single person who lives in the District and the City of Boca Raton. . Let the experts make the decision as a business decision, not a political decision.

Jeff Solomon

Director of Girls’ Soccer for SABR

17374 Spring Tree Lane, Boca Raton

Mr. Solomon referred to the NBC Report which aired nationally. Although the Government and EPA refuse to comment on it, or take a position, stating that more studies were needed to be done, his organization asked to be moved to grass fields because of the many concerns of families and parents. We were granted the opportunity and moved over to Woodlands. We did not refuse to play anywhere else

Craig Mossey

1156 SW 13<sup>th</sup> Drive Boca Raton

Mr. Mossey stated that he came to the meeting to listen as a parent whose children play sports and could not believe the animosity and venom. It seems like a turf war. He feels Boca does a great job maintaining its fields. He doesn’t know a parent that would rather play on turf as opposed to grass. Understanding the technical issues of limited land, limited use, and down time, his preference is grass, commenting “I would much rather have a rain-out and stay at home than to play on turf”.

**APPROVAL OF INVOICES:**

**MOTION** was made by Commissioner Frisch and seconded by Commissioner Rollins to approve the invoices as presented totaling \$191,398.89.

**MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED**

**REPORTS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

**Executive Director - None**

**District Counsel - None**

**Commissioners**

*Golden Harbor HOA Annual Meeting*

Commissioner Starkoff stated that he addressed the Golden Harbor Annual Homeowner's Association meeting. He thanked Assistant Director Briann Harms for her assistance. The members expressed a lot of interest in all of the District's projects. He received some positive feedback as to the position the District took a few years ago relative to what the Court and FIND (Florida Inland Navigational District) were proposing on the Lake Wyman project. They seemed to be glad that the project did not proceed under that circumstance.

Commissioner Rollins stated that he has served on the Parks and Recreation Board for ten years and on the Beach & Park District Board for 15 years. He remarked that due to his efforts, and those of other members in the community, we have the fields at FAU and DeHoernle Park. He agrees 100% that politics should not be a part of the turf surface decision and assured everyone that he has no political agenda. His decision will be based on the needs of the community and not the needs of any individual organization. He is embarrassed for the people who want to apologize to some of the Commissioners for whatever reason, and then exempt those who also are trying to do the best for our community. Having heard all of the arguments and read all of the reports, he will vote his conscience and do what is right for the community. Whether its grass or turf, politics is not going to enter into his decision.

Commissioner Engel stated that, to his knowledge, no Board member is here to further a private agenda. The Board is trying to work for the good of the community.

*Beach Renourishment Reimbursement*

Commissioner Vogelgesang noted that today, the District received a check in the amount of \$1,927,056.76 from the City of Boca Raton which represents the balance of the contribution that the District made to the City several years ago following the completion of the North Boca Raton Beach Renourishment Project.

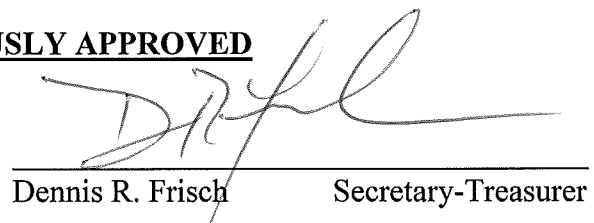
**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:**

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**MOTION** was made by Commissioner Starkoff and seconded by Commissioner Frisch to adjourn the meeting at 6:10 p.m.

**MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED**

  
Susan Vogelgesang Chairman

  
Dennis R. Frisch Secretary-Treasurer