

**PARKS, RECREATION, & BEACHES BOARD MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
WEDNESDAY, MAY 23, 2018 – 5:30 P.M.
CITY HALL – 8TH FLOOR
100 N ANDREWS AVE
FORT LAUDERDALE, FL 33312**

Cumulative Attendance

Board Members	Attendance	Present	Absent
Bill Schonlau	P	7	0
Bruce Quailey	P	7	0
Brucie Cummings	P	4	3
David Itskovich	P	5	2
Debby Eisinger	P	6	1
Dermot McQuarrie	A	4	3
James Jordan	P	5	2
Jo Ann Smith	P	5	2
Karen Polivka	P	7	0
Marianna Seiler	P	6	1
Marie Huntley	P	3	1
Paul Davidson	P	7	0
Robert Payne	P	2	0
Roy Grimsland	P	6	1

Oct 2017 - Sept 2018

As of this date, there are 14 appointed members to the Board, which means 8 would constitute a quorum. It was noted that a quorum was met for the meeting.

Staff

Phil Thornburg, *Parks & Recreation Director*
 Carl Williams, *Parks & Recreation Deputy Director*
 Orlando Castellano, *Auditorium Manager*
 Leona Osamor, *Administrative Assistant*
 Max Newhart, *Auditorium Operations Manager*

Public Attendees

Dennis Ulmer
 David Parker
 Marla Sherman Dumas
 Michaela M. Conca

Roll Call

Chairperson Debby Eisinger called the meeting to order at 5:35 PM. Roll was called and all stood for the pledge of allegiance. It was determined that a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes

Motion was made by Bill Schonlau and seconded by Karen Polivka, that the minutes of April 25, 2018 be approved. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

1. War Memorial Auditorium

Deputy Director Mr. Carl Williams informed the board that during the last City Commission Meeting, Mayor Trantalis asked for a discussion on the War Memorial Auditorium to come before the board in an effort to gather critical feedback on programming suggestions and the overall view of the operations at the facility.

Chairperson Debby Eisinger informed the board that at one point in the past, there were discussions about the possibility of demolishing the War Memorial Auditorium but some were in support of this while others supported preserving the history. Chairperson Debby Eisinger also informed the board that the Parker Playhouse was not part of the proposed discussion and was actually currently going through its own major renovations as part of the Broward Theatre.

Board member Brucie Cummings expressed her disappointment in the loss of so many trees that were once a part of the beautiful green landscaping at War Memorial. In addition, she also expressed dissatisfaction of the limited history now left behind, which could also be potentially destroyed and torn down.

Board member Karen Polivka inquired as to whether or not the War Memorial Auditorium couldn't be combined with something else such as in the case with Fort Lauderdale Aquatics Center (FLAC) and the Swimming Hall of Fame since it appears to be the most sentimental part of the entire discussion. Deputy Director Mr. Williams confirmed that this option is also on the table for discussions.

Board member Karen Polivka also informed the board that prior to the War Memorial Auditorium discussions, the pickle ball groups were very upset that during the summer months they are forced to leave the gymnasium due to summer camps and wondered if the War Memorial couldn't be an option for them during that time especially since there is a great demand for it. Deputy Director Mr. Williams confirmed that beginning early next month, this option to have indoor pickle ball at the War Memorial Auditorium will commence.

Board member Paul Davidson inquired about whether or not there was a feasibility

or master plan study on the War Memorial Auditorium. Deputy Director Mr. Williams explained that within the last five or six years there were renovations that had taken place which includes the new roof, retractable seating, smaller marquees inside the facility and other general up keep in landscaping totaling approximately \$500,000. Mr. Williams further stated that there is a remaining total of approximately \$1.2 million that had been approved by the City Commission and available for further needed improvements.

Board member Jo Ann Smith in an emotional plea stated that she didn't understand why the City would even consider the demolition and rebuilding of this facility as an option especially when there is so much history and fond memories including the yearly Promenade Event that took place at this park. Jo Ann Smith further stated that it was one of the best yearly family friendly events and the City should look into bringing back something similar to it at this location.

Board member James Jordan inquired about the amount of funding that is available and the scope of work that is needed to complete the renovations. Deputy Director Carl Williams confirmed that currently it would take approximately \$1.2 million dollars to complete.

Orlando Castellano, War Memorial Auditorium Manager further stated that there is currently \$1.2 million unencumbered of CIP funding which would cover electrical upgrades, new lighting and wiring and an additional \$842,000 of postponed funding.

Max Newhart, War Memorial Operations Manager informed the board that once all the upgrades have been made, it would allow the facility to get onto circuits where theatrical events as such can be booked because the facility would have the upgraded technology to accommodate such events. Max Newhart further stated to the board that the War Memorial Auditorium does many other good events and programs and doesn't want everyone to think that the facility is focused solely as a "gun show" facility.

Chairperson Debby Eisinger stated that she supports the City moving forward in having the renovations and improving the facility with the concept of *"if you build it they will come"*. She further stated that the element of marketing will be very important and working along with the Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) will be equally as important in promoting it as well.

Board member Roy Grimsland stated that the history of the War Memorial Auditorium is significant but was also underutilized. He suggested that the City could possibly form a committee in an effort to try and resurrect some of the great events held in the past such as the "Promenade Event". Roy Grimsland further

stated that there are Destination Management Companies (DMC) that can assist in providing feedback on what needs to be done or steps to be taken in determining how to improve the facility and become part of the profitable business circuits.

Board member Jo Ann Smith stated that on numerous occasions she has had to turn down applicants looking to book a wedding for approximately 200 to 300 guests at the Women's Club because she couldn't accommodate the capacity but foresees that if the War Memorial Auditorium is maintained and upgraded that this location would be the perfect venue to hold such weddings and will definitely become a revenue stream for the facility.

Public Comments

Public attendee Michaela M. Conca, President of the Broward Trust for Historic Preservation stated that the War Memorial Auditorium is a significant historic building that is well worth the City's time and efforts in terms of the money that is needed to invest in it and did not want to see the building go away. In addition, she stated that personally she would like to see the building being used for what it was initially intended to be used by the forebearers and the architects and all the original people associated with the facility. Michaela M. Conca also informed the board that the night before this meeting she met someone that had confirmed having their high school graduation ceremony at the facility but also didn't think that based on the size of high school graduations today could accommodate such an event. However, she further stated that it can be a perfect venue for other vendors to utilize such as craft shows, small musicians coming up the pike and even car shows because the building has potential despite needing a lot of work.

Public attendee Marla Sherman Dumas, City Planner and board member of the Broward Trust for Historic Preservation informed the board that she had done some research on the history of the War Memorial Auditorium and confirmed that it was a community effort starting in 1937 that created the now Holiday Park and from that the idea came about after the war to develop something to recognize and honor the veterans. Marla Sherman Dumas further stated that it was the City that selected an architectural firm by the name of Gable, Pownall & Gilroy, comprised of three veterans that designed the War Memorial Auditorium and who had also become well known for designing other facilities including the original Galleria Mall, 163rd Street Shopping Center and some famous churches. She further stated that these veterans took the design on this facility very seriously and since World War II, it has been updated to include memorials from the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Marla Sherman Dumas also stated that upon entrance to the Holiday Park, it is known as Sandy Nininger Jr. who was one of Fort Lauderdale's first war heroes killed in active duty and was named to honor him for significant reasons. She further stated that attorney William "Bill" G. Crawford researched and discovered that the War Memorial Auditorium was built in 1950 for \$450,000 with an extrapolated value today at about 4 to 5 million dollars. In addition, she stated that the founder of Causeway Lumber,

Col. O.R. Whiddon donated the materials and lumber that built the Auditorium and much of the \$450,000 was accomplished through fundraising by people who wanted to see something for the community. Marla Sherman Dumas further stated that she was not publicly speaking out for designation but rather for the City to maintain this building that has great historical significance. Marla Sherman Dumas also shared with the board that early pictures of the now War Memorial Auditorium depicted the original name of the facility as "Memorial Auditorium".

Public attendee Dennis Ulmer stated that every year he publicly speaks out at the City Commission Meeting in support of Memorial Day but was dismayed when an expenditure item came up before the Commission to approve some needed electrical work amongst other things that it was questioned by the Commission. Dennis Ulmer further stated that he would like for the City to move forward in spending the funds needed to make the repairs but also noted that it was his understanding that help was going to be given by the business community as well in an effort to market the facility to various vendors interested in using the facility.

Public attendee David Parker, a community activist for preservation stated that he is a resident of Sailboat Bend where he has restored a home and agrees that when you speak of Fort Lauderdale; so many people identify Holiday Park as the Memorial. David Parker further stated that he commended everyone's efforts thus far in trying to keep the facility in good shape and usability and encouraged everyone to continue to look for opportunities and ways for it to be used.

2. Marathon Swimmer Diana Nyad – Historic Preservationist Markers

Chairperson Debby Eisinger informed the board that new information has been brought forward regarding marathon swimmer Diana Nyad that should be reviewed and discussed to determine if any changes need to be made to the motion passed during the last board meeting held on April 25, 2018.

3. Board Comments and Discussions

The members of the board discussed other options for a well deserving female athlete that has not yet been recognized but who should be given recognition with an historical marker for their outstanding contributions and impact made to the City of Fort Lauderdale.

Board member Paul Davidson shared with the board a short history of a female American athlete, Florida native and three-time Olympic champion by the name of Brooke Bennett as an example of one that should be recognized. Chairperson Debby Eisinger encouraged all members of the board to take some time and research the names and history of all possible candidates for discussion at a future meeting.

Members of the board also discussed possible options for land acquisitions relating to future park locations or green spaces which included the following:

- a. a 5-acre lot just off of Andrews and NW 17th St. that is essentially attached to the South Middle River.
- b. the Whiddon Property located on Davie Blvd. between 9th Ave. and the bridge.
- c. a small plot of land just west of the railroad tracks which is also the home of the famous “rain tree” that was once to be relocated.

Discussions were also made about a small piece of property located along A-1-A between the Paramount Condominiums and Bonnet House and its proposed usage.

4. Communications to the Commission

Motion was made by Jo Ann Smith and seconded by Brucie Cummings in support of completing the renovations needed at the War Memorial Auditorium and to the preservation of this historic facility. In addition, creating a board to explore the establishment of future projects or events such as the “Promenade Event” and identifying other avenues that would generate streams of revenue for the facility. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Motion was made by Roy Grimsland and seconded by Bill Schonlou that an alternative name to War Memorial Auditorium be considered and as a suggestion “Veterans Memorial Auditorium” or similar that would honor the veterans without having the word “War” that suggests a negative connotation based on feedback received. **Motion failed** with **8 No’s** and **5 Yes.**

Summary of voting results were as follows:

Bruce Qualey – No	Bill Schonlou – Yes
Brucie Cummings – No	David Itskovitch – Yes
James Jordan – No	Debby Eisinger – Yes
Jo Ann Smith – No	Paul Davidson – Yes
Karen Polivka – No	Roy Grimsland – Yes
Marianna Seiler – No	
Marie Huntley – No	
Robert Payne – No	

Motion was made by Bill Schonlau and seconded by Jo Ann Smith to withdraw the

motion of support made on April 25, 2018, to have an historical marker honoring marathon swimmer Diana Nyad installed at the entrance of the Fort Lauderdale Beach, south of the intersection of A1A and Las Olas Boulevard. In a voice vote, the **motion passed** with **12 Yes's** and **1 No**.

Summary of voting results were as follows:

Bill Schonlou – Yes	Roy Grimsland – No
Bruce Quailey – Yes	
Brucie Cummings – Yes	
David Itskovitch – Yes	
Debby Eisinger – Yes	
James Jordan – Yes	
Jo Ann Smith – Yes	
Karen Polivka – Yes	
Marianna Seiler – Yes	
Marie Huntley – Yes	
Paul Davidson – Yes	
Robert Payne – Yes	

5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 PM.