

**PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES FROM MEETING OF MARCH 18, 2026**

The Marion County Parks & Recreation Advisory Council (PRAC) held a public meeting on March 18, 2026, at the Marion County Parks & Recreation Main Office, 111 SE 25th Avenue, Ocala, FL 34471.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

Joe Reichel, Vice-Chair
Kathy Funk
Curt Bromund

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT

Jerry Furlong, Chair
Brian Cretul

STAFF PRESENT

Jim Couillard, Director
Kelsey Mears, Assistant Director
Sara Lambert, Community Engagement Coordinator
Angel Roussel, Assistant County Administrator

CALL TO ORDER

Joe Reichel officially called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM, followed by the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Sara Lambert took roll call.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Joe called for a motion to approve the minutes. Curt motioned to approve the minutes, Kathy seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

STAFF ITEMS

A. Legislative Update

1. Sara gave an update on the three Special Sessions that were scheduled and which bills we were following made it through both chambers.
2. Jim added extra elaboration on a few of the bills for additional information.
3. Curt asked a question that asked for more context on the bill regarding electronic payments and how it would affect parks. Jim explained that there's a few options for electronic payments and we are exploring them.
4. Additional discussion was had on smoking in public places and what our commissioners thought would be on a departmental ordinance that banned smoking in parks.
 - i. This led to an additional discussion on vaping in public.

B. Bond Referendum Update

1. Jim gave a brief update on the bond workshop with Pegeen Hanrahan of the Trust For Public Land (TPL). This workshop outlined the work they do, the success they've had, and how they manage bond referendum language and research.
2. Lots of engagement between Pegeen and the Board, she has served as a

public servant in Alachua County and is thus very familiar with our part of the state.

3. Jim reiterated our need for more funding to aid in long-term success and outlined our department's timeline for meeting with commissioners to discuss a diverse funding structure.
4. The commissioners agreed to a 2026 ballot initiative for bond funding, seeking anywhere from \$100M-\$120M.
5. This funding would cover deferred maintenance, improvements or enhancements, new projects, and the acquisition of new sites.
 - i. These needs were broken down by the commission districts to see where dollars should be allocated and then we developed a grand total for pricing.
6. 1:1's with commissioners is taking place and have been well received, all the conversations have been positive.
7. Curt asked how the county measures population growth. Jim explained that there's a few mechanisms they use, citing the US Census and the University of Florida's BEBR as one of those mechanisms.
8. Jim broke down each commission district's demographics including population density.
 - i. This data has led us to look at future sites in the NW and SW parts of the county.
9. Next steps would be to meet with the different municipalities and assess their needs.
10. Some large-scale countywide projects are being considered for this funding such as converting all ballfield lights to LED and some trail projects.
11. Prioritizing the projects list will be a large undertaking, that list will go to TPL to help create and test ballot language. Testing ballot language is one of the more important aspects of this process.
12. Jerry asked if the commissioners have shown any hesitation in this process or if Jim feels like any portion of it will be shot down. Jim shared that we have to be tactical and smart about how we manage this process.

C. Recreation Software Update

1. The original vendor we shortlisted withdrew because of a change to their business model, our new vendor for consideration is Xplor- the city of Ocala uses them.
2. Xplor checks a bunch of our boxes and scored very high in the solicitation process.
3. We will have app capabilities, and it will work well with large group registrations like summer camp.
4. Curt asked if it would require use of our servers. Jim shared that its cloud based.
5. We will be working with other municipalities who use the product to see how their backend processes work and what their customer experience is like.

Old Business

None.

Council Items

1. Jerry asked if Jim had any updates on the Customer Service Vision Statement rollout. Jim shared that we had a big unveiling at an all-hands meeting, he is now visiting each division to do more reinforcement. Jim then shared real world examples of customer service learning examples that our team have

experienced.

2. Curt shared some examples of bad customer service, reiterating that bad service will stick with you.
3. Kathy asked about the news article that was recently published regarding Heagy-Burry. Jim shared that it was an innacurate article that misconstrued a grant contract timeline. The project is projected to be done in late spring or early summer.

Closing Comments

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM

SIGNED _____
Jerry Furlong, Chair

DATE: _____

Minutes submitted by Sara Lambert