

**City of St Johns**  
**Parks and Recreation Board**  
**Meeting Minutes October 15, 2025**  
**Approved Jan 21, 2026**

Meeting Called to order 6:05 pm by Chairman Pioszak

Members Present: Motz, Pioszak, Thelen, Deliso, Fromson

Members Absent: Gleeson

Staff Present: Director Schafer, Gamble

Others Present: Chris Khoury, Ethan Senti

Approval of the Agenda: Motion by Member Thelen, seconded by Member Fromson, to approve the agenda as submitted.

All in Favor: All

All opposed: None

Approval of the Minutes: Motion by Member Motz, seconded by Member Fromson, to approve the minutes as submitted.

All in favor: All

All Opposed: None

**Public Comment**

None

**Board Business**

**1. Board Business - Election of Officers**

Member Pioszak's status as Chair was clarified: this is his first year out of the maximum two consecutive years allowed to serve.

Member Deliso nominated Member Pioszak to serve as Chairman, it was seconded by Member Fromson. Member Thelen moved to cast a unanimous vote for Member Pioszak for Chairman. I Voice Vote Followed

All in Favor: Motz, Thelen, Deliso, and Fromson

For Vice Chair, a motion was made by Member Thelen, seconded by Member Motz to nominate Member Fromson as Vice-Chair. A motion by Member Motz, seconded by Member Thelen, to cast a unanimous vote for Member Fromson to be Vice-Chair. A voice vote followed.

All in Favor: Motz, Thelen, Deliso, and Pioszak

### Board Reappointments

Members Butler and Thelen have two-year terms expiring this year and expressed interest in serving two more years; they meet the bylaws requirements.

It was moved by Member Motz, seconded by Member Fromson, to recommend Members Thelen and Butler be reappointed for two more years

There was discussion about the bylaws which indicate the board is meant to have 7 members: 5 residents, 1 City Commission representative, and 1 School Board representative; the board is currently at the maximum. Discussion noted interest from Andrea Hallead potentially for the school representative role due to attendance challenges by the current school rep; the school typically determines its representative.

## **Old Business**

### **A. 2026-30 Parks and Recreation Five-Year Master Plan Review**

The board discussed the Five-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The five-year Parks and Recreation Master Plan will be aligned within the City's overall master plan for seamless integration. A required public hearing will be held by the Planning Commission, which will count for Parks Board requirements; this cannot occur until after October 21.

Consultants (McKenna) are assisting with the citywide master plan and ensuring the Parks content integrates appropriately. They talked about:

The parks and recreation action plan was formatted with identification numbers (e.g., PR11), priority levels (A, B, C), and timeframes (1, 2, 3), enabling clear reference for city actions over the next five years.

Action Plan Priorities, Costs, and Budgeting- Priorities were informed by the community survey, board discussions, available resources, and logistics; the colored action plan document mirrors the city's format, and any inconsistencies with earlier versions will be addressed.

A playground at the Depot was noted in the plan as an idea; space feasibility and details would be explored further in the citywide master plan context.

Downtown Redevelopment, Silos, and Event Logistics

Mint Fest is planned to move downtown next summer; some city costs are anticipated (e.g., removing a dirt pile), with coordination among DDA and the Chamber.

Discussion on silos: community sentiment generally favors removal due to upkeep and blight, but there is some interest in keeping some silos; funding and parcel assembly are key factors.

The board discussed edits of the action plan: remove the parenthetical on PR 30; modify the description for PR 34 to “fell property master plan”; and add a City Park line that includes “ice rink improvements” and “Fantasy Forest future phases.”

### **B. Fantasy Forest 2.0 Update**

Director Schafer gave an update on Fantasy Forest. The main construction phase of Fantasy Forest is complete, with future phases planned. Attendance has been strong, including school groups (e.g., a bus from Fowler).

Ongoing maintenance includes keeping the site clean and safe and addressing behavior issues observed via cameras (e.g., bikes on the poured-in-place surface, use of top swing improperly).

There are rules posted at some facilities (e.g., basketball courts); Fantasy Forest currently lacks written rules on the play structure usage. Enforcement mechanisms discussed: calling police for disturbing the peace, challenges of banning individuals from public spaces, and potential public backlash from removing equipment (e.g., basketball rims).

### **C. Wilson Center Update**

A contractor has been selected and agreements signed; the project is awaiting tax credits application feedback and National Park Service response, which will not occur until after the government shutdown. Due to holidays, the start is targeted for “after the first of the year.” Roof replacement: prior patches were applied to stabilize conditions; full roof replacement will begin in November. The team confirmed full replacement is planned and that mobilization is imminent. Once started, the project is expected to take “Six to eight months,” with “Closer to the eight months” likely. Completion is anticipated in “fall-ish” after commencement. There was confirmation that roof work can proceed prior to historical processes, though specifics beyond that were not detailed.

A core team, modeled after the Fantasy Forest approach, will focus on fundraising, relationships with a 501c3, and naming rights/advertisers. The design work is mostly complete; team efforts will focus on financial support strategies

### **D. DNR Passport Grant - Senior Citizen Park**

Preliminary score: “165 out of 250.” In the last two years, minimum scores to get funding were “around 180.” Materials were resubmitted aiming to add “up to 30 points,” which could place the application within funding range. Final scores are due in “late November,” with recommendations at the trust fund board meeting “the first Wednesday... in December.” Aligning the budget with split fiscal years to match grant timing. If not funded, an “alternative plan C4” to reconfigure courts at the park may be considered.

## **New Business**

### **A. Rail Cars**

RFP outcome: Two east rail cars are approved for sale; the city commission approved sale prices of “\$1,500” and “\$500.” The buyer will bear costs to remove and transport the cars and

related rail, saving the city money. There is a “six months” removal timeline from contract execution. The city will maintain the caboose and the car adjacent to it (referred to as “mail car” by some, though exact identification needs on-site verification).

The buyer has multiple museums and intends to restore the rail cars, considered a win-win for the city.

#### **B. Parks and Recreation Program Activity July-September**

Program activity is strong; Rachel was credited for effective planning.

Non-traditional winter programs are expanding, including a charcuterie board class at the end of the month and a future flower arranging class in partnership with a downtown shop. Past collaborations with downtown art studios were referenced. Softball participation has improved in recent years, though competitive imbalance with one strong team may deter others. A potential league rule adjustment was discussed: classify as EF league with only one rostered player above class E (e.g., class D), which could address the imbalance.

#### **C. Depot Restoration Update**

Renovation is nearing completion. Next week, floors on the east side will be redone; the main area (previously red flooring) will get maple hardwood with a transition piece.

A key pad entry system is in place for rentals, active only during the rental window (e.g., Saturday 12:30–5:30), eliminating key pickup/return. It generally works well but has occasional reliability issues

#### **D. Disc Golf**

The course has added nine holes. A printed scorecard includes a map and scoring; a QR code for mobile scorekeeping is in development. Posts are installed; signs will match the existing nine, with a donation being pursued to fund signage. Concrete tee boxes are not planned initially; turf tee pads are being considered instead of wood chips/stone, using used turf (example price mentioned: \$120 for a 10-foot length) over a sand base to define tee areas. Community use is broad.

#### **Adjournment**

Move to adjourn by Member Butler, seconded by Member Fromson at 7:27pm