

# **Recreation District #1 of St. Tammany Parish**

Chairman: Nixon Adams  
Vice-Chairman: Shearn Lemoine  
Commissioner: Rick Danielson

Commissioner: John Neill  
Commissioner: deShea Richardson  
Commissioner: Barrett McGuire

Commissioner: Ed Bee  
Executive Director: Suzanne Reeder



## **Recreation District #1/Pelican Park Board of Commissioners Monthly Meeting August 20, 2025**

### **Board present:**

- **Nixon Adams**
- **Shearn Lemoine**
- **Rick Danielson**
- **Barrett McGuire**
- **Ed Bee**

### **Board Absent:**

- **John Neill**
- **deShea Richardson**

### **Staff present:**

- **Suzanne Reeder – Executive Director**
- **Scott Goodwill – Chief Financial Officer**
- **Niki Butler – Marketing Director/Board Secretary**
- **Louisette Scott – Dept. Planning & Environmental Ed.**
- **Alex Landry – Naturalist & Environ. Ed. Coordinator**
- **Melissa Garcia – Grants & Contracts Manager**
- **Carly Arthur – Recreation Supervisor**
- **Chad Groover – Recreation Supervisor**
- **Catherine Barbier – Castine Center Supervisor**
- **Ron Johnson – Park Supervisor**
- **Emily Pellegrin – Pelican Park Recreation Intern**

### **1. Call to Order:**

- The Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting was called to order by Chairman N. Adams at 6:30pm. N. Butler, Board Secretary, called the roll. Five of the Seven Board Members were present, which represents a quorum.

### **2. Open agenda to propose new items:**

- No New Items

### **3. Welcome Visitors:**

- **Patrick Cox – Girls Softball Coach**

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## **4. Proclamations**

- None

## **5. Board of Commissioner Meeting Minutes:**

- **5a. Board of Commissioner Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes – July 16, 2025.**
  - Motion by R. Danielson to approve the previous month's Meeting Minutes as presented with no changes, Second by B. McGuire. Vote 5-0. Motion passes.

## **6. New Business:**

- **6a. Internship Presentation – Emily Pellegrin**

The Board welcomed Emily Pellegrin, summer intern with the Recreation Department, who presented a presentation and summary of her work and experiences during her internship, which began in May. Staff expressed appreciation for Emily's contributions, highlighting her professionalism, work ethic, and positive impact on the department. A farewell gift was presented to her on behalf of the staff.

- **Emily's Presentation Highlights:**

- **Background:** Sophomore at Southeastern Louisiana University, majoring in Sport Management. Aspires to pursue a leadership role in athletics or recreation management.
- **Projects include:** Inventory Management: Organized and cataloged the Brown Gym inventory, creating a comprehensive spreadsheet and preparing equipment for team use. Photography RFP: Researched over 10 local photography businesses, assisted with outreach, evaluated responses, and participated in the contract renewal process with Miller Photo. File Organization: Scanned and digitized Recreation Department records and assisted staff with improved file organization. Daily Operations: Managed score sheets, incident reports, and facility communication records; provided support to staff across various tasks as needed.
- **Board Comments:** The Board and staff commended Emily for her dedication and professionalism throughout the summer. Encouragement was given regarding her career path, with offers to provide future networking opportunities and support within the sports and recreation field. Emily was thanked for her meaningful contributions in just two months and invited to return to visit or collaborate in the future.

- **6b. Grant Presentation – Melissa Garcia**

- Melissa Garcia, Grants and Contracts Manager, provided an update on her work since beginning in February 2025. She has implemented a new tracking system for all contracts across departments, which has already resulted in significant improvements in organization and efficiency. From February through July 31, a total of 228 contracts have been logged into the system. These include construction contracts, cooperative endeavor agreements, vendor contracts, revenue-generating rental contracts, insurance agreements, MOUs such as the bike revenue share agreement, and one active grant

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agreement. Of these, approximately 86% have been executed successfully, while the remaining were canceled, postponed, or identified as duplicates.

- Melissa noted that construction contracts currently represent the largest share of revenue being tracked, though her work is ongoing to integrate historic construction agreements and expand tracking of vendor services, CEAs, and rentals. She also highlighted the district's active EPA grant of \$350,000, explaining that to date \$31,000 has been invoiced, \$21,000 reimbursed, \$9,000 is pending, and approximately \$340,000 remains available.
- She emphasized that the new system not only allows for accurate tracking but also provides a framework to streamline processes, align with QuickBooks for payables and receivables, and improve coordination across departments. Looking ahead, her goals include enhancing grant monitoring and reporting, developing a contract retention and archiving process, and exploring new opportunities for community programs and partnerships.
- Board members commended Melissa for the progress made in just six months, noting that other agencies have struggled with similar efforts, while she has already brought structure, vision, and measurable results to the district. They praised the level of detail in her reporting and the positive impact her work is having on operations. Melissa expressed her gratitude for the support of staff and the Board and welcomed continued feedback as the system grows and develops.

- **6c. Park Maintenance - Temporary Building - Relocation Update – No Vote**

- Staff provided an update on the upcoming installation of a new equipment storage building. With the bypass road project scheduled to eliminate access to the current maintenance road in October, the park staff needed a solution for housing equipment in a protected, accessible location. To address this, the district has purchased a 2,250 square-foot metal building from Eagle Carports that will be installed behind the Castine Center, within the green space near the fence and dumpsters.
- The structure will sit on a limestone base, with installation scheduled between September 8–12. Both 30-foot ends of the building will remain open to allow equipment to move in and out easily, and once construction is complete, a chain link fence will be installed to restrict public access while allowing staff use. The building will be large enough to house daily-use equipment such as mowers and tractors, though larger or less frequently used items will continue to be stored offsite in existing facilities. Smaller tools, such as weed eaters and blowers, may be stored in repurposed containers located behind the Castine Center.
- Staff explained that while this building addresses the immediate need for storage during the road construction period, it also offers flexibility for the future. The structure could be relocated if necessary, or later enclosed with roll-up doors to serve as permanent storage or other uses for the park.
- Board members acknowledged the importance of this project in maintaining daily operations and commended staff for their planning and preparation.

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## **7. Financials**

### **• 7a. Monthly Summaries:**

- The Board received the monthly financial report. Staff noted there was little of significance to report for July, other than the presentation of an initial rough draft of the 2026 budget at the Finance Committee meeting. That draft will be refined in September and October as more accurate numbers become available. Board members commented on the budget preparation process is ahead of schedule compared to prior years, thanks to the great work done by Scott. While adjustments and decisions remain, the district is projected to meet its budget and end the year with a positive financial result. No financial concerns were identified in the July reports, and bank reconciliations and credit card charges were all in order.

### **• 7b. Bank and Credit Card Statements:**

- N. Adams reported that there are no financial concerns identified in the July reports.
- S. Lemoine reviewed the credit card activity, all appeared in order. Motion by R. Danielson to approve the financials as presented. Second by S. Lemoine. Vote 5-0. Motion passes.

## **8. Committee Updates:**

### **• 8a. Finance Committee– 07/11**

- The Finance Committee provided additional context from its recent meeting. Scott has worked closely with department heads during the budget process to gather input and improve projections. A particular focus has been placed on the gap historically seen between budgeted salaries and actual expenditures due to turnover and vacancies. Scott reviewed data going back to 2017, which showed variances ranging from approximately \$99,000 to \$250,000 under budget annually. While those figures were influenced by COVID and leadership transitions, the committee agreed it remains necessary to fully allocate budgeted salary funds for compliance purposes.
- For the current year, Scott estimated that salary savings could range between \$200,000 and \$300,000, depending on the pace of filling vacancies. At present, the district has five open positions. Staffing remains a challenge, as noted by Doug, who explained that his department is currently down three full-time employees and relying on temporary workers. However, retaining temporary staff has been difficult, as many do not remain for the full term. The Board acknowledged the staffing challenges and commended staff for their efforts to manage operations despite the vacancies.

## **9. Division Monthly Reports**

### **• 9a. Administration – by Suzanne Reeder**

- The personnel manual revisions were received back from the district's HR attorney. Staff are currently reviewing and responding to the attorney's questions, and the manual will be resubmitted for a second review. It is anticipated that a final version will be presented

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to the Board in September. The manual is over 50 pages, and Board members were reminded to expect detailed review material.

- Staffing updates included one employee on FMLA leave, one on medical leave, and two part-time recreation staff in the process of being hired.
- Social media analytics showed strong engagement for the month, with 143,000 views and a reach of approximately 32,000. The busiest day for park visitation was July 19, with 3,800 unique vehicles recorded entering the park. Although no major tournaments were scheduled that day, the visit coincided with LSU baseball players appearing at Chuck's Sports Cards, which accounted for the unusually high traffic.
- The monthly disc golf report from UDisc was also reviewed. Notably, players from Canada and Norway were recorded on the course, with staff identifying that the Norwegian player was a professional disc golfer who had been participating in a pro tour event in Memphis. The UDisc system also tracks activity data, including steps taken by players, with over 10 million steps recorded on the course since implementation.
- Administration also highlighted the success of the recent Back to School Bash, which was well attended and supported by staff and volunteers. In addition, social media coverage of championship events has been strong, with N. Butler recognized for her efforts in promoting activities online.

- **9b Planning – Louissette Scott**

- Staff reported that the Pickleball project has received its approved permit and is moving forward. Bid advertisements are scheduled for September 10, 17, and 24, with a bid opening expected on October 2. Contracting would follow within 30 days, with construction anticipated to begin in November. L. Scott noted that significant progress was made in working through permitting issues with the Parish, which should help streamline future projects.
- The Skate Park and Pump Track project is progressing, though slower than anticipated due to heat and rain delays. Small concrete pours are continuing, with larger visible progress expected in the coming weeks. Specialty Construction is scheduled to wrap up in early to mid-October, with final work completed by Sieverding Construction. The project is currently delayed two to three weeks, with a revised completion estimate of early November.
- For the Sand Volleyball project, consultants have been finalizing construction drawings following site visits and meetings with St. Tammany Parish Inspectors. Permit applications are expected to be submitted within one to two weeks, with bid advertisements to follow soon after.

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- The Bypass Road project continues under Parish management. Clearing has been completed and debris burning is underway. The entrance road from the bypass into the park will not be addressed for several months, but staff continue to monitor progress through bi-weekly meetings.
- The Master Plan siting contract with Perkins & Will is underway, with a site visit scheduled for September 9-10. Internal and external stakeholder meetings will be held as part of the nine-week schedule. Board members will be invited, and meetings will also be publicly advertised.
- Staff also shared that the park's beehives produced their first honey harvest, yielding approximately four to five gallons. This was a smaller but expected first-year yield. S. Reeder and staff presented bottles of the very first Pelican Park Gold MVP Honey that are decorated with a precious sticker logo designed by N. Butler. Honey will be brought to the upcoming NRPA conference for an exchange with other park agencies in Florida. Local beekeeper Greg Capranica assisted with the harvest and will also lead an upcoming Pelican Nature Club program on Wednesday, August 24.
- The Lake Pontchartrain Basin Restoration Program grant work is continuing, focusing on the Habitat Master Plan and Drainage Master Plan. A stakeholder meeting was held August 7, with discussions centered on biodiversity corridors, planting of native species, invasive species management, creating low-maintenance areas, and opportunities for education and engagement. The group also discussed agreements related to the red-cockaded woodpecker habitat to ensure long-term park flexibility.
- Additional programming updates included the upcoming Bartram Conference on October 25, celebrating the 250th anniversary of William Bartram with guest speakers and a trail marker installation at the park. The Pelican Park Astronomy program led by Leon Zebrick has had strong participation, with 42 people registered. Public Astronomy events have been scheduled through December.
- Finally, staff announced that the new portable planetarium has been delivered and set up in Hall A. Programming is currently being loaded and prepared. Board members were invited to stop by for a demonstration. Staff also recognized A. Landry for representing the park on a Fox 8 community segment, where he provided updates on several upcoming Pelican Park events.
- **Environmental Education Programs - Alex Landry**
  - Alex reported that he led several programs this summer, including presentations for Coquille's summer camps, where he used mammal pelts and live butterflies from the LSU Ag Garden at Brown Gym to engage students. He noted it was a valuable learning experience and will help guide future programming.

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- Upcoming programs include Horror in Nature, presented by a master naturalist and librarian from Baton Rouge, which will draw parallels between nature and themes found in horror films in a family-friendly format. The LSU Raptor Rehab will also be returning on a new date to be determined. In addition, the Northshore Naturalist Introduction Workshop, an overnight program at Fontainebleau State Park, is scheduled for November 15-16. Registration opened earlier this week and has already drawn participants from as far as Baton Rouge and Thibodaux.
- Alex has also expanded environmental education outreach through social media. His Instagram reels, including features on purple martins and local natural areas have generated significant engagement with thousands of views. He also represented Pelican Park at a Lakeview Hospital health pop-up event, where he interacted with approximately 150 people and received strong positive feedback from community members about the park.
- Additionally, the Louisiana Master Naturalist – Greater New Orleans Chapter has invited Alex to lead their programs at Northlake Nature Center going forward and has asked him to serve on their board. Staff expressed pride in this recognition of his leadership and expertise.

- **9c. Parks – Doug McLemore**

- D. McLemore reported that John Kelly with Eco Light followed through on his commitment and supplied 33 replacement fixtures at no cost to the District. Ron and Will assisted with the installation using the lift, resulting in an estimated \$25,000 worth of equipment being replaced free of charge. This resolves the outstanding lighting issues in the Park. While this was likely a one-time offering related to the prior SEEP grant challenges, the District will need to consider long-term replacement options for the future. Staff expressed appreciation to Eco Light for honoring their commitment and to Ron and Will for completing the work.

- **9d. Recreation – Carly Arthur**

- Thanks to Scott's assistance, staff were able to provide a clearer year-to-year comparison from 2023 through 2025, which remained pretty consistent, with some growth in divisions such as 9–10 softball. Baseball participation improved compared to 2024 despite age adjustments. Games began September 1, with the first home football game set for September 13. Football days are especially busy, and volunteers are encouraged to assist.
- Winter basketball registration opened early to allow more preparation, with games starting November 8. Upcoming events include the Pickleball Classic, coordinating with Andy Rubenstein again, and after the tournament, the Park will have a Karaoke in the Park Event with food vendors and live entertainment.

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- Staff addressed football scheduling concerns, confirming Pelican Park teams will not play the St. Bernard Rage due to potential legal issues during this time. New football sleds, L-screens, and four batting cages have been purchased to improve facilities.

- **9e. Castine Center – Suzanne Reeder**

- Suzanne reported that Catherine, Tracy, and Kevin have all been busy the past month. Kevin is in the process of interviewing for an open position and has had temporary staff assisting with turnovers. Catherine and Melissa have been managing contracts. August was busy, but technically it's a lot slower month for the Castine Center, but activity will pick up significantly in September and remain steady through July.

- **9f. Concessions – Suzanne Reeder**

- Suzanne shared that concessions remain steady at White Gym and Brown Gym, with Ray providing weekly Tuesday updates. Operations are consistent and on track. Suzanne and Ray recently completed training in Toast and identified some system setting issues that will need to be addressed.

## **10. Old Business:**

- S. Reeder provided updates under Old Business. The Game Changer Conference has officially been moved to 2026. This decision provides more time to expand programming and partnerships, ensuring the event is even stronger. Melissa has already made great progress, and John Neill has suggested potential speakers. Interest is growing with opportunities in concussion training, nutrition, and sponsorships, including LMNT. The extended timeline will allow the event to attract attendees not only from the Northshore but also from areas like North Florida and Alabama.
- Staff anniversaries were also recognized:
  - Catherine – 10 years
  - Charlie – 10 years
  - Will – 15 years
  - Ron – 25 years

The Board expressed gratitude for their continued dedication and service.

## **11. Public Comments:**

Patrick Cox was present and shared positive feedback after traveling with a summer softball team to other venues. He noted that the experience highlighted the high quality of Pelican Park's fields and facilities, praising the maintenance team for their excellent work. He also mentioned that the shaded awning areas are greatly appreciated by families.

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Additionally, Nixon expressed his appreciation for the condolences offered following his wife's passing, noting they were very meaningful to him and his family.

**Next Board of Commissioner Meeting, Wednesday September 24, 2025. Reminder that it was moved to a week later due to 7 staff members that will be going to NRPA the week of September 15-19th**

## **12. Meeting Adjourn:**

- Motion to adjourn at 7:27pm by B. McGuire. Second by S. Lemoine. Vote 5-0 in favor.

**\*\*All attachments, item lists and Reports in Brief documents are included in the official minutes.**