

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 April 16, 2025

Board present:

- Nixon Adams
- Shearn Lemoine
- Rick Danielson
- John Neill
- Ed Bee

Board absent:

- Barrett McGuire
- 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
- Brennan Kuss – Recreation Supervisor
- Carly Arthur – Recreation Supervisor
- Chad Groover – Recreation Supervisor
- Borato Broughton – Recreation Supervisor

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 out of seven of the current appointed Board Members were present, which represents a quorum.

2. Open agenda to propose new items:

- None

3. Welcome Visitors:

- **Crystal Ferris and Lindsay Long** – Recognition of Pelican Park Boys 9U Biddy Elite Basketball Team

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4. Proclamations/Resolutions:

- A proclamation was presented in honor of the Pelican Park Boys 9U Biddy Elite basketball team for their outstanding performance in the 2024–2025 season. Head Coach Crystal Farris and Assistant Coach Lindsay Long, along with their team, earned 2nd place in the Biddy World Tournament held March 30–April 2 at Coquille. The team was commended for their talent, sportsmanship, and dedication. The proclamation recognized each player by name and celebrated their representation of Pelican Park on a national stage. The Board expressed pride in their achievements and community spirit.
- Discussion on Tournament Experience -The Board congratulated and thanked the 9U coaches for their dedication and efforts during the tournament season. Coaches shared positive feedback about the 9U State Tournament, noting it ran smoothly overall. However, they highlighted logistical challenges during the credentialing process, including significant delays, overlapping scheduling, and food shortages. The Board asked for input on areas for improvement when hosting future tournaments, particularly regarding scheduling and accommodations for visiting teams.
- Both coaches also expressed strong interest in creating a Pelican Park competitive league that is separate from the recreational season. They noted that talented players often struggle to grow when mixed with beginners, and that the current format leads to frustration for all skill levels. A competitive league could help retain advanced players and better develop newcomers. The Youth Sports Committee acknowledged the feedback and confirmed that this topic is already scheduled for further discussion at the next Youth Sports Committee on May 6th at 5:30pm, with plans to explore potential changes for the next season. Coach Crystal also wanted to commend Pelican Park on a tournament they participated in last week, that brought in many teams from across the lake and surrounding areas. She commented that they received many compliments on how well this Park is kept up and wanted to give praise to the team that keeps everything so organized and how the Park always looks so beautiful and inviting.

5. Board of Commissioner Meeting Minutes:

- **5a. Board of Commissioner Monthly Meeting Minutes – March 19, 2025.**
 - Motion by E. Bee to approve the previous month's Meeting Minutes as presented with no changes, Seconded by S. Lemoine Vote 5-0. Motion passes.

6. New Business:

- **6a. Budget Adjustment**
 - S. Reeder gave an update on the current issues with playground surfaces at Pelican Park, particularly at Orange playground, where some tiles have become a safety hazard. An estimate of \$25,120 was provided to fully resurface the Orange playground with poured-in-place material, meeting safety standards. Additional costs include \$4,600 for removal and disposal of existing materials, due in part to the weight and nature of the materials.

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The new surface is expected to last approximately 20 years. The current surface has aged-out and poses legal and safety concerns.

- Motion by J. Neil to approve and authorize the Executive Director to purchase replacement of surfacing material for the Orange playground in the amount of \$25,120 with DYNA-PLAY, LLC. Second, by R. Danielson. Vote 5-0. Motion passes.

• 6b. Pickleball Lighting

- L. Scott discussed an amendment to a contract with Neel Schaefer for Pickleball Court Lighting. A revision to the contract with Neel Schaefer was presented to amend lighting plans for the new and existing pickleball courts. The existing lights do not meet required brightness levels, and the updated plan includes replacing them and adding Musco lighting for all courts without increasing the number of poles. The new layout requires taller poles and repositioning for optimal coverage. Neel Schaefer provided a revised construction cost estimate of \$784,000, including alternates for resurfacing existing courts \$14,000 and a food truck area \$41,000. The addition of Musco lighting increases the estimated construction budget by \$146,000, bringing it to \$930,000. With added engineering and related fees approx. \$12,000, the revised total project cost is \$1,026,000. The staff is asking for approval of this amendment to allow Neel Schaefer to proceed with final design revisions and resubmit for permitting. Once the permit is issued, bidding can begin within 2-3 months. Construction could be completed by winter. **Discussion.**
- Motion by R. Danielson to approve and authorize Executive Director to sign Amendment #4 to Owner-Engineer Agreement for Pickleball Court Project dated March 25, 2025. Second, by E. Bee. Vote 5-0. Motion passes.

• 6c. Budget Adjustment - Pickleball

- S. Goodwill explains items and funds that need to be reallocated to support the revised pickleball court project costs. The adjustment increases the pickleball project budget by \$145,000, reduces the water well project balance by \$20,860.02, and decreases the unallocated funds by \$124,139.98.
- Motion by d. Richardson to reallocate funding in the Development Account to increase Pickleball Courts by \$145,000 by reducing the amount allocated for the water well by \$20,860.02 and reducing the unallocated amount by \$142,139.80. Second, by J. Neill. Vote 5-0. Motion passes.

• 6d. Master Plan Update and Discussion

- L. Scott provided a presentation on the Pelican Park Master Plan, adopted in January 2023, for board members who were not present during its development. The goal was to ensure all members are aligned before discussing new projects. A copy of the full plan was included in the meeting packet, with hard copies available upon request.
- The master plan process included:
 - Inventory & Analysis: Reviewed Pelican Park's main site, East property (maintenance area), and Northlake Nature Center to assess development

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- opportunities and create a cohesive park identity, factoring in the impact of the new bypass road.
- Conceptual Planning & Public Engagement: Drafted initial concepts and refined them based on community feedback.
- Final Plan & Implementation Strategy: Identified immediate (0–12 months), high priority (1–5 years), and long-term (5+ years) projects, along with stewardship goals.
- Key Areas and Project Highlights:
 - Sports Complex:
 - Immediate actions completed/in progress include the event stage, professional sand volleyball courts (in design), and integration of a pump track into the skate park project.
 - High-priority projects include the 400m track, synthetic turf field (pending feasibility), and turfing of additional fields.
- Long-term projects include nature-based playgrounds, splash pad, 50m pool (possibly offsite), and expanded tennis/pickleball facilities.
- East Property / Multi-Purpose Area:
 - Originally planned for renovations of the laundromat building; however, cost and site limitations shifted focus to a new structure that now includes the planetarium.
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 - Other goals include new access roads, parking, and trail networks.
- Northlake Nature Center:
 - Focus on trail upgrades, restroom installation, Beaver Pond boardwalk replacement, and potential renovation of the historic clubhouse.
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 - Long-term goals include improved access, new bridge infrastructure, and exploratory features like zip lines.
- Stewardship & Circulation:
 - Emphasis on site-wide wayfinding (in progress), landscape naturalization (addressed via grant), and habitat/hydrology integration under restoration grants.
- Next Steps:
 - Board members were asked to review the draft list of new projects (previously shared during the July retreat) and suggest any additions. Staff may schedule two special meetings to discuss these in detail.
 - Discussion acknowledged the importance of maintaining the park's original mission: serving local families through recreation, education, and access to nature, while balancing opportunities like turf field use.
 - A request was made to revisit demographic data and park usage trends to guide project prioritization. Staff confirmed that previous demographic projections remain accurate.
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- Additional Discussion Points:
 - Board members emphasized balancing youth sports with broader recreational and educational opportunities.
 - Staff clarified that proposed turf fields are not intended for large tournaments but rather to increase field availability and reduce weather-related downtime.
 - An RFP for public art is ready for release, indicating some longer-term items may be initiated sooner.
- No motions were made, the Board and Staff will schedule a Special Called Board Meetings to go over all Master Plan ideas and rank their favorites and discuss them at the next meeting.

7. Financials

• 7a. Monthly Summaries:

- The financials were reviewed by S. Goodwill and N. Adams, there was general agreement that the year will likely end with a surplus. The financials were viewed as strong overall, with reasonable expenses reflected.

• 7b. Bank and Credit Card Statements:

- S. Lemoine reviewed the Credit Card Statements, after a few discussions and issues taken care of before the meeting, S. Lemoine approved the Credit Card Statements.
- Motion by J. Neill to approve the financials as presented. Second by S. Lemoine. Vote 5-0. Motion passes.

8. Committee Updates:

• 8a. Finance Committee– 04/10

- E. Bee began a discussion on the subjects presented at the Finance Committee. The board discussed that the district's population is growing at about 1% annually, property tax revenues have historically increased by around 3% per year due to inflation and rising property values. This 3% growth is considered a reasonable planning assumption based on trends from 2017 to 2025.
- A pending state bill could reduce property tax rates for “brown water” marine businesses, potentially lowering district revenues by approximately \$1 million. These changes could impact our taxes which is a significant revenue source for Recreation District #1.
- There was also discussion of future commercial growth along I-12, including a major distribution center at Hwy 1088 as well as a Loves Truck Stop. Such developments could help support long-term capital projects, which may lead to retail growth.

9. Division Monthly Reports

• 9a. Administration S. Reeder gave an overview for Admin updates:

- Picnic in the Park was held over the weekend with approximately 1,200 attendees, including around 300 children participating in the egg hunt. The event featured a DJ and food trucks, including a Food Network-featured BBQ vendor. Survey feedback has been positive with a 4.3-star average rating.

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- Park Visitation: Flock camera data recorded 95,382 cars entering the park over the past 3.5 weeks, indicating the park is on pace to exceed 1.2 million visitors annually. The busiest weekends coincided with youth basketball tournaments.
- **9b Planning:**
 - Skate Park Phase 2 construction is underway with steel delivery beginning this week; completion is expected by August 4.
 - Pickleball Courts are moving forward following board approval; revised plans will be submitted for bid.
 - Sand Volleyball Courts are in the design phase with conceptual drawings expected shortly.
 - Planetarium Demonstration is scheduled for Monday at 11:50 AM; board members are encouraged to attend.
 - Wayfinding & Trails: Neil Schaefer is finalizing signage plans and trail master plan components, including budget estimates.
 - Landscaping: Updates to the Castine Center parking lot islands are nearly complete, with relocated plant materials now providing improved aesthetics and shade.
 - Lake Pontchartrain Basin Restoration Grant: The sub-award agreement was submitted, and work will begin once the contract with NSI are executed is finalized.
 - **Upcoming Environmental Education Events:**
 - 4/6: Keep Louisiana Beautiful Litter Clean up (cancelled due to rain)
 - 4/12: Full Moon Night Hike @ Northlake Nature Center
 - 4/13: Cane Bayou Paddle (Partnership with Canoe and Trail Adventures)
 - 4/16: Cane Bayou Paddle (Partnership with Canoe and Trail Adventures)
 - 4/26: City Nature Challenge @ various parks.
 - 4/27: Celebrate Trails bird and nature walk @ Northlake Nature Center.
 - 5/9-5/10: Birdwatching Basics course @ Fontainebleau State Park
- **Programs in the works:**
 - Field trip with the St. Tammany Photographic Society (May 4th)
 - Overnight Naturalist Workshop @ Fontainebleau State Park (May 17th-18th)
 - Gulf Coast Phenology Trail training @ Northlake Nature Center (TBD)
 - Mammals Program with Bright Futures ABA Therapy (TBD)
 - Medicinal Mycology workshop and hike with Jordan Gros (TBD)
 - Edible Plant hike with Trenton Nichols (TBD)
 - Pontchartrain Astronomy Society: Star Party" dates: Saturday, May 3rd 8-10 pm on Orange 2
 - Louisiana Iris Conservation Initiative: The irises are in peak bloom as of the week of April 7th – generally lasts a week or 10 days

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- **9c. Parks:**

The Perry Weather alert system has been installed and tested. A test was conducted last Friday, and the system performed well. It is quite loud, which may startle some park users, such as those playing pickleball, but it is very effective. The system issues alerts for lightning and includes a 30-minute warning signal. When the danger has passed, it announces that it is safe to return.

Additionally, the system has a text-to-speech feature, allowing staff to type and broadcast custom messages to the entire park. This will be useful for making general announcements or emergency notifications.

- **9d. Recreation:**

- Fast-Pitch Softball Clinic – April 27, featuring participation from Pearl River Community College Athletes from Mississippi. Eight stations will be set up across the fields.
- Pickleball Pop-Up Clinics: Registration is open for Ken and Vicky's pickleball pop-up clinic. The program has been well-received and attended.
- Baseball/Softball Season: The season began on April 8, though opening games were canceled due to weather. Games officially started on April 9.
- Recreational Soccer: The MSC soccer season concluded on April 13. Competitive teams are still holding a few practices on the purple fields, with tryouts scheduled on the yellow field.
- Now all Coaches will be required to wear a photo ID Badge to coach.
- Basketball Tournament Rentals: Biddy Tournament was in late March, LaMark Tournament the following weekend and two additional YBOA tournaments as well.
- Rugby Tournament – First Weekend of May
- A large adult rugby tournament is scheduled for May 3, this is expected to be a significant event with teams traveling in from various locations.
- Pickleball Facility Update: Despite the number of indoor pickleball facilities in our area, outdoor courts remain consistently busy. A player commented on the high costs of indoor play compared to free outdoor access. Evening usage remains strong, though daytime players may be drawn to indoor venues. We have now introduced Court Etiquette Signage due to concerns about court sharing during peak times. While there is a general understanding among players to rotate off after games.

- **9c. Castine Center:**

- Catherine and Tracy reported strong facility usage, with events filling the calendar. Last week included events from Thursday through Sunday, featuring an MMA event, followed by the Jehovah's Witnesses, and another group. This week's schedule includes events on Thursday and Friday. Event attendance has been high, and contracts continue to come in regularly.
- Special recognition was given to Melissa Garcia for her outstanding work on contract processing. Since joining, she has significantly improved turnaround time, completing 30

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contracts by mid-week, with the latest signed just before the meeting. Her contributions, including her work on grants, have been excellent and much appreciated.

- The SIU Business Forum was held on April 10, the same day as the Finance Committee meeting. Parking was at full capacity with the high level of activity at the facility.

10. Old Business:

11. Public Comments: None

Next Board of Commissioner Meeting, Wednesday, May 21, 2025

Board Reminder: Board Member Financial Disclosure Forms are due online by May 15, 2025

12. Meeting Adjourn:

- **Motion to adjourn at 8:00pm by J. Neill. Second by S. Lemoine Vote 5-0 in favor.**

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