

**PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

January 20, 2026 9:00 A.M.

PRESENT: Mike Wise, Chair
Kent Gordon, Member
Jayne Stitik, Member

ABSENT: Liz Sinatra, Vice Chair
Daryl Dykens, Member

STAFF PRESENT: Mandy Edmunds, Resident Services Director
Ginny Bodkin, Deputy City Clerk

Chair Wise called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Approval of the Agenda

Motion: Member Gordon moved, and Member Stitik seconded to approve the January 20, 2026 agenda as presented; the motion carried unanimously.

2. Audience Comments – No one came forward to comment

3. Action Items

a. Fee Study Presentation by Raftelis and Recommendations

Resident Services Director Mandy Edmunds explained that committee input is being sought as St. Pete Beach conducts a comprehensive city-wide fee study. This meeting would focus solely on recreation and aquatics, and member input would be for how the process (not necessarily the fees) stands now and moving forward to completion with this project.

She introduced Christina Conchilla, Senior Consultant from the local government consulting firm Raftelis, who has been working with staff for several months. Ms. Conchilla presented the methodology and preliminary findings of the fee study focusing on Parks and Recreation. The purpose and objectives are to establish a defensible, transparent methodology tied to actual costs of service, identify opportunities for additional revenue, fee consolidation, removal of obsolete fees, support long-term financial sustainability for Parks & Recreation operations and maintenance, and benchmark fees against peer communities (10 nearby jurisdictions plus YMCA, particularly for camps) to ensure competitiveness and avoid pricing users out of services.

She explained the methodology: all Parks & Recreation fees were grouped into seven service categories (pool, recreation programs, camps, gym, facility rentals, special events, and beach weddings). Department expenses were allocated to these categories based on staff time and operational effort. Current cost recovery was calculated by dividing fee revenue by allocated expenses for each category. Target cost recovery levels were then set using American Planning Association (APA) and National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) standards, which use a three-tier “cost recovery pyramid” based on public vs. individual benefit.

She presented a three-tier cost recovery framework: Tier 1 – High community benefit (0–20% cost recovery) - examples: parks, playgrounds, open space, which are primarily tax-supported with generally no or very low fees; Tier 2 – Mixed community/individual benefit (~70% target) - examples: pool use, camps, afterschool programs, youth leagues, special events. Costs are shared between users and taxpayers; Tier 3 – Individual benefit (100% target) - examples: facility and ballroom rentals, adult leagues, private lessons, trainers., which are intended to be fully user-funded. Recognizing the potential for “sticker shock,” especially in Tier 3, Rafelis recommends phasing increases over three years (longer if desired). The model allows adjustments if participation drops or fees become unreasonable.

In the benchmark findings, fee comparisons showed that results vary by program, but overall St. Pete Beach fees are lower than most peer communities, leaving room for increases while remaining competitive. Benchmarking acts as a “reality check” against strict cost recovery, ensuring fees do not exceed market tolerance. The YMCA data was primarily used for summer camp comparisons due to program similarity.

Six fee option alternatives were presented – 1) Full cost recovery in Year 1; 2) Phased cost recovery (default: 3 years); 3) Maximum peer benchmark rate; 4) Staff/board override rate for local judgment; 5) Keep current rate; 6) Consolidate or remove fee.

Regarding resident vs. non-resident fees, the study generally maintains the existing resident/non-resident fee ratio, recognizing residents’ tax support, however, some programs currently charge the same rate to both. A key policy question for the committee is whether to introduce or expand non-resident premiums for those services. Staff noted that recreation classes skew non-resident, special events skew resident, and pool use is roughly balanced.

Ms. Conchella summarized that input is being sought in two main areas - agreement with the cost recovery methodology and direction on resident vs. non-resident fees.

The committee’s recommendations were to prioritize participation and utilization over maximum cost recovery, emphasizing that maintaining high participation in classes, fitness programs, and pool use is more important than strictly achieving higher fees and raising fees to match benchmarks; cost recovery targets should not come at the expense of reduced usage or community engagement. Spreading fixed costs (such as instructors) across more participants is financially and socially beneficial. Regarding resident vs. non-resident fees, the committee expressed discomfort with charging different rates for residents and non-residents for classes and fitness programs. History shows that resident/non-resident class pricing reduced participation, particularly from neighboring communities. The current single-rate structure for classes is viewed as successful and should generally be maintained.

For programs that fill to capacity (especially camps and licensed childcare programs), the committee supported resident priority registration, followed by non-resident enrollment to fill remaining slots. The committee acknowledged that the pool and similar facilities are community amenities, funded for quality-of-life benefits rather than profit. There is no expectation of achieving 100% cost recovery for these services, as is common in all municipalities. The committee did not support setting fees simply to align with peer cities’ averages and expressed a strong preference for keeping programs accessible to friends, family, and neighboring communities, provided residents are not

displaced. The committee endorsed using the study’s override and phased approaches, recognizing that fee-setting requires judgment beyond formulas. Not all programs should be treated the same; larger “big ticket” items (rentals, camps) may warrant closer alignment with benchmarks, while classes should remain flexible.

Overall, the committee supported the study’s framework but recommended a balanced, utilization-first approach, maintaining single-rate classes, prioritizing residents only where capacity is constrained, using benchmarks as guardrails—not targets—and accepting that some parks and recreation services are intended primarily as community benefits rather than revenue sources.

Ms. Edmunds commented that facility rentals declined over the past few years due to COVID, storm impacts, and building maintenance issues (notably AC failures), making recent years unreliable for trend analysis. Utilization is now rebounding to roughly pre-disruption levels from about three years ago, averaging 25–30 rentals per year. Saturday bookings at the community center are filling again, with March and April largely booked, and activity at the Warren Webster facility is also increasing. Staff are launching a focused marketing effort to further boost rentals, which are viewed as high-value revenue opportunities that significantly offset operating costs.

4. Added Items for Discussion

Member Gordon praised the recent Warren Webster meeting for successfully engaging the shuffleboard community, which he noted had previously been largely invisible. He expressed concern that the shuffleboard courts and historic building have operated “under the radar” - not appearing in budgets, work orders, or the city website - and are largely maintained by users themselves, despite the courts being in poor condition and needing significant investment. He highlighted the planned demolition of a historically significant pavilion, damaged after user-added walls failed during a hurricane, questioning how such decisions occur with little broader oversight. He did not call for immediate action but urged the committee to be more aware and involved in oversight of shuffleboard and other recreational facilities, noting that these are city assets used by more than just a single group.

Member Gordon asked whether the informal dog beach is an official or public facility. Ms. Edmunds clarified that the area is not an official park or parcel, but a temporary sandbar that changes with dredging and storms. Once new signage is installed, it will be treated as open land rather than a city park, meaning standard park leash rules will no longer apply. The area will be posted as off-leash, use at your own risk, formalizing its informal status without designating it as a regulated dog park.

5. Adjournment – The next meeting is the special meeting on April 21, 2026.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:53 AM.

These minutes were approved at the April 21, 2026 Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee meeting.