



**Hendry LaBelle Recreation Board**  
**P.O. Box 1760**  
**LaBelle, FL. 33935**  
**(863)675-5347 - Office (863)675-0390 – Fax**

September 21, 2023

A regular meeting of the Hendry LaBelle Recreation Board was held on the above date at 6:00 PM at the Hendry-LaBelle Recreation Office, 310 Cowboy Way, LaBelle, Florida.

City Commissioner/Chairman, Daniel Akin, called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Opening Prayer was led by County Commissioner, Mitchell Wills. Members present were, City Commissioner, Bobbie Spratt; Schoolboard Member, Paul Samerdyke; and County Commissioner, Emory “Rowdy” Howard.

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Akin opened with Bids – None.

Consent Agenda -

***Chairman Akin made a motion to accept the August 17, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes and to approve payment of the bills. Commissioner Spratt seconded. All were in favor. Motion was unanimously passed.***

Awards, Appearances, and Presentations – None.

Correspondence (FYI) – None.

Chairman Akin opened the floor up for Public Comment.

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Stephanie Sposato of Southern Swamp Gala stepped to the podium to ask permission for this year's Gala to be held at Forrey Park once again during Swamp Cabbage weekend (February 24, 2024). Director Lynn agreed but made a stipulation that their participants/attendees were not to park on the baseball fields. Commissioner Spratt asked Commissioner Wills if there were any of those orange barricades that could be put out in that area to keep people off that field. Commissioner Wills replied, "That would be no problem." Commissioner Howard asked Director Lynn if he had to do any prep work before the Gala is actually held. Director Lynn replied that he would put the cones out again and put caution tape up too and if we don't have enough, we can get with Commissioner Wills. Commissioner Wills replied that he does have plenty of those. Stephanie agreed.

***Commissioner Wills made a motion to approve having the Gala at Forrey Park again this year, Commissioner Howard seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.***

Hearing of the Public - Dessie Thomas stepped up to the podium to report that the side window next to the kitchen of the James Singleton Community Center has dry rotted wood around it is falling out. She further stated that it hadn't leaked there yet but could someone take a look at it. Director Lynn told her that it had already been fixed since Saturday. Ms. Thomas expressed her appreciation. Chairman Akin thanked her for bringing it to their attention.

Before Ms. Thomas sat down, Commissioner Wills interjected that he had spoken to Miss Wanda about the 501(c)3 exempt status timeline. Miss Wanda said that she was still looking into it. Commissioner Wills wanted to make sure that Ms. Thomas didn't think he had forgotten. She replied that she didn't think he had.

Commissioner Spratt told Ms. Thomas that she was inviting Director Lynn and some of the other Board Members to the Ford & Sunset Community meetings at New Bethel Church. Director Lynn wanted to know why aren't they having their meetings at the Singleton building. Commissioner Spratt replied, "They started those meetings back when they still had to pay for the Singleton Building." She wanted Ms. Thomas to know that's exactly the kind of meetings that should be going on there, a community meeting. Ms. Thomas thanked everyone and said she would let us know when they want to use it. Chairman Akin thanked Ms. Thomas for her comments.

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Staff Reports - Director Lynn turned this portion over to Kim since she was the one who brought up the 501(c)3 timeline questions and had not yet received verification on that last month. Director Lynn further mentioned that Commissioner Wills was going to ask somebody. Commissioner Wills answered that is what he was telling Ms. Thomas that his bookkeeper, Miss Wanda, at the church is in Lake City and is actively working on that. Commissioner Spratt said there were several questions there. Does that answer all those questions? Commissioner Wills stated that the process is not a short process. Kim then asked how long are we going to allow them to not show any paperwork and get the Singleton building for free? Commissioner Wills stated that we know they are in the process of applying. Schoolboard Member, Paul Samerdyke, said they have no control on how long the process will take. Chairman Akin asked, "Do we have a timeline?" Commissioner Wills stated, "I don't." Chairman Akin suggested that we could safely set a timeline of 4 or 6 months so we have a measuring stick.

***Commissioner Wills made a motion to put a 6-month timeline on the 501(c)3 application process and if it isn't done in that time frame, we come back to the Board and ask for an extension. Schoolboard Member Samerdyke seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.***

Removal of the basketball hoops at the Rodeo Grounds. Director Lynn said he was looking into getting something else done. He got with Jon Hamil to quote a roof over basketball court at Civic Park. Can go ahead and do away with the hoops at the Rodeo Grounds since it's not a public park. Commissioner Wills asked, "If it's not a public park, then what is it?" Director Lynn replied, "It's not a public park." Commissioner Wills stated, "It is a public park." They looked over at Tommy Vaughan and he stated, "It's a rodeo ground." Director Lynn said, "It's locked 24/7 unless someone calls for a reservation." Commissioner Wills restated, "It's a public park." Commissioner Wills asked how much the price range was for the roof for the Civic Park basketball court... further stating the reason he asked is that they had one done for the City of LaBelle at the water plant and the barn which were quite a bit smaller than that and it cost \$17,000.00 so it might be in the \$25,000-\$28,000 range. He further stated that it's a good idea to separate the two venues. Commissioner Wills continued to say that if the fans are being damaged, then we should probably start working on taking the hoops down.

***Chairman Akin made the motion to have the basketball hoops removed at the Rodeo Grounds, Commissioner Wills seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.***

Reports & Other Business - Director Lynn brought up his employment evaluation – all five (5) Board Member's evaluation forms were turned in. Commissioner Wills stated that each could

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look at the opinions of the others, so they passed the forms around. Schoolboard Member Samerdyke said to Steven: "You do commendable work that I can see." Chairman Akin reported that they are all positive comments... further stating that Commissioner Howard and himself determined that Director Lynn was doing a great job... further taking steps to further his education such as turf management, so I put, "Needs Improvement, which is part of being new so it's not really a criticism but a reality." Director Lynn said he appreciated everyone's comments. Commissioner Spratt said that Director Lynn's salary would be discussed along with the proposed budget approval, which is the next agenda item.

Director Lynn handed out two (2) pages to each Board Member instructing that the first was the Primary Budget and the second was the Forrey Park Budget. He stated what his salary is at and asked if they all agreed on that amount. Commissioner Wills asked if the budget supported that figure and Director Lynn answered, "Yes."

There was discussion between Director Lynn and Commissioner Wills about the YMCA figure listed from last year to this year stating that it was \$27,000 last year and it's \$32,000 this year. Commissioner Wills said that we did not support YMCA this year, so let's go along with that.

Commissioner Howard asked if all the employees are at the rate they are supposed to be and Director Lynn replied, "Yes, the last one is at \$15.00/hr., which a little bit more than the 5%." Commissioner Spratt said she was glad that got taken care of. Commissioner Wills said that if Director Lynn is doing the job that everyone says he is doing, he believes that it's only right that they pay him for doing the job. Commissioner Howard pointed out that Director Lynn had gone from a focused operations person to a director's position with a much broader vision for West Rec and he does believe that the director's position warrants that salary. Schoolboard Member Samerdyke replied that Director Lynn does work pretty hard - at night, people call after hours and it's more than a 40 hour a week job.

***Commissioner Wills made a motion to set Director Lynn's salary at \$70,000. Schoolboard Member, Samerdyke, seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.***

Budget Approvals – Without any further comments...

***Commissioner Wills made a motion to accept the Budgets as proposed. Commissioner Howard seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.***

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Agenda Additions - Director Lynn stated that he wanted to move forward on the purchase of ABI equipment. He stated he didn't want to wait until the budget for next year but to go ahead and use the money right now. He further stated that he had an unusual Transfer of Funds Request to move \$20,000 from salaries; \$10,000 from machinery and equipment of the Primary Budget and another \$30,000 from Other Contractual Services from the Forrey Park Budget into Machinery & Equipment in the Forrey Park Budget for a total of \$60,000. The ABI is \$48,480.00 with all of its attachments and we are looking to trade in the Toro. Director Lynn said he did some shopping around for a side by side and found it right here in town at Aaction Power Equipment for a total of \$14,599.00 out the door. The side by side would be used for spraying and picking up trash. The ABI has many uses, saves time and the quality is far above the SandPro which this will replace. Warranty and training come with it for no additional cost.

***Commissioner Wills made a motion to approve the transfer of funds and the purchases of the ABI and UTV, Commissioner Spratt seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.***

Approval and Signing of the Hendry-LaBelle Recreation Board Resolution No.: 2023. Director Lynn explained the changes from the previous Resolution 2018-01 to amend Resolution 2023 consisted of the "rental fee" of \$50.00 being waived by the Board and is no longer charged, a "set-up fee" is no longer charged, a "cleaning fee" is no longer charged, and a "supervision fee" is no longer charged, so all of that language has been stricken from pages 5, 6 & 7. There was additional language on the Schedule of Fees pertaining to the rental of the Rodeo Grounds that was stricken because Hendry-LaBelle Recreation Board is no longer is in charge of renting that facility. Director Lynn went on to answer Commissioner Spratt's inquiry with regard to the issue with LaBelle Martial Arts (his contract being the League License Agreement) that the language in paragraph 1.3.8 on Page 3 of Resolution 2023 about preventing monopolization still stands. "No regular events may be held." Mr. Norberto loan is no longer holding classes at the James Singleton Community Center.

Chairman Aiken pointed out that we need to keep track of the number that is assigned to these Amendments/Resolutions from the Record Book. Kim said she wasn't sure if Legal assigns the number or the Clerk's office once it's filed.

***Commissioner Spratt made motion to accept Resolution 2023 for the revised Fee Schedule. Schoolboard Member Samerdyke seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.***

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Approval and Signing of the Kid Jones Playground Interlocal Agreement – Director Lynn explained that the signing of the Interlocal Agreement between Hendry County, Hendry-LaBelle Recreation Board and The Florida Department of Health – Hendry County Health Department, for the grant money explained in “Exhibit A” will need to be completed tonight. Tommy Vaughan stepped up to the podium to say that he had brought the three (3) Interlocal Agreement originals here on behalf of The Department of Health. The Department shall reimburse the Recreation Board for the purchase, construction and installation of playground equipment as explained in Exhibit A for Alton “Kid Jones” Park located at 450 Withlacoochee Ave., LaBelle, Florida totaling \$69,157. No costs that exceed this amount will be reimbursed. This installation has to be completed no later than April 30, 2024. The Board acknowledges that the program funding ends on May 31, 2024 and no reimbursements beyond that date will be made by The Department. The Recreation Board will be responsible to remove the old playground equipment and prepare the site for the installation of the new playground equipment which will include mulch.

***Commissioner Wills made a motion to approve and sign the Playground Interlocal Agreement. Commissioner Howard seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.***

Open Forum - No motions are required, just information being shared. Director Lynn showed the Board members a site map of Forrey Park indicating that there is no way to get construction vehicles through to perform construction of the new concession stand due to the backstops and lighting already installed there. He spoke to Rock and Shane Parker about donating some millings to create an entryway for just construction vehicles. If we don't do this, we will need to tear down the existing backstops/lighting. Rock proposes holding off on the final installation of lights because this one particular area without the lights is the only way to enter - causing the final two (2) light poles to be put on hold until we get this finished. Commissioner Akin added that he also spoke with Rock and he told him the same thing. Commissioner Howard said we should follow Rock's recommendation.

Director Steven Lynn then brought up the lighting for Civic Park's soccer field explaining that he met with David Whited of Whited Electric on the location of the service. He recommended that FPL install the service by the fence. Director Steven Lynn will get with FPL next week to have a representative come out and put eyes on the situation and advise us accordingly.

Director Steven Lynn mentioned the 4-H Club at the Rodeo Ground – N.E. Corner to add panels – board fence to loop around and go to the new steer barn (12x14 gate). All materials will be

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donated and at no cost to the Rec Board. It should be completed before 4-H begins in February. This will take place on the weekends with all of the Leaders and Director Lynn will be there to help them.

Director Steven Lynn stated that he is looking into becoming a Certified Playground Inspector through the course the FRPA offers. It's the cheapest route at roughly \$600.00. The next course is in November. He stated he is not ready to take that one yet; however, he wanted to get the okay to pursue that. Schoolboard Member Samerdyke asked about the particulars of it. Director Lynn explained that it's a three (3) day course with two (2) days allotted to training with an actual inspector on hand and the third day is taking the test. Commissioner Spratt asked where it is held at. Director Steven Lynn answered that the next one in November is in Venice but that he doesn't know the location of the one he would attend at this time. They do not have the location for next year yet. Commissioner Howard asked what the certification allowed him to do. Director Steven Lynn said the certification would benefit us with regard to the insurance and to inspect the parks in order to keep them from being shut down. Commissioner Howard further stated that it would help him to identify things like what Mr. Iglacious found out at the Rodeo Grounds. Chairman Akin added that these courses are very worthwhile.

Kim asked Director Steven Lynn to give feedback on the FRPA conference he just attended in Orlando the last week of August. Director Steven Lynn stated he attended 15 classes the whole time he was there and it was very interesting. During the Director/Assistant Director's breakfast – he found out that we are the only County in the State of Florida that has our parks split with the City.

Commissioner Spratt suggested that we change the start time of these meetings to 5:30 p.m. instead of 6:00 p.m.

***Chairman Akin made a motion to change the meeting time to 5:30 p.m. Schoolboard Member Samerdyke seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.***

Dessie Thomas approached the podium to ask how the new playground at Kid Jones Park would affect the swings. Director Steven Lynn said that he will not be removing the swings.

Schoolboard Member Samerdyke wanted to comment further about the Forrey Park construction entrance being only a "temporary" thing. He feels that there should be a more permanent/good access from now on out there.

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Commissioner Howard brought up the Boat Ramp Parking issue and shared photographs of Sunday evening of all The Launch patrons parking in the boating parking spaces and after the tiki bar closed, they did “burn-outs” on our newly paved parking lot. He indicated that the Board of County Commissioners is engaged on this issue too. Planner, Ryan Alexander, has one more step he needs to take but not sure what the final answer is going to be whether it's going to be recommending a new fence. Everyone is struggling with a real clear answer. Nonetheless it’s the boaters that are affected by that behavior on our freshly sealed parking lot. It's just not appropriate. Chairman Aikin agreed and further stated that the flip side is the facility was originally there as a bait shop, now it’s a restaurant. They had to have had approval on the parking there and on the hotel side. There is never going to be enough parking for boaters. Commissioner Howard stated that is a whole other issue. Schoolboard member Samerdyke asked if it’s been discussed with Daniel Paragrin. Commissioner Howard replied there has been a discussion but didn’t know where that went. It will be his issue, rather than falling wholly on us stated Schoolboard Member Samerdyke. Commissioner Wills interjected that the County is looking for other property for a boat ramp along with SW Florida Water Management. There will never be enough parking at the current spot. Staff is working on other properties to possibly moving the boat ramp to.

Then, Directory Lynn got up to show everyone photos he had of vandalism at Forrey Park’s electric room where someone tried to break in with a hammer putting a hole in the wall and damaging the metal door and lock but were unsuccessful getting in.

Commissioner Wills mentioned that the family that lost the 15 year old child is going to have a benefit/BBQ for use of the Rodeo Grounds for a fund raiser this weekend.

***Commissioner wills made a motion to allow the fund raiser at the Rodeo Grounds this Saturday. Schoolboard Member Samerdyke seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.***

Commissioner Akin said that he was pleasantly surprised to see that our cash balance forward on the Budget had gone up.

Mr. William Thomas in the public stated that he needs nets for the basketball hoops for Kid Jones Park. Chairman Akin said that should already be on Director Lynn’s list. Director Lynn affirmed that it is.

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Chairman Akin reported that Rock is almost finished with the Forrey Park bid for the lighting and 75% completed on the concession stand bid. He further stated that funds may need to be transferred because he doesn't think there are sufficient funds in the Budget to complete the concession stand. More discussion ensued between Chairman Akin and Commissioner Wills about the funds needed for this project over the past seven (7) years. Director Lynn stated that we have saved over \$18,000 by taking over control of the lights.

Commissioner Wills brought up the situation of both restrooms at the boat dock being closed. Director Lynn advised that he is waiting on parts for the toilets that were damaged due to vandalism. He will get them up and running as soon as he can.

Chairman Akin wanted to revisit the recent vandalism at Forrey Park. Director Lynn stated that he would need to get a new metal door and fix the hole in the wall. He showed the photos he had in his phone of the damage. Commissioner Howard asked if he filed a police report with Director Lynn responding that he will be. Currently there are no video cameras out there; however, Director Lynn has a couple in stock that he intends on installing on the Musco lights to point down on each side of the electrical room. Commissioner Wills advised Director Lynn to be sure and check with the attorney on liability and how long those have to be maintained and backed up and how they will be monitored before installing them so that we don't get into a lawsuit. Director Lynn agreed.

Chairman Akin brought up the sink hole problem at the LaBelle Sports Park/Tennis Courts on the old landfill - stating that a decision should be made soon because it's a liability with public safety. Commissioner Spratt agreed with what he was saying but hates to see those tennis courts close. Schoolboard Member Samerdyke also stated that the racquet ball courts are being utilized there as well as the walkway and pavilion. Chairman Akin suggested that some portions could be kept but pretending that pretending that it's safe for the public doesn't make sense. Director Lynn stated that the only part of that park that he has not found a sink hole on is the fenced in dog park area. Everywhere else he has. Director Lynn mentioned that he is obtaining quotes for a combined tennis/pickleball courts for Forrey Park. Commissioner Wills made a recommendation that perhaps we get the School Board involved in donating funds to the new tennis/pickleball courts since their students use those old tennis courts that require the cracks needing patched frequently.

***Commissioner Spratt made motion to adjourn the meeting. Schoolboard Member Samerdyke seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.***

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## ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Akin, adjourned the meeting. Meeting was dismissed at 7:10 p.m.

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