

SARASOTA COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources

TO: Sarasota County Commission
THROUGH: Thomas A. Harmer, County Administrator
FROM: Carolyn Brown, Director, Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources
DATE: October 13, 2015
SUBJECT: Update on Parks, Preserves and Recreation Master Plan Project

RECOMMENDED MOTION(S) OR ACTION(S):

Update on the progress of the Parks, Preserves and Recreation Master Plan and preliminary findings.

BACKGROUND:

Sarasota County Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Department manages 160 park and preserve sites totaling over 55,000 acres. With over 35 miles of beach shoreline, 113 athletic fields, a range of recreation centers and neighborhood parks, miles of trails, historic buildings, and expansive preserves, Sarasota County has an abundance of outstanding natural resources and notable amenities. The value and impact of the County's park system to residents and visitors is reflected in the popularity of our beaches, the strong attendance at recreational activities and events, and the constant demand for use of amenities within the parks and preserves. Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources sites, programs and amenities also contribute to tourist development tax revenue by supporting tourism within the County.

In order to capitalize on future opportunities as well as provide a prioritized strategic approach to funding the immediate and future needs of the community, Request for Proposals No. 142848KR was issued on July 21, 2014 requesting proposals from qualified professionals to provide the development of a master plan. Toole Design Group, LLC (Toole) was the selected proposer and the Board of County Commissioners (Board) approved a Consulting Services Agreement, Contract No. 2015-123 (Attachment 1) on February 11, 2015.

RELEVANT PRIOR BOARD ACTION:

1. January 28, 2014 - The Board directed the Interim County Administrator to extend an offer to the Area Municipalities to collaborate and be included in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Project (5-0 vote).
2. February 11, 2015 - The Board approved a Consulting Services Agreement Contract No. 2015-123, with Toole Design Group, LLC in an amount not to exceed \$299,800 (5-0 vote).

PROCUREMENT ACTION:

Request for Proposals No. 142848KR was issued on July 21, 2014, resulting in Contract 2015-123 with Toole Design Group, LLC.

ANALYSIS/NEXT STEPS:

The scope of work for the master plan contains 18 primary objectives and is divided into seven tasks. The objectives, tasks and the project schedule are included in Attachment 1. The project is on schedule and Tasks 2 and 3, Inventory and Analysis, are complete. During the implementation of these tasks, 143 parks were evaluated and PRNR’s budget and operations guidelines were assessed.

Work is progressing on Task 4, Needs Assessment, and the public engagement portion of this task recently concluded. PRNR and Toole actively engaged with over 3,500 people through multiple platforms including:

- Three public workshops
- Ten focus groups (Athletic Leagues, Economic Development, Environment, Municipalities, Parents, School Board, Seniors, Trails, Young Professionals, Volunteers)
- Eight special events (Farmer’s Markets, Big Truck Day, etc.)
- On-Line Survey
- Statistically valid mail survey

Preliminary indications include the following:

- The County parks, preserves and recreation system is beloved by County residents and visitors and is a significant factor in the County’s high quality of life.
- Only a few top priority needs have emerged including athletic fields, fitness and exercise equipment, playgrounds and off-leash dog parks.
- The overall system should be updated to address:
 - Changing needs and trends, such as planning to meet needs of an aging demographic
 - Deferred maintenance and repairs
 - Sports tourism
- Continued emphasis should be placed on:
 - Nature Trails and Centers
 - Wildlife Habitat
 - Small Neighborhood Parks
 - Paved Trails
 - Boat Ramps and Launches
 - Water Access
 - Fishing Areas
 - Large Community and Regional Parks
 - Public Recreational Beach Space
- Based upon public input, focus group meetings, nationwide trends, and discussions with community leaders and PRNR staff, improved / increased athletic fields and playgrounds rose to a higher priority than if evaluated solely on input received from the statistically valid survey.
- The County may benefit from improved aesthetics, new/upgraded facilities, additional amenities and reinforcement of a Sarasota County “brand” throughout the system.

FUNDING:

Funding for the contract with Toole is encumbered in Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Project #93077 through the N Park Construction Fund (\$149,900) and the S Park Construction Fund (\$149,900).

A funding strategy related to future park improvements will be identified as the master plan project continues.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION(S):

The Parks, Preserves and Recreation Master Plan is well underway. Staff will continue to bring periodic updates to the Board.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Consulting Services Agreement, Contract No. 2015-123
2. Presentation