



Oconee County Parks & Recreation

Lisa Davol, Director

Board of Commissioners

John Daniell, Chairman
Mark Thomas, Post 1
Chuck Horton, Post 2
Amrey Harden, Post 3
Mark Saxon, Post 4

Recreation Advisory Committee – Called Meeting Meeting Minutes – April 15, 2025

Members Present: Richard Ashmore, Joe Avolio, Jason Hewell, Leslie Hunsinger, Dan Moore, Wesley Scott, Robin Stevens

Members Absent: Giles Moree

Staff: Lisa Davol, Pat Sebring, Jake Thornton, Justin Kirouac

Guest: Philip Bernardi (OFC, Flag Football, Premier Basketball), Dutch Guest (Tackle Football, Lacrosse, Baseball), Terry Owens (Tackle Football), Tim Finney (Premier Basketball, Travel Flag Football, Tennis, Softball), Trey Beavers (Tackle Football), Heather MacDonald (OCLL)

BOC: Commissioner Horton

Press: None

Minutes:

1. Call to Order – The Recreation Committee convened the regular meeting at Oconee Veterans Park. Leslie Hunsinger called the meeting to order.
2. Davol introduced Justin Kirouac to the attendees to provide an update on Dawson Park.

Kirouac stated that LOSE engineering provided conceptual plans and Carter Engineering would be designing the park in its entirety. Kirouac said that the BOC received 3 conceptual phases for building out the park and the BOC voted on option B with the goal to break ground in the spring of 2026. In addition, Kirouac said that the previous LAS site is scheduled to be decommissioned by December of 2025. Bernardi asked what the total costs to build out Dawson Park and Kirouac stated estimates are \$80-\$100M with \$17-\$18M currently allocated. Question was asked if any fields will be artificial turf and Kirouac responded that it was undetermined at this time though natural turf provides largest bang for the buck for initial costs. Kirouac added that it would be a 12-to-18-month build, and natural turf would need a growing season to be ready for play. Bernardi asked what would determine what was built in the first phase and Kirouac answered that was a policy choice and funding would be a factor. Scott asked about financing bonds. Kirouac stated that bond options are being reviewed, as well as the upcoming SPLOST. Kirouac said that the park design aligns with the community input received thus far for fields.

Hunsinger requested input from attendees. Bernardi emphasized that the park is needed today and does not believe phasing is the best option. Bernardi added that COSTCO helps provide funding now, there is high demand for the facilities and Oconee families are traveling outside the county due to lack of fields and gym space. Guest said that the lack of fields also affects baseball and softball and if OCLL was able to play only during the week it would open up the opportunity to host



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tournaments on the weekends. Guest mentioned that youth lacrosse was a growing sport and that tackle football numbers are increasing.

Commissioner Horton stated Dawson Park was an opportunity to do something on a large scale. He expressed concern over access to school facilities for park programs with no backup available. In addition, Horton stated that Dawson Park would enable tournament play.

Hunsinger announced the upcoming Town Hall on Tuesday, May 13. Stevens supported the build-out of the park and also stated the issue with competing forces for funding.

Kirouac stated that there are currently \$600M in capital needs for the county; to include sewer, roundabouts and other important needs. Kirouac said that the 2027 SPLOST vote would be in the spring of 2026 to support capital, but does not support M&O. In addition, Kiroauc said that the OVP debt would be paid by 2034. Kirouac added that the county would be educating the public on the upcoming SPLOST starting this summer; however, the BOC only educates and does not advocate for SPLOST. Bernardi said that the user groups will advocate for it. Scott said they learned from OVP not to phase in the park build.

Hunsinger thanked everyone for attending.

3. Other Business. None.