



CITY OF BARTOW
RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2025 AT 5:30 PM
OR AS SOON THEREAFTER AS POSSIBLE
CITY HALL COMMISSION CHAMBERS
450 NORTH WILSON AVE., BARTOW, FL 33830

AGENDA

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL
2. INVOCATION
3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. October 8, 2025, Regular Meeting
5. PUBLIC COMMENT
6. DIRECTOR'S REPORT
7. OLD BUSINESS
 - a. Florida Wildlife Conservation Presentation
8. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Board Member Shirts
9. ADVISORY BOARD COMMENTS
10. CITY COMMISSIONER COMMENTS
11. NEXT MEETING DATE
12. ADJOURNMENT

Please be advised that if you desire to appeal any decisions made as a result of the above hearing or meeting, you will need a record of the proceedings and in some cases, a verbatim record is required. You must make your own arrangements to produce this record. (Florida Statute 286.0105) If you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. Please contact the City Clerk's Office at 450 N. Wilson Avenue, P.O. Box 1069, Bartow, Florida 33831-1069, or phone (863) 534-0100 within 2 working days of your receipt of this meeting notification; if you are hearing or voice impaired, call 1-800-955-8771. Posted at City Hall and the City's Website www.cityofbartow.net on 11/4/2025.

**CITY OF BARTOW
RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2025 – 5:30 P.M. (EST)
CITY COMMISSION CHAMBER, CITY HALL
450 N. WILSON AVENUE, BARTOW, FL 33830**

MINUTES

The City of Bartow Recreation Advisory Board held a regular meeting on Wednesday, October 8, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall in the City Commission Chamber, 450 N. Wilson Avenue, Bartow. Notice of this meeting was posted at City Hall, Bartow Public Library, and on the City’s website www.cityofbartow.net.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Keith called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. INVOCATION

Board Member Bohde gave the invocation.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Board Members gave the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America Flag.

4. SWEARING IN THE NEW BOARD MEMBER – Swearing in new board member Troy Lung

Deputy City Clerk Donna Donaldson swore in new Board Member Troy Lung.

5. ROLL CALL

Deputy City Clerk Donna Donaldson called the roll and attendance was as follows:

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Board Member Bill Bohde, Board Member Leslie Green (arrived at 5:34 p.m.), Board Member Troy Lung, and Board Member Sheila Keith, Chairperson

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Board Member Carver Young, Vice-Chairperson

CITY COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Mayor Tanya Tucker

STAFF PRESENT: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Director Jason Hargrove, Parks and Recreation Assistant Director Kyle Lasek, and Deputy City Clerk Donna Donaldson.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. September 10, 2025 – Regular Meeting

MOTION was made by Board Member Bohde, seconded by Board Member Lung to approve the minutes from September 10, 2025, Regular Meeting as presented.

VOTE TO THE MOTION WAS AS FOLLOWS:

AYE: Bohde, Green, Keith, Lung

NAY: None

Motion carried.

- 6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT** – At this time, the Board will receive comments from the public regarding matters not appearing on this agenda.

Chairperson Keith opened and closed the floor to receive comments from the public regarding matters not appearing on this agenda. There were no comments.

6. DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Director Hargrove

Director Hargrove reported on the following:

(A copy of the report is attached therein and is described as Exhibit A)

○ **Golf Course**

- Won Best Public Golf Course – Best of Central Florida Community Choice Awards
- Cart Paths completed by October 30th.

○ **Library**

- Update on Story Trail – received 100% drawings – waiting on SWFMD Permit before organizing Bid documents.

○ **Parks and Recreation**

- Athletic Courts coming a long great- Whitehead Construction – photos provided by Assistant Director Lasek

(A copy of the photos is attached therein and is described as Exhibit B)

○ **AC Updates**

- Carver Recreation Center
- Polk Street
- Civic Center Floors being done 11/26 thru 12/5 – stripped down and waxed. Quoting out to have the floors done at Polk Street Community Center.
- Nye Jordan Park Water Fountain – pending third quote then will start project. This water fountain will include a water bottle feature, high water fountain, low water foundation for ADA compliant and will also have a dog water fountain.
- Tinting of windows at Carver Recreation Center and Polk Street Community Center – meeting with Hollywood Signs to get quote.

- Evergreen Cemetery Vault Lids Replaced – photo provided by assistant Director Lasek

(A copy of the photo is attached therein and is described as Exhibit C)

- **General Items**

- Budget approved September 16, 2025, at the City Commission Meeting – report provided by Director Hargrove
 - CIP Projects
 - Golf Course
 - Library
 - Parks & Recreation
 - Development of Programming
 - Parks and Recreation

(A copy of the report is attached therein and is described as Exhibit D)

- Golf – report provided by Director Hargrove
 - Program Innovation
 - Community Engagement
 - Seasonal and Annual Events
 - Operational Planning
 - Marketing and Promotion

(A copy of the report is attached therein and is described as Exhibit E)

Chairperson Keith inquired whether all facility air conditioning systems are operating properly.

Director Hargrove confirmed that all units across city facilities are functioning as expected and will continued to be monitored.

Director Hargrove reported that City Manager Herr has approved the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Catalyst Design Group is finalizing the plan, which includes evaluating options either renovate the Civic Center or construct a new facility. The plan also explores expanding athletic fields for baseball, softball, soccer, and football to better accommodate local sports programs. Additional proposals include expanding the Carver Recreation Center by adding more rooms, redesigning Mary Holland Park as a destination playground, enlarging Wildwood Cemetery, and considering an amphitheater by the library's lake. Director Hargrove emphasized that the plan serves as a long-term vision and not all projects are guaranteed to be completed. However, it presents many promising opportunities for community development.

Board Member Bohde commented that sports programs are currently spread throughout Bartow. While he expressed his appreciation for the Mosaic soccer fields, he noted that alternative locations might have been more suitable.

Director Hargrove stated that part of the master plan's purpose is to evaluate better locations for athletic facilities. He intends to discuss several concepts with the Catalyst Design Group, including the possibility of acquiring additional land to situate all athletic facilities in one area. This would benefit families with children involved in multiple sports. The preferred location would be near the Bartow Sports Complex. The plan may also include identifying properties for potential acquisition. Director Hargrove said he looks forward to continued collaboration with Catalyst Design Group.

Director Hargrove reported that he gave a presentation at the most recent City Commission meeting regarding a proposed Tourist-Oriented Sports Destination in Bartow. This project would include several athletic facilities within the city. He explained that the city will work with community stakeholders and various organizations to determine needs, not only for Bartow but also for Polk County. The goal is to strengthen local economic activity, attract non-local visitors, and increase revenue for local businesses.

Director Hargrove stated that the proposed sports village would enhance tourism, raise Bartow's profile as a sports destination, and attract not only athletic events but also banquets and sponsored activities. The facility would be designed for year-round use and would also serve residents. Director Hargrove noted that Bartow is well-positioned for such development, with strong existing infrastructure including the Bartow Sports Complex, an award-winning golf course, numerous playgrounds, pickleball courts, and tennis courts. He thanked Center Florida Sports and the Polk County Board of County Commissioners for their continued partnership.

Director Hargrove added that the city will seek public-private partnerships to help fund the project and will work with Visit Central Florida to identify needs and opportunities. He emphasized that this project aims to strengthen Bartow's economy and attract more visitors to the city. The initiative is still in its early stages and has not yet been approved by City Manager Her. Director Hargrove recently met with the design team during the preparation of the first master plan but has not yet received a cost proposal for this new plan. Once the proposal is received, it will be presented to the board. He concluded by updating the board on his presentation to the City Commission and outlining the long-term vision for the project.

- Tourist-Oriented Sports Destination
 - Purpose Development & Revenue Generation
 - Economic Development and Revenue Generation
 - Boost Tourism & Profile
 - Community Recreation/Engagement & Quality of Life
 - Why It's a Good Fit
 - Existing sports infrastructure & recreation assets
 - What is Being Asked by the Master Plan
 - How will it be Accomplished

(A copy of the report is attached therein and is described as Exhibit F)

Board Member Bohde asked if he could reference another city that has already established a similar sports complex.

Director Hargrove responded that the design team will provide examples of cities currently implementing similar projects. He noted that the Lake Myrtle Sports Complex serves as a small-scale example, while Bartow's vision would be on a somewhat larger scale.

Chairperson Keith mentioned that The Villages has a comparable athletic complex and agreed that expanding the athletic facilities is beneficial and much needed.

Director Hargrove reiterated that the project is still in the early planning stages. Once progress begins, he will keep board members informed. He stated that the Recreation Board, community stakeholders, and athletic organizations will all be involved in the process. Public meetings will also be held to gather feedback from residents on the city's needs. He emphasized that the master plan will not only help determine the project's feasibility but also estimate its potential costs and funding requirements.

Board Member Bohde commented that selecting and securing a site will likely be the greatest challenge and should be done as soon as possible. He noted that the land prices continue to rise, which will significantly affect the total cost of the project.

Director Hargrove stated that funding will be a key component of the master plan. It will outline potential funding sources, which could include city, county, state, or federal funds, along with grants and private partnerships. He acknowledged that this will be a major and expensive project, possibly the largest ever undertaken in Bartow but emphasized that it remains a planning effort intended to create a clear vision for the future.

Chairperson Keith added that she is familiar with similar sports centers and has visited one personally.

Director Hargrove explained that such facilities typically consist of multiple buildings and fields, some of which are designed for specific sports. The design team will explore several options to determine what best suits Bartow's needs.

Chairperson Keith mentioned that the Advent Center in Winter Haven has recently renovated its baseball fields.

Director Hargrove confirmed that the fields are brand new and fully turfed, as part of the Advent Sports Complex.

Board Member Green noted that one advantage of Advent Health’s complex is its low-cost gym membership program for residents and suggested that a similar benefit would be valuable for Bartow residents.

Director Hargrove shared that he had discussed with City Manager Herr and the city’s management team the possibility of creating an Assistant Director position in Parks and Recreation. Although the request was not approved due to previously established staffing plans, an existing position was reclassified. The Parks and Recreation Manager position was reclassified to Assistant Director of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts. As a result, Kyle Lasek now serves as the Assistant Director of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts. This was not a new position but a reclassification. Director Hargrove commended Assistant Director Lasek for already performing many of the duties associated with both roles.

Chairperson Keith asked if the Parks and Recreation Manager position would be reinstated next year.

Director Hargrove stated that he plans to include the position in the next fiscal year budget so it can be refilled. He explained that the Assistant Director of Parks, Recreation, and Culture Arts will continue to oversee the Parks and Recreation Division, manage the completion of all Capital Improvement Projects involving parks, the golf course, and the library, and assume leadership responsibilities in the Director’s absence.

Assistant Director Lasek expressed his enthusiasm for his new role as Assistant Director of Parks, Recreation, and Culture Arts. He stated he looks forward to continuing his work with the City of Bartow and contributing to the department’s growth and success.

Purpose of the Board

Advise our local government on matters related to parks, programs, and facilities. Provide recommendations and being the voice for the community – letting us know what programs/activities that they would like to see, their interests. I always have an open-door policy.

7. OLD BUSINESS

• Carver Recreation Center All-Purpose Room – Christine McCoy Room Update

- Rec Board Approved Recommendation to Commission – January 12, 1994
- Commission Approved January 18, 1994
- Directed staff to move forward with the naming of the room.

Director Hargrove reported that there has been discussion regarding the renaming the Carver Recreation Center All-Purpose Room to the Christine McCoy Room. After

reviewing previous meeting minutes, he confirmed that City Commission approval is not required, as the renaming was already approved in the past. He referenced the official record stating “The Recreation Board made the recommendation to the Commission on January 12, 1994, and the Commission approved it on January 18, 1994.

8. NEW BUSINESS

- **Florida Wildlife Conservation Presentation**

Matthew Swerdferger, Fisheries Biologist with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), stated that he oversees all lakes within Polk County. He reported that Lake Ruth covers just over two acres, with low water clarity and little to no existing vegetation.

Mr. Swerdferger explained that to develop Lake Ruth into a community fishery, three key steps are required: removing invasive species, planting native vegetation, and stocking the lake with sport fish. He noted that the entire project will be funded by FWC.

Mr. Swerdferger explained to remove the invasive species, FWC will use electrofishing process. This involves using a generator to send electric current into the water, temporarily stunning the fish so they can be collected manually. This method allows staff to be selective in removing certain species and helps identify the types of fish currently present in the lake. Removing invasive species will increase native fish populations by reducing competition for resources. For habitat enhancement, FWC plans to plant native submerged vegetation commonly found across Florida. This vegetation will provide nursery habitat for fish, strengthen the food chain, improve cover for species such as bass and bluegill, and enhance water quality by absorbing excess nutrients. As the final step, stocking the lake with sport fish will improve catch rates, increase existing fish populations, and create new recreational fishing opportunities.

Mr. Swerdferger also highlighted several recent FWC projects. At the Apollo Beach Sports Complex, native vegetation was introduced and became fully established within six months, followed by the stocking of forage species. At Mary Holland Park, eelgrass was successfully planted in 2021, and the lake has since been stocked with hybrid striped bass and catfish, along with the addition of fish attractors to improve shoreline fishing opportunities. He concluded by sharing that future projects are planned for Lake Hack, which may include additional planting, installation of natural fish attractors, fish stocking, and electrofishing surveys.

Mayor Tucker asked what happens to the fish that are removed from the lake.

Mr. Swerdferger explained that any fish removed during the process will be humanely euthanized.

Board Member Bohde asked how the community can better help maintain the lakes.

Mr. Swerdfeger responded that maintaining a healthy habitat is essential and that residents can help by preventing trash and debris from accumulating in the lakes.

Mayor Tucker asked how this process relates to lake dredging, noting that a few dredging projects have been completed in the past.

Director Hargrove stated that Lake Hack was dredged prior to his tenure, and no dredging projects have been completed since he joined the city.

Mr. Swerdfeger explained that dredging removes build-up nutrients from the water system immediately but is a very expensive process. He noted that the FWC typically does not fund dredging for smaller lakes due to their limited size. While dredging is beneficial, securing adequate funding remains a major challenge.

Mayor Tucker commented that the city has previously funded and completed the dredging project and wanted to confirm that it had been appropriate course of action.

Mr. Swerdfeger explained that nutrient buildup in local lakes continues to come from yard runoff. He noted that additional native plantings will help absorb excess nutrients and reduce algae blooms that can lead to fish kills.

Director Hargrove asked whether the proposed work by the FWC would help improve water quality.

Mr. Swerdfeger confirmed that it would.

Director Hargrove added that most of the city's current water quality issues are caused by stormwater runoff.

Mr. Swerdfeger agreed, noting that runoff is contributing to algae growth in local lakes.

Chairperson Keith asked where Lake Ruth is located.

Director Hargrove responded that it is west of Floral Avenue Elementary School.

Chairperson Keith noted that Lake Ruth is located between residential homes and asked about the location of Lake Hack.

Director Hargrove stated Lake Hack is located east of Nye Jordan Park.

Chairperson Keith mentioned the pit area in west Bartow near Gause Academy, where residents frequently fish on the north and south ends is mucky and green, and the surrounding land has been cleared.

Mayor Tucker confirmed that townhomes are planned for construction in that area.

Chairperson Keith remarked that large numbers of people are frequently seen fishing there.

Mayor Tucker explained that the property is county jurisdiction.

Board Member Bohde asked whether, after electrofishing is completed, the lake will be restocked with bait fish.

Mr. Swerdfeger clarified that electrofishing does not kill the fish. He added that while stocking bait fish may sometimes be necessary, smaller lakes typically sustain themselves one bluegill populations are established, since they reproduce effectively and provide the needed forage.

Board Member Lung asked how often stocked fisheries are replenished.

Mr. Swerdfeger replied that the schedule depends on how frequently the lake is used and how many fish are harvested. Common species such as catfish are typically stocked annually, especially before children's fishing derby events. Restocking decisions for other species are based on electrofishing surveys; if a fish population remains stable, additional stocking is not required.

Board Member Green asked how the city can enforce the prohibition on using cast nets, noting that although signs are posted, some individuals continue to do so.

Mr. Swerdfeger said that enforcement is difficult without active law enforcement present. He mentioned that similar challenges occur at Saddle Creek Park in Lakeland.

Director Hargrove stated that he will instruct city staff to contact law enforcement's non-emergency number if they observe anyone using cast nets. He added that if no staff present, enforcement remains difficult. He suggested using social media to educate residents about local water regulations and to encourage them to report violations through non-emergency line. He noted that "No Cast Netting" signs and corresponding ordinance numbers are already posted around Mary Holland Park.

Director Hargrove thanked Mr. Swerdfeger for his presentation and time with the board. He asked members whether they felt the city should move forward with the project.

Board Member Bohde expressed support for the initiative.

Director Hargrove stated that Mr. Swerdfeger will deliver the same presentation to the City Commission as a future meeting for further consideration.

(A copy of the report is attached therein and is described as Exhibit G)

9. ADVISORY BOARD COMMENTS

a. Bill Bohde

Board Member Bohde thanked Director Hargrove for his vision of developing a Sports Village, stating that it would be a tremendous opportunity for the city. He added that as this project moves forward, reinstating the Parks and Recreation Manager position will become increasingly important. Managing such a facility without additional personnel would be difficult. He noted that while expansion may not be immediate, staffing will need to increase eventually to support future operations.

Director Hargrove stated that the master plan will evaluate staffing needs and determine how many additional personnel would be required to effectively operate a facility of that size and scope.

Board Member Bodhe commented that the Sports Village concept could generate efficiencies and cost savings by combining multiple recreational functions in one location.

Director Hargrove agreed and stated that for any future athletic fields the city develops, he will strongly recommend using synthetic turf instead of natural grass. He explained that natural grass requires extensive maintenance and the department currently lacks sufficient staff to maintain it properly. He noted that Polk County and several neighboring cities have already begun transitioning to synthetic turf for this reason.

Board Member Bohde shared that a resident had contacted him about the parking lot at Nye Jordan Park. He explained that the park was a joint project with Bartow Kiwanis Club and that funding may have run out before improvements reached the parking area. He said that along Orange Avenue and Stewart Street, heavy rainfall causes the area to become muddy, and the citizen asked if any improvements could be made to the parking conditions.

Director Hargrove replied that crushed asphalt millings could be applied to the area to help stabilize the surface. However, he noted that the Parks and Recreation Department would need to monitor and maintain the area regularly, as material can wash out over time. He stated that he will meet with the Public Works Department to discuss potential solutions and evaluate the next steps.

b. Leslie Green

Board Member Green asked whether Director Hargrove had received the economic impact report for the Bartow Sports Complex.

Director Hargrove stated that he has not yet received the report but has a meeting scheduled in December to review the information.

Board Member Green thanked Director Hargrove for his proactive efforts at the start of the new fiscal year. She noted that there are many positive developments underway and expressed appreciation for his leadership and responsiveness.

Director Hargrove mentioned that on the first day of the new fiscal year, nearly \$100,000 was spent purchasing new chairs for the recreation centers and other essential equipment to support departmental operations.

c. Sheila Keith

Chairperson Keith reported that she attended the Diversity Luncheon, where she noticed a ceiling leak and brought it to the attention of Supervisor Sparkman. She wanted to ensure Director Hargrove was aware of the issue in case it has not yet been addressed.

Chairperson Keith thanked Director Hargrove for his detailed presentation, noting that it provided the board with much to consider and reflects a promising future for the City of Bartow. She commended both Director Hargrove and Assistant Director Lasek for maintaining an open-door policy and expressed appreciation for their dedication and excellent work. She added that she is enthusiastic about the city's continued improvements and growth.

d. Troy Lung

Board Member Lung thanked the board and staff for the opportunity to serve on the advisory board. He stated that it is exciting to see the many projects currently underway, as well as the forward-thinking initiatives being planned. He added that these efforts reflect a promising future for the City of Bartow.

e. Carver Young

Vice-Chairperson Young was absent.

10. CITY COMMISSION COMMENTS

a. Mayor Tucker

Mayor Tucker stated that the pit near Gause Academy is privately owned property. She noted that anyone fishing in that area is trespassing.

Chairperson Keith commented that there are no visible “No Trespassing” signs posted at the site.

Mayor Tucker responded that during a recent community cleanup event she attended, the Police Department visited the area and asked individuals to leave. She added that, according to the Polk County Property Appraiser’s website, the property has been privately owned since 2005.

11. NEXT MEETING – October 8, 2025

Chairperson Keith announced the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 12, 2025, at 5:30 p.m.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson Keith adjourned the meeting at 6:39 p.m.

Chairperson Keith

ATTEST:

Asst. City Clerk Kaylee Fussell

(SEAL)