

MINUTES OF MEETING

UNIVERSITY PARK RECREATION DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
MEETING

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2026

3:00 pm

Business Offices

8301 The Park Boulevard, University Park, FL 34201

Strategic Planning Committee Members present in person or via Zoom:

Jim Freedman	Chair
Ronni Loundy	Vice-Chair
Barbara Somma	Secretary
Ken Schreder	Committee Member
Steve Swanson	Committee Member

Also, present in person or via Zoom:

John Fetsick	General Manager – University Park Country Club
Jennifer Brown	Executive Assistant - University Park Country Club
Vivian Carvalho	District Manager - PFM
Sydney Johnson	Communications Director – University Park Country Club

Various audience members

FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS

Organizational Matters

Call to Order, Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at approximately 3:00 pm. Those in attendance are outlined above.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

SECOND ORDER OF BUSINESS

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the meetings held on October 20, November 6, November 12, and December 10 were reviewed. No amendments were proposed, and the minutes were approved unanimously following a motion by Jim Freedman and a second by Steve Swanson.

THIRD ORDER OF BUSINESS

RFP Update

John Fetsick updated the committee that the RFP was approved by the UPRD board and advertised. The deadline was extended to February 20, 2026 to allow more time for distribution to relevant firms.

FOURTH ORDER OF BUSINESS

Collaboration with UPCA

Jim Freedman provided an update on efforts to improve collaboration between the UPRD board and the UPCA board, regarding strategic planning and community engagement.

Suggestions from the committee included the following:

1. Inviting a representative from the UPCA board to participate in UPRD strategic planning meetings.
2. Regular Updates at HOA Chair Council Meetings
3. Engaging Neighborhood Chairs as Ambassadors
4. Joint Communications: Sydney Johnson, Communications Director, suggested utilizing existing communication platforms, such as the club's monthly newsletter and HOA updates, to share information about collaborative efforts and strategic planning initiatives.

Next Steps:

- Jim Freedman will continue discussions with UPCA President, Tom Christopher and other HOA board members to encourage participation in RD strategic planning meetings.
- The committee will explore opportunities to provide updates at HOA chair council meetings and engage neighborhood chairs in RD initiatives.
- Sydney Johnson and Dawne Waite will work on creating joint communication materials that clearly define the roles and benefits of the RD, HOA, and PBM entities.

FIFTH ORDER OF BUSINESS

Communication Strategies

Ronni Loundy provided an update on the development of communication materials following her meeting with the UPCA Communications & PR Committee and PBM staff, including Sydney Johnson and Dawne Waite. PBM staff proposed creating a pamphlet or tri-fold flyer to clearly explain the roles and benefits of the UPRD, UPCA and PBM, with

concise and easy-to-understand definitions of each entity and their respective responsibilities. While the committee initially discussed the use of posters in high-traffic areas such as the dining room, fitness center, and other community spaces, the tri-fold format was presented as a more effective and portable option that could also be distributed digitally through monthly and other club email communications.

In addition, Sydney Johnson created a professionally produced video explaining the roles of the UPRD, UPCA, and PBM, intended to educate prospective buyers and community members on the structure and benefits of the three entities. The UPCA board expressed concerns that the video was overly focused on PBM and did not align with their preferences. The committee discussed the possibility of re-editing the video to provide a more balanced presentation with greater emphasis on UPCA and suggested using the revised video as a marketing and educational tool for new residents and prospective members during the onboarding process, including when new residents complete membership paperwork.

SIXTH ORDER OF BUSINESS

RD Financial Benefits

Ken Schreder presented a detailed analysis of the financial benefits associated with the RD (Recreational District) structure, emphasizing the significant cost savings it provides to the community. The discussion highlighted three primary areas of savings:

1. Property Tax Savings

- The RD structure exempts the community from paying property taxes on RD-owned properties.
- The last recorded property tax payment was in 2017, amounting to \$312,000. However, this figure is likely understated as property taxes have increased since then.
- The committee noted that this exemption represents a substantial financial benefit for the community, as property taxes would otherwise be a recurring annual expense.

2. Sales Tax Savings

- In the last fiscal year, the RD made \$4.469 million in purchases, resulting in a 7% sales tax savings of \$312,000.
- Ken Schreder highlighted that this figure might also be understated, as it does not account for large-scale purchases such as the \$1.2 million irrigation system. Including such significant expenditures would further increase the savings.

3. Bond Interest Savings

- The RD structure allows for lower interest rates on bonds compared to traditional financing methods.

- Over the term of the bond, the community saves approximately \$655,000 annually, totaling over \$1 million in savings.

Annual RD Costs vs. Savings

- The annual cost of maintaining the RD was approximately \$300,000 last year.
- When compared to the total annual savings of \$750,000, the RD structure provides a net financial benefit of \$450,000 annually.
- On average, this equates to a savings of \$627 per household per year.

Committee Discussion

- Suggestions were made to create a comprehensive report that includes historical data on property tax savings since the RD was established in 2017. This report would provide a clearer picture of the cumulative savings over the years.

It was noted that the RD's ability to purchase materials directly (e.g., for the irrigation system and café renovations) further amplifies the sales tax savings.

- The committee discussed the need to highlight these financial benefits in future communications to ensure residents understand the value of the RD structure.

Action Items

- Ken Schreder will work with Paul Fay to compile a detailed report on RD savings since 2017, including annual property tax savings, sales tax savings, and bond interest savings.
- The report will be shared with the committee and included in future communications to the community.

The committee agreed that the RD financial benefits are a key selling point for the community and should be emphasized in educational materials to increase awareness and support for the RD structure.

SEVENTH ORDER OF BUSINESS

Visit to Heron's Glen

Jim Freedman shared insights from a visit to Heron's Glen, another RD community. Key observations included:

1. Management Structure:

- Heron's Glen does not use an outside management company. Instead, they have one organization that provides all staff and services for both the Homeowners Association (HOA) and the Country Club.
 - Residents interact with a single office for all issues, whether related to the HOA or the Country Club, simplifying processes for the community.
2. **Property Ownership:**
 - The RD at Heron's Glen owns all the real estate, including common areas and facilities, while the HOA owns no real estate. This structure helps them save on real estate taxes.
 3. **District Management:**
 - Heron's Glen uses the same district management company (PFM) as UPCA but only for audits. They pay \$80,000 annually for these services, which is less than UPCA's \$70,000 for more comprehensive services, including meeting attendance.
 4. **Membership Structure:**
 - Heron's Glen has two levels of membership. All members can use facilities like the gym, tennis courts, dining areas, and card rooms, but golf is a separate fee.
 - Golf membership costs approximately \$2,500 annually, which includes a golf cart and no green fees.
 5. **Facilities:**
 - Heron's Glen has a large, modern gym with extensive equipment but lacks classrooms for group activities.
 - Their clubhouse is well-designed, featuring a library, card rooms, dining areas, a large ballroom with a stage, and a central pool. However, some facilities appeared dated and not recently upgraded.
 6. **Cost-Saving Measures:**
 - Heron's Glen has a strong focus on keeping costs low, which is reflected in their facilities and membership fees.
 - They refinanced their original bond to secure an additional \$7 million for improvements, which increased costs by \$100 per home, causing some dissatisfaction among residents.
 7. **Demographics and Community Feel:**
 - The community has an older population, with homes being smaller and more modest compared to UPCA. The average home price is around \$400,000.
 - The community has a different feel, with less emphasis on events and engagement compared to UPCA.
 8. **Sunshine Laws:**
 - Heron's Glen does not strictly follow sunshine laws, which has been a point of discussion at UPCA regarding the level of protection desired.
 9. **General Observations:**
 - The visit highlighted that while Heron's Glen has some practices worth considering, it operates at a different level and has a different focus compared

to UPCA. It was noted that Heron's Glen is not as focused on ensuring a strong future or competing with nearby communities like Lakewood Ranch.

EIGHTH ORDER OF BUSINESS

Membership Demographics and Strategy

The committee discussed the need to analyze current membership demographics to address concerns about aging members and declining full membership levels. Suggestions included:

- Creating a senior membership category for less active members.
- Gathering data on membership turnover, age demographics, and activity levels.
- Exploring reasons why new residents may not opt for full membership.

The committee agreed to gather data and explore strategies to adapt to changing demographics.

NINTH ORDER OF BUSINESS

Online Feedback System

Jim Freedman proposed implementing an online system for grievances, suggestions, and feedback. John Fetsick shared details about a potential software solution that could include features like geofencing and push notifications to gather feedback from members. The committee agreed to explore this further, with John Fetsick presenting a proposal at the next meeting.

The next upcoming meeting:

Date	Meeting Type	Time	Location	Note
February 11, 2026	Strategic Planning Committee Meeting	3:00 pm	Business Office	In person or by Zoom

Strategic Planning Committee Member Requests

Action Item: Committee members were asked to submit recommendations for data needed to support data-driven Board decisions on membership categories, including analysis of aging membership and demographic trends. Suggestions should be sent to Jennifer Brown, who will compile and share them with the group to avoid duplication.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:26 pm.