

## **Henderson County Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting**

Tuesday, February 13, 2018, 12pm, AAC

In attendance: Corum Smith, Terry Maybin, Tommy Laughter, Phillip Ellis, Ralph King, Tricia King, Jennifer Hensley. County staff present: Carleen, Dixon, Laura Rice, Erin Hendrix, Tim Hopkin, Autumn Radcliff,

Meeting is led by Terry Wilson in Jeff Donaldson's absence. Meeting called to order at 12:15pm.

Minutes taken by Erin Hendrix

No Public Input

January minutes approved by Phillip seconded by Jennifer.

### **Future Look and Master Plan for Jackson Park by Carleen Dixon**

We would like to brain storm about Jackson Park and what the future looks like. There have been conversations about bringing Jackson back up to par for Tournament play for baseball, softball, soccer, tennis, disc golf, etc. We should think about what we would like to host how big we would like to do it. Basics, we must have ADA access to our fields, we must have seating, we must have safety measures in place. We also must look at who we are competing with. We are looking for thoughts from the board about what you and the public think as steps for the future and look at building Jackson Park up. Ideas, concerns? Terry asks if it affects the parks staff. Carleen says that this is more capital improvements and less about staffing. We can reach out to organizations to help come in and look at what we need done. Corum asks if we need more equipment to take care of a bigger or upgraded park. Carleen answers that we already take care of all the grounds and that maintenance will not really be affected since we are taking care of it currently. Making improvements to the park will make maintenance easier. Jenn asks if we have a current master plan. Carleen answers that we do not but that we are working on a comprehensive plan. We are currently working on a parks-wide comprehensive plan but would like to start a narrower master plan specific to Jackson Park. Jenn asks if part of Jackson Park is in the city. Tim answers that a corner of it is, but that it is a county-owned property. One small portion of field nine is under a lease agreement with the city. To get it the size that they wanted, part of field nine overlaps into the swamp area that is owned by the city.

Tricia asks if we have to coordinate with the city if we want to improve drainage within the park. Autumn answers that yes, because we are in the city, we fall under the city's jurisdiction we essentially fall under their zoning. But we will work with them. Tricia asks if we have done any brain storming outside of this meeting. Carleen answers that yes, there have been talks before this, but the push currently is grant funding. We could apply for a PARTF grant in May if we can get a plan together in time. Then, once we get the funding, we can go through the full process of public input and a detailed plan. Tricia asks if there are any specific goals for the park? Carleen answers yes, there are a lot of improvements that need to be made and tournament play is one of the bigger goals for the space. We must look at these fields and

see what needs to be done to bring them up to a level that we can look at bringing tournament play back in. Phillip asks if the entire purpose of this agenda is tournament play for softball and baseball. Carleen answers that we are talking about all types of tournament play, tennis, soccer, races, etc. Something that brings travel and tourism in to the county. How do we get our level of play up to how big they used to be in the area? I come back to the softball example because that's what used to be very big and very popular, but softball has waned a lot over the years. But we have so many opportunities for that park. And these improvements would not only benefit tournament play but local citizens as well. Even just having the ADA access in the park would be huge step forward.

Jennifer asks what the bare minimums are for improvements. Carleen answers some items are that baseline distances need to be more flexible in their uses. The soccer fields need a ton of improvements and are in dire need of updating. All these things will be looked at so that we can get the park up to date enough for our own leagues and introduce tournament play back in. Terry asks if PARTF is a matching grant. Yes, Carleen answers, PARTF can give up to \$500,000 that requires a match. We will likely have to phase this plan and do the updates incrementally. But we can get a large portion done in phase one. One of our biggest challenges is drainage issues and our maintenance staff can't let people on our fields because they are too wet. It affects local teams and schools trying to get on to practice. Corum asks if we have a need for more tennis courts. Tim answers that schools are always asking for more time or more space but that any user group will always ask for more space for their own favorite activity. East Henderson and Hendersonville High school's boys and girl's teams are scheduled on our courts. Corum asks if it takes creative scheduling. Yes, Tim answers, but that we are very good at that.

Terry asks if Carleen needs a vote from the board to move forward with this. Carleen answers that we are looking for feedback and recommendations. Phillips states that he likes the idea of tournament play and the idea of bringing people to Jackson Park and downtown. He thinks that the maintenance of the improvements need to be considered. Maybe limit the number of fields to improve so that we can maintain them under our current budget. Carleen answers that yes, we are looking at maintenance budgets and that improvements will help with staff time and resources. Drainage and crowning on the softball fields will help our staff better care for the fields and reduce the amount of time they spend working on them. Our operational budget will all be included in that plan. Phillip asks if we have been able to maintain the fields with our current staff. Tim answers that no, essentially, we don't have enough staff to maintain what is there currently. What makes it easier is a field that maintains itself. Like the synthetic field, there is very little maintenance that we do, and it also helps the field usage in Jackson Park. The fields there are in the flood plain and we have looked at addressing that, but it is not always easy to do because of the structure and size of our program. Most of the prime maintenance time is done in spring and fall which is peak time for play. The weather in the mountains is also a contributing factor. Phillip wants to know if maintenance has been able to keep up in the last 5 years. Tim answers that it depends on the weather. Sometimes even when we are on time, the weather ruins the fields before they can be used. Corum suggests asking the commissioners for more property for soccer and baseball fields.

Phillip asks what the difference is between recreational level fields and tournament level fields. Carleen answers that seating is a challenge, we are challenged in our layout and our flexibility for different age groups. We are challenged in our ADA access as most of our fields don't have proper access to seating, dugouts and fields. And we are not necessarily looking to add fields. We are looking at upgrading and maintaining the fields that we currently have and how can we meet federal ADA standards and guidelines for recreational access to our parks. Phillip asks if there is a requirement for wheelchair ramps to be put into our existing fields (noted that he knows new fields this would be required but existing?). Yes, Terry answers. Carleen says that we have to transitionally plan to make improvements over time towards ADA access and show improvements on existing structures. We need to have a plan ready to show if the question comes up. Jenn says that ADA seems the very least that we can do in that park and that the rest of the improvements are preferential. Jenn suggests scheduling and adjusting layouts to better accommodate tournaments instead of large improvements. She says that it doesn't seem as though Jackson Park is too far off from being able to host tournaments. Carleen says that we also must think about our competition and being on par with other facilities in the same market. Jenn asks if it is more of a marketing issue rather than our fields not being appropriate. Carleen answers that we have fierce competition with fields that are immaculate with plenty of seating and parking and upgraded playgrounds that are fully accessible. So, we must get to a level that we can compete with that.

Tricia asks what our limitations are as far as parking. Carleen answers that this is one of the biggest things that we need to look at. Tricia says that we want to have enough parking but that we don't want to distract from the area. Terry asks if they need to put it in form of a motion or table it until the next meeting. Jenn asks if we have thought about putting together an educational presentation for the commissioners to show them what our competition looks like and the number of upgrades that we would require bringing tournament years. Terry says that she believes the commissioners remember the level of play that used to occur and would like that to happen again. She says that the master plan that Carleen is asking for would help to educate everyone on what the expectations are for the park. Jenn asks if a master would even cover Jackson park. Carleen clarifies that a comprehensive plan is an overview of all the parks and the direction of the department and that a master plan is a design plan for a specific park. Jenn says that we might have trouble asking for improvements to Jackson Park when we just started the process for the comprehensive plan and it feels as though we are asking for too much at one time. Terry says that she thinks the commissioners already know what the plan is and know what we will be asking of them. Carleen says that there are two different items happening. We are looking to put together a concept plan together so that we can apply for a grant. The commissioners would have to sign off on us going after the PARTF grant and we won't be asking for anything now except to apply for the money from PARTF. Then we can start a full planning process.

Autumn says that at this point, we are not asking the commissioners to approve this, they have already stated that this is what they want us to do. The board's purpose here is to approve the direction of how we want to do this. Phillip says that he has a hesitation on new, expensive fields when other passive things like greenways are neglected. He is worried about the money being spent just on baseball when he and his family and the people he tried to bring to the area are not interested in baseball. Carleen clarifies that we are not just talking about

baseball. That is only one of all the uses of the park. Jenn agrees with Phillip that the greenway needs to be fixed. Phillip says that he wants everything to be included, including trails and greenways. Corum suggests that we include some sort of swimming program to teach children to swim.

Carleen asks if they want the comprehensive plan completed before we dive into something new. Jenn says maybe not completed, but a clearer plan of what our true needs are so that we aren't creating new issues. Autumn says that these are two different issues. That the comprehensive plan will help with issues like that but that it doesn't have to be completed before we can upgrade existing structures. Jackson Park is one of our main parks and will be the first thing on the list of the comprehensive plan and so there is no benefit to waiting for the plan to be complete before working on Jackson Park. We already know that tournament play is one of the things that we want to bring to the county and we can certainly do both things at the same time. Jenn asks if the comprehensive plan is still being worked on, which is being used to figure out what the community wants from our parks, why are we making upgrades to things before we know what is important to the community. Autumn answers that we don't have to ask the community about their interests in Jackson Park fields because the interest is apparent. The usage alone tells us that our community values Jackson Parks and values these programs. We are trying to improve them to continue use them to their fullest potential.

Phillip asks if a master plan includes large program changes as opposed to just a maintenance plan for upgrades. Carleen answers that again we aren't necessarily looking to add fields, just upgrading our existing facilities to the level that they need to be. Some of that may mean shifting or changing what we have due to drainage or things like that, but we are not currently planning on adding a bunch of new fields. Terry asks if they want to pursue it or table it for the next meeting. Tommy says that there is no consensus and the board should table it. Terry asks if we didn't apply for the PARTF grant for Jackson Park, could we apply for it for a different purpose, like the greenway. Carleen answers that no, the greenway project isn't far enough along and that the feasibility studies haven't come back yet for that to be an option. Autumn says that those studies will not be back until the end of summer and that the greenway has access to other pots of money. She believes that the greenway is not the best option for a PARTF grant and that it is better suited to the needs at Jackson Park. Carleen says that we must have an application in by the first of May. We are also in a good position to be awarded a PARTF grant. Politically and regionally we are positioned well based on who else is applying. Terry asks, if the discussion were to be tabled until next meeting, would we have time to get an application in. Carleen says that we would have little time to do so. She also says that the board is in an advisory position and that she ultimately must proceed based on County priorities. Erin reminds the board the master plan for Jackson Park would tell them exactly what the PARTF grant would go towards and that the creation of the document does not mean that that plan is approved and set in stone. She asks if Carleen can create a plan for the PARTF grant that the board can also review in greater detail and see if it is something that the board approves of. Phillip says that he would like to see something like a master plan drawn-up so that he can see what the recreation staff envision for the park. Carleen says that she would like to work with a planning company to drawn-up a concept plan for Jackson Park to present to the commissioners and to seek funds from PARTF. Jenn asks if it is solely going for tournament play. No, Carleen answers, that the master plan would include the entire park. Jenn would like

to see improvements for the whole park and not just spend money on baseball fields. Carleen agrees. Phillip says he would like to make a motion to help empower Carleen to get a concept plan done and talk to the consultants and you can take the various input from the recreation advisory board to the consultants and they can do what they do. Jenn asks if we are planning on spending a large amount of money on the concept plan. No, Carleen answers, it's a very small scale of money. Phillip says he would approve even just something written by Carleen and put on paper that the board could look at and say we are behind this or not. Tricia asks if Carleen would be using the feedback from the comprehensive plan to create the plan for Jackson Park. Carleen answers that we have not gotten to that point yet and that she and Autumn have just had their initial meeting regarding the comprehensive plan. She will be drawing on the user groups that we work with currently and making decisions based on our current known needs and staff issues to create a concept plan. Terry asks if there is a second to Phillip's motion so Carleen can proceed with this. Tricia seconds. Unanimously approved.

### **The House at Jackson Park by Carleen Dixon**

We have used this house as the main headquarters in the past. Currently, we use it for multiple staff offices and meeting space for a few user groups. It is not currently open to the public and we want to ensure we are using it to its fullest potential. Carleen is looking for feedback and ideas for how we might use this house. Tricia asks if there are any summer camps that could use the space. Jenn wants to know if we can have a summer camp for kids to help working parents with childcare during the summer. Terry says that we used to have summer camps but that there was not enough interest. Phillip says that the proximity to the greenway is an advantage. Tim suggests that the board come by and look at the building to see the inside of the building. Carleen says that we are looking into what we would need to upgrade to bring the building up to code. Phillip says that the building could be a hub for greenway use. Jenn says that it sounds like the board is fully behind the idea of opening the building for recreational use.

### **Kaboom Playground Grant by Carleen Dixon**

Kaboom has reached out to for a regional grant for East Flat Rock Park to upgrade the older section of the playground to be replaced. We are looking to get a set amount of money awarded and have a community build to complete it. There is a small contribution of \$8,500 that we would have to provide but we can look at local vendors to provide. The grant is \$50,000 and the materials are provided by Kaboom at cost.

### **Recreation Updates by Park Staff**

Laura says that there is a recreation update in a flyer in the binder. Jason is out sick but has been very busy getting the fields ready for spring play. We are still short three part-time

positions for maintenance. Phillip asks if we are advertising. Carleen answers that we are and that we have started advertising through Blue Ridge Community College. Erin updates the board on administrative items such as upcoming scholarship award revisions. The rooms of the AAC now have lock on the doors and is helping us keep our building secure and allow us to more effectively track who is in our building. We did sit down and look at RecDesk and we will be moving forward with that as a department. Carleen lets everyone know that the work on the retaining wall has started. We will also have an intern from East Carolina for 12 weeks starting in May. IT has been helping us get up to date with our computers and we will be connected to the ethernet soon and that will help with connectivity and productivity. She has set up a meeting to talk about greenway flooding and will be getting as much history as possible. She will be working on figuring out how to fix the issues. Jenn asks if an engineer designed it. Tim answers that it was a collaboration with the city of Hendersonville years ago. The biggest issue is that it must run under Martin Luther King hwy and that the Duke power lines provide issues. Carleen says that one of the temporary fixes will be gates on the trail to warn users that the trail is closed due to flooding. Phillip says that he does not like having gates. Carleen says that it is a safety and liability issue to let people know that the greenway is closed. Phillip says that in general, he does not approve of signage that way because it presents the idea that the trail is not safe. Tricia asks if there is alternative route if it is closed. Carleen answers that we do not have detour signs but that we can look into having some printed.

Carleen says that we are working on our operational budget for 2019 and that will be turned in next week. We also have a septic issue in the Jackson Park house. It is on a very old septic system. Tim clarifies that the public bathrooms are on the new city septic system but that the old house and the bathrooms in the wooded area playground are not on the city system.

Terry mentions the Tuxedo picnic shelter and that it will be on the agenda in the future. She adjourns the meeting at 1:38pm.