

Henderson County Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting

Tuesday April 13th, 2021 12pm, Edneyville Community Center

In attendance: Ralph King, Jeff Donaldson, David Hill, Terry Maybin, Stephanie Cantwell, Katie Breckheimer, Corum Smith, Robert Smith, Scott Rhodes, Milton Butterworth, and Philip Ellis.

Staff in attendance: Carleen Dixon, Megan Bishop, Jason Kilgore, Bridgette Galloway, Lindsey Pressley, and Autumn Radcliff.

Speakers in attendance: None

1. Call to Order: 12:08 pm

2. Approval of Minutes: With Katie Bruckheimer's corrections, a motion to approve March 2021 made by Terry Maybin, seconded by Katie Breckheimer, unanimously approved.

3. Public Input: None

4. New Business:

a. Summer Events - Bridgette

July 4th: We have to work around what the mass gathering numbers are when planning for July 4th festivities. The fireworks will happen no matter what (TDA manages this contract), and we will continue to work with TDA to partner on this event.

Movies: Our Movies in the Park series will be coming back this year and will visit 4 different parks to better serve the community. The series will begin in June and go through September. We will be holding one movie per month and they will start at dusk.

We will be following state covid guidelines and setting up pods for families that are 6 feet apart so we can social distance. We are also going to require pre-registration to keep numbers at whatever the guidelines are at that time.

Senior Games: We also have Senior Games coming up, registration is underway, and the actual events will go until May. Events have been modified to comply with restrictions, some will be in person, some self-reporting and some virtual. Our local games are Sanctioned by the NC Senior Games so participants that qualify will advance onto to the state finals.

Egg Hunt: We just hosted our "Egg Hunt to go" event and it was a big success. It was a modified version of our traditional egg hunt usually done in Jackson Park. It

was a drive through event, we decorated the AAC front lawn to be the bunny's home. We had a costume bunny and staff gave out goodie bags with crafts. Registration filled up quickly and we served 500 kids. It was a huge success!

Terry asked if the movies in the park schedule had been posted. Bridgette replied that the schedule is not posted yet however, the dates have been decided and we would love to have board members join us if they would like.

Bridgette noted that Tuxedo Park and Dana Park were very well attended last year. Philip asked if we have a blow-up screen for the movies. Bridgette replied that we do. Carleen noted that we rent the screen and equipment.

Jeff asked how many people usually attend. Bridgette replied that there were roughly 300 people at Dana last year and staff had to go help with parking participants. We typically just did Movies in the Park at Jackson Park in the past but wanted to better serve all our communities and that it had a great turnout. We plan to continue going to multiple parks.

Carleen said this year will be the first year we will hold a movie at Etowah and that we have a lot of support and interest in Etowah to host the movie. The Etowah Lions Club and the Friends of Etowah Park are very interested in partnering.

Milton asked if we show the same movie at every park. Bridgette replied that each park will show a different movie, she works with Swank Productions to get permitting for every movie and is getting the permits for the movies now.

b. Edneyville Program Update - Lindsey

We have our annual plant swap coming up this Sunday at 3. Everyone comes and drops off their plants that they want to trade out and everything is separated into categories. People are then given a number, and then everyone takes a plant that someone else brought. Every year participation depends on the weather since it is an outdoor event but last year, we had good participation.

Another event coming up is the Community Yard Sale. A lot of people requested this event, and it has been very successful, 15 people set up last year to sell and it brought a good crowd. People are charged \$10 for their space and we handle everything else like marketing and registration.

c. Kiosks – Megan

We have installed a kiosk at the Jackson Park tennis courts to display schedules and reservations since we have so many different groups using it.

d. Productive Parks - Megan

Staff have been working on implementing a new software for the Parks division. This is a maintenance management and work order system specifically for parks and recreation departments. This will allow Jason to streamline how he assigns work to the maintenance staff on a day-to-day basis. It will also help front desk staff when we get a call about something needing a repair; staff can input that into the system and then Jason will be able to assign that task to someone without several calls being made.

5. Unfinished Business

1. Greenways Update – Autumn

The article in the Hendersonville Lightning detailed most of the Ecusta updates. We have started the railbanking process and that is required to take place before the acquisition process. The Commissioners will be working on MOUs and some other stuff to finalize the bridge loan at their upcoming meeting to go along with the application.

The construction and preliminary engineering portion of this money was funded through STBG funds. That's how we were able to fund the first three phases. We just received notification that with the stimulus funds they have added an additional 1.5 million to the pot of STBG money which will be discussed at the MPO meeting. We are hoping to go back to the list of projects that were submitted in our other phases which were scored well and possibly get another phase funded with that money.

Philip asked if 1.5 million was a 1% increase or a 90% increase.

Autumn said the pot varies, that last round it was big with 26 million but it's not typically that much. Some of the money is set aside for planning like the feasibility study we completed, and the rest is set aside for engineering, construction and right of way purchase. It varies with the budget, but this is not the first time they have received additional funds.

Autumn stated that Katie had asked about the flooded Oklawaha section and the funding the Commissioners approved for some additional studies to seek grants with. Autumn noted that she contacted Marcus, who said that the streams and wetlands have all been flagged and that the surveying should be done this week. Over the next 30 days we should have some solid information to move forward. Philip asked for further clarification.

Autumn replied that Marcus will be the main contact for the engineer, and that she is not directly involved. He asked if there will be a project.

Autumn said yes, the commissioners approved \$15,000 to complete further engineering work to go a step further than what Equinox did. This is a more detailed report that will show specific numbers and what will be needed. This will make us more competitive for grant funding.

Philip stated that we will take it from the concepts that Equinox did to a design.

Carleen stated yes and that we will seek funding for the LWCF grant.

Kate asked about those deadlines.

Carleen said it has been delayed and will not be due until September or October now. This grant will give us a better possibility of qualifying for this particular piece. PARTF is still due in May, our needs are not necessarily a good fit for this grant but there is a lot of money to be given out so we will likely apply for both.

Katie asked timing wise if Marcus does what he needs to do then this will be ready in time to apply? Carleen replied that a portion will be completed.

Philip asked if the LWCF must have a water quality improvement component.

Carleen replied that it does not, that outdoor recreation is the focus of that grant.

Milton asked about the working timeline.

Carleen replied the grant would not be awarded until the first of the year; the process has been delayed because of the budget.

Milton asked so if we get the grant, we will not get the funding until next year.

Carleen replied yes, the funds would not be released until January of next year.

Katie asked looking ahead what if we don't get the grant funds, would greenways not be in the P&R budget anymore?

Carleen replied the commissioners will not allocate funds to a grant match unless we receive a grant. They will budget for the grant match at the time we receive it but not before.

Katie asked if in the future we can have greenways in P&R budget?

Carleen replied they are typically in the projects fund, not the P&R fund.

Katie asked if that is in the general fund.

Carleen responded that a project fund spans multiple fiscal years.

Jeff asked if the trestle in Etowah is the only one we will have to cross for the Ecusta greenway.

Autumn replied that is not the only one, but it is the biggest one. Part of the preliminary engineering is to evaluate the structural integrity of the bridge. If we can repair the bridges to make them safe for pedestrians now, we will repair it instead of replacing it.

Milton noted the number of small bridges that are no longer serviceable.

Autumn replied that the engineers have considered how the bridges were originally built to withstand the weight of trains so the need for pedestrians is much less.

Philip noted there are also several bank erosions spots on the trail.

Autumn agreed and stated that was part of the cost estimate to fix that.

Katie wanted to know when we can start using the trailhead on the Chief Belle property.

Carleen replied it is a partnership piece with Conserving Carolina, the agreement that was made was that the County would seek the PARTF grant to acquire the land, and

Conserving Carolina would work on fundraising money for developing the park. They are working on this now.

2. Etowah Trail Update - Carleen

After we got the funding from the commissioners, we put it out to bid for pricing. The prices were a lot more expensive than they were in January due to additional issues including asphalt prices took a drastic increase. We are about \$35,000 off from what we had quoted in January so, we are working to allocate additional funding from the contracted services budget to offset that amount. That will be going on the BOC agenda soon for approval.

Philip asked if they are having to address the previous groundwater issues in the construction or if it is an access issue.

Carleen replied there is drainage pipe that needs to be removed and replaced, and another needs to be extended further that both must be done to get the trail in. Those issues made the price go up a little, but it is mostly the price of asphalt that has gone up.

Philip stated he is willing to look at the plans for the pipes and if it conforms to his previous advice for the situation.

Carleen stated the plan is to enhance the current system, not a new system.

Philip said if they remove them and reset them a few inches lower it will be an improvement.

Carleen clarified we are only removing one pipe but agreed.

3. Covid Guidelines Update

We have made some adjustments after the Governor's updated orders. We have had a bit more flexibility in the gymnasium for basketball, pickleball, and volleyball. We are going to implement changes with gym participant numbers next week. We are still limited by the amount that we can social distance in classrooms. Outdoor programming has changed; kids are not required to wear a mask while they are playing on the field or court outdoors. All people are required to wear a mask on the sidelines/watching when they are not able to social distance; exception is when it is household members.

We have had some questions about soccer league taking place currently which is not ours, our league has not started yet. The league they were referring to has determined that they are requiring players to wear mask during play.

Terry asked if there have been changes to the rental of community centers. Carleen stated we have not yet due to staffing issues. We are actively trying to recruit part time staff so we can open our facilities up more. We have 8 positions open currently. Again, any help in recruiting staff is greatly appreciated as we are not getting new applications.

6. Staff Updates

1. Jason

It is definitely baseball and softball season. We have re-roofed all of our dugouts, they all match and look nice. The addition of numbered windscreens in the outfields will be helpful especially for out-of-town people visiting. Staff are always working on ballfields, due to the high use. The weather has been great as well which has helped with sports.

Our contract mowers cancelled their contract with us, so we are having to cover all the mowing ourselves despite being short staffed. The majority of the staff have to mow in the mornings and then get back to work on ballfields in the afternoon. We will have a different contractor starting soon but it is clear that we are behind on this for now.

We have put in two new bridge crossings by the soccer fields to the parking lots behind field 6. The previous bridges were old, and staff poured concrete by the new one to make it more accessible.

Katie asked if we took the old bridge out. Jason replied we took one out already and will take the other out soon.

Jason showed pictures.

We have a very busy weekend coming up in the parks. Top Gun has 36 teams signed up as of today and Little League is going to be at Etowah playing and they have picture day on Saturday.

Another project is near the dog park in Jackson Park. Beavers have dammed the creek up and plugged the storm pipe this is about ten feet long, causing about 6 acres of flooding. Staff eventually had to replace the pipe, but the beavers continue to work.

Philip asked how the water was getting out.

Jason replied it didn't, that it was backing up to the other three ponds.

Yesterday the beavers had already stacked a bunch of materials up to the pipe.

Katie asked if we could have a beaver relocation project. Jason replied that no there is not one.

Jason noted that we are desperately needing help in the maintenance department if anyone knows of anyone interested to please refer them.

Milton asked about the position requirements.

Jason said we need applicants to be 17 years old and up. Carleen stated we will train them, no experience necessary. Jason also said he would like some women to start working especially during tournament weekends.

Philip stated that the bridges look great.

Philip asked that since mowing is an issue, is there anything stopping us from reducing the amount of turf that needs to be mowed. He mentioned utilizing Tricia and Hunter on the board to plan possible changes in the landscape.

Jason replied that the issue so far has been people parking anywhere and everywhere during tournament. Staff has put up split rail fences trying to deter parking, but nothing has worked long term.

Philip also stated he has a lot of experience with beavers and designing with beavers.

Jason said he is very familiar with them as well, as he was a Wildlife Damage Control Agent, they have clogged up 3 culverts so far.

Philip stated that Jackson Park is an amazing wetland bog ecosystem that could be managed more intentionally.

Corum stated that the park looks immaculate. He asked about the parks relationship with the Mtn Community school. Jason replied we have a good relationship with them.

2. Admin Update – Megan

Nothing further.

3. Departmental Update – Carleen

Our ordinance currently does not allow vendors to sell things in the park, including food trucks, with the exception for special events. We struggle to keep food trucks out but also recognize the need for food trucks at certain times in the park. There are various challenges with managing it, monitoring licensing, working with the health department and so on. There is definitely a need and a want for food trucks in the parks. Carleen stated she wanted to bring the idea to the table and receive feedback from the Advisory Board and will email some draft policy ideas out before the next meeting.

Jeff asked what Buncombe County does.

Carleen stated they do different things, some parks allow them and some don't. Every agency has different policies on this.

The proposals for the Edneyville stream restoration project are in and we will be evaluating these right away. We have about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the funding for this project so, we can get started.

Jeff asked if the walkway/trail by the stream is going to be restored.

Carleen stated that it will be.

7. Member Comments

Katie asked about the stimulus money that will be coming to the county and if any of that money will be going to the parks, specifically to things like a new playground for Jackson Park.

David stated we are waiting on information and direction from the federal government on how the funds can be spent. We have not received that money yet and won't for a few weeks. The board plans on being cautious with the funds once they are received. He stated that non-profits and infrastructure projects like parks and water lines are also eligible to receive money. We will receive 11.5 million this year.

Katie stated that Outdoor recreation has proved itself especially during this past year with covid restrictions and the needs for parks. She would like to see this money used in the areas that were highly impacted such as Parks! And that we need some of this money to fix our park lights that we have so many problems with.

Corum asked if we are involved in the Bat Cave area.

Jason stated we maintain the Hickory Nut Gorge Trail and that it is heavily frequented.

Corum stated the county has made a lot of progress over the past few years, because of people like Steve Wyatt, John Mitchell, Marcus Jones, and David Hill. He also commended the school system for their work as well.

Philip reiterated the increased demand on outdoor recreational resources that Katie mentioned, and he doesn't think the demand will subside. He agrees that increased funding is needed for Parks and Recreation.

Following up, Carleen addressed Katie's comments on lights, stating that we still are having challenges with lights. We had 54 lamps out between Jackson and Etowah Parks that we had to replace, but work was delayed because the water table was too high. Carleen stated that by the time we were able to fix the lights we had an additional 22 lamps that were out. And we had 22 compactors and 12 ballasts that had to be replaced. So, the price went from \$13,000 to \$30,000. We are currently pulling numbers on how much we have spent on lights in the past 5 years, and it is significant.

Katie stated extending the daylight hours would be useful so people can recreate more.

Stephanie stated the laser grading has been phenomenal and that it has been a great purchase for the county. It has allowed game play after significant rain because it has improved drainage.

Jeff invites the board members to visit both Jackson and Etowah Parks on a weekend like this to see everything that goes on in the parks when it is so busy.

8. Call to Adjourn: 1:11