

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

**March 8, 2022, 12:00pm, King St. Meeting Room**

**Board members in attendance:** Robert Smith, Jeffrey Donaldson, Scott Rhodes, Katie Breckheimer, Stephanie Cantwell, Philip Ellis, Terry Maybin, Tricia King

**Staff in attendance:** Carleen Dixon, Bruce Gilliam, Megan Burnette, and Jason Kilgore.

**Speakers in attendance:** Janna Bianculli and Autumn Radcliff

**1. Call to Order:** 12:09

**2. Approval of Minutes:** Katie Breckheimer made a motion to approve the February 8, 2022, minutes as presented. Terry Maybin seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

**3. New Business:**

**a. Office Administrator position filled**

Carleen Dixon introduced the new office administrator – Megan Burnette – to the board.

**b. April meeting – propose April 5<sup>th</sup> instead of April 12**

Philip Ellis made a motion to move the next meeting to April 5<sup>th</sup> due to Carleen being out of town on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Robert Smith seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

**c. PARTF Grant – Seeking recommendation motion**

Carleen explained that a section of Etowah Park needs some work. She needs the approval of the Board of Commissioners to apply for the PARTF grant which would cover half of the costs associated with park improvement, up to \$500,000.

The proposed grant would be used to: 1) Rebuild the playground, making it more accessible. 2) Resurface the basketball court, put up new basketball goals, and remove old posts from batting cages that have not been removed yet, for safety reasons. The old batting cages would be resurfaced for two pickleball courts. 3) Wetland area: multiple rain garden areas would be added to improve drainage and the crossover over the ditch from the playground to the parking lot would be improved to make it more user friendly and visually appealing.

She does not currently have a total cost for the project but estimates it to be around \$400,000-\$500,000 for the entire project. The grant would be for 50% and the County would be responsible for the other 50%. There is a lot of support for this project in the Etowah Community.

Robert Smith made a motion to proceed with the grant. Philip Ellis seconded the motion with a clarification that the wetland area is accessible with interpretative signage. The motion passed unanimously.

Stephanie Cantwell asked about the possibility of adding more parking. Carleen said there is currently not land for this but additional land is of interest.

#### **d. Comprehensive Plan – Planning Department**

Autumn Radcliff and Janna Bianculli from the Planning Department came to speak about the 2045 Comprehensive Plan.

The Board of Commissioners chose the consulting firm Stewart to help with the plan. This plan will address the entirety of Henderson County. Parks and Recreation is one of the many things the plan addresses. The plan will require a review every 5 years and update every 10 years to ensure that the land development code fits the vision of the community.

Survey Results: 6,698 responses, 14% of all the households in Henderson County. This is a good number of responses; however, they want to get a more reflective sample for the county in regard to age and race/ethnicity. Stephanie suggested contacting the Sheriff's Office to post on their social media to try and reach the younger population.

The top priorities respondents chose were: "protect open space and forests", "conservation of unique natural areas and farmland", "improve access to internet and broadband".

Priorities for Recreation Advisory Board: Tricia King and Katie Breckheimer mentioned connections of parks and schools through trails. Autumn asked opinion on whether more facilities are needed or if it would be more beneficial to ramp up existing facilities. She also asked how people felt about small pocket parks and what is the implication on staffing? Carleen reminded the Board about past priority discussions they have had stating the importance of maintaining what we have and the impacts that have been discussed about the housing boom and what has happened since COVID-19 on Parks and Recreation. Parks and Recreation became more about health and well-being during the pandemic. Jeffrey Donaldson questioned if the Ecusta Trail will provide a means for a land switch. Philip stated that our zoning should reflect what we want. Tricia spoke about form-based code and wanting more pocket parks and multisport complexes. Scott Rhodes talked

about the need we have for land for things such as sports complexes and the current price of land being at a premium.

Autumn opened up the conversation about the housing market with some trends from the survey showing that the majority of Henderson County citizens will continue to be retirees, and we are unlikely to see a trend of young people moving to the county because the cost of living is so high. She asked if there was a plan for senior focused projects at the parks. Tricia talked about the potential for multisport complexes that have greenways, pavilions, and fit courses geared towards different age groups. She reiterated the importance of catering to seniors.

Jeffrey stated that he has seen more couples age 30-40 with young children moving here in the last 18 months. Tricia agreed that she has had an increase of younger clients in the past year.

Katie believes Parks and Recreation should update their mission statement to emphasize the benefits it provides to health and wellbeing. She believes Parks and Recreation needs more advocacy. She also expressed the need for a Parks and Recreation Master Plan but realizes that many of the needs of Parks and Recreation are very urgent – it is necessary to take care of what we currently have and then move forward from that. Carleen said that we have the first two pieces done of a Master Plan: the needs assessment and ADA evaluation.

Autumn spoke about how many aspects of the Comprehensive Plan are interconnected. For example, many of the Parks and Recreation goals fall under Public Health. Land, connectivity, and opportunity are the three objectives of the plan. Parks and Recreation is a “strategy” to accomplish other objectives. Katie does not want Parks and Recreation to be hidden behind other objectives, she thinks Parks and Recreation should be considered a building block of the community. Board members agreed that recreation like Jackson Park and the Ecusta Trail are, and will, continue to be large sources of economic development in the community.

Katie asked about the integration of schools and parks. Scott and Bruce spoke about how the schools use the parks more than people realize. Katie thinks part of the planning process should be to assess what we have now, how it is currently being used, and how we can improve that usage. Carleen agreed on how much of a connection there actually is between schools and parks. The board agreed there should be more of an open discussion around the topic.

#### **4. Unfinished Business:**

##### **a. Housing market and impacts to parks and recreation**

Jeffrey Donaldson asked Scott Rhodes what he is seeing in the schools. Scott said they normally have at least 1,000 students per grade level and right now it is running about 975 since the onset of the pandemic.

Carleen Dixon mentioned that homeschooled students might not be accounted for but are still big users of parks.

Board members speculated that there will be more young children and we will need more facilities but have less available land as time passes. Bruce Gilliam said sports registrations are coming back in record numbers and that we need to be proactive instead of reactive.

There will be more information after kindergarten registration is complete.

## **b. Subcommittees update**

### **i. Soccer**

The soccer subcommittee met with Mike Rottjakob from Asheville Buncombe Youth Soccer Association (ABYSA) and Coach Mitchy and Bruce has individually met with almost all of the high school soccer coaches. History of this: A proposal was brought to the committee that they consider handing over the administration of recreation soccer to ABYSA. The committee believes that ABYSA can provide a more "professional" soccer program because they have more resources. However, the biggest problem with Henderson County Recreation Soccer is the lack of field space, which would not be fixed by ABYSA. The Henderson County program could improve with a higher level of administration. This was defined as more training opportunities for volunteer coaches and additional training for high school officials. They will defer making any decisions about this until after the fall season to give time for the new Athletics Recreation Program Coordinator to make improvements. The goal is to improve the current soccer program, and if that is not possible then ABYSA may be the next best option.

Carleen said that Parks and Recreation is always trying to improve their programs and after hiring Zach High, the last Athletics Recreation Program Coordinator, they saw a lot of improvements in the soccer program. The pandemic halted a lot of progress, and now they are in a transition period while looking for someone to fill that position but are hoping the new person can bring some new things to the role/programs.

Carleen asked if we could continue this conversation at the next meeting due to time and the board agreed.

**5. Call to Adjourn:** 1:42 pm

The next Recreation Advisory Board meeting will be held on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022, at the AAC, 708 S. Grove St, Hendersonville.