

Henderson County Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting

September 19th, 2023, Edneyville Community Center

Board members in attendance: Jeff Donaldson, Terry Maybin, Corum Smith, Robert Smith, Katie Breckheimer, Doug Moon, Mary Davis

Staff in attendance: Bruce Gilliam, Jason Kilgore, Cory Blackwell, Autumn Radcliff, Lindsay Pressley, and Brooklyn Bishop

Public in Attendance: Rick Wood

1. Call to Order: 12:04

2. Approval of Minutes: August 2023

Jeff asked for a motion to approve the August minutes as written. Doug motioned to approve, Bob seconded, and there was a unanimous approval from the board.

3. Public Input

Rick Wood is a local community member who will be attending the county commissioners meeting tomorrow morning to present the material he brought to the advisory board today. Rick wrote an op-ed piece 20 years ago addressing the need for a community center in Henderson County. He has seen in recent years how the Athletics and Activities Center has fulfilled that role, especially with the addition of pickleball to the gym. However, Rick has noted that the gym has become very crowded during pickleball and feels there is a demand for additional courts. Rick suggests that the county should add pickleball courts to Jackson Park. This would be a great, affordable option to keep retirees active. The sport has been most popular with groups 60+ and is growing in the community. Rick mentioned that the Edneyville courts will be a great addition to the community. The Ecusta Trail has also been a great resource for seniors to keep them active.

4. New Business

a. Jackson Park Tennis Courts – Upper and Lower

Jackson Park has 8 tennis courts, 4 upper and 4 lower. The upper courts were refinished in 2017 but the lower courts are still original from when they were first built around 2010. The lower courts are in bad shape and Bruce will be attending the Commissioners meeting to ask for the funding to have them redone. They did set aside \$25k for the upper courts to be resurfaced which will be completed in October. If we are approved for the lower court work, it will be next year before that is completed. This is mainly a safety issue due to large cracks in the courts. The courts are used very regularly for pickleball as well as tennis which mainly attracts an older crowd. It is not safe for the pickleball groups to play on courts with such large cracks. They will be colored grey and green like the new Edneyville courts to help keep courts cooler during the summer.

Doug mentioned that the upper courts were built in 1974 with the lower being added around 2010. He said the due to the clay that was used for the courts, they will always shift. Bruce said he recently learned that courts usually only last around 5 years. Hendersonville High and East High both consider them their home courts. Between schools, other tennis programs, and pickleball, the courts are in constant use. Pickleball groups have asked for two of the lower courts to be designated for pickleball only, but, due to the need for tennis, this is not a possibility.

Katie asked if we need to go to the commissioners to spend funds that have been allocated in our budget. Bruce explained that this would be a capitol project coming in around \$300k and anything this large must go for approval. The upper court resurfacing was included in our budget. Mary asked if adding pickleball lines would be an issue for tennis use. Bruce explained that we must stay compliant with NCHAA guidelines for the lines, which requires tennis lines to be white. We would love to have pickleball courts in Jackson Park. The City of Hendersonville will be adding 6 courts soon, and both Fletcher and Mills River have recently added new courts.

b. Sports Complex – Soccer Complex Update

Currently, there has been property in Edneyville that was being considered that the county has now moved away from. They are looking at a new location but if you know of any land, please contact Bruce.

c. Staff Update and Program Updates

Our fall soccer program has 700 kids playing in Jackson Park. Our programs have grown so much that we are running out of room, especially for spectators. On Saturdays, we have soccer, occasionally Top Gunn softball tournaments, Special Needs softball, and other regular use patrons like walkers and birders. We now have the Rescue Squad station in Jackson Park on Saturdays. This is a busy time for our sports with adult basketball sign-ups starting soon and adult softball is ongoing.

We are planning for Treat Street with 30 vendors signed up so far and hopes to get 50 contributors on board this year. Lowes was very generous and will be donating decorations for the event. Biltmore Baptist will be hosting the fun zone again with 20 different games and inflatables that will spread two blocks. All contributors will be giving out candy or a kid friendly item and downtown merchants will be giving out candy as well.

Lindsay has some exciting programs planned for the fall at ECC. There will be a yard sale this Saturday from 8am – 12pm. There will be two Tumble Bears and 2 Art Start sessions for the remainder of the year. On October 27th, the ECC will host a Monster Mash for Halloween, followed by a Turkey Time event before Thanksgiving. Most of these programs are for kids 12 and under. The programs in Edneyville have grown tremendously and have drawn an interest from local homeschool groups. Lindsay is open to the idea of offering adult events, but it is difficult to get commitment.

Cory has done a great job of keeping the website current and updated. Lynn has released a fall schedule of programs for seniors that can be found on our website and Mary has copies she will hand out as well. This schedule will be continually updated online in the event of any changes. Mary and her husband will be offering a bike seminar in October. Our

senior cheerleading group attended special needs softball this past weekend to cheer for them. We will be hosting a Pickleball Fall Brawl in October at our AAC gym. Cory is continuing with his hiking series next Wednesday for a guided hike to Holmes State Park.

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Ecusta Trail Update

They have done the design and permitting for the first 6 miles of the trail, and it is on the agenda at the Board of Commissioner's meeting tomorrow to review the bid results. NHN was the recommended engineering firm based on the bid tabulation and engineers' evaluation. The bid came in at 10 million for the first 6 miles. They are currently working with the DOT to ensure all approvals are in line since this is federal funding and the DOT is the grant administrator for multiple grants. The design process had to address issues that came from the previous design, mainly drainage issues that have now created wetlands that were not originally there. The commissioners will take these issues into consideration tomorrow as well as the engineering for the next 6 miles. This process will likely take about a year, but the funding is secured. Brevard just signed their contracts for engineering so hopefully construction starts will line up for Brevard and Henderson County.

Jeff asked if this will be 14ft wide and Autumn confirmed it will be 14ft in municipalities and move into 12ft as it nears the county line. They will be kicking off in October with Trail partners to work with the businesses, organizations and those adjacent to the trail. This will be to keep them informed on the trail and hopefully continue the group as the trail is completed to be a community for the trail. This group will help as they have discussions about parking, restrooms, signage, and more aspects of the trail. Katie mentioned that the Hellbender Conference recognized the county and the planning staff for how important this work is and everything they have done to make it happen.

b. Etowah – PARTF Grant – Jason

Nothing has changed since the previous meeting. We have gotten several quotes for different equipment. Currently, we are still waiting on the surveying to be completed before a map can be done.

The Edneyville Community Center will undergo a stream restoration project with Soil and Water. They have completed the pre-bid meeting and bids will be due October 2nd. This project should be completed by June of 2024.

c. EFR Park – Trail and Disc Golf Update

We received a quote on the walking trail and materials. The trail is roughly 4,360 ft and will tie into the existing soccer field. This will be a stone dust trail which allows for easy maintenance. For the disc golf portion, Bruce and Jason have asked management for additional funding. We would have an outside group build this course for us. We have added this land addition to our mowing contract to ensure it is maintained and the land has been cleared, however the vacant space can cause the land to be used for unwanted purposes. We would like to get this project completed soon to grow the park.

6. EVENTS

There will be a Hunger Walk at Jackson Park on September 23rd. Farm City Day will be October 7th at Jackson Park, so we will not have soccer that weekend. Treat Street will be downtown on Halloween. We will be downtown again in December for Santa on the Square on the 2nd and our New Years Apple Rise on the 31st. Our events have been huge this year and consistently growing. On October 21st, Tuxedo will be hosting Discovery Day. Terry mentioned that this will be the largest one yet with plenty of options for kids including petting zoos, and more.

Terry mentioned they are waiting on the community group foundation to do a ribbon cutting for the new additions to Tuxedo Park. The park now has a court like the one at ECC that is getting plenty of use.

7. MEMBER COMMENTS

Katie mentioned that the playground has been causing some issues for traffic in Jackson Park due to people walking in the road. Phillip had brought this issue up last month and Katie agrees that we need to implement some type of safety measure for people to get from the greenway to the playground. Katie would really like to see some work done to improve the trails in Jackson Park as well. Doug asked if we could add signage by the lower trail, but Mary stated that the trail doesn't completely connect. Doug said this could be a safer option given how narrow the road through the park is. The board agreed that this would be a much safer option, signage would be the main issue.

Mary stated that even given the constraints on field space in Jackson Park, the traffic and park use flowed very well. We are happy to see the park being used and the community has given feedback to state how pleased they are with the park. The parks are getting updates and new additions to accommodate the growing use.

Corum stated that he has made a point to speak with them today to let them know how much their support is appreciated for parks and recreation. He is thrilled to see the growth among the county parks. Bruce mentioned how grateful we are to have Corum as a part of our board.

Bruce and Jason will be in Dallas, TX for the National Parks & Recreation Conference in October so the next meeting will be November 14th at our AAC office.

8. ADJOURN: 12:50

Next Meeting: November 14th