

Henderson County Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting

September 10th, 2024, Veterans Services Office

Board members in attendance: Jeff Donaldson, Terry Maybin, Corum Smith, Bob Smith, Ralph King, Katie Breckheimer, Mary Davis, Doug Moon, Stephanie Cantwell, Milton Butterworth, Phillip Ellis, and Tricia King

Staff in attendance: Bruce Gilliam, Jason Kilgore, Lynn Metcalf, Autumn Radcliff, Nora Sjue, and Brooklyn Bishop

Public in Attendance: Bill Ramsey, Sonya Jones

1. Call to Order: 12:03

2. Approval of Minutes: July & August 2024

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

Public Input – None.

3. New Business

a. AFP Grants – Nora and Brooklyn

Nora Sjue is an intern with Henderson County who has been working with Parks and Rec on an accessibility grant for East Flat Rock Park. We have applied for this grant in the past but will be reapplying this year. Nora will be working on the application along with Cory, Lynn, Bruce, and Brooklyn. The goal of the AFP grant is to create a more accessible park at East Flat Rock including possible upgrades to the parking, sidewalks, shelter, and playground. The grant has changed since we last applied in 2022. This is a \$500k grant with a 1 to 5 required match from the county. We will be looking to the board for suggestions on what to apply for specifically. We will also need support for assisting with community engagement to identify what the East Flat Rock community would like to see done at the park and later host a public involvement meeting. A letter of support from the Advisory Board is required at the

end of the application process so we will be discussing that further as well.

A master plan was a major component of the previous application, which we do not have and cost us most of the points but is not a requirement this year. Katie thinks that we need a master plan, and Bruce agrees, especially for Jackson Park. Phillip asked if 20% of the total grant award would have to be matched by the county and Bruce confirmed. Phillip asked if you are allowed to use the funds outside of the park to assist in access to the park. Nor believes it is possible but in very specific circumstances. Phillip asked if this could be used for new capital improvements, such as Berkeley, but Bruce stated that Chris Todd would like this to solely focused on East Flat Rock Park.

Stephanie brought up some serious safety concerns that the Sheriff's Office has been monitoring at the East Flat Rock Park. There has been increased activity of crime and a homeless population in the park and disc golf course. There have been incidents of vandalism at East Flat Rock and Dana Park which has increased the need for security cameras and additional police presence. Sonya, the new Public Health Strategist for the Health Department, mentioned the possibility of grants available to assist in park development. Mary asked if we could form a committee together to create a master plan for all parks. Bruce stated his goal is to encourage his superiors to push for a master plan and create a site plan for this specific grant. A master plan would need to be contracted out and could not be done by an internal county department, which Bruce has submitted to the Parks budget.

Katie motioned to formally recommend the county commissioners to initiate a Parks and Rec master plan to allow Parks and Rec to set priorities and leverage additional funding and support. Phillip seconded the motion, and there was a unanimous approval from the board.

b. Senior Games Activities – Lynn Metcalf

Lynn hosts senior activities free of cost every month for anyone over 50 that include sports, arts, and crafts. A florist has offered to host table and door decoration crafts for seniors this holiday season free of charge. Adult daycares have begun to bring groups to participate. This will allow the Senior Games to grow in participation as well. Local Senior Games ended in May with 130 participants qualifying for State Games with 40 traveling to participate. We will start two weeks earlier in 2025 and hopefully include a torch run as well. The SilverArts Showcase will be held at Blue Ridge Community College and hope to grow attendance to around 250. Advent Health will be sponsoring the dinner at the Showcase and Milton mentioned that Pardee would like to partner as well. Lynn will be moving into an office at the VSO facility and will begin to host senior activities at the VSO as well. The State Sendoff Luncheon was just held at the facility with a great turnout. Jeff wanted to thank Lynn for all the work she has done to grow the programming for our seniors.

Mary mentioned that it would be helpful to get sponsorship to assist with travel. Many that qualify for State games couldn't attend since they could not drive themselves. If we had busses to drive the participants that would assist in State games attendance. Stephanie mentioned reaching out to churches as well for possible transportation solutions.

c. Berkeley Park – Bruce and Jason

Bruce presented the board with a map for the Berkeley Park plans. The soil sample came back good. The layout includes 4 full size soccer fields, 6 tennis courts, a softball field, 335 parking spaces, a proposed playground area, walkways around the perimeter that ties into the Oklawaha, restrooms, and a maintenance facility. We cannot touch the baseball field with federal funds, but we will do some improvements later. Katie asked about the greenway involvement and Jason confirmed that it would be connected to the walking paths in the park. Katie is concerned with how this will fit in with the greenway eventually leading to Westfeldt Park. Autumn stated that this was not from a master plan

but rather a feasibility study so it is not a design but rather suggestions for connections.

Tricia asked if there will be additional walking areas around the park. Jason confirmed that there will be 12ft wide walkways around the perimeter of the park. This will be a major upgrade from Jackson Park for soccer since there will be multiuse for everyone in the family. The fields will be sewn for 11v11 lines but can be painted for smaller fields, lacrosse or other sports as well. Special needs will have a place for soccer programming as well. The park will be all the same elevation as well. Phillip asked if we will be using a higher quality of turf. The AAC turf field has become very worn. The AAC field has no out of bounds space but this will be allocated for at Berkeley.

Mary mentioned that additional parking will be great to have at Berkeley. We have faced parking issues at Jackson Park and our AAC facility during soccer season and softball season with people parking anywhere they can in dangerous places. There is available space to designate overflow parking at Berkeley for an additional 75+ vehicles in addition to the 335 parking spaces in place. Jeff asked if we would need any steps to access parking and Jason confirmed there will be no steps. There will be two retaining walls, but none are around the fields. Terry asked when the projected opening date will be. Jason stated we are looking at an 18 month build out. Milton said he believes this is the biggest accomplishment of the RAB in years. Milton asked how the parking will compare to Jackson Park and Jason confirmed Berkeley will have more parking. Bruce thanked the board for their assistance and support in making this possible. This will become a destination park and alleviate congestion and traffic issues by hosting softball and soccer in separate locations.

d. Bell Park Opening

Jason presented a map to highlight the space we own. There has been a large deck built and they are working on creating the trail. There will also be a small parking area. This will be a great addition and Jason

mentioned how grateful we are to have Conserving Carolina in our county. They have done so much for our county and are responsible for most all the work and funding for this trail. The trail will be around a mile long with some elevation. We will host a ribbon cutting in October with an official date to come. Terry asked how much parking will be available and Jason confirmed there are 5 spots. They are completing the construction before the trail will be open.

e. EFR Park – Bridges and Disc Golf – Jason

Our maintenance staff is currently putting in bridges to cross the creek. There will be a walking path installed along the outside of the property. The disc golf course has been heavily used since its opening and has received great feedback.

f. VFW Building – Brooklyn

The facility includes a meeting room downstairs that seats 60 people and the large multipurpose room upstairs that seats 108 along with a warming kitchen. There is no fee for the facility however we are charging a security deposit that is returned after reservations. We have had a great deal of reservations in the facility since its opening, especially in the multipurpose room. There are several ballroom dance groups currently reserving the facility. The upstairs floor will be resurfaced next week to protect the wood. There is also an internal conference room for county use only that has been used mainly by the VSO staff.

Mary asked about the access of the facility. Brooklyn stated that Bryan Rhodes has been creating key cards for rentals that we distribute at the AAC office to renters that are to be returned after their reservation. Reoccurring renters will have a specific card labeled for their group that they can keep throughout the extent of their reservations. Mary also asked about the amount of the security deposit fee. Brooklyn stated that it is currently \$125 but there have been discussions of increasing this, which would require a change to our fee schedule.

g. Tuxedo Park – Pollinator Garden Installation – Terry

A group of gardeners in Tuxedo have applied for and received a grant to install a sign into the pollinator garden at the Tuxedo Park. Terry stated it looks great and has added to the beauty of the park.

h. Etowah Park – Library Panels Installation – Bruce

We will be adding reading panels around the walking trail. Bruce and Jason will be meeting about this progress tomorrow afternoon.

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Ecusta Trail Opening Update - Autumn

95% of the drainage has been installed, 90% of the sub-grade has been prepared, and there has been a significant amount of unsuitable soil that has been removed. A large amount of the first layer of the pavement has been complete and around 25% of the trail has had the final layer installed. All the bridges have been installed as well. One of the two retaining walls is nearing completion, and they are about to start working on the electrical for the signals at crossings. Everything is moving on schedule, so opening is still hopeful for December. One thing the planning department has been working on is offering free consultations with business owners to see what they can do to make their business more trail oriented and providing information about policies. The Hellbender regional trail gathering is going to be on September 26th that will be hosted in Brevard. There will be two presentations with one being about the Ecusta. This will be free but does require registration.

Milton brought up the discussion of e-bikes on the trail. Autumn discussed that since this is considered a transportation corridor, they will be allowed up to a certain level and this is a topic that will continue to be addressed. Doug mentioned that he received complaints about 4-wheelers and trucks on the trail which proposed the question of 4-wheelers on the trail. These will not be allowed, and it needs to be enforceable and should be reported to the Sheriffs Office or local police.

b. S.O.S. – Support Our Swimmers – Katie Breckheimer

The SOS group has some new members including Sonya from the Health Department and Steve Bradshaw, the swim coach at West Henderson High School. There is a trip scheduled to Cullowhee to see their new facility on November 7th. This Jackson County facility took design ideas from a Waynesville facility and a Boone facility that the SOS group visited. They anticipate the Jackson County facility to be even better than those that they have already visited. There will be a community organizing event on October 26th at The Buzz to build enthusiasm for the need of a swimming complex. Katie has been in touch with Katharine Berkoff, who was an Olympic medalist this year. She grew up in Montana and said she struggled to find practice space while living there and wants to come support the cause. If she is unable to attend in person, she will be attending via Skype.

c. Etowah Park - PARTF Update with Playground and Fitness Stations

A geo study was completed at the basketball area to see if we would be able to remove the old asphalt. We will be taking up the asphalt at the old batting cages and given our budget it was recommended we overlay the basketball courts which should last a while. Now that this is completed, we can start to make more progress and get bids out. We hope to get asphalt down by early spring. All playground and exercise equipment has been ordered and will be delivered soon. We hope to start seeing dirt move soon. We are excited for the changes that are coming to Etowah and hope to get this completed as soon as possible.

5. STAFF UPDATES AND EVENTS

Treat Street will be held downtown on Halloween again this year. Last year we had 55 contributors participate along with the downtown merchants. This is a huge event with crowds comparable to the Apple Festival. We hosted a Fly-Tying class in partnership with NC Wildlife. Cory will be hosting Keep Jackson Park Clean on November 19th. Cory is also continuing to host hikes once a month through the end of the year. The Fall Brawl Pickleball tournament will

be in October at the AAC gym. Adult basketball registration is open, and we will have space for 6 teams. Youth basketball, basketball clinics and sprouts basketball are upcoming. Basketball is our biggest youth sport program with numbers exceeding soccer registrations each year. Lindsay will be hosting Apple-ology and Art Start programs at the Edneyville Community Center. We will be painting the basketball courts at Jackson Park and East Flat Rock Park.

6. MEMBER COMMENTS

Autumn asked if we would start having all meetings at the VSO facility. This facility is rented very frequently but we could swap to the downstairs meeting room or stay at the AAC facility.

7. ADJOURN:

Next Meeting: November 12, 2024 VFW