

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

**November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Athletics and Activities Center**

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

**Staff in attendance:** Bruce Gilliam, Jason Kilgore, Cory Blackwell, Nora Sjue, and Brooklyn Bishop

**Public in Attendance:** Annette Huetter

**1. Call to Order:** 12:05

**2. Approval of Minutes:** September 2024

Jeff asked for a motion to approve the September minutes as written. Katie motioned to approve, Mary seconded, and there was a unanimous approval from the board.

**Public Input** – None.

**3. AAC and HCPRD Programs and Parks Update from Hurricane –**

Bruce and Jason provided an update on the department and facilities in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. The AAC facility was used as an emergency shelter for about 5 weeks starting on Sept. 26<sup>th</sup>. The shelter housed about 100 people in and out during the time. The American Red Cross used our turf field to land their helicopter to drop off both supplies and people that had been rescued. After the first week, the Red Cross began operating the AAC shelter and FEMA had a station at the AAC to assist. Jason and other county employees were performing wellness checks and transporting people in need to the shelter.

We stopped all our recreation programming for several weeks and were assigned disaster relief duties including assisting at shelters and helping the inspections department with damage assessments around the county. Our staff assisted in transporting shelter needs between the AAC shelter and the

Edneyville Elementary School shelter including food and donations. After a few weeks of clean-up and recovery, we finished out the youth soccer season, adult softball season, and special needs baseball.

This has been a team effort from all county departments from rescue to recovery. We are still working on recovery in our parks. All our parks received some sort of damage, and we had assessments preformed that have now come back. Many of the large trees fell, the dog park fencing was down, and the old landfill cap got uncovered which has made the area very unsafe. Our maintenance staff focused on cutting trees to open roadways for emergency services directly after the storm and then moved into the parks to make them as safe as possible. There is a lot of trees work ongoing in the parks, mainly Jackson. There was a large silt load left from the flooding over the whole park that was washed off slightly by some rain. We were able to clean our soccer fields to finish the season.

Jackson Park had tremendous flooding with areas having around 15ft of water. We had a lot of items float away or damaged such as trashcans and picnic tables. The bank beside the slides of the new playground did get damaged. We are working with insurance to get most of this covered. We were able to finish out the baseball seasons for little league and adult softball at Etowah Park and fields 8 & 9, which were not damaged. We are very thankful to have been able to play to bring some normalcy back to our community. Everyone has come together to help through this which has been amazing.

Terry asked besides the disc golf course, what areas are closed. Jason stated the Jackson disc golf course, the dog park, and the trails at Jackson are closed. We had possibly 200 trees down in Jackson Park alone and there are crews currently working to clean up the trees. This likely to take a while given the amount of damage. Westfeldt and Blantyre Parks did not fair well. There was severe flooding at both parks.

We hosted Treat Street Downtown on Halloween with record attendance. Mars Candy donated about 12 pallets of candy that we were able to give out to our contributors. Mars also attended the event as a contributor and

brought along several mascots such as the M&M character. There was also candy donated to the distribution center to give out. The distribution center has been receiving an overwhelming amount of donations for our community. The VFW has been closed since the storm to use as a sorting facility for the mass amounts of clothing donations. Tricia asked if there were organizations that would like to donate specifically to Parks and Recreation to help with repairs. Jason stated that insurance will be able to cover most of the damage. Once the AAC shelter moved out, we did get the facility professionally cleaned before reopening for activities. Jeff asked if we have been able to get to the Gerton area to check on our trail. Jason stated that he was unable to get to the trail to see the damage, but he is aware that the parking lot has been washed away.

#### **4. New Business**

##### **a. Berkeley Park Update - Jason**

Jason presented the board with the decided layout for the park. A pre-bid meeting will be held today. A lot of dirt will need to be moved to make this layout possible. We will not be making renovations to the baseball field as it is a historic site that cannot be touched with Federal funds. We could make renovations on our own later. There will be a plaza area at the entrance and wide walkways around the park. The walkway will tie into the Oklawaha Trail and there will be a separate lot for those interested in only the walking trail. We will have 11v11 lines sewn in and will be able to paint any other needed lines. This will accommodate 3 games on each field for soccer. There will be 30ft in-between each field and bleacher pads around the outside of the fields. Phillip asked if equipment will be stored outside, and Jason confirmed there will be a maintenance facility to store any extra goals and supplies. There will be lights at all amenities and netting around the facility.

Mandatory contractor pre-bid meeting will be held today, and we have had 20 download the plan. We are looking at an 18-month timeline, starting breaking ground around February or March. Katie mentioned the funds will be awarded at the 12/2 Commissioners meeting so the funds can be under contract by 12/31. Bruce and Jason confirmed this

and stated that no extension was awarded for this funding. Milton asked if the plans address everything that was requested by the school district. Jason stated that we have put them in the layout but will not know what is possible until we receive bids. Phillip asked if the new members of the School Board will be in office before this is awarded. Scott confirmed that the newly elected board will not affect this decision. We are excited to add amenities for our high schools. The softball field will have similar to stadium seating, pitching dugouts, and batting cages. Jason has worked closely with the design company to make sure everything is accounted for in the design. We tried to orient all fields to keep the sun out of their eyes when playing.

**b. Bell Park Trail Ribbon Cutting Nov. 22, 2024 10:00am - Bruce**

We had to reschedule the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the Bell Park Trail from October to Friday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> at 10am. Conserving Carolina has cleaned up the trail from any damage. This has not been put out to the public due to lack of parking, but the Advisory Board is welcome to attend. The trail fared well in the storm. There was a landslide that our maintenance department was able to repair, which has made the waterfall more visible from the trail. Milton asked if the trail will be open prior to the Ribbon Cutting but that will be the Grand Opening. There are only about 6 parking spaces at the trail head, but parking is available at the old bridge across the street for overflow.

**c. VFW Update – Brooklyn**

The facility has been closed since the Hurricane. The county commissioners decided to use the VFW for sorting the mass amounts of clothing donations from the distribution center. Clothes would be sent to the VFW, sorted between usable and unusable, boxed up by size, and sent back to the distribution center. Storage containers have now been rented to store overflow clothing and will soon be moving out of the VFW. We will have the facility cleaned before reopening for reservations.

**5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**a. Ecusta Update - Autumn**

The trail sustained some damage but not a lot. The county is working with the DOT on a supplemental agreement for the contractor to repair the damaged areas in the first phase. This will likely delay the opening until March. Damage cost was about \$470k that FEMA and insurance will cover. All the bridges held in place. There was some surface buckling in a few places, but the trail held up very well.

**b. PARTF Update - Jason**

The project is still looking to be completed by August. We have removed the batting cages and asphalt around that side. The mandatory pre-bid meeting for the basketball court was scheduled for 9/27, which pushed us back a month. The contract has been awarded and if weather continues to be warm paving could be completed soon on the basketball court. The playground will begin to be removed soon. The exercise equipment is set to ship on 11/19. Our staff will install the equipment when it arrives and will pour concrete pads. The playground equipment is set to ship the first week of December. Progress will begin moving much quicker in the coming weeks. Milton asked what the finished project include. Jason listed basketball/pickleball courts, a new playground with swings, exercise equipment along the existing walking trail, and reading panels that we will be adding. If there is funding leftover, we will add a seating wall near the basketball court.

**c. Accessibility for Parks Grant Update – Nora, Cory, and Brooklyn**

This is an accessibility grant for East Flat Rock Park. The grant application is due on 3/3/25. We have scheduled two presentations with groups representing those with mobility issues. We will also host a public input meeting on 1/13/25. We are hoping to get on the schedule for the mid-January Commissioners meeting for the final approval to apply. Tomorrow, we will do a walk-thru of the park with Jason to get his insight on what needs to be completed.

We will need approval from advisory board for our application and we would also like to have a letter of support from the board. We would

like to involve the Friends of East Flat Rock group specifically in our public input meeting.

Terry motioned that the advisory board support the effort to apply for the Accessibility for Parks Grant for East Flat Rock Park, Phillip Seconded, all approved.

**d. S.O.S. Update – Katie**

The S.O.S. group has taken a pause due to the Hurricane for the time being. Prior to the storm, the group met with the Director of the Community Foundation who was willing to start a fund and hold any funding collected for the group. The October Pool Party has been cancelled. There was a great informative article about the group in the Hendersonville Lighting. A field trip was scheduled to visit the Sylvia facility, but it has not yet opened. The director of the facility is willing to host the group for a tour. The committee will reconvene early in 2025. The need has not gone away for a pool in our community. Katie reached out to the City Public Works for an update on Patton Pool and was informed it is full of mud. The pool will likely not open in Summer of 2025 due to the level of damage. The only other two pools in the county are private or the YMCA, which are both aging. This is a good time for the community to see the need.

**e. Parks Master Plan Request Update**

Bruce met with Chris Todd to inform him of the request for a Parks Master Plan. Since the Hurricane, this has been pushed back and we have no new info to share. Katie made a request to keep this on our agenda for future bi-monthly updates. Milton asked if we think there is a level of support for this. Bruce confirmed that there is support from county management, however this is just a bad time. Milton mentioned that due to its location, Jackson Park is the main priority, but the best route would be to create a Master Plan for all parks at the rate we are growing. Katie wants to make sure a Master Plan would include to extend the greenway both directions. She was able to find a map that displayed options for extension and included the

floodways. Tricia mentioned that the Hurricane has changed the land of our parks which is more cause for us to reassess our facilities.

## **6. STAFF UPDATES AND EVENTS**

Our youth basketball program will begin practicing in December with games beginning in the first of January. We extended the registration after the Hurricane. Treat Street was a huge success downtown on Halloween. Cory presented some photos of the event. We had 65 contributors participate along with the downtown merchants, all who we were able to provide with some candy from donations. We estimate the crowd to have been around 10,000+ people. Our senior activities have started back up and Lynn will continue to update the website with any changes. We will have Santa on the Square downtown on 12/6 and will participate in the Christmas Parade on 12/7. Our New Years Apple Rise event is coming up on New Years Eve downtown as well. Lindsay is hosting several special events like Turkey Time, coming up at the Edneyville Community Center. Milton asked if Edneyville Community Center suffered any damage, and Bruce confirmed the Center was not harmed.

## **7. MEMBER COMMENTS**

Tricia asked if someone had issues registering for a program due to financial troubles if we would be able to work with them. Bruce confirmed that we would be able to provide assistance for those who need it. Milton asked if he could donate some old sports equipment and Bruce said we will take the donations. Katie asked if the Red Cross landing their helicopter on the turf field caused any damage. Bruce stated we turned it in on our insurance but there was no major damage to the field.

## **8. ADJOURN: 1:27**

Next Meeting: January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025 – Athletics and Activities Center