

Henderson County Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting

March 11th, 2025, Athletics and Activities Center

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

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

Public in Attendance: Lynn Gilpin

1. Call to Order: 12:04

2. Approval of Minutes: January 2025

Jeff asked for a motion to approve the January minutes as written. Milton motioned to approve, Phillip seconded, and there was a unanimous approval from the board.

Public Input – None.

3. New Business

a. Ecusta Trail Rules and Etiquette – RTAC - Autumn

The rules were taken back to the RTAC, and they were approved. They did change the first rule to state “Stay on the trail and respect private property.” The list was reviewed by the City of Brevard, and they found no issue. The Friends Group has now posted them on their website. The RTAC will meet tomorrow to look at items like parking and events. We have completed all Ecusta storm recovery tasks on the trail, and they are still looking to the June completion date.

Jeff asked if there will be a map on the trail to display parking and bathrooms. Autumn said the TDA and Friends Group will be working on that. Several businesses have offered parking to be available. Some will not be possible as there is an encroachment policy and safety is the main concern. Businesses would need to have an approved

encroachment or show how you would use a public access sidewalk. Phillip and Jason asked what would prevent businesses from advertising parking on their own, Businesses would need to become an encroachment with the county. Bob asked if there will be parking near Horse Shoe and Autumn stated it will be a challenge in that area.

The 30% design for the second phase to Brevard is almost complete. There will be no closures of the trail for any events as it is a transportation corridor. Milton asked if a business or property owner along the trail has an event, will there be rules for them keeping events off the trail. Autumn confirmed yes, they will need to keep those on private property.

b. CTA Tennis Grant 2025 – Lynn Gilpin

Lynn from the Community Tennis Association has been working with the County Commissioners to get more tennis courts in the county. We are limited on space in Jackson Park as the CTA programs share with HCPRD, Hendersonville High, and East High for space. Lynn has been communicating with the Executive Director of the US Tennis Association of North Carolina, the National Tennis Association, and the Southern Tennis Association to get funding for local courts. She attended a CTA meeting with representatives from NC and National and they are bringing in \$200k that can be accessed in Henderson County for new courts. There is a need for additional courts in the county, especially on the east side of town.

Lynn would like the support of the RAB on building additional local courts, mainly near East Henderson High School. CTA groups around the country are building new courts to meet the growing need of the sport. They are looking at property behind Hillandale Elementary. This would encourage programs to start at Hillandale Elementary and move up into Flat Rock Middle School and East High School.

c. PARTF Grant May 2025 – Berkeley Park Sports Complex - Jason

We have the opportunity to apply for a new PARTF grant that we are requesting a vote of support for. We have \$11.4m allocated for this project, but that amount will not cover the full scope of work. We are requesting a vote of support from the RAB to apply for the PARTF grant to help complete the Berkeley Park project. The deadline for this application is May 1st. Milton will assist with letters of support. We will host two public meetings and a meeting with the Rotary club before taking this request to the Commissioners in April. Phillip will reach out to local soccer groups for letters of support.

Phillip motioned to support the application for the PARTF grant to assist with the funding of all additional needed facilities at Berkeley Park. Milton seconded the motion and there was a unanimous approval from the board.

d. Spring Sports Update – Bruce

Spring soccer practice began last week at Jackson Park. We are allowing Mountain Community School, Immaculata, and a few homeschool groups to use the fields prior to practice times for their soccer leagues. The Jackson Park soccer fields are in bad shape. Youth basketball completed the season. We will receive the spring schedule from Youth Baseball soon for their upcoming season. Special needs softball will begin soon in Jackson Park. The Jackson Park disc golf course is still closed as clean-up from Hurricane Helene continues on the trails and course. Milton mentioned that he has seen positive feedback on the East Flat Rock disc golf course in the disc golf community.

Sports betting in NC has allowed us to apply for a \$20k grant to go towards youth sports. We would have to share this amount with county municipalities. Bruce has also applied for a grant that will install a free playground in an area that was damaged by Hurricane Helene. He has submitted this for the lower area of the AAC.

e. Special Events – Cory

Our Daddy Daughter Dance was a huge success with around 250 participants at all three sessions and wonderful feedback. Phillip attended with his daughter and they both had a great time. Maintenance built most of our props and Bridgette did a wonderful job planning the event. Our Egg Hunt event will be in Jackson Park on April 12th. Movies in the Park will begin in May and continue into the summer.

f. Summer Camp Update – Cory

Registration opened March 1st and most of the camps are already full with a waitlist. We will not have Adventure Camp this year due to liability issues and several of our usual visits being closed from Hurricane damage such as Chimney Rock and local pools.

g. Senior Games Update – Lynn

Senior Games registration ends this Saturday. We will have a registration luncheon tomorrow at the VFW for anyone interested to learn more information. We have over 18 sports and Silver Arts for individuals to register for. Our Silver Arts Showcase will be on April 15th at Blue Ridge Community College. We will provide dinner and there will be performances from those participating. Performers and a plus one receive a free meal, and tickets are available for others at \$10. Pardee and Advent Hospitals have been great sponsors for the Games.

There will be a Kick-off Breakfast on April 9th at the VFW with a torch run to begin the games. We had 181 registrants last year and have received 114 so far this year. The Hurricane has diminished some of the registration this year. Lynn hosts senior events weekly year-round and there is a flyer in office and online for those interested.

h. Special Needs Update - Lynn

Special needs baseball will begin soon in Jackson Park. Basketball just completed its season. Lynn encouraged the board to attend a game for support. The participants love to have supporters at the games.

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Etowah PARTF Update - Jason

Installation of the playground equipment and swings has been completed. Concrete will be poured for the fitness stations on Friday. We are still waiting on asphalt for the basketball/pickleball courts before we can pour concrete at the playground. Surfacing will then be installed after concrete work is completed. We hope to be completed with the project in full by early June.

b. Accessibility for Parks Grant Update – Brooklyn

We submitted our application for the Accessibility for Parks Grant on Feb. 27th. An award decision will be made in June. We were able to meet with the Innovative Approaches group at the Health Department for feedback. We will be keeping the rock wall fully intact, which is a well-loved piece of the park.

c. S.O.S. Update – Katie

The group recently visited the new Jackson County facility and met with the director. The director discussed that a pool was on their Parks and Rec master plan and continued to move up the priority list. The facility was completed for \$20 million. The group is now meeting monthly, and they hope to visit a dome covered pool next. The City of Hendersonville has hired a company to redesign Patton Pool, and they will host a public input meeting on April 11th. Mary mentioned that the need has increased due to local pools in Henderson County and Asheville now being closed from Helene damage.

The prospectus is complete, and they will meet with TDA and Shelia Franklin to hopefully get support. Milton asked what the strategy for Patton Pool will be and if this is a possible location for a swimming complex. We will see what the company to redesign says about the area. The Summer Olympics will be back in the US, which could generate additional interest in a swimming complex. Corum asked if Patton Pool will become a year-round facility, but they are unsure yet. Katie wants to keep the master plan on the RAB agenda.

Berkeley Park Update – Jason

Jason met with the grading contractor that was awarded the project. A groundbreaking will be held at the end of the month. We have received most of the permits back for the grading work. Hendersonville High School is playing their baseball season at the Berkeley field and fencing will be installed to separate them from construction. We lack around \$2.5m for what is needed to complete the project. We lack funding for the restroom facilities, office and maintenance facilities, and the lights. We were approved to get the high-quality turf for the soccer fields that we requested.

We are looking for sponsors assist with the project completion. Milton asked if the county will be assisting in funding the project where it is needed. We believe the county would assist with funding if needed. We would like to partner with Pardee and their Sports Medicine to have trainers on site at the facility and a meeting has been scheduled to discuss it. This will be a multipurpose facility, and we have had a variety of different groups reach out about using the facility. HHS is playing baseball this season at Berkeley without water, power, or lights by their choice. The Honeycrisps may play their next season at East High School.

5. STAFF UPDATES AND EVENTS

Adult softball registration will open on March 17th. Sprouts soccer will start soon at Hendersonville High School. We will be hosting Movies in the Park this summer. Our Egg Hunt event will be in Jackson Park on April 12th. Edneyville Community Center will continue to host Art Start and Tumble Bears. There will also be a Plant Swap and Ag in the Classroom at Edneyville upcoming. Cory will be hosting a hike in the Saluda Land Trust next month. The Skate Club will begin again in May and Cory received donations from Zumiez to provide participants with equipment.

6. MEMBER COMMENTS

Kaite spoke with Chuck McGrady about the Bell Park Trail. She also reached out to another individual at the DOT to assist in the clean up of the area. When the Saluda Grade Trail ties into the area, the parking can be redesigned to allow for additional parking.

Bruce will be presenting to businesses at the Elk's Lodge tomorrow to promote our programs. Earth Fest will be downtown on April 17th from 10am – 2pm. Milton asked if there has been any progress on the pump track at the Jackson Bike Park. Cory stated that the property has been deemed unusable. We want to advocate for biking in our county and we just need the space to provide the amenities for them.

7. ADJOURN: 1:21pm

Next Meeting: May 13th, 2025