

Henderson County Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting

July 8th, 2025, Athletics and Activities Center

Board members in attendance: Jeff Donaldson, Rebecca McCall, Phillip Ellis, Mary Davis, Bob Smith, Corum Smith, and Milton Butterworth

Staff in attendance: Bruce Gilliam, Cory Blackwell, Autumn Radcliff, Janna Bianculli, Nora Sjue, and Brooklyn Bishop

Public in Attendance: Ward Seguine, Bobby Scott, Gary Eblen

- 1. Call to Order:** 12:17pm
- 2. Approval of Minutes:** May 2025

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

Public Input – Bobby Scott – WNC Disc Golf Association

Bobby Scott is the president of the WNC Disc Golf Association. He is here to advocate for the prompt reopening of the Jackson Park Disc Golf Course. It has been 9 months since Hurricane Helene and extensive clean up was needed on the course, which was completed a month ago. There are still issues on the course including broken tee pads and baskets, and disturbed grounds. Bobby has spoke and met with the County several times over the past months offering support with the repair. It has been officially closed but there have still been users on the course, breaking these rules. They have posted on their website indicating the closure. There are hundreds of people playing every week according to data Bobby was able to pull. The Association would like to extend their support to get the course opened as soon as possible.

Bruce stated that work has been occurring on the course with the contracted clean-up group to get the course repaired. Our Risk Manager has indicated that we cannot allow people onto the course as there are still areas that need tree removal. We have ordered the replacement tee pads and baskets and hope that by the end of July we will be able to open the course. This issue is

similar to how the Ecusta Trail is not yet open but there are still users on the trail daily. It can be difficult to prevent visitors in a large area. We are grateful to have the East Flat Rock Disc Golf Course so there is a course in the county to provide play. Signage has been posted to indicate the course closure but has continued to be ripped down. The course closure is for the safety of the users.

Bobby stated that the hurricane has helped with the trees on the course. Phillip asked if there is a way for those who are using the course while closed to know when there is heavy equipment on the course. We have marked and indicated the closure to prevent users from entering the course. Milton suggested that we post the reopening date in the Kiosk at the course. Jeff asked if Bobby knows how many players are typically at the course when it has been open. Bobby referred to the UDisk system where users can log their game, and there were 44 players on the course last week. This is about half of what was recorded last year, and the actual number of users is likely much higher, as this is one of the most popular courses in WNC.

3. New Business

a. Ecusta Trail – RTAC – Autumn

The Trail Ribbon Cutting will be next Friday, July 18th and the trail will officially be open at 3pm. There will continue to be contractors on the trail finishing punch list items for the rest of the year. They are still working on signage concerns but have received a lot of positive feedback on the trail so far. Autumn gave the board a copy of the draft for Ecusta Trail Event Guidelines, and they will be voted on tomorrow at the RTAC meeting. There will also be application materials, and more information provided to those applying to host an event on the trail. A fee schedule will need to be discussed with the Commissioners. They hope to have everything compiled to allow for applications to be received by the end of Summer and reviewed in October for 2026 events. There will be coordination with other municipalities about events crossing over areas. There are aspects of the application that are still being worked on by staff. Several different groups have provided input for guidelines. This application process will go along with the current Parks and Rec special event process.

Mary asked if the crossing at Church St will be completed before the Ribbon Cutting. Autumn stated it should be completed. There is currently a light and flashers in place and this area will be improved later with the planned round-a-bout. Mary mentioned to look out for races that may cross the trail while coordinating events. Phillip asked if we could get a timeline for the full project completion. The next section will go to the county line and work will be picked up by Brevard. This will be bid as two separate projects, but the two phases would be completed within 6 months to a year of each other in 2027. We currently have a full-time maintenance position open for the Ecusta Trail.

b. Grants for HCPRD – Etowah, Berkeley, USTA, NCAS, AFP Update – Bruce

A Ribbon Cutting for Etowah Park will be held on July 21st as work is finishing up. A PARTF Grant was submitted for additional needs at Berkeley Park that we will find out if we will be awarded in August. We have applied for a USTA Grant for the tennis courts at Berkeley. This grant award could range from \$0-\$700k. We received a \$12,500 grant from NC Amateur Sports Betting that we will use for soccer goals to replace those damaged in the hurricane.

We were awarded the Accessibility for Parks Grant for \$500k with a \$100k match from the county to improve East Flat Rock Park. This will include a new playground, additional pavement to access facilities, and other ADA accommodations to improve the park. We will be keeping the dinosaurs and tractor that are well loved at the current playground. Milton said a thank you for working with the Innovative Approaches group at the Health Department for guidance on this grant application.

c. Parks Update – Bruce

The Green River Community Association has looked into adding a connecting trail to the walking path at Tuxedo Park. There is currently some erosion in the field that we will need to address, and we are getting a quote to repair the basketball court at Tuxedo Park. Terry mentioned that the park is heavily used by Furman University and North

Greenville University which has eliminated parking for other visitors. Adding a trail to the lake would open parking for those visiting. We have hired a few new maintenance employees. We unfortunately had a long-term maintenance employee pass away last month.

The new playground and fitness equipment are installed at Etowah Park and the library panels are being completed. We received a complaint about lack of water fountains at Jackson Park and we are going to install a bottle fill station in the park. Milton asked about the timeline for the East Flat Rock Park grant. We will have 3 years to complete the project but hope to finish in less time. The hurricane and inflation have caused setbacks in the Etowah project.

d. Summer Sports and Camps – Cory

There is a possibility that we will have the opportunity for a new bike park project in Jackson Park and Cory will be in contact with those in the community willing to help. We hosted the Summer Slam Pickleball Tournament in our AAC Gym. Lynn will be hosting senior activities both indoor and outdoor all summer. Special Needs Baseball has completed their season. Spring adult softball is ongoing in Jackson Park. Fall soccer registration is now open and late registration will begin on August 3rd. Summer camps are ongoing with full rosters and waitlists. We have been able to work with the County Schools to use their gyms for some of our camps as registration grows for the programs. We were unable to host Adventure Camp this year due to most of the locations we visit being closed due to the hurricane. There are several ongoing programs and events at the Edneyville Community Center. Cory is continuing to host Skate Club on Saturday's and provided a video from the program for the board. Cory is continuing to host monthly hikes around the county.

The County has hired a Social Media Coordinator, who has created social media accounts for our department. This will allow us to highlight our programs and park updates directly to the public. There will be videos posted to highlight each park in the county to inform what is available at our facilities.

e. Events - Cory

We are continuing our Movie in the Park series. The Jackson Park movie on August 1st will also be a Back-to-School event in partnership with Lipman Family Farms. Lipman will join us again and will be giving away 500 backpacks filled with school materials to the first 500 children in attendance. There will also be 100 bicycles given out courtesy to Lipman Family Farms. There will be inflatables, food vendors, and several businesses will be in attendance as well. We will be showing Despicable Me 4. We will look into providing helmets for the bikes as well. Backpacks and supplies will be picked up and we will host a packing event at the AAC on the 22nd with HCPRD staff and Lipman Family Farms staff. Any leftover backpacks will be given away at the Tuxedo Back-to-School event. Mary would like to get Bike Walk HVL involved to assist with bike fittings at the event.

Our July 4th event was a huge success downtown. We hosted the event across 3 blocks downtown with live music, inflatables, crafts, swag, vendors, and fireworks. The fireworks show was great, and we received nothing but positive feedback.

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Etowah PARTF Update – Bruce

The Etowah Park Ribbon Cutting will be held on July 18th. The project is nearly complete and finishing work is now being completed.

b. Berkeley Park Update – Bruce

There has been a lot of dirt moved at Berkeley Park and progress is underway. Rebecca mentioned that there are a lot of concerns about the trees being removed. She stated that most of the trees needed to be removed, and the County has consulted with our Arborist who has provided a list of local trees to plan that we can replace those with. We are planning for the rental of the facility and have spoken with other municipalities about their fee schedules to determine a fair fee cost. We have received several inquiries about using the fields from various

sports including lacrosse. Our county youth soccer program will receive priority scheduling for the facility.

c. S.O.S. Update – Mary

There will be a meeting today for the group. The prospectus has been written and a slide show has been created to present to organizations. Katie and Steve Bradshaw, the West Henderson High School swim coach, have presented to the Rotary Club and will speak with City Council at the first meeting in August. On July 15th at 4pm and 5pm at the Henderson County Library, the findings from the architectural engineering group survey for Patton Pool and the Whitmire Center will be presented. The S.O.S. group was able to attend a stakeholder meeting with this group to provide their opinion on what would be best for Patton Pool. The S.O.S. group is in favor of a year-round swimming facility, which does not have to be at Patton Park. Patton is in a floodplain which would make it difficult to renovate. The presentation the S.O.S. group has created is a review of the facilities they have visited to show what our community needs.

d. Master Plan for Parks Update – Bruce

Bruce has spoken to Chris Todd about developing a plan for each of our parks to address issues caused from Hurricane Helene and wear over time. When we apply for grants a Master Plan is a needed addition to the application. Milton mentioned they also help protect what is important to us in our parks. Mary mentioned having a plan also helps with accountability for progress. Rebecca mentioned having a Greenway Master Plan is the reason the Ecusta Trail was able to be created. Ward mentioned that in the past when creating a plan for Etowah they reached out to Betsy Gerwig with Water and Soil. She was able to create a plan for them and could be a good resource to contact. We had created a few plans to turn Jackson Park ball fields into a pinwheel design that would create more space and allow for additional fields.

5. STAFF UPDATES AND EVENTS

VFW floors are being recoated, buffed and patched this week. The facility is heavily used daily. We would like to revisit the security deposit amount later as it may need to be increased due to a few incidents that have already occurred with 3 deposits retained already after one year of use.

6. MEMBER COMMENTS

Corum thanked Rebecca for all the Commissioners have done for the County and Recreation. He would like to see a swim complex in the county. Rebecca mentioned a program they started with the YMCA to teach every 2nd grader swim safety within the County.

7. ADJOURN: 1:42pm

Next Meeting: September 9th, 2025