

Henderson County Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting

September 9th, 2025, Veterans Services Office

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

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

Public in Attendance: Peter Kaufman, Ward Seguine

1. Call to Order: 12:01pm

2. Approval of Minutes: May 2025

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

Public Input – Peter, a resident of Etowah, is a frequent user of the Etowah Park and an avid pickleball player. He was looking forward to the addition of courts with the PARTF Grant project at the park. Peter stated that the courts at Etowah Park are unusable due to the lack of fencing. He was under the impression that the pickleball courts would be going where the tennis courts are located and would now like the court to be fenced in. Peter also mentioned that he feels the exercise equipment is dangerous since it has been set on concrete. He would like to see the surfacing change to a softer material.

3. New Business

a. Recognize Advisory Board Member – Bruce

Corum Smith has been a member of the Recreation Advisory Board for 32 years. He has been a proud, consistent, and supportive member of the board since his appointment. We would like to honor Corum for his continued devotion. Bruce presented Corum with a plaque in his honor for his 32 years of commitment to the Recreation Advisory Board.

We have a special member on our board who has been a part of the board for 32 years and we would like to honor a member who has been very proud and consistent to our board. Former principal and always happy to help and give good advice. We want to honor Corum Smith with a plaque for his commitment and

b. Ecusta Trail – RTAC – Autumn

There is still a long punch list of items that are still to be completed on the trail that will hopefully be done by the holidays. Some of this work had been intentionally put off until after the Apple Festival. Autumn asked that we remind trail users that there are stop signs at crosswalks that need to be obeyed for safety. Planning is working with Parks and Recreation on the event application process and there will be no events held until 2026. There is an RTAC meeting tomorrow at 10am to prioritize amenities for the first 6 miles.

Jeff asked if there was a way to track how many users have been on the trail so far. Autumn said the Friends groups is looking to install permanent trail counters to track the activity. They completed a survey with local businesses last year that they will revisit next year to assist in tracking upticks in business. There was a very large turnout for the Apple Festival and the trail received extensive use. They are currently working with the DOT for the second phase with construction beginning likely next fall.

c. SOS Update – Katie Breckheimer

Katie presented a slide show presentation to the board. There is a growing population in Henderson County that needs to be accounted for with aquatic needs. Katie presented a list of aquatic needs and what would be the best fit for our county. A lap pool and recreation pool would be the best fit for our needs. Hurricane Helene destroyed Patton Pool, and a decision has yet to be made by the city on repairs or replacement of the facility, leaving the county without a public pool. The SOS group is trying to build support from the community for the push for a swimming complex.

Having an indoor swimming complex would be ideal, which would allow for 12 months use rather than the 3-month window an outdoor pool allows. This would allow for county schools to expand their swimming athletics as their season falls in the winter. Community access to a pool allows for early swim lessons for children to prevent drowning incidents. Rebecca mentioned the program that was implemented in the county for 2nd graders which requires them to take a swimming safety course at the YMCA. Katie highlighted that without a place to practice this learned skill, children will likely lose the ability.

The SOS group visited several nearby facilities and spoke of the cost for each facility. A swim complex would allow for the expansion of aquatic activities in our county including water rehab and exercise. Swimming is a lifelong exercise that improves your cardiovascular health, strength, and flexibility into older age. Having a complex would also open the opportunity for the county to host swim meets which can be very beneficial to the local economy.

Katie asked the board if they would be willing to write a letter of support to the Support our Swimmers group. Phillip asked what the most effective message from the board in a letter would be and Katie said to list the needs, and she could write a draft that could be discussed.

Milton motioned that the RAB provide a letter of support for the expansion of swim opportunities in the county. Stephanie seconded the motion, all approved.

d. Berkeley Sports Complex – Phillip Ellis

Phillip and Tricia, who both are very familiar with sport complex facilities, have been made aware of businesses that are interested in sponsoring the Berkeley Complex. They have been compiling a list of needed amenities for the complex that would need funding. Phillip would like to make a motion to ask County Staff and Commissioners to

provide a sponsorship program for those willing to donate to the Berkeley Park Sports Complex.

Bruce provided a draft of a sponsorship campaign to get local businesses involved in being possible sponsors that he would like the board to review for input. Jason stated that we are missing needed funding for amenities such as permanent restrooms. They have hit rock in the grading process which has taken up a bit of the budget as well. We would like to add these amenities in the initial build to prevent having to fund and add items after the original completion of the project.

Nora asked if the board felt the funding tiers and recognitions feel appropriate. Stephanie asked if anyone comparable to Henderson County has done something similar, but we are unsure of what comparable counties have done. The County Schools rely heavily on sponsorships. The price points of levels are in relation to the cost of needed amenities. This would be a great marketing opportunity for those willing to sponsor. Rebecca suggested sending this to the Chamber once completed. Tricia mentioned that hospitals have been a major sponsor for Charlotte fields and have continued to sponsor recreation efforts in the area. Tricia felt the pricing was fair, but Milton and Doug mentioned that the price points could be a stretch.

One aspect that needs to be accounted for is budgeting from the revenue the facility will produce to go towards upkeep of the facility. Phillip and Tricia also suggested to look for those willing to donate useful items. Milton asked what the specific gaps in the project are. Jason clarified that we lack funding for restrooms, lights, playgrounds, and shelters. All underground work is accounted for in the budget. We are around \$2m short for the basic needs of the facility. Stephanie would like to make sure that we are not out pricing our community with the sponsorship tiers. Mary requested that we keep our community in mind when pricing the facility rentals and Bruce assured her that we will accommodate our youth and community programs first and keep pricing affordable.

Nora will take the recommendations from the board and make sure our numbers are correct based on comparable counties and check into our needed amenities. She would like to get approval for this sponsorship program soon so there is a possibility of a special call meeting in October. Rebecca suggested making community partners a separate page which would show benches and other options that they could donate to the facility and possibly a memorial option. Phillip feels that it is important to highlight what this facility will be used for and to make it known that this facility will be made for kids and accessible for all.

Phillip motioned that Parks and Recreation staff will develop a sponsorship form allowing Parks and Rec employees and staff to accept donations and sponsorships for Berkeley Sports Complex. Milton seconded and all approved.

e. Grants Update - Jason

We were awarded the Accessibility for Parks Grant for the East Flat Rock Park. We will be adding ADA parking, an entry ramp to access the walking path, which will lead to the new playground, additional accessibility around the restrooms and shelter, and added picnic tables. With these additions, we hope to increase positive use at the park and make it more useable for all patrons. Rebecca asked if the entire playground area will be replaced. Jason stated the main playground will be removed and replaced but we will keep key elements such as the dinosaurs and tractor from the current playground.

We applied for a PARTF Grant for the Berkeley Park Sports Complex but were unsuccessful. There is still the possibility we could receive a tennis grant for the complex. Stephanie asked if we plan to add any security features to East Flat Rock Park. We are hoping that an increase in traffic at the park will help discourage the negative behavior that occurs at the park.

Stephanie asked for a formal request to allow Henderson County Sheriff's Office Deputies to trespass those who have had repeated issues at any county parks. This was approved.

f. Parks Update – Jason

We have seen an increase in usage at the Bell Trail Park. Hickory Nut Gorge is still closed from Helene damage. Jason met with Conserving Carolina, and they are hoping to work on repairing the trail, but it will take a lot of work. Etowah Park has been packed every day since the ribbon cutting for the PARTF Grant renovations. Tiffany has done a great job of creating promotional videos for the County social media accounts for our parks. Tiffany is the Henderson County Social Media Coordinator, and she has been working with Parks staff to highlight our parks, facilities, and programs to the public. Abby, who is in attendance today, is the new Fellowship Intern with the County who will be working with Parks as well.

g. Recreation Update and Events - Cory

Senior activities are ongoing, and a schedule can be found on our website. Fall youth soccer games began on Saturday and our youth basketball clinic will begin soon. We will be hosting a Fall Brawl Pickleball Tournament in November, and our adult basketball league this winter. Programs such as Art Start and Tumble Bears are ongoing at the Edneyville Community Center and Lindsay will be hosting the Fall Yard Sale soon as well. Cory presented a video of the Skate Club to the board, which is now completed for the year. Cory will continue to host hikes through November. We are currently looking for Treat Steet contributors and Bridgette is planning for our upcoming events Santa on the Square, New Years Apple Rise, and the Daddy Daughter/Family Dance.

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Master Plan for Parks Update – Bruce

A master plan would greatly assist in grant applications. Katie mentioned that the board agreed an overall or individual park plan would

be great to have. Milton mentioned that our last needs assessment was completed in 2019. We would like to protect Jackson Park and everything it has to offer the county.

5. STAFF UPDATES AND EVENTS

Corum thanked the board, staff, and commissioners for their dedication to Henderson County Parks and Recreation as well as for his recognition today.

6. MEMBER COMMENTS

None.

7. ADJOURN: 1:26pm

Next Meeting: November 12th, 2025