

Henderson County Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting

November 12th, 2025, GE

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

A quorum was not met for this meeting.

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

Public in Attendance: None.

1. Call to Order: 12:08pm

2. Approval of Minutes: September 2025

A quorum was not met for this meeting and the board was unable to vote on the September minutes.

Public Input – None.

3. New Business

a. Ecusta Trail – RTAC – Autumn

The County is working with the Friends Group to utilize donation funds for amenities along the trail and cover some basic needs. Trash cans have been placed along the trail, and they have contracted out for additional educational and interoperative signage. There is a QR code that is displayed in areas on the trail that can allow users to report an issue. The Planning Department is working with Parks and Recreation to monitor and track issues that need to be resolved. There are still several punch list items to be completed. The special event application is now open for applications for 2026.

As phase 2 begins, the bridge over the French Broad will need to be reassessed since Hurricane Helene. If the bridge does need to be replaced, this should not affect the completion timeline for the trail. Repairing the bridge now if needed would allow the use of grant funding

for the repairs rather than if it needed to be completed later. Construction should occur at the same time as Brevard. The design will fall under the DOT, and they will make their design build selection in April. Phillip asked if there is a completion date and Autumn said they are still looking at the end of 2027. The RTAC has discussed the QR code report system, and they feel it is necessary to add a required name field to report submissions.

b. SOS Update – Katie Breckheimer

Katie presented a video from Katharine Berkoff, an Olympic swimmer, who provided her support to the SOS Group. The group has solidified their mission and vision. The mission of the SOS Group is to have an indoor aquatic center in Henderson County and the vision is to do it together with community leaders. They received a letter of support from the Board of Health. Katie has spoke to the incoming WNC YMCA CEO and they have completed a feasibility study that includes a pool. City Council is still discussing Patton Pool, and they have received information from consultants on replacing it. No decision has been made yet, but they are leaning towards an outdoor replacement. The mayor has stated she is not in favor of a 50-meter pool as she feels that only serves lap swimmers and feels the County should provide a pool for the schools.

Katie has a letter of support prepared but a quorum has not been met, so a vote is not possible at this meeting. She would like to read this letter to the Board of Commissioners once approved and signed. Jason mentioned that while we would love a pool, we don't currently have funding for one as we are trying to maintain the facilities we have now. Stephanie showed support for the letter as written and Bruce will email the letter to obtain a vote from the board so Katie can present at the next Commissioners Meeting.

c. Berkeley Sports Complex Fundraiser - Nora

Nora presented a rendering for the Berkeley Sports Complex. Currently, the fields are being fine graded, and we are almost ready to install the

retaining walls. The turf should be shipping soon. Now, the project is not fully funded but we are taking steps to close the funding gap. We are looking for individuals or businesses to sponsor the project and the Educational Foundation has agreed to partner with us to handle all sponsorships. The Commissioners approved the sponsorship schema that was present at the last Advisory Board meeting.

Mary asked what funding was still needed to complete everything, and Nora stated we lack around \$4 million. Milton asked what amount was necessary to have the facility operational and that number would be around \$1 million. This amount does not include lights, which would be around \$2 million alone. There will be equipment, staffing, and other additional needs that will have to be added to our budget for the Commissioners to vote on. Katie mentioned that the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority gave \$9 million to Buncombe County Recreation and suggested we seek funding from our Tourism Department. By the end of this month there should be a clearer budget for the project.

Milton mentioned that we need to make it clear to possible sponsors what we are specifically asking funding for so they are aware of what they could assist in providing. The rendering should assist in explaining sponsorships, but more material will be created as well to provide information. The website for sponsorship will be launched very soon. Stephanie mentioned that Anderson, SC added a 1% sales tax that goes directly to funding school facilities that turned out to be very successful and appreciated in the community. She would like to take the commissioners on a trip to see the high-quality facilities this tax program was able to provide for the schools.

d. EFR Playground Update - Jason

Jason presented a photo of the playground model that will be installed. The playground has been ordered and should ship on December 19th. Installation will begin on January 12th, and we have already received the purchase order for the surfacing. The old playground will be removed in

the next few weeks and grading will begin. We hope to be completed by March.

e. Recreation Update – Brooklyn

Fall youth soccer completed its season at Jackson Park with a successful season. Registration for youth basketball is now closed, and we had around 800 kids register for the program. Sprouts basketball registration is still open. We had to cancel the winter adult basketball league due to lack of interest. The AAC Gym will be hosting the Fall Brawl Pickleball Tournament tomorrow.

f. Events and Trails – Cory

We are now accepting Ecusta Trail event applications, but no events will be scheduled until after the Friends Group event in April. The Treat Street event was a huge success with a great turnout. Lynn is working on preparing for Senior Games and offering indoor senior activities weekly. Cory is partnering with Wild Bird Unlimited and the WNC Disc Golf Association, who provided funding for bat boxes to be installed in Jackson Park on the disc golf course to aid with the mosquito issue in the park. Milton would like to assist in helping locate where to place the boxes. Registration for Hiking Henderson County has been full with a wait list all year and has grown as a program. Santa on the Square will be held downtown on December 5th. The New Years Apple Rise will be downtown on December 31st. Our Daddy Daughter/Family Dance sessions will be February 6th – 7th with a Wizard of Oz theme.

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Master Plan for Parks Update – Bruce

Bruce is trying to express to the Commissioners our need for a master plan. Katie asked if we could add a master plan to our budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Putting this in the budget could cause us to lose funding for equipment that we need for our facilities. Milton suggested the board craft a letter to give to Chris Todd and the Commissioners expressing our need for a master plan. Nora and Abby are completing a Capital Improvement plan which is a step in the right direction and could

assist with grant applications. They hope to have something together to present at the January meeting.

5. ADJOURN: 1:48

Next Meeting: January 13th, 2026