

Henderson County Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting

March 10, 2026, Athletics and Activities Center

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

Staff in attendance: Bruce Gilliam, Jason Kilgore, Cory Blackwell, Lynn Metcalf, Riley Dale, Brooklyn Bishop

Public in Attendance:

1. Call to Order: 1:04

2. Approval of Minutes: January 2026

Jeff asked for a motion to approve the January minutes as written. Milton mentioned a correction. Phillip motion to approve pending that change, Mary seconded, and there was a unanimous approval from the board.

Public Input – None.

3. New Business

a. Ecusta Trail Update and RTAC Info – Jason

There will be a DOT closure on the trail for what could be 100 days due to some road work at White Pine and Daniel Dr. Rebecca asked if the speed limit signs have been helping and they have reduced some of the speeding on the trail. We hope the ambassador program will help deter speeding as well. Mary mentioned that the ambassadors are not there to enforce rules but rather to educate. Mary mentioned that while on the Swamp Rabbit Trail, she noticed there were informational signs about upcoming events. She feels this should be a requirement on the Ecusta Trail at least a week in advance of events. Jason confirmed that this is mentioned in the event application and a requirement. The only issue we could find with this could be those that visit the trail day of who would've not seen the signage prior to their visit.

Since the timeframe of the DOT closure is not confirmed, we have slowed on accepting future events. Mary would like to make public comment at the RTAC meeting to encourage that if responsible event groups are willing to provide an alternate route, their events should be approved and Phillip agreed. There will be a DOT meeting to discuss this project more on Friday. Phillip mentioned that since this is a DOT project, they should provide an alternate route and there should be a push for them to open the trail as quickly as possible.

b. Senior Games and Silver Arts - Lynn

Senior Games Registration opened in January, and we already have 150 participants. Registration ends on March 13th, but we will accept additional participants if requested. We have received several new sponsors and 40 new participants so far. Anyone over 50 is welcome to participate. Our Silver Arts Showcase will be held at Blue Ridge Community College on April 14th. Jeff asked how many people were participating in pickleball. Lynn did not have an exact number but there are several in each category. Tricia asked how many have registered for tennis and Lynn said we have enough for 3 to 4 doubles matches. This is the first year that we have had tennis participation in a while as it is a hard program to grow. Tricia will help spread the word for the tennis activities. Lynn offers senior activities every week throughout the year outside of Senior Games. We received a \$10k private donation to be used to install a new bocce court for our senior activities.

c. Bike Park JP - Cory

We are continuing to work with Pisgah Area Sorba and paperwork to develop a new bike park. We would only be responsible for the design and planning, and all other costs and labor would be handled by Pisgah Area Sorba. This would be a great asset for an overlooked demographic for those ages 10 – 16 and up. This course would be made to teach skills and learn to safely progress to larger courses. Cory presented a proposed course map to the board. This would be in the wooded area beside the road leading to fields 8 & 9 and would require us to move

disc golf hole 14. This would be inside the wooded area so it would provide natural shading.

This addition would present new programming opportunities outside of our traditional sports. Katie asked if this area was previously used for something else. This area only became an option for development after Helene destroyed so many of the oak trees in the area. Tricia and Phillip agreed that this would be a great space for families and groups to visit. Mary asked if this would be for beginners and Cory confirmed it would be tailored for those learning and a low-risk course that anyone can utilize. Terry asked how much total area this would be, and Cory stated in total with all trails it would be around 6 miles. Tricia asked if we would need to relocate cross country running courses and Cory confirmed we would. This would be a mountain bike course and an improvement from our previous bike park. Phillip asked when this would be completed. Jason discussed that we are still in contract discussions, and this will have to go to the Commissioners for approval.

d. America 250 Grant – Bruce

We received a \$10k America 250 Grant for our July 4th event. We have added speakers from each of the high schools to give speeches about the future. The city will be doing the parade on a larger scale this year with 103 floats. There will be several performers including JAM Kids, Blake Elledge, various speakers, and some veterans will be involved as well. Jackson Park will stay open for the day while we host the event downtown with food trucks, fireworks, inflatables, and more. The Heritage Museum will also participate. We have had discussions with the Sheriff about providing coverage in Jackson Park.

e. Fee Schedules for FY27 – Brooklyn

We have been working with Abigail and Nora to compare our revenue to what we have been charging and the cost of maintenance of our facilities. They believe we should be raising some of our fees for FY27 starting in July. Most changes discussed have been a very small increase, around \$5 dollars for most, to keep facilities and programs affordable.

This will need to be voted on and approved by Commissioners in our FY27 budget. We also still offer scholarships for our youth programs to ensure there is opportunity for everyone to participate. We would like to raise our AAC classroom fees from \$1.00 to \$5.00 per hour. We hope this will also encourage more contracting. Small changes to our fees could significantly help subsidize the cost of repairs and maintenance we require in all our parks.

We would like to propose a rental fee for the spaces at the VFW. Currently, there is no rental fee and only a \$125.00 security deposit. There would continue to be a refundable deposit but also introduce a rental fee per hour with separate fee costs for non-profit and for-profit organizations. This facility is heavily used, and this would help with the maintenance cost of the facility. Rebecca asked if we could introduce a fee due to the funding that was used to rebuild the facility. Chris Todd confirmed that we can adopt a fee now. Bruce mentioned that the clause stated we cannot make revenue, but this fee would be to only cover the cost to maintain the facility. The facility has been open for less than two years and several deposits have already been made due to damage. We hope a fee would encourage some accountability. Rebecca requested we install a restroom sign in the main upstairs room.

f. Summer Camps – Brooklyn

Summer camp registration opened on March 1st, and they are filling up quickly. Unfortunately, we do not have as many camp offerings this year due to the difficulty getting instructors. Contracted instructors are required to hold a \$1 million personal liability insurance policy which has been a significant expense most of our instructors have not been willing to pay. Members asked how this policy was started and Bruce confirmed it is an HR policy. This is not only for camp instructors but for all contracted instructors. You can get a personal liability policy on top of a homeowner's policy, but several instructors are not homeowners. We could hire the instructors, but they would only be able to make \$15 an hour, which is significantly less than the instructor's pay. Rebecca will look into a solution. Chris Todd is also looking into a solution for this.

We have three camps already full, and the others are close to full. Most morning sessions fill up first, with many of the morning sessions already having a waitlist. We have received some backlash for not offering a June Art Camp, but we do not have an instructor available for that month. Camps are one of our most successful programs with continued interest every year.

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. East Flat Rock Park and Playground Update – Jason

Jason presented a photo of the new playground, which should be fully installed this Friday. We installed a retaining wall around the playground and will install drainage next week. Surfacing installation will begin on the 23rd with a two-week installation. The playground is very tall with points reaching up to 34ft. We are looking at dates for when we can host a Ribbon Cutting. The Accessibility Grant was a great thing to receive to allow us to make these upgrades to the park and a huge win for the community. Concrete work will be the final step to completing the project. Terry asked if our staff installed the playground and Jason confirmed the labor was hired out for the installation. Ralph asked when the playground will be complete, and Jason said the project will be done in about a month.

b. Berkeley Park Update – Jason

The fields and netting are fully installed, and gates are being completed. Progress is moving quickly, and the project is changing daily. Construction for the softball field and tennis courts will begin next week with the installation of retaining walls. Jason has a meeting this evening to discuss phase 3 of the project for the playground. They will do some concept drawing and planning. There is no playground currently in the plan, but we will leave the space open to install one when funding allows it. The baseball field is outside of this project due to the funding we received, but we are working on our own budget to restore the facility. We hope to get the field back in shape before next spring.

Pepsi has donated \$20k that will allow us to purchase scoreboards for the softball field. A donation has been secured from Carolina Village for \$100k with us receiving \$20k per year for the next 5 years. Bruce met with Champion Credit Union, and they are discussing if they would like to donate. There have been discussions with the Guinness Book of World Records, and we may have the most continuous piece of carpet. Phillip asked what progress has been made on funding restrooms and lights. Rebecca stated the Commissioners approved an additional \$1.6 million for restrooms and concessions but we are still seeking funding for lights. The lights will cost \$1.6 million with the baseball alone costing \$400k, which is where we would like to start. Installation of infrastructure such as power will begin in May. We should receive plans for the buildings back this week and hope to get an RFP out quickly.

We lost \$1.2 million of our funding to rock that was found in the grading process. Tricia asked if we would have temporary lighting. Rebecca confirmed we will have parking lot lighting since that is provided by Duke Energy. We are proud of the work that is completed, and it will be a challenge to keep people off the fields. The area is blocked off and if anything occurs during construction, the company building is responsible for any damage. Jeff asked when we will have a Ribbon Cutting and we are planning for October. We have submitted the grant for the tennis courts. Milton wanted to clarify how the baseball field relates to the high schools. We would be using both fields for the high school to use for their practices and games. There is no way Hendersonville High School will be able to use Berkeley this calendar year. Hendersonville is currently using the field at Green Meadows on 7th Ave, and we don't have a field large enough to accommodate high school baseball.

c. S.O.S. Update – Katie Breckheimer

Katie went to the Board of Commissioners on 2/4, and the presentation was well received. There was an article on the front page of the Hendersonville Lightning regarding the S.O.S. Group. Katie feels they have a strong committee and that there has been much discussion

about a pool recently among organizations like the City of Hendersonville.

d. Master Plan Schedule

Katie suggested that we update our mission statement to include the importance of health and fitness. Several members are willing to contribute to the creation of a new statement. Brooklyn will check in policy on how this can be changed and will update the board. We will allow Katie to draft a statement in the meantime.

5. STAFF UPDATES AND EVENTS

We completed our youth basketball season and sent out a survey to receive feedback on the season. Soccer registration is now closed, and games will begin next Saturday at Jackson Park. We are still looking to hire some additional referees. Registration for several kids, teens, and adult tennis programs at Jackson Park are now available. Edneyville Community Center will continue to offer classes such as Tumble Bears and Art Start. Lindsay is also hosting a plant swap at the ECC soon. Cory is continuing to offer community hikes with several hikes on private property this year. Skate Club registration will start March 30th, and the program will run with sessions from May to August. Fingerprinting has become difficult to schedule with referees since there is limited availability for the service. Bruce would like to discuss with the Sheriff and HR about hosting a Saturday date for all our new hires to complete fingerprinting and required paperwork at one time all together.

Cory presented a photo from our Daddy Daughter Dance which was a huge success with all three sessions completely full at 240. Bridgette does a wonderful job with our events and Bruce received a call from a participant to nominate her for Hometown Hero for her work. Bridgette has also been working on the America 250 grant for the July 4th event. In two weeks, we will have our Egg Hunt Event in Jackson Park for walkers to age 10. There will be an easter bunny, DJ, inflatables, and plenty of eggs and prizes for kids. Movies in the Park will begin in May with a different movie at 5 different parks throughout the summer. We will have our back-to-school Movie in Jackson Park in August, and we plan to partner with Lipman Family Farms again to give

out backpacks. Our July 4th event will be larger than ever this year thanks to the additional funding from the America 250 grant.

6. MEMBER COMMENTS

None.

7. ADJOURN: 2:32pm

Next Meeting: May 12th, 2026