

## **Henderson County Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting**

**May 12, 2026, Athletics and Activities Center**

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

**Staff in attendance:** Cory Blackwell, Brooklyn Bishop

**Public in Attendance:** None

**1. Call to Order:** 12:12

**2. Approval of Minutes:** March 2026

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

**Public Input** – None.

**3. New Business**

**a. USTA Grant for Berkeley – Cory**

We were awarded a grant of \$305k to assist in the funding of tennis courts at Berkeley. Rebecca said we have approached the TDA about providing funding for the lighting. Jeff asked if there would be a pickleball option at the facility and Cory and Rebecca both confirmed there would not be pickleball at Berkeley. Rebecca mentioned this will open availability for pickleball at Jackson Park tennis courts.

**b. Ecusta Trail – Events and Updates – Cory**

The Friends of the Ecusta Trail held their race as the first event on the trail. This was a great first event and very helpful to see how special events can function on the trail. The trail closure will begin July 6<sup>th</sup> from Daniel Dr to White Pine Dr for approximately 105 days. The first 3 miles will still be open and an option for use. Rebecca said they are

challenging the DOT to improve the closure timeline. The closure is for safety.

Strive Not to Drive week is May 15 – May 22 with different events each day. Mary provided a flyer with a detailed itinerary. Walk audits will be completed to provide the city with data as well. The city has installed a ghost bike rack in honor of a cyclist that was killed in December. The plaque description will be more general than a dedication to that specific cyclist with the inscription “Remember fallen cyclists. Let’s make roads safer.” Katie mentioned this program was ongoing previously and has now been restarted. She also mentioned that this is an effort to show that we do not put in enough money to support non-car travel infrastructure and safety.

This Friday is national bike-to-work day. Milton mentioned that there are several schools that have done a similar biking program and Mountain Community might be the only one who still runs a program. Milton mentioned a leverage point for greenways is modes of transportation. Milton asked if the list of rules provided at the FOET event was the current list that the board provided input on, and Mary said yes. Doug asked if the amenities and signs were going up, and Mary said most everything is temporary at the moment. Cory mentioned that permanent trash cans are a major need given the complaints on the trail of lack of trash cans.

**c. Bike Park Partnership JP – Cory**

The Commissioners approved the new bike park. The next step is an ecological survey of the space. The course will be in a wilderness format to help educate on respect of the land before users visit nature trails. Mary asked if any of this would encroach on the trails for cross-country and bike races in the park. Cory said yes but we will provide a track around for running and bike races. There will be an online community survey to get public opinion. Pisgah Area Sorba will be responsible for the funding of this park, and we are hoping to open in summer of 2027. Phillip mentioned that an ecological survey was completed recently in

Jackson Park, and he will provide Cory with the contact information for that individual. Milton asked where people will access the facility and Cory mentioned they will add some parking to both entries but there are a few spots available already. Milton asked if you could access it from the dog park and Cory said no but you could from the nature trail.

**d. Mission Statement – Brooklyn**

Katie made a request to update our department mission statement and provided two options for the board to review via email. Milton responded by submitting an option that most of the board preferred via email. The board reviewed the suggestions and would like to approve the statement with the change to remove the second mention of Henderson County.

Proposed Mission Statement: ***To enrich the quality of life in Henderson County through excellent parks, park programs and events that provide mental and physical wellbeing through leisure and recreation opportunities that benefit all residents and visitors.***

Phillip motioned we adopt the new suggested mission statement. Mary seconded the motion, and all approved.

**e. Fee Schedules for FY27 – Brooklyn**

Brooklyn provided a copy of the proposed fee schedule that will go to the Board of Commissioners for approval. Most fees will be increasing by \$5.00. The main change we are requesting is to adopt a rental fee for the Veterans Services Facility, which currently only requires a refundable deposit.

We have confirmed and informed partner organizations, Henderson County Youth Baseball and Asheville-Buncombe Youth Soccer Association, that there will be major changes to their fees. Both organizations currently use our facilities as needed for their seasons and pay a fee of \$10 per child at the end of each season. Abby and Nora have done extensive research and found that we are currently

subsidizing a major portion of both programs with this current rate ABYSA will be charged hourly at a discounted rate for the AAC Turf Field and HCYB will be charged per field, per day, based on games or practices, discounted rate for Jackson and Etowah Fields. HCYB will also be charged a daily fee for using the concession stand, as their sales do impact on our mobile vending availability to avoid competition. These updated rates will assist in the maintenance cost related to the prep for these programs without overcharging our partner organizations. Bruce has met with both organizations to discuss these changes, and they have accepted the updated rates.

**f. Memorial Bench Request for Dana Park – Brooklyn**

There was a tragic incident in Dana Park where a local teen was killed. The victim's aunt has reached out to Bruce requesting to place a memorial bench at Dana Park in the young girl's honor. The requestor would be responsible for purchasing an approved bench and plaque, and our staff would install the bench. We would like to place the bench where the innocent occurred. Mary asked if we could install a concrete pad under the bench and Bruce confirmed it will be installed with either concrete or gravel to ensure it is stationary.

We are requesting board approval to allow this memorial bench to be placed in Dana Park in memory of Isabella Gamez. Terry motioned to approve the memorial bench. Phillip seconded, and all approved.

We normally run a background check on the individual that is honored but we would not in this situation. Rebecca mentioned this situation has led to the decision that we need cameras in all our parks.

**4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**a. East Flat Rock Park and Playground Update – Cory**

We held a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the East Flat Rock renovations and it was very well received by the public. We have received some complaints about the river rocks that are located near the playground for drainage purposes. Those rocks will be replaced with concrete. Ralph

has received positive feedback from the community on the playground. Ralph did mention that we should have a professional assess the wall at the park as it is leaning in certain areas.

**b. Berkeley Park and Baseball Update – Cory**

Bathroom infrastructure has now been accounted for. Rebecca said only thing missing is concession stands, but we will allow food trucks in the meantime. Terry asked when the ribbon cutting will be, and Rebecca said sometime in October. Phillip asked about how bathroom infrastructure is involved in the current construction contract. Rebecca stated the bathrooms will be completed by a separate contractor and Bruce confirmed Capital Projects has secured a contractor. Rebecca has requested that we allow use of the soccer fields prior to the ribbon cutting for fall soccer. Terry asked if we have had an issue of people using the fields already, and Cory said not that we are aware and there are signs up to prevent this.

**c. S.O.S. Update – Katie Breckheimer**

Support Our Swimmers has a new website and has now been incorporated as an official non-profit organization. With the ability to now collect funds, they have hired a consultant, Stuart Issac, to complete a feasibility study in the effort to receive a pool in Henderson County. The group has partnered with Ryan Bird and the Flat Rock Cinema to promote May as National Water Safety Month. Milton mentioned that this is a great promotional opportunity. Katie thanked the Board of Commissioners and John for bringing a swimming complex into budget discussions. Rebecca said that the county is discussing a partnership with the City. This could involve the County providing a location for Patton Pool and the City would provide funding for the facility. It is unknown if this will occur yet, but this could be a great progressive project opportunity.

**5. STAFF UPDATES AND EVENTS**

Senior Games are coming to an end for the year, and Cory presented several photos from the games. We had 225 participants for this year's games. Mary

presented Milton and UNC Health Pardee with a plaque for being a top financial sponsor and for providing Sports Medicine personnel at our Senior Games track event.

We just completed our spring soccer season and registration will open next month for the fall season. We have registration open for various kids, teens, and adult tennis programs. Registration is open for the Summer Slam Pickleball Tournament, and we will also be hosting another Adult Pickleball League. Adult Softball is ongoing at Jackson Park. Summer camps will begin in June, and registrations are filling up quickly for remaining spots. We have also added an Art Camp session in June to accommodate Hendersonville students' schedule. The next community hike will be on May 22<sup>nd</sup> to Pink Beds. Skate Club is now full with a waitlist and Cory is hoping to hire an additional part-time helper for the program. The first Movie in the Park will be this Friday in Etowah showing Elio. Bridgette has been working hard to prepare for our America 250 July 4<sup>th</sup> Celebration downtown.

## **6. MEMBER COMMENTS**

Mary asked if the county will provide an officer at Church St or Kanuga on July 4<sup>th</sup> evening to help with safety and it was confirmed that both HCSO and HPD will be assisting with traffic that evening.

Milton asked about the Edneyville park decision that was made at the most recent Commissioners meeting to turn the park into an impound lot for the Sheriff's Department. Brooklyn and Cory expressed that they did not have any further info on the decision. Doug provided some history on the park mentioning that it was purchased by fundraising money from the community and sold to the County for a park to be built. He said that Land and Water Conservation Funds were used to build the park which requires the park to be used for outdoor recreation and the reasoning behind the Community Center being in a separate location. Philip mentioned that he believes this would be permanent if it happens and there was \$100k allocated to renovate the park to an impound lot. Doug mentioned that he believes due to the funding used to build the park, the county must provide an equal park somewhere in the county to replace it if it is done away with. He mentioned this happened in the

City of Asheville and they were required to provide a replacement park. The board agreed that this should be further investigated and that once park space is lost, it is much harder to obtain new space.

Milton mentioned that the news article mentioned the Edneyville Community Center is a nice space, but it does not have the same courts and amenities that Edneyville Park does. Philip stated that this information needs to be brought to the attention of County managers to ensure this is being handled correctly and the board agreed. This news has upset the community of Edneyville as users of the park.

**7. ADJOURN: 1:26**

Next Meeting: July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026