

Henderson County Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting

July 14, 2026, Athletics and Activities Center

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

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

Public in Attendance: None

1. Call to Order: 12:06

2. Approval of Minutes: May 2026

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

Public Input – None.

3. New Business

a. Ecusta Trail – Closures and Events – Autumn

An RTAC meeting was held last week to discuss if any issues have come from the DOT closure at White Pine Drive. The DOT has been very receptive and has shortened the closure from 60 to 30 days but that is subject to change based on weather. The second closure at Daniel Drive will likely begin in September for 45 days.

The Phase 2 Section will go from Horseshoe to the county line. This was done as a design build, and the DOT is monitoring that. Last year, three companies were selected to move on to the next phase to earn the bid. They have around 8 months after that to complete the design to 30%. These companies will all be paid for their work despite who is chosen for the project. The total cost will be \$24.7 million, which includes 16% contingency, the overhead, administrative cost, and all else. There are

several grants that were awarded for this project. This also includes the bridge over the French Broad River. They have received questions about why this project has been so costly, and Autumn clarified that this is a very thorough and well-built project that was proved when Helene caused minimal damage to the work completed.

Jeff asked if there are any restrooms in this design and Autumn stated no but there will be an amenities project. There is an amenities contract for the first 6 miles that was funded by the Friends group from donations of around \$750,000. Hunter Marks will be administering this, and some work will be completed in-house. This will include, signage, benches, and hopefully some parking. The goal was to get the trail open and then see where there is a need for parking and restrooms. There is a design plan for a few restroom locations including one at the county line. Mary mentioned that there are available restrooms at partner businesses along the trail. Phillip asked how the selection was made for who received the final bid on the design build. Autumn stated that the DOT had a committee to make this decision that included Marcus from Henderson County. NCSU is doing a study on usage on the trail. The numbers that have been reported so far have been significant.

Cory presented a list of upcoming events on the trail. We are hoping to work with Mountain Trail to do a stream clean-up along the trail. Businesses along the trail have benefited from the business received from the foot traffic and have been very accommodating during the closure. Katie asked if we are responsible for the trail event applications and Bruce confirmed that we do complete all of those. We have a QR code posted to allow users to submit issues they may see along the trail. Milton asked if we would be putting up the funds for the repair to the trail from the closures. Autumn confirmed that the DOT has included the repair cost into their project budget. We are a little ahead of Transylvania County, but the entire trail should be completed around 2029.

b. Edneyville Park LWCF and ECC – Survey – Bruce

There has been discussion on the future of Edneyville Park, and we have decided to send out a community survey to gather input over the next few months. We are asking the board to approve that we send out this public survey. The questions mainly focus on what amenities are used to determine what would be the best fit at the park. There is no funding lined up for this project, but we want to gather input to apply to a future project.

Milton and Doug asked if there is still a possibility the park would be renovated into an impound lot. The discussion has shifted from an impound lot and Rebecca stated it is on hold and unlikely. Since the park was built with LWCF funding, we are required to replace the park if it is done away with, so if that were to happen there would be an equivalent replacement for the community. Bruce and Jason received a copy of the LWCF agreement from Blake Convington. Rebecca asked how the survey would be distributed. We will have an online link sent to our email list and on our website. We also plan to post flyers with a QR code around the area, provide paper copies at our main office and the Edneyville Community Center, and use the library and local businesses to promote. Milton suggested providing an “other” option on the amenities questions.

Mary suggested an informational session would likely get more people to participate and Rebecca mentioned that one was already held, and we will hold another after the survey. Ralph really likes offering surveys and thinks we should do them more often before projects to get community input. Bruce mentioned that the Friend’s groups are great resources for community input in different areas. Mary said a QR code is a good idea to get younger groups involved. We hope that social media will be a good resource to put the survey out.

We would like board approval to send this survey to the public to gather input on their usage of Edneyville Parks and what they would like to see added to the Edneyville Park.

Milton motioned to approve the survey with the spelling change and emphasis on sending this to the Edneyville Community. Terry seconded the motion and all approved.

c. Sponsorships Berkeley Park – Bruce

Bruce met with Carolina Village, and they will be providing us with a \$100k donation over the next 10 years. We also received \$10k in donations from Kimberly Clark. Pepsi offered a sponsorship amount, but we will be meeting with Coca-Cola to see if they have a counteroffer for sponsorship. We received the Amateur Sports Grant again this year to go towards soccer goals. Those interested are still able to donate online as well. We received \$1.6m from the TDA to go towards lights at the facility. Nora and Bruce have worked on a grant for the tennis courts that we hope to receive.

Rebecca said the main unfunded item remaining is the stadium seating at the baseball field. Phillip asked if people are able to use the turf fields now. Bruce stated that the park is still an active construction zone, so we are not allowing people on the fields yet. There is not a set opening date yet, but we anticipate around October or November.

d. Park Ordinances Additions for Events – Bruce and Cory

At the recent Hendersonville Pride event in Jackson Park, there were some conflict issues with protestors. We currently don't have a written ordinance that covers soliciting in the parks and we would like to discuss verbiage to create this. Terry mentioned they ran into an issue of someone attempting to sell donuts at the Tuxedo Movie Night. Milton thinks our Mobile Vending policy could help cover this.

During the Pride event, we designated a protesting area, but they wanted to argue that they had the right to provide handouts amongst the event. Milton and Phillip think the best avenue would be to seek advice from Russ to implement a policy to remove solicitors from our parks. Katie suggested we draft a policy and return this to the board to

review. Nora mentioned that freedom of speech is highly protected in public spaces so we would likely need guidance from Russ to navigate this.

e. Geocaching Policy for Parks – Cory

We have a lot of geocaching in the county parks that are currently unmonitored or regulated. Cory would like to start a geocaching program with the board's permission. He has sent out a starting policy that we will continue to work on. He would like to create an application process to have approved geocaches in the parks. Phillip is on board with everything Cory has presented but would like the policy to be simplified. Milton suggested adding a line to the policy about how to obtain a permit. Milton asked why geocaching wouldn't be allowed in Jackson Park. Cory stated he would like our program to be focused on Jackson Park. Mary said the tags received with a permit will need to be made in several different sizes. Jeff asked if you need a GPS to participate or if it can be done by your phone. Cory said it is almost always completed by phone. Milton said the line should be removed that discusses nature preserve staff.

f. AAC Soccer Field - Jason

The AAC turf field is in desperate need of repair as the turf is now down to the rubber. It remains heavily used since it is the only field available. The replacement would cost around \$900k but was not approved in the budget. We have discussed the option of removing the field and replacing it with pickleball courts, which would cost around \$500k. This is only an idea as of now, but a decision will need to be made to replace the turf or change the facility.

Jeff asked how old the turf is, and Jason confirmed it is 12 years old and had an 8-year warranty. Berkeley Complex will help take the usage to a new location. A possible issue with installing pickleball courts would be parking since we have a limited amount now. The cost estimate we received would be for 20 courts and we would have space to add parking below. This would allow us to take pickleball out of Jackson Park

to open up tennis courts. Mary stated the only issue she sees for pickleball courts would be players creating an issue of not allowing beginners to use the courts. We would make sure all skill levels have equal opportunity to utilize the courts and that Playtime Scheduler is not used to monopolize the space. Mary would like to see some volleyball courts in addition.

Milton asked if there were repairs done to the drop off on the sideline of the turf and if replaced, we would be fixing this. Philip mentioned that this field is the only free space to play soccer near downtown. He feels it would be appropriate to still maintain a small field to allow for soccer play. Terry asked if the usage has dropped due to the condition of the field. It has actually increased due to the lack of other facilities. Mary asked if there is an inspection that the field needs to pass and Jason indicated this would not be needed unless an injury was reported.

We would like a consensus from the board on how they feel about pickleball courts replacing the AAC turf field. Phillip asked that we wait to think about it. We will table this discussion to the next meeting.

g. Jackson Park Property Lines – Katie and Bruce

Katie provided a map to show that the City of Hendersonville owns a portion of Jackson Park. We have a 100-year lease with them for this parcel, and we do maintain this area.

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Bike Park in JP – Cory

An ecological assessment was just completed. An online survey will be sent out through Pisgah Area SORBA for public input on the park. We are hoping for an opening date in late summer of 2027.

b. Mission Statement – Bruce

The new proposed Mission Statement will go to the BOC tomorrow for approval.

c. Berkeley Park and Baseball Update – Jason

Currently, the bathrooms, office, and covered shelter with family restrooms are being built. Tennis courts and the softball field are also underway. They have poured concrete borders for the tennis courts, and they should be completed quickly. Electrical work is also being completed. The paving of the parking lot should begin soon. This is still an active construction zone, so we ask that the public stay clear of the park.

d. S.O.S. Update – Katie Breckheimer

Kimberly King with WLOS interviewed members of the public and John Connett about the Patton Pool closure's impact. Rebecca also spoke to WLOS about the County's interest in partnering with the city to help replace the pool. Bruce asked if there are any planned meetings between the two entities. John Mitchell had plans to meet with the YMCA, but the topic of discussion is unknown. Mary stated that the city is planning to replace the pool. Mary was approached about an interview but suggested they visit Jackson Park to get public input. Doug mentioned that Buncombe County has 8 different pools available to use, while we do not have a single public pool currently.

5. STAFF UPDATES AND EVENTS

Fall soccer registration is open until August 2nd, and we are still looking for referees. Our summer camps have been ongoing since June. We recently hosted our Summer Slam Pickleball Tournament in the AAC gym. There are several upcoming events at the Edneyville Community Center including Water Day tomorrow and Boats and Floats on August 5th. We are now also offering Pickleball Clinics at the Edneyville Community Center. Cory is continuing to offer monthly free hikes. Skate Club has continued to have a great turnout all summer, and our new Skate Gals program is growing as well.

6. MEMBER COMMENTS

Ralph asked if the wall at East Flat Rock Park had been looked at. Jason said they have put wash stone and concrete in the leaks at the drains in the wall.

Ralph asked if we could concrete the top to help with drainage, and Jason said we could look into it.

7. ADJOURN: 1:41pm

Next Meeting: September 8th, 2026