

Henderson County Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting

May 14th, 2024, Athletics and Activities Center

Board members in attendance: Jeff Donaldson, Terry Maybin, Corum Smith, Bob Smith, David Hill, Katie Breckheimer, Mary Davis, Phillip Ellis, Doug Moon, Ralph King, and Milton Butterworth

Staff in attendance: Bruce Gilliam, Jason Kilgore, Cory Blackwell, and Brooklyn Bishop

Public in Attendance: Lynn Gilpin and board members for the Hendersonville CTA, Annette Huetter, and Bill Ramsey

1. Call to Order: 12:02

2. Approval of Minutes: March 2024

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

Public Input – None.

3. New Business

a. CTA Award for Tennis – May HC National Tennis Month - Bruce

The Board of Commissioners have declared May as National Tennis Month in Henderson County. Bruce has framed the proclamation to present to Lynn Gilpin, the chairwoman of the CTA, and a copy for each CTA board member. Lynn stated how grateful the CTA is for the support from Bruce and Parks & Recreation. The CTA along with Parks & Recreation currently run 180 kids through programs in Jackson Park. Abilities tennis and adult tennis have been added as well. The CTA is about to launch a campaign with the USTA to push for tennis courts on the east side of town. She has found land that could be a possibility behind Hillandale Elementary, and with the support of the county manager, she is now working to find funding. Tennis is growing tremendously nationally and there is a growing demand in Henderson

County. The CTA wants to be able to grow tennis leagues for all ages in the county. Corum stated that he formally played tennis up until he was 83 and had a deep love for the sport and commended Lynn and the CTA for all their organization has done.

Katie asked if the lower courts at Jackson Park have been completed and Bruce confirmed they are finished along with photos of the new courts. They will be opened on Friday. Lynn is glad to have all courts back open given the courts are shared between the CTA programs, Hendersonville High, and East Henderson High. Phillip asked if there is an off season for tennis and Lynn stated they take a break at end of November to February for the winter. Lynn asked for the board to support the 46th annual Apple Tournament, which is the CTA's biggest fundraiser. Jackson Park will advertise the tournament, which draws a large crowd from all over the south. The location has not been finalized but Phillip suggested hosting the final in Jackson Park. Lynn thanked the board for all their support.

Bruce discussed the challenge of scheduling courts during the renovations to the bottom 4 courts. Katie asked which high schools do not have tennis courts and Bruce confirmed that East and Hendersonville lack courts. Lynn has been in contact with county managers and the superintendent about getting more courts build on the east side of town. Jeff asked if we could get two pickleball courts for each tennis court and Bruce confirmed. Pickleball players have been adamant about wanting separate courts in Jackson Park. Doug mentioned the City of Hendersonville removed their tennis courts and asked Bruce if they will have any courts. Bruce stated they are working to make 2 tennis courts and 6 pickleball courts at Patton Park. Phillip asked if the issue is both groups wanting to use the courts at the same time. Bruce stated that pickleball players don't always see tennis being played in the mornings, so they are unaware of the tennis usage the courts see in the afternoons. They want us to change all the courts to pickleball but that is not an option. We do provide pickleball every morning at our AAC gym as well as having courts at the Edneyville

Elementary school 3 nights a week, Edneyville Community Center, and Tuxedo Park.

b. Ecusta Trail Update – Autumn

Autumn presented slides for the board detailing the trail progress and information about the Trail Partner's Program. The Partner's Program is mainly for businesses along the trail. Trails are the foundation of the state's outdoor recreation economy and by promoting and investing in trail infrastructure, it allows businesses to benefit. Autumn gave information about 4 successful trails that have supported their local infrastructure and brought significant economic benefit. The main goal of the businesses group is to promote community along the trail. They will be able to collaborate on shared issues, access to resources and information, and streamline communication with the county, municipalities, and the Friend's group.

There have been two meetings so far. There are a little over 200 business owners along the trail that invitations are being sent to, which includes the property owner and business themselves. The first meeting discussed the program and how this could work to receive feedback. The second meeting hosted a guest panel from Traveler's Rest to provide information to local businesses on how this process has worked for them. There will be different categories for the program varying on involvement and location.

Autumn provided photos to include with the construction update. There have been people still using the trail during construction and it has not caused any issues. Autumn showed the progress on one of the bridge rebuilds to show what work is needed. The City of Hendersonville has provided funding to do some of the design on a few sections including the section that connects Church St to Main St. Autumn showed a design of what the plan is for this area. They will be adding a two-lane bike lane in this section. Phillip asked if anything will be installed to protect the bike lane and Autumn stated they will have parking to divide the road and bike lane in some areas. This area will act as the trailhead

for the county since there will be restrooms, parking, and the TDA office available. The county will be working with the DOT and the Hendersonville Bike Club to identify safe routes to get bikers on the road. Phillip asked if connections like the AAC would be under the county or city and Autumn stated the DOT is looking into safe routes around the area for when the round-a-bout will be installed.

They are currently working with TPD to get future cost estimates for a connection in Horseshoe, which has been identified as an unsafe crossing. Ecusta West is currently under design. Brevard is set to complete their 30% design of the Transylvania portion in June. They are contracting amenities for Ecusta East and Ecusta East is set to be completed in December 2024. Jeff asked if the same design firm will be used in Henderson County and Transylvania. Autumn stated that they will share some of the same sub-contractors, but the main contractor will differ. Jeff also asked if there will be enough parking for the trail. Autumn believes there will be enough, and the partner's program will help grow the parking for the trail as well.

c. S.O.S. – Support Our Swimmers – Katie Breckheimer

Katie introduced Bill Ramsey, a member of the Support Our Swimmers team, who coined the title for this sub-committee. Kaite, Cory, Mary, and Doug from the board are all members of this committee. There have been monthly meetings since January where the need has been established for a year-round swimming complex. There are various groups in need of swimming amenities, such as school swim teams, lifeguard training, first responder training, and more. The sub-committee mission statement and vision was sent out with the minutes prior to the meeting. The committee feels that the need is there for a complex rather than only a pool.

Katie and the group will be going on trips to different sport complexes around the state that she feels would be a good fit in Henderson County. Katie also spoke with the director of the Jackson County Parks and Recreation Department about the complex they are building.

Jackson County drew inspiration from Watauga County's complex for their design. The committee will visit complexes in Boone and Waynesville. There is a complex owned by Buncombe County at TC Robertson High School that is open to resident's half of the time and half the time to the swim teams. Katie would like to discuss a budget and possible funding for a complex. Phillip would like to know if operation is included in maintenance cost and Katie believes it is included.

Mary mentioned an article that stated swimming is one of the best sports to do and we are not accommodating the residents with the swimming options we have in this county. A complex could support residents of all ages including students and seniors and many facilities are partnered with Hospitals and insurance companies. Corum mentioned that the county has done great at accommodating other areas of recreation, but swimming is not getting the support it needs. Milton agreed with Mary about the therapeutic and health benefits of swimming, and he feels this would be an opportunity to get health related stakeholders involved.

d. Spring Sports Update – Bruce

The spring soccer season will end this Saturday with a rain makeup day. Using the school fields has been great for practices for both our program and ABYSA. One issue we encountered this season was parents on the sideline being too close together and close to referees causing some tension. This was a great season with over 700 kids participating. Phillip stated that it was wonderful how busy Jackson Park is every weekend. Adult softball began last week with 25 teams, but the rain has set games behind. Registration for fall soccer will open in June.

Phillip asked if there's a plan to maintain the soccer fields better. Jason discussed that part of the issue is the frequency of soccer season which causes us to lose time to repair the fields in-between season. Phillip suggested that we create a plan to focus on repairing the fields for the upcoming season. David mentioned that the commissioners do their

best to approve all maintenance requests. Jason stated that a request was made to redo the Jackson Park fields but the county decided to invest in a soccer complex. Phillip thinks we should focus on investing in our current fields now rather than relying on waiting for a soccer complex. Milton asked what would be needed for the Jackson Park fields to continue use in the event we built a complex. Cory stated that without consistent ongoing use the fields would improve some, but Phillip and David mentioned they would still need a major repair project. Doug mentioned how great having two season of soccer is for our county kids but damaging for the field. Jason mentioned what a great problem it is to have with so many people recreating.

e. Outdoor Recreation Updates – Cory

Our hiking programs have been filling up quickly and there are more to come. Cory will host a Jackson Park clean-up day on May 21st and Starbucks will be providing coffee. We will host another fly-tying workshop with NC Wildlife on June 1st. Cory has begun a new Skate Club program, which has been a huge success, and registration for the second session was filled within 30 seconds.

f. Senior Games and Silver Arts – Bruce

Lynn has done a great job this year and participation his higher than ever with 183 registered. We have received phenomenal feedback from both the games and the SilverArts Showcase. Advent Health donated the food for our SilverArts Showcase and a state representative from Senior Games was able to attend. Mary is an ambassador for Senior Games and has done a wonderful job. Mary would like to thank Lynn and all the Parks and Recreation staff for their work and support. Mary stated last year Henderson County won the award for most increase in participants and this year we have grown even further and, on the way to becoming one of the biggest groups in the state.

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Dana Park Community Building - Jason

We were given \$120k by Jennifer Balkcom and state representatives to renovate the Dana Community Building. We able to replace the ceiling, removed the fireplace, and completely renovate the inside. We will be putting in new doors and have updated the restrooms. This is a great opportunity for the community and was at no cost to the county. We will host a ribbon cutting this Friday at 10am for the building.

b. Etowah PARTF Update – Jason

We just placed the order for all the fitness equipment, and we hope for a 3-week turnaround. We just received bids back on the playground and we are looking to get opinions on colors. We are working on completing an RFQ for the basketball and pickleball court. The Etowah Library is opening a patio area attached to the library this Friday. The library will be assisting us in the placement of 28 reading panels around the walking trail. These panels will change every few months to a new book. Katie asked if it would be possible to link Etowah Park to the Ecusta Trail, but Autumn stated it would be challenging.

c. EFR Disc Golf Course – Jason

We have added the disc golf course at East Flat Rock, and it has already gotten a lot of usage. There has not been an official ribbon cutting but the course has been posted online. This will bring positive activity to the area. The tee pads and baskets have been installed and Jason is working on installing a map and kiosk. Jay, who worked on this course, will be donating his time to redesign the Etowah course. This project came in very underbudget by doing a lot of the work in-house. This is a 9-hole course but there are 2 tee pads for each basket which can extend to an 18-hole game. An Eagle Scout project was completed in East Flat Rock Park and installed a xylophone. Mary mentioned a helpful eagle scout project would be to install a disc return box, which Cory has mentioned to maintenance.

d. Bike Park Renovations - Cory

Cory presented photos of the current jumps at the bike park in Jackson Park. The current jumps stand around 6ft high, which is dangerous. Cory

has sponsors that are willing to help transform the course who would aid in cost. This project has been submitted in the FY25 Capital Projects budget. Mary believes people could learn skills that are transferable to trail and road biking.

5. STAFF UPDATES AND EVENTS

We hosted our East Egg Hunt in Jackson Park in March, which was a huge success. Camp registration is ongoing and almost all camp sessions are full with waitlists. Lindsay has several events and programs planned for this summer at the Edneyville Community Center. Our Movies in the Park series will begin this Friday at Etowah Park. Our July 4th event will be held downtown again this year.

Brooklyn discussed the current mobile vending fees and proposed a change for our vendors who do not require a permit from the health department. These vendors are not preparing food in their truck and have significantly lower menu prices versus those serving main course food. We would like to lower the weekend fee for these vendors exempt from health department permits from \$50 to \$25 to help with their profit margins. Katie and Mary agreed this was a logical change if the vendors exemption does not change. Milton asked how we would determine a vendor's fee rate and if this would cause smaller vendors to take slots away from those serving meal portion food. Brooklyn stated that the determining factor would be their requirements from the health department. Brooklyn also mentioned that there are multiple slots for each date in the park which allows us to book multiple vendors for the same date. Mary made a motion that we change the weekend fee to \$25 for vendors not required to have a permit from the health department, Phillip seconded and all approved.

Phillip mentioned the parking issue we have faced at some facilities. We have had to close some facilities when they are not being used to have enough parking for other events in the same park. Phillip discussed that this is an issue for those who would like to use the closed facility and are not driving or taking any parking area. Phillip asked the board what a good solution would be to manage parking or if our current solution of closing other facilities is the best

option. Bruce provided our SilverArts dinner as an example. This event hosts 180 people at the AAC gym from 5-7pm. Parking at the AAC is already limited and groups like ABYSA can take up a full parking lot with the group size they have. Bruce has been contacted by the businesses across the street that their lot is being used by our visitors and they will be towing if this continues to happen. We decided the best option was to close all AAC facilities for usage that evening to save all parking for SilverArts. We have done this a few times for our bigger events. Bruce has been looking into finding a new location for some of our larger events. Phillip asked if there was a different solution to manage the parking besides closing the surrounding facilities that are not being used as parking will always be an issue. Cory mentioned this is something that needs to be taken into consideration for all new facilities but for older facilities, like the AAC, it is just an issue we must tackle how we have been. Phillip suggested we investigate managing parking rather than closing all surrounding facilities. Milton thinks this is a considerable issue to discuss and we should add this to the next agenda.

6. ADJOURN: 2:00

Next Meeting: July 9th, VFW