

Henderson County Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting

August 1st, 2024, Athletics and Activities Center & Zoom

Board members in attendance: Jeff Donaldson, Terry Maybin, Ralph King, Bob Smith, Doug Moon, Scott Rhodes, Phillip Ellis, and Tricia King

Staff in attendance: Bruce Gilliam, Chris Todd, Cory Blackwell, Bridgette Thompson, Matt Russell, Jason Powell, and Brooklyn Bishop

Public in Attendance: Bill Ramsey

1. Call to Order: 12:02

Public Input – None.

2. New Business

a. Sports Complex Locations in Jackson Park or Berkley Park

The school board voted to donate 39 acres to the county which allows us to explore Berkley Park or Jackson Park for the sports complex location. We would like the board's feedback on the option they feel is best suited. The County Commissioners will be voting on a location Monday and if a member of the Advisory Board would like, someone could share the board's option with the commissioners.

Terry asked for the option of the Parks and Recreation staff. Chris Todd discussed that 20 years ago soccer fields became a discussion and the need for a multifielld complex. This resulted in the creation of different groups like ABYSA to provide soccer for the community. This is the farthest this idea has come in this county. About 2 ½ years ago, the commissioners voted to set aside \$2 million in the Federal ARPA funding for the purpose of soccer fields/multisport complex. This would mean flat rectangular fields that could be used for multiple recreational purposes. Chris and the county have been working to find land for the past 2 ½ years but never found the right location. We must be under contract by December 31st. The commissioners changed direction on

how to solve the Edneyville sewer infrastructure, which allowed that funding to be reallocated, with about \$7.4 million being added to the sports complex project. The commissioners then directed that we find land that is already controlled by the county to meet the needs for this project. The two parcels being discussed are Jackson Park and Berkley Park. The federal funding must impact qualifying census track, which both parks fall under.

The school board held a special meeting last Thursday to discuss this idea and have come with a letter to help the county with the issue of control for the land. The letter stated the school board would give the county the land if the county graded the whole site to adhere to the school's plans to include 3 ½ full size fields, a softball field, and 6 tennis courts along with associated parking and amenities to go along with the facilities. Their main goal is to grade the site to prepare for this if the funding is not there yet to complete this fully. The commissioners will decide Monday what option to chose and Chris stated a decision must be made. They are meeting August 5th to review requests for qualifications for a design team for this facility since this cannot wait any longer. The goal is to allow the commissioners to vote on a site location, select a designer and get them started on the project. We want to design the entire facility and get it out for bid at the beginning of November.

Terry asked if we could share the pros and cons of each location. Chirs stated we control one site and have a good offer form a wonderful partner for the other. Scott mentioned there are several contingencies for Berkley Park. Hendersonville High School is landlocked and has never had their own facilities for softball, baseball, or tennis. The schools cannot give the 39 acres up without some guarantee that the land will partially be used for these needed amenities. This land is the only option the school will have to build these facilities. Currently, Hendersonville High plays tennis and softball in Jackson Park and baseball at Berkley Park. From the school board perspective, this is the only opportunity for Hendersonville High School to have their own facilities, however, they

also recognize the need for soccer fields in the county as well. This discussion has been ongoing for a year, but the opportunity now makes sense with the additional funding. Chris, on behalf of the board, is thankful for the partnership with the school system and the opportunity to include this as an option. Both locations will require a fair amount of changes and neither site would look the same as they do today. Berkley could allow for the amenities, but it would require shaping down the hill. The only place at Jackson would be the area that currently houses baseball fields 8 & 9. We would hear backlash from the disc golf community, birders, and those who enjoy the natural landscape the park has to offer. We would be able to fit 4 full size fields at Jackson, however it would be a challenge at Berkley to fit 4 fields. Neither site is overwhelmingly better than the other. Both locations are relatively centrally located and off major roads. We would likely hear backlash for cutting down all the trees at Berkley, which would be necessary.

Ralph asked how we would schedule activities if Berkley was the chosen site. Bruce stated we currently schedule all the school needs through our office, which would be the same process. The county schools will always have first choice before others. We also use the school facilities as well on occasions. Scott stated the county schools and Parks and Recreation have had a strong relationship and will continue to work together. Currently, if the school is not using a facility Parks and Recreation have first right. This could become a situation where the schools have first right of refusal during certain times to ensure the county schools consistently have the available facilities. The school board's goal is to ensure Berkley is used to accommodate Hendersonville High School's needs. Both Bruce and Scott agreed that this partnership will continue, and both will work together. Selecting Berkley would open both field 5 and our tennis courts for programming at Jackson Park.

Bob mentioned that it would be great to add an additional park, but would we have the resources to maintain this. Bruce said this has been part of the conversation and we have discussed the possibility of having

to add staff. Jason was unable to attend due to assisting his staff with mowing in the parks today. Cory asked which location could sustain the traffic the best. Cory mentioned how congested Jackson Park can become especially on Saturday's. Chris would believe that Berkley would be better for traffic issues. If the commissioners were to select Jackson Park, a new master plan would have to be constructed, which would mean more changes and needed funding in Jackson Park. Jeff stated that he feels Berkley is a better option for several reasons, but especially due to the popularity of our disc golf course and the issue of additional traffic.

Terry asked what the acreage difference between each site is, and Chris and Phillip both confirmed the size would be about the same. Terry also asked if there would be an additional entrance at Jackson for the fields only. Chris confirmed at the moment there would not be an additional entrance. Jeff mentioned he has seen the proposed plans for Berkley and thought the field space would be tight between fields. Chris stated the next challenge for either location will be the planning and implementation. Each field alone could cost around \$1 million, not including needed lights, infrastructure, concessions, bathroom, and possible locker rooms. Scott stated the priority items would be soccer fields, a softball fields, and tennis courts. Phillip asked if this could consolidate soccer programming to one location. Bruce stated that having one location would allow the program to run smooth.

Jeff asked if the board needed to vote today, and Chris stated they did not need to vote. Doug asked if the fields would be mainly for recreational play or tournament purposes. Chris stated that the county citizens and recreational play are the top priority, and any outside play will come second. Tricia stated she feels Berkley is the best location choice. She feels it is a safer choice given traffic issues and that it would help Hendersonville High School have an established location. Tricia also feels that we need a new master plan for Jackson Park to best use the space if we acquire Berkley as a new facility. Doug sees concerns with

Jackson Park traffic becoming an even bigger issue if we add fields. He feels a new facility would aid to both the county and the school system.

Terry asked if all the funding would have to be spent at Berkley Park if chosen. Chris stated he wants all funding to be used at one location and feels the funding could possibly be short for the work needed at Berkley. He wants to have infrastructure in the ground so we can then find the funding to finish the project. Jeff asked if we need to be under contract for construction by the end of the year and Chris confirmed the date to be December 31st. The goal is to bid this out by November. Chris and others have been making calls this week to contractors and design firms to seek interest. The project has 24 months to be completed after December 31st, but 18 months would be the goal to have time to report back to the federal government.

Milton and Katie both provided letters that Bruce read to the board. Milton strongly supports Berkley as the site location and is very concerned about the disruption this project would cause to the current Jackson Park amenities. Katie expressed that this project needs to be done and expressed concern about the disruption at Jackson Park. She mentioned her frustration with the lack of information we have received and progress over the past two years. She also agreed there is a need for a new master plan for Jackson Park to best use the space. Phillip also feels that Berkley is the best suited option and would make political sense to work alongside the school board. Terry appreciated this meeting and the history that was provided.

Bill Ramsey mentioned that he would be happy with either location, as it would open the opportunity for a possible aquatic center in the future.

Bob made a motion to recommend Berkley Park be developed for the multiuse fields. Phillip seconded, and all approved the motion.

Phillip made a second motion to work with the school board so that their sports facility needs (particularly Hendersonville High School) can

be met, either as part of Berkley Mills development, or as part of the master planning of Jackson Park. Bob seconded the motion and all approved.

Jeff asked that Bruce and Brooklyn write a letter of recommendation that he would sign to be presented to the board of commissioners.

All motions were unanimously approved

3. MEMBER COMMENTS

Jeff appreciated having this meeting and is glad to see the partnership between the county and the school board.

4. ADJOURN: 1:15pm

Next Meeting: September 10th VFW