

Henderson County Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting

January 14th, 2025, Athletics and Activities Center

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

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

Public in Attendance: Matt Manley from City of Hendersonville, Annette Huetter, and Ken Shelton and member of the Friends of the Ecusta Trail

1. Call to Order: 12:04

2. Approval of Minutes: November 2024

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

Public Input – None.

3. New Business

a. Vote on Ecusta Trail Rules and Etiquette - Autumn

Autumn stated there was about \$406k worth of damage to the Ecusta Trail, which is not significant given the cost of the trail. They are currently looking at June for the first phase opening. The 30% design for the next section has been completed. There may be some delay on this section due to having to possibly reevaluate on areas that could have been impacted by the storm.

Autumn provided the board with a Ecusta Trail Rules and Etiquette list to review. They have decided against creating enforceable rules for the trail, rather they have made a list of rules and etiquette that is encouraged. These are separate from our county ordinance codes and Autumn spoke with the county attorney to check on the overlap of the

two. Since this is a transportation corridor, it will be open 24/7. Doug is a member of the RTAC to represent the RAB and Ken Shelton is a board member as well. A previous draft was presented to the RAB previously and a sub-committee provided feedback. This current draft has been reviewed by several groups.

There is still a question of what phone number will be listed. The Friend's Group has a number that they do check at least every 24 hours, and they are great at transferring questions to the correct source. There is the question of does this number need to be one that is manned 7 days a week. Parks and recreation will likely continue to receive calls with questions as well. Once the trail is completed to Brevard this will also create a different scenario. Safety issues are the main cause for a number. This could also depend on the volume of calls.

Autumn would like a formal recommendation from the RAB for the Ecusta Trail Rules and Etiquette. Autumn asked the board for suggestions:

- Tricia recommended rearranging to have "be alert on the trail and respect private property" to the top of the list and to elaborate online on certain rules for those who have never used a trail.
- Tricia suggested adding some detail on the audible warning by including "on your left" and Mary suggested making that more board to include bells.
- Mary and Milton agree adding details online is important for those who may be first time trail users.
- E-bike restrictions were discussed and there will be a speed limit, but this will not be enforceable by law.
- Mary would like a section on motorcycles/dirt bikes added to the prohibited activities.
- Tricia mentioned an app she has used previously to report issues.
- Stephanie suggested that it may not be best to list that the trail is open 24/7 in writing for safety reasons.
- Milton mentioned it is worth stating bluntly to respect private property at the top.

This list will be posted online on websites in conjunction with the trail and it will likely be posted at the trail. Milton likes the new copy of rules and etiquette and would recommend marking all road crossings to indicate that vehicles will have the right of way. Jason showed QR code stickers from a park in Texas that open an app that allows you to report an incident, which could aid in the call volume or possibly eliminate the need for a listed number at all. Jeff asked if there were any county owned restrooms along the trail and Autumn stated not yet but they are looking into that. Cory asked how challenging it is for businesses to get in touch with the DOT to get a cross walk. Autumn said it depends on the area, but it would be challenging. Bruce talked to our county management about the crossing at the Bell Park trail and we will need to reach out to the DOT about a crossing there.

The Friends Group spoke and stated they would like one set of trail rules and etiquette for the entire trail including Brevard. The goal is a consistent, seamless trail user experience for the entire trail. Milton asked if we could later revise this list if it has been posted prior to the completion to Brevard. Autumn stated they could be later addressed with an MOU if needed.

Milton moved the RAB to approve the drafted Ecusta Trail Rules and Etiquette dated 1/14/25 with consideration of the ideas discussed. Mary seconded the motion, and all approved.

b. Hurricane Helene Updates - Jason

We are currently still cleaning up in all parks. Jason had a meeting today with the contracted company for debris clean-up. They have been spread very thin which is causing clean-up to take longer than expected. There will be more progress made soon due to spring nearing. We are scheduled to have our baseball fields fixed which were heavily damaged in the storm. Weather has held back some of the progress so far. Parks are still being used but there are still a few closed areas at Jackson and East Flat Rock Park that we are working to reopen as soon as possible. The Jackson Park disc golf course and dog area are still closed, which is

posted online and in the parks. There are a few hazardous areas at East Flat Rock Park that are roped off, but the disc golf course is open for use.

c. Sports and Program Updates – Bruce

Youth basketball has begun with 800 kids playing this season, which is the highest registration we have ever had. Spring youth soccer registration is now open, which will play in March at Jackson Park. Lynn and a few Senior Games ambassadors went to a training in Greensboro last week ahead of our Senior Games registration. Our Senior Games was recognized for growth, with having the highest number of registrations since Senior Games has been played in Henderson County. We had 101 registrants last year and we anticipate over 200 this year. Registration will run from Feb. 1 – March 15 with games beginning in April. We are hosting a pickleball tournament in our AAC gym today.

d. Raise Grant Letter of Support for City of Hendersonville – Matt Manley

Matt is from the City of Hendersonville Planning Department. This is a cross departmental project with engineering, public works, GIS, and planning. This project is attempted to be funded by the federal Raise Grant. The maximum amount that can be asked is \$25 million and the City will be asking just right below that. Matt provided the board with a map and packet of info for the Above the Mud project. South Main St would be the first component to create a space that allows for vehicular travel but designed in a way to tailor to pedestrians and bikers. This would also allow for the area to be closed to host events.

The next portion would be to connect the end of the Ecusta Trail at South Main to the existing Oklawaha Greenway. There are two routes that have been identified through a feasibility study for this. This grant would also fund a renovation to the portion of the Oklawaha that floods most frequently. Lastly, focusing on streetscaping where the Oklawaha and 7th Ave intersect to the Depot.

The deadline for this grant is January 31st. Matt is asking the RAB for a letter of support for this grant. They have currently obtained about 40

letters of support so far. Tricia asked if the festival area is above Church St and Matt confirmed this. The Saluda Grade Trail would tie into this as well where the trail enters town. Mary asked if component one on the plan would be elevated. Matt stated the feasibility study didn't call for raising but possibly some drainage work. Matt discussed using punch-throughs for drainage and Jason mentioned that sediment went directly into the punch-throughs in Jackson Park. This design phase could change this plan as needed. Matt would like a support letter signed by either the complete board or the chairman. If they were to be awarded the grant, award would be late this fall and there would be around 18-month turnaround before beginning design.

Stephanie motioned to use the example letter given by Matt to fit our organization and signed by Jeff. Doug seconded the motion and all approved

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Etowah PARTF Update - Jason

We are currently moving forward, and progress will soon be rapidly increasing. Jason provided photos of the current progress. The old playground has been removed and the layout for the installation of the new playground has begun, which should be completed by the 31st. This is the build work, but the surfacing will not be completed yet. We hope to be completed with the project in total by June or July. Most all the funding has been allocated for this project has now been assigned to work.

b. Accessibility for Parks Grant Update – Nora, Cory, and Brooklyn

We held a meeting at Brookdale Senior Living in December to gain feedback on our current plan from those who may have mobility issues. The group was very engaged and provided quality feedback. Cory is currently working on a site plan, and we are in contact with several companies for quotes to present. We will be hosting a public input meeting next Thursday at the VSO facility at 5:30pm, which has been posted on Facebook and in the Hendersonville Lightning. We will also be

presenting to the Steering Committee for the Henderson County Dept. of Public Health for input from those who work or live closely with those with disabilities/mobility issues. Brooklyn and Nora will be presenting the grant at the Feb. 18th Commissioners meeting for approval to submit our application for the grant. If approved, we would need to submit the application by March 3rd.

We would be adding a ramp and additional handicap parking and the entrance of the park, that would not impact the rock wall currently in place. We would also like to add sidewalks to better access the basketball court, playground, restrooms, and shelter. The addition of a new ADA playground and ADA picnic tables would also be included in our plan. The intention for applying for this grant is to provide much needed updates to make East Flat Rock more accessible and useable for all. We are still in need of a letter of support from the RAB, that Phillip is working on. Having a master plan for parks would gain us additional points in this grant but we are hoping the work we have done will contribute enough.

c. S.O.S. Update – Katie

The committee has gained a few new members. A few members spoke before City Council this past week to ask them to repair or replace Patton Pool after it was damaged in the storm. Councilwoman Jennifer Hensley contacted Kaite after the meeting very excited about this idea and has been in favor of a pool for a long time. The group's next field trip will be either Jan. 30th or Feb. 13th to Cullowhee from 11:30am to 4:30pm.

d. Berkeley Park Update – Bruce and Jason

We have gotten past the initial base bids and the add alternates will be sorted through tomorrow at the Commissioners meeting. The base bid included the turf, all the grading, paving and more. The add alternates will include lighting, bathrooms, softball field, and tennis courts. The requirement was met for the December 31st deadline. We cannot start groundbreaking until March, and this will likely be an 18-month build

out. Hendersonville High School will be able to play baseball at Berkeley Park this season, but there will not be power or water.

Bruce and Jason have been researching and visiting facilities to find the best options for turf and lighting. The turf we would like to be used is a higher quality. Doug asked if the presence of RAB members at the commissioners meeting tomorrow would assist in ensuring that the best turf is selected for the project. Jason feels the commissioners have been well informed about the turf options. These fields will experience heavy use once completed and we feel the higher quality of turf would be a worthy investment.

Milton motioned for the Recreation Advisory Board to recommend the best possible turf option to the County Commissioners in their decision tomorrow. Tricia seconded the motion and all approved.

e. Master Plan for Parks - Bruce

No new updates.

5. STAFF UPDATES AND EVENTS

We hosted Santa on the Square and participated in the Hendersonville Christmas Parade and placed 3rd. Cory presented a video from the New Years Apple Rise event that had a very large crowd. The Senior Games Kickoff breakfast will be April 9th at the VSO facility. Summer Camp registration will open on March 1st. Our annual Daddy Daughter/Family Dance will be held Feb 14th – 15th with 3 sessions. Lindsay will be hosting a Dolly and Me Tea Party and Valentines Dance Party at the Edneyville Community Center. Cory will be hosting his community hikes and skate program again. Merrell will be sponsoring his hikes and offering a coupon for all participants. Cory has also received several donations including skateboards for the program that will run from May – August.

6. MEMBER COMMENTS

Katie is concerned about the current signage at the Bell Park Trail and the state of the bridge across the street. The pavement is crumbling, there is graffiti,

and trash littering the area. Katie plans to speak with Chuck McGrady about this issue and her interest in adding the bridge as a part of the trail to keep it better maintained.

7. ADJOURN: 1:53pm

Next Meeting: March 11th, 2025 – Athletics and Activities Center