

Recreation Advisory Board

March 14, 2011



Members present:

Sara Manuel, Chair
Geoff Ferland, Vice Chair
Wanda Hawthorne
Wayne Wheeler
Mary Ann West
Mildred Nance-Carson
Hutch Kerns
Will Callaway
Cecil Bothwell, City Council Liaison

Staff present:

Megan Shepherd, Special Projects Coordinator
Debbie Ivester, Assistant Director
Roderick Simmons, Director
Frank McGowan, Business Services Superintendent
Diane Ruggiero, Cultural Arts Superintendent

Guests present:

Pam Meyers, Asheville Art Museum
Graham Hackett, Asheville Arts Council

Sara called the meeting to order at 12:34 p.m.

1. Approval of February Minutes

Wanda motioned to approve the February minutes, Mildred seconded, all approved, and the motion passed unanimously.

2. National Endowment for the Arts

Pam Meyers reported that the Asheville Art Museum would like to apply for an Our Town grant through the National Endowment for the Arts. This grant would provide \$25,000-250,000 in support for design-related development for projects in the arts that affect community growth and identity. The Asheville Art Museum would like to apply for funding to support renovating their building, which would double its size and add public gathering spaces. The Museum has already completed the building's design and had the plans reviewed from affiliated organizations. The overall response from the community has been extremely positive. They have met with nearby businesses and organizations to work out a plan for minimizing disruption during construction.

One of the grant's requirements is a local government partnership, and Pam would like for the Board to vote in favor of that partnership regarding the City of Asheville. The Museum already has a history of working with the City on various projects and volunteer boards. Additionally, the Museum expansion is included in many of the City's master plans (Downtown Master Plan; Parks, Recreation, Cultural Arts & Greenways Master Plan; Tourism Development Plan). The land under the proposed expansion is owned by the City of Asheville. At this time, the Museum isn't asking for cash support, but rather a partnership with the City and the right to expand on that land.

Wayne asked if the grant money will fund the bricks-and-mortar portion of the project. Pam said that the grant is only for design documents. Highlighting the need for additional space, Pam explained that 97% of the Museum's collection is in storage.

Geoff asked if Pack Place is run by a private investment group. Pam clarified that Pack Plaza is owned by Southeastern Development Corp., which owns property adjacent to the Museum. Pack Place is built on city property, but the improvements are owned by the Pack Place 501c3 organization. Pack Place, the City, and the Museum have entered into a legal agreement that the improvements the Museum makes will be owned by the Museum.

Sara asked for more information on what the Museum expansion will include. Pam said the galleries will increase six fold. The permanent collection constantly rotates, but a larger percentage will be on display. The entire square footage of the facility increases by five times. The ground floor galleries, however, will remain open free of charge. There will also be enough space to hold traveling exhibits. Pam added that it will be a green building, as much as possible.

Cecil added that the Finance Committee voted to pay for the new HVAC system for the building.

Mary Ann asked for a more detailed description of what the Museum is asking for and what the grant requires. Pam said it is asking for the Board to support the local government partnership required by the grant. There is no financial responsibility at this time. She explained that the City has already been supporting this project with planning money. The Museum has a long history of getting NEA grants. They will apply for the full amount of \$250,000 and they will have the necessary matching funds.

Mary Ann also asked about the status of the Health Adventure/Momentum project. Pam said she cannot speak on their behalf, but knows they are moving forward and have no intention of putting progress on hold.

Geoff asked if there's a chance the Museum could be awarded less than the full requested amount. Pam said NEA does reserve the right to offer a lesser amount, and that part of the grant application is preparing for this contingency.

Wanda asked what the total renovation project cost is. Pam said it is a \$24 million dollar campaign, which includes \$17 million in construction costs and \$7 million in fees and endowment.

Wayne motioned to support the partnership with the Asheville Art Museum for the National Endowment for the Arts Our Town grant. Wanda seconded, all approved and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Asheville Area Arts Council Agreement

Diane Ruggiero said that the Asheville Area Arts Council is interested in establishing a partnership agreement with the City of Asheville. The APRCA department has been working closely with them as they go through organizational redevelopment. This agreement will help facilitate collaboration on projects and give credibility to the Arts Council for applying for grants, etc.

Hutch asked if this is the renewal of a previous agreement. Diane said this is a new agreement. Wayne asked for more information on the Council and their activities. Graham Hackett explained that the Arts Council has been through many iterations and has now returned to a very basic level of operations. However, they've recently experienced a resurgence of interest. They instituted a grant program, bringing in \$40,000 of state art funding, and opened a new building in the River Arts district. This building, "The Artery," is 1400 square foot space that can be used for offices, exhibitions, or meetings. The building is funded through donor campaigns, membership funding, and grants. Wayne asked if they have a board, which they do, as a 501c3 organization. Mary Ann asked if the partnership will require additional city staff or support, which it won't.

Geoff said the new Livingston Street Center will be a good partner for the arts, and Mildred added that is one of the Center's goals for the year. Diane said staff is collaborating with the Arts Council on an arts summit this week. Roderick added the partnership is also part of our APRCA Master Plan and the Downtown Master Plan.

Geoff asked if there will be a standing liaison or representative on the Public Art Board. Graham said perhaps not formally, but they are opening that dialogue. Cecil asked if there's a financial commitment, which there isn't. The agreement states the Arts Council and the City will collaborate on a minimum of two projects a year, depending on resources. Roderick said it's similar to the NEA/Arts Museum grant support. It formalizes and helps establish the Arts Council's credibility.

Geoff asked if there will be a Memorandum of Understanding, which there will be. Hutch asked which geographic areas it primarily addresses. The Arts Council reaches all of Buncombe County, focusing on local artists.

Geoff motioned to support the partnership agreement between the Asheville Area Arts Council and the City of Asheville. Wayne seconded, all approved and the motion passed unanimously.

4. Marketing Subcommittee Report

Wayne explained that he, Wanda and Lonnie met with Frank to discuss the department's marketing program. He commended Frank for his thorough job. They concluded they won't have a set meeting, but will meet with the subcommittee as needed.

5. Director's Report

Roderick gave an update of the CIP process. Over the next month, City Council will be considering the entire CIP project list and budget. Last year, the Board put together a subcommittee to look at this. Roderick asked the Chair to consider appointing a new subcommittee for this year, to refine the CIP process for review. There are currently 32 planned projects, as well as many unplanned projects. The subcommittee would look at updating, tweaking, and reprioritizing those projects. The subcommittee may also facilitate the process for gathering public input, and then bring it to the full Board.

Sara asked for volunteers. Wayne, Mildred, Geoff, and Sara will serve on the CIP subcommittee. Debbie will coordinate with them.

Debbie said that as the department prepares for the opening of the new center at Livingston Street Park, they want to work with the Reid Center Advisory Board to plan a grand opening event. The Reid Board is appointing two people to work with staff on that. The other issue is the naming of the center. They'd like to invite two members of the Recreation Advisory Board and two members of Reid Center Advisory Board to be on a panel to help staff with this. We'll use the same system (SurveyMonkey) we used to collect names for the Nature Center otter naming contest, which was very successful. Also, people can call in to the main APRCA phone number if they don't have computer access. There will be some parameters, since the department has a facility naming policy. Once names are collected, the panel will create a short list and bring to the Board, who will make a recommendation and send that to City Council. The name will be unveiled at the grand opening. This process will be starting very soon, since we'll need signage ready for grand opening.

Wayne asked if the name "Reid Center" will automatically go to the new center, if the old/current Reid Center is demolished. Debbie said Asheville Housing Authority is interested in purchasing the building, so demolishing isn't likely. The new center could be called the Reid Center, but it's not mandatory, and depends on the results of the naming contest. Sarah asked if we're naming the whole facility or each building/phase. Debbie said this is the name of the whole facility. In the future, there is the possibility to name smaller pieces within (gym, auditorium, etc). The facility name won't change if we get a sponsor or donor agreement.

Mildred said she felt the community would like to see "Livingston" incorporated into the center name. Hutch recalled that a few months ago Lonnie had discussed the name

“Reid” as inaccurate. Mildred responded that more people favored the name Livingston because they attended the Livingston School.

Wanda and Wayne volunteered to serve on the naming subcommittee.

6. Reports

Pack Square Conservancy: Geoff reported that plans for restrooms in Pack Square Park are underway. The latest plan is for four restrooms. They are making the final tweaks to the plan and should have the budget for that this week. The Executive Director has resigned, and there are no immediate plans to hire new one. The current administrative assistant/communications person will be retained.

Asheville Parks & Greenways Foundation: Geoff said that the previous meeting was cancelled, and the Foundation is now doing routine maintenance and organization.

Bele Chere Committee: Wanda said the music selection was completed in February. They are still looking for volunteers for some positions: arts, community liaison for downtown merchants, and hospitality. The artwork winner has been selected and will be unveiled shortly. The children’s area is looking for nonprofits to help out. There will be background checks on any people working in this area. The Bele Chere Committee is meeting on a monthly basis.

Mary Ann asked if Bele Chere made money for the city or cost money in 2010. Sara said that should be the report for next month.

7. Other Business

Mary Ann asked who’s responsible for removing graffiti on Irby Brinson Park (on Reed Creek Greenway). Roderick said it’s part of the public nuisance court. He will report it.

Geoff asked about phase II progress on Reed Creek. Construction should start in about 8 weeks.

Wayne asked about the status of the birdhouses. Mary Ann said they’re in her office. Debbie said she’s been looking into that and will be in touch.

Wanda asked about the fencing around basketball at Weaver Park and its status. Roderick said he’ll check into it.

Wayne asked about the status of the tractor seats donation. Debbie said she recently met at the park to discuss the project. They still need a little more information before proceeding. Stephan Bonitz will also refinish the chess table stone tops, which will require a contract.

Mildred said the basketball court at Reid Center has been removed, and the tennis court at Congress and Choctaw is being removed. The closest basketball court is at Walton Street Park, and the closest tennis court is at Aston Park. Roderick said there's a basketball court planned in Phase II of the new center construction. Wanda added there's a fee associated with using the Aston Park tennis courts.

Mary Ann reported that Channel 14 had a segment about Pritchard Park last night and the park got good coverage.

8. Adjournment

Wayne motioned to adjourn, Wanda seconded, and all approved. The meeting adjourned at 1:24 p.m.