

City of Asheville Parks & Recreation Department

RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

May 11, 2015 /12:30 P.M. to 2:00 P.M.

City Hall, 1st Floor Conference Room

Committee Members Attending: Bob Pierce, Forrest Matthew, Barry Mundt, Todd Dunnuck, Ashley Arrington, , Josh O’Conner, Hutch Kerns, City Council: Chris Pelly

Staff Present: Roderick Simmons, Debbie Ivester, Lauren Wheeler, Steph Monson Dahl

Guest: Wilson Sims,

Absent: Kim Reed, Pat Dennehy

The meeting was called to order at 12:30pm by Chairman Hutch Kerns.

Debbie introduced Lauren Wheeler, the department’s new Administrative Assistant.

1. Recognition of RAB Members:

Chairman Kerns presented Ashley Arrington with a gift in recognition of her years of service to the Recreation Advisory Board. Ashley stated she enjoyed her time on the board and complimented Roderick Simmons for being an ambassador. Board member Pat Dennehy was also recognized for his years of service. His recognition gift will be mailed to him.

2. Asheville Whitewater Park Proposal Presentation

Mr. Sims thanked the Board for the opportunity to present the Whitewater Park Proposal.

The two key elements for this project are the budget and permit processes, and the project is under consideration by City Council. Currently development of the project will require private funding for the build itself, with operations and maintenance funded by the City. The total project estimated cost is \$1,781,000 with construction to begin in 2018.

Mr. Sims stated there are more than 20 instream parks in the country, the closest being the Nantahala in Bryson City. He noted three potential sites have been identified for the whitewater park including: Bowen Bridge, Pearson Bridge and the Jean Webb Park. Criteria being considered are water flow, the River Arts District development, New Belgium development and potential future greenway locations.

The plan is to integrate the design into the natural surroundings and include gates to help mitigate flooding. The Whitewater Park will be for all ages, beginners, professionals and other recreational water users.

Mr. Sims stated that the City will need to take the lead with how they want to move forward and for evaluating other best practices.

Stephanie Monson, Riverfront Redevelopment Office Director, stated that the Riverfront Redevelopment Commission requested a draft report for the next meeting.

Bob Pierce stated concerns regarding the substantial flood risks and assessing future impacts prior to moving forward with the permitting process. Hutch asked if the land under consideration is owned by the City, and Stephanie clarified that some of the land is private. Ashley questioned ongoing maintenance costs and where funding would come from. Roderick agreed with the technical questions and stated that all of these questions still need to be addressed.

Stephanie stated that staff has contacted four other waterparks to better understand how this proposal will impact Asheville and our unique environment. She added that staff would be needed to maintain and operate the gates, and downstream sedimentation is a concern that would need to be addressed.

Hutch inquired if there is a plan to initiate funding and if the City is going to put funding toward it or if it can be part of the Advocacy group's funding efforts. Stephanie advised to be cautious of the cost estimates as they do not always address all factors such as the need for additional public restroom facilities. She also stated they are looking into studies using public-private partnerships and what has made them successful.

Wilson told the Board there hasn't been a fundraising analysis, or a serious plan to match up funding with each phase at this point.

Bob commented that this process will take significantly longer than the estimates and there is still a lot to do prior to moving forward. Hutch asked if it is feasible to fit the project into the existing list of projects. Stephanie advised that coordinating permitting under the City's current RADTIP schedule may be possible, but additional resources would be needed and the coordination may threaten existing funding.

Forrest asked if there is a formal review for City Council. Stephanie informed the Board that a draft of the report will be submitted for consideration at the next council meeting.

Hutch summarized the Board's concerns as: cost, maintenance, environmental factors such as wildlife and flooding, and to ensure it is not a burden on the Parks and Recreation Department.

3. Approval of March Minutes

Forrest asked to have his comments on the Montford Complex renovations added as commentary to the last meeting's minutes. Hutch stated we can procedurally add to minutes.

* At the May 11th, 2015 RAB meeting Forrest requested to have comments added to the Montford Complex agenda item. After further review of the intended plan and potential negative impact on available tennis courts, he would fully support a plan that replaces the two courts with at least one, if not two, but otherwise cannot support a decrease in recreational opportunities in our parks.

Bob motioned to approve minutes; Barry seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

4. FY 2015-2016 RAB Chair & Vice Chair Nomination

Hutch asked the Board members to spread awareness about the open positions. Debbie told members they needed to actively recruit for the positions and plan to discuss candidates at the next meeting in July. Hutch asked the Board to notify Josh, Debbie, and himself of possible candidates in order to add them to the July meeting agenda.

5. Director's Report

Announced two upcoming ribbon cuttings at the Stephens-Lee and Shiloh Recreation Centers with dates to be provided.

Currently working on the operating budget and management of the Skate Park.

The right-of-way mowing operations will be transferring to the Public Works Department.

Staff are assisting the Human Resources Department with the Wellness Program.

All the facilities are coming up on end of life at the same time and turf replacement is needed, along with resurfacing for the hockey and velodrome areas.

At pools we are looking at attendance and conditions, identifying what needs to be done. The pools are all about 40 years old, we are deciding if we should spend the money to update.

City Council meets tomorrow to discuss the City's capital budget and what it will mean for Parks and Recreation.

6. Other Business

Debbie Gurriere, on behalf of the residents of the Sky Club, asked about the status of the park being constructed near Helen's Bridge. Roderick responded that the current design is to turn it into a trail head so it will be an entrance to the greenway, not a full park. Staff is preparing bid documents to be released by June, with a vote by City Council following review.

Debbie asked why there will no longer be public meetings held, just online commentary allowed.

Roderick informed her that Parks already met privately with land owners, in an effort to allow others to bring forth issues staff was unaware of the City has offered to allow private commentary.

Forrest thanked the Parks and Recreation Department for the Carrier Park Volleyball Club. They greatly appreciated the new sand. Forrest also expressed his desire to help facilitate communication between the Recreation Advisory Board and the Greenway Committee he also serves on. He then expressed their concern about the hold on the feasibility study for the East Asheville greenway project. Chris Pelly informed Forrest there is no shortage of commitment to the feasibility study for East Asheville but since there are currently six studies on the table, there is not funding at this time.

7. Adjournment

Josh adjourned the meeting at 1:40pm