

Draft Recreation Advisory Board Minutes

June 10, 2013

In Attendance:

Board Members:

Wayne Wheeler

Barry Mundt

Ashley Arrington

Todd Dunnuck

Hutch Kerns

Josh O'Conner

Jordan Veale

Mildred Nance-Carson

Council Liaison:

Cecil Bothwell

City Staff:

Roderick Simmons, Director of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts

Debbie Ivester, Assistant Director of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts

Al Kopf, Superintendent of Park Planning & Development

Sandra Travis, Program Supervisor, Festivals

Alex Carmichael, Executive Assistant

Guests:

Holly Stiles, President of Friends of the WNC Nature Center

Wayne called the meeting to order at 12:31 PM.

1. Approval of May Minutes

Todd motioned to approve the May minutes with amendment. Barry seconded. The motioned passed with all in favor.

2. Partner Presentation: Friends of the WNC Nature Center

Holly Stiles, President of Friends of the WNC Nature Center, gave an overview of the status of her organization. The Friends and the Nature Center have been in the news due to the city's budget crisis. Closing the Nature Center is no longer an option being discussed, but the Friends will have to be a bigger financial partner. The Friends have supported capital projects, but never programming until now. Holly discussed the capital projects that the Friends have been involved with and thanked the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department for their transparency in sharing operational information and costs.

Wayne asked about the percentage of donations from the general public vs. foundations. Holly said that is hard to determine because the number of grant awards vary from year to year. Wayne noted that foundations tend to give for capital projects rather than administrative costs. Holly agreed that money for operations is the hardest to raise, and that the Friends will have to work to find new financial sources.

Todd asked about the completion date for the playground. Holly said that the target is the first week of October.

Josh asked how much will have to be deferred from capital funds to cover operations. Holly said that they have not gotten to that point yet; the Friends and the City are still in conversation about operational costs.

Holly invited Board members to come see the new Hell Bender/ Mud Puppy exhibit and offered to arrange tours.

Hutch asked staff if there is a funding threshold that the Friends will have to raise.

Roderick said that the Department is looking for \$150,000-\$200,000.

3. Slate of Officers: 2013-2014 Chair and Vice Chair

a. Nominations for Chair:

Barry nominated Wayne. Mildred seconded, and all voted in favor.

b. Nominations for Vice Chair:

Wayne nominated Hutch. Mildred seconded, and all voted in favor.

Josh suggested streamlining the nominating process in favor of open floor nominations rather than through a committee. Debbie said that she would review the by-laws to determine if any action is required.

4. Budget Update

Roderick Simmons, Director of Asheville Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts presented an update to the Department's budget process. Roderick reported that City Council will hold public hearings tomorrow, June 11, to consider two variables: a) the City is permitted to join the Culture and Recreational Authority (CRA) with Buncombe County or b) the City is excluded from the CRA. A tax increase to offset the budget gap is an option being considered if the City is excluded from the CRA. If the City is included in the CRA, Council recommends transferring everything but the recreation centers and the Civic Center. Three other municipalities in Buncombe County are interested in joining as well. Roderick said that he will present details to the Board as they become available. He noted that there would be no operational impact other than on the Festivals Division.

Hutch asked if someone else would take over Festivals. Roderick said that he did not know. Josh asked if there was a transition plan in place for the Festivals Division. Roderick said that they were looking for available positions to which the Festivals staff could apply.

Councilman Bothwell added that the Legislature is leaving Asheville twisting in the wind. They want the City to drop the lawsuit over the water system and they are using the CRA as leverage. While the CRA is stuck in committee, two budgets have to be approved and decided on at the last minute.

Hutch asked Councilman Bothwell if the City has briefs on the two budget options. Roderick said that he will send those to the Board.

5. Director's Report

Roderick presented the Director's Report. Asheville City Schools requested putting mobile units on site at the Grant Center to relocate Randolph students displaced by Issac Dickson students during school construction. A two year agreement would be established without operational impact to the PRCA budget. Hutch asked if that would affect future phases of construction. Roderick said that it would not; there is a two-year funding process which may be delayed an additional year. Josh asked what parking issues that would create. Roderick said that isn't known yet. Fifty spaces around the center perimeter may be designated. Mildred asked about the amount of the lease. Roderick said that it would be \$1 per year.

Debbie Ivester, Assistant Director of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts reported on the status of a North Asheville dog park. She reported that City Council at Councilman Chris Pelly's request to assign staff to work with a citizen group to establish a dog park. They have identified potential land adjacent to Beaver Dam Rd. Council agreed to provide \$5,000 for the concept design. The citizen group is also providing \$5,000. They are designating a work group to include Debbie and find a landscape architect.

Al Kopf, Superintendent of Park Planning and Development provided an update on the Thomas Wolfe cabin. The Historic Preservation Society has conducted research on the property. A full report goes to the Historic Resources Commission this month on demolishing an addition added to the cabin in the 1960's.

6. Reports

a. Bele Chere Board:

Todd reported for the Bele Chere Board. The performers list was released and can be found at belecherefestival.com or belecherefestival.org. There will also be a preview of the artwork. Three interns started two weeks ago.

Mildred asked if the footprint will be the same size or reduced. Todd said it will be the same.

b. Asheville Area Riverfront Redevelopment Commission:

Wayne reported for the Asheville Area Riverfront Redevelopment Commission. A map is being developed for the RADTIP. They are forming an ad hoc committee to meet with the City on unsafe/dilapidated buildings and hope to establish subsequent standing meetings. The Commission will not have a June meeting because they will be in Greenville on a fact finding trip. They are going to look at that city's riverfront development.

Mildred asked who is addressing parking on Roberts and Depot Streets. Roderick said that Jeff More in Transportation is in charge of that. Mildred noted that the Riverfront traffic circle is unsafe for pedestrians.

7. Other Business

Josh asked about meeting space for community groups in the East Asheville Center. Some of those groups are under the impression that the space is no longer available to them. Roderick said that the Center is not staffed, but remains available for use. Debbie noted the center will be leased to LEAF but the existing community groups who use the center are given an option to stay or relocate. Most groups opted to leave. Staff is contacting two groups who have since indicated their interest to still be at the center. LEAF will continue to make the center available for community use.

8. Adjournment

At 1:19 Mildred moved to adjourn. Ashley seconded, and the motion passed with all in favor.