

Recreation Advisory Board

October 10, 2011



Members Present:

Wanda Hawthorne, Chair
Wayne Wheeler, Vice Chair
Mildred Nance-Carson
Lonnie Gilliam
Josh O'Connor
John Parrish
Todd Dunnuck
Hutch Kerns

Staff Present:

Roderick Simmons, Director
Debbie Ivester, Assistant Director
Christy Bass, Business Services Supervisor
Sandra Travis, Program Supervisor
Amy Rickman, Recreation Superintendent
Dan Baechtold, Transportation
Al Kopf, Planning & Development Superintendent
Frank McGowan, Business Services Superintendent
Diane Ruggiero, Cultural Arts Superintendent

Council Present:

Cecil Bothwell

Guests:

Timothy Sadler

Wanda called the meeting to order at 12:30

1. Welcome New Board Member:

Wanda welcomed new board member John Parrish to the Recreation Advisory Board

2. Approval of September Minutes:

Corrections to September meeting: include Fire Department in NCRPA Conference Update.

Josh motioned to approve the corrected September minutes, Lonnie 2nd, all approved and the motion passed unanimously.

3. 2012 Bele Chere:

Sandra Travis, Festivals Program Supervisor, presented a staff report and asked for approval to nominate Aileen Sheehan-Wilson as the 2012 Bele Chere Board Chair. Todd

asked how the nomination process works. Sandra responded that the Bele Chere sub-committee is not a City Council appointed board and is a sub-committee of the Recreation Board and made up of volunteers.

Wayne motioned to approve the nomination of Aileen Sheehan-Wilson, Mildred 2nd, all approved and the motion passed unanimously.

Wanda asked Sandra to provide an update on the wrap up of the 2011 Bele Chere. Sandra reported that the festival wrap-up occurred in September and this year there was nothing outstanding to report. Sandra added that staff is always looking to find better ways to run the festival, that they are happy with the current footprint and find it is a good use of resources and have received good feedback from attendees. Wanda stated that there was a large group of children from the YWCA and asked if it is possible to provide the children performers with a free ride ticket as a thank you for the time that they are offering. Sandra stated that this was a good idea.

4. River Arts District Transportation Improvement Project Update:

Dan Baechtold, Transportation Department, provided an overview on the River Arts District Transportation Improvement Project. He stated the City is currently coordinating with a variety of stakeholder groups and that the project will have some impacts, both positive and with encroachments, on the park area in this district. He added that the transportation in this area for bikers, pedestrians, vehicles is also being reviewed. Dan stated that in 2003, the Wilma Dykeman Riverway Plan came together and included about 17 miles of corridor in all directions. The proposed project being discussed today is 2.2 miles and focuses on the southern end where Amboy Road comes into Lyman Street to the northern end where Hill Street links in to I-240.

Dan stated that although there is no money for construction of this project, the City is looking to work on the project in pieces which would include an environmental assessment, required for any federal money. Dan stated that there have been two public meetings held already to discuss the possibilities of how the roads would come together. Depending on the outcomes of the environmental assessment, there are many factors to consider such as the historic buildings, the flood plains and the human component that already exists. Maps will be available on the City's website along with input from the public meetings and can be found under the Projects and Initiatives link. Dan stressed that this project needs to address the transportation need which is to improve the system linkages for pedestrians, bicycles and cars to improve mobility. On the alternative routes, they are looking for feedback on any of the areas that already have a median and if they should stay, placing bike lanes and sidewalks on one or both sides of the road, suggestions as to where parking should be as well as the greenway, which would run next to the road in some areas.

Wayne asked if there would need to be a lot of properties purchased or if the City could use eminent domain. Dan responded yes, and that eminent domain could be the case. Dan reported that the goal is to be completed with the environmental document in February/March 2012 with approval hopefully received in April 2012. Mildred asked if

AB Tech is a stakeholder. Dan responded yes and the first public meeting was held at the Asheville AB Tech campus. Dan added that any of the alternatives will not affect the access into AB Tech and that the number of impacts to businesses will be considered after the results are received, with staff currently working on the costs of things such as right of ways. Wayne asked who makes the final decision on the alternative. Dan responded that the consultants will make a recommendation based on cost, the alternatives and other information. Ultimately before the documents are submitted to the federal government the proposed alternative would go before City Council for approval. Dan reported that the city has a grant for the area east of this project area up to the hospital area. Dan shared that the area north of the I-240 bridges is slated to be open space with the area from I-240 down to Lyman Street and the rest of Riverside Drive could have businesses on one side of the road with open space on the other; south of Lyman Street would become more urban space development.

Wayne asked if the bus currently serves this area. Dan responded that the bus line currently runs along the Clingman Bridge, but not along the proposed corridor. He added that they would like to plan for future bus usage with more bus shelters along this road once completed. Hutch asked if there is significant open space or parks in addition to the existing Jean Webb Park. Dan responded that there is the potential for creating more open space north of Smokey Park Bridge, however this would require buying out existing businesses and that the Craven Street bridge south towards 12 Bones restaurant between the road and the river is currently publicly owned with the exception of one property and also has the potential to become linear park space.

Cecil asked if there are existing bays along the railroad tracks. Dan responded that there is existing vegetation and the alternative road would need to shift a little to come in to the tracks.

5. Director's Report:

Roderick reported that there is an East of the Riverway planning grant to look at how to tie the community to jobs and to recreation, focusing on the Hillcrest and Livingston Street communities. The City is looking at the Clingman Forest and Town Branch greenways and how we can use these greenways as transportation modes to get people to jobs. The East of the Riverway planning grant will be about a three year grant and the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department will be the project managers of the greenway component. He added that staff is looking to get all of the planning documents together before the grant is awarded, such as the environmental assessment. There is a HUD grant that the Housing Authority received to purchase the Reid Center from the City and they will be using the location as a job training center.

Roderick reported that the Martin Luther King, Jr. playground is complete and the community would like to organize a small ribbon cutting ceremony. Staff is starting to identify other playgrounds that could use some attention with Montford and Kennilworth playgrounds being looked at next.

As a reminder, the Dr. Wesley Grant, Sr. Southside Center opening will be held Thursday, October 13th at 5:30 pm.

6. Committee Reports:

Pack Square Conservancy: Roderick reported that there has not been a meeting in the past three months but when there is information available, he will pass that along.

Bele Chere: Wanda reported that no meetings are currently being held.

Asheville Parks and Greenways Foundation: Wayne reported that he attended his second meeting. The APGF is donating \$1000 with a match of another \$1000 to be used towards the splash pad enhancements at the new recreation center.

7. Other business:

Timothy Sadler, community guest, asked about a bike share program on the eastern greenway. He spoke of the vertical garden concept that can be used as a garden, for farming, and food product production such as making ketchup for local restaurants. He added that Asheville has the ability to become a better place for science & technology. He added that kiosks are a good way to educate the community.

Wanda agreed with the idea of a bike share program.

Wanda motioned to adjourn the meeting at 2:15 pm, Wayne 2nd, all approved and the motion passed unanimously.