

Recreation Advisory Board

November 14, 2011



Members Present:

Wanda Hawthorne
Josh O'Connor
Lonnie Gilliam
Mildred Nance-Carson
John Parrish
Todd Dunnuck
Hutch Kerns

Council Member Present:

Cecil Bothwell

Staff Present:

Roderick Simmons, Director
Debbie Ivester, Assistant Director
Christy Bass, Business Services Supervisor
Amy Rickman, Recreation Superintendent
Al Kopf, Superintendent of Parks, Planning & Development
Frank McGowan, Superintendent of Business Services
Diane Ruggiero, Superintendent of Cultural Arts

Wanda called the meeting to order at 12:30

1. Approval of October Minutes:

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

2. Burton Street Tech Center Presentation:

Dwayne Barton, Burton Street Community Association, provided a recap of how they began working with the Asheville Design Center to put a computer center in the basement of the Burton Street Recreation Center, along with a multi-purpose and gallery/performance space. Luke Perry, Asheville Design Center, provided a presentation of the preliminary ideas of the possibilities of options for Burton Street Recreation Center. Luke displayed and discussed the design and proposed changes, with a plan to keep the basement space open, with access from the upstairs. The preliminary financials include \$325,000 for design and construction costs, \$57,000 for equipment and furnishings, \$16,000 for operations allowing for 152 additional occupants to utilize the space and ten workstations in the computer lab. Luke stated that minimal infrastructure changes would be necessary. He added that parking is currently an issue and might continue to be an issue there is an agreement for nine additional spaces with the Community Baptist Church and six additional street parking spaces along Bryant Street.

Mildred asked if funding has already been secured for this project. Laura Clemmons, Asheville Design Center, responded that because this is a City owned property they felt it was necessary to present the options and then have further funding discussions with the City. She added that should they be given approval to continue with the project, the Asheville Design Center will agree to help write grants. Wanda asked about a timeline for completion. Laura responded that it could take several years to get the project up and running, while at the same time continue existing programming to help ensure that the space would be utilized once complete. Debbie stated that there are still outstanding discussions such as how the center will continue to operate over the long-term and that applicants have been good at looking at the permits required for this project although a summary has yet to be received. She added that overall this needs to be a long-term, sustainable project with all of the funding in hand before any construction can occur.

Josh asked if there is any recommendation that can be made today for the funding stream. Debbie responded that because this is very preliminary information, staff will come back with a complete recommendation for the Recreation Board, and that the project will need to be presented to City Council, stating that it could possibly be ready for the December meeting and going to City Council in January. Mildred asked how this would affect the CIP budget. Roderick stated that this is something that still needs to be looked at in the budget, and would be flushed out before the next step in the conversation. Hutch asked if this could be economically sustainable with the community taking ownership of a community asset and that he would like to see the numbers, discuss the sound system, and would like staff's opinion on how realistic the operating figures really are over the long-term. Debbie stated that this will be part of the information brought back before the Board.

3. Director's Report:

Roderick reported that the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park playground is now finished and the ribbon cutting will be held this Thursday at 4:00 p.m adding that the park is at a key intersection as you come into the city. All board members are invited to attend. Roderick stated that Montford Center playground will be looked at next, followed by the Carrier Park restrooms for possible revamping, but because of the flood plain they cannot rebuild the restrooms.

Roderick added that the Municipal Golf Course proposals are due back by December 12, 2011 with the Finance Committee to determine what the next steps will be.

Roderick reported that due to the Occupy Asheville movement, the topic of park hours may come before this board in the future to determine. He added that staff can bring back best practices and policies prior to a recommendation to council.

4. Committee Updates:

Pack Square Conservancy Update:

Roderick reported that construction on the restrooms at Pack Square Park has started and that they should be completed spring 2012. He added that the money is coming from the

TDA (Tourist Development Authority) and that the department will only be responsible for maintaining the facilities when they are completed.

Josh asked if they could get a list of facilities that the park hours would impact and if the park hours could be applied differentially between the facilities. He would also be interested in the law enforcement perspective and what other activity safeguards are in place, such as the noise ordinance that already exists.

Cecil asked about history of park hours and how they came to be. Roderick stated that the park hours were approved by the city council back in the late 1960's.

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Wanda reported that there have not been any meetings and there is no report.

5. Other business

Bill Whalen, Muni Alliance, is representing a community golf course group working together to revise the Asheville Municipal Golf Course and transform it into a sustainable course. Bill stated that the group is intentionally diverse and cares about the golf course and strongly believe that the course has untapped potential. He added that in the 84 year history, there has never been a comprehensive study of the needs of the course for the future and this will be important before setting the long-term future. He added that members of the Muni Alliance are willing to contribute time and expertise to the study if they can participate in a positive and constructive process. The mission is to preserve the Muni course and the group intends to present the handed out proposal to City Council.

John asked about the use of the word potential and what is not currently being met. Bill responded that the potential is in course improvement such as landscaping, and that community members of the Alliance are there to serve those that utilize the course; there are opportunities for design and development, and operations of the course; fundraising and development for the course. Robert, Golf USA, stated that the course should not be costing the city money each year and it could be marketed so that more people come to Asheville to use the course and fill hotels. Bill stated that he is here on behalf of community neighborhood as well. Mildred asked about the possibility of doing fundraising and if they are already doing this. Bill responded that both the men's and women's groups work on fundraising however they do not have a process in place.

Cecil stated that as a member of the Finance Committee, City Council likes ideas that do not cost the City any additional money. He added that the water usage is the current financial drain because of how the agreements were set up years ago.

Bill asked how the subsidy from the city is considered excessive; what is it compared to. Brenda Dunlap, community resident, shared pictures of the history of the course, such as when the clubhouse had a top level prior to a fire years ago. She stated that the people using the course are of all ages and genders.

Roderick thanked the Muni Alliance for coming together for a shared interest and recognized that this takes time and energy. He added that part of the position the City is in is how to balance the funds while at the same time preserving the integrity of the City in a tough economy, recognizing that this is a tough conversation. Wanda echoed Roderick's statements.

Tim Sadler, Asheville resident, commented on solutions for the Municipal Golf Course, suggesting solar panels to generate electricity and possibly sell that extra energy back to the grid; having a club share program which would allow people without clubs to be able to come play without purchasing a set; locally grown food from the acreage of the course; he hopes that there is programming to help make the course uniquely Asheville, something that helps it stand out a little bit.

Wanda reminded all about the ribbon cutting at Martin Luther King, Jr. Park.

Wanda adjourned the meeting at 1:23 pm.