

MINUTES

Parks and Recreation Board

Tuesday, October 20, 2009

7:00 PM, Town Barn

PRESENT: Chair Bryant Warren, Vice Chair Steven Whitlow, Mary Donegan, Nancy Espersen, Mike Gering, Emily McNally, and Vicky Wilson.

ABSENT: Robb English, Kevin McKenna, and Jennifer Weaver, absences excused.

STAFF: Planner Stephanie Trueblood.

ITEM 1: Call to Order, Roll Call, and Confirmation of a Quorum.

Chair Bryant Warren called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. Planner Stephanie Trueblood called the roll and confirmed the presence of a quorum.

ITEM 2: Consideration of changes or adjustments to the agenda.

No adjustments or changes were made to the agenda.

ITEM 3: Approval of minutes from August 18 and September 15, 2009.

MOTION/

VOTE: Mr. Whitlow moved to approve the minutes of the August 18 and September 15, 2009 meetings as submitted. Ms. Donegan seconded. The vote was unanimous.

ITEM 4: Reports and Updates:

- **Town Board** - Mr. Gering stated the Town Board had met on October 12 and discussed changes the County wanted to make to the Strategic Growth Plan, of which one was voting representation on the Planning Board for people not in the Town limits or in the ETJ, and another was using County development rules for projects that were in the County's jurisdictions with the assumption that the Town would then accept those projects when annexation was requested. Mr. Gering said the Town Board had not been pleased with the reasoning behind those changes and had expressed their concerns.

Mr. Gering said the Town Board had discussed alternatives to providing pedestrian access to Gold Park. He said the Board had decided they needed to exercise more the option of getting permission from Norfolk Southern to use the current roadway rather than designing and paying for an alternative, which could cost as much as \$50,000. Mr. Gering said the Mayor and staff would pursue that before they committed to spending any additional funds. He said the second alternative was to provide a sidewalk from Churton Street along Margaret Lane to the new library, and the Board had determined that the staff's suggestion to put a sidewalk on the south side of Margaret Lane was

the best approach and staff would begin working on the design and implementation of that.

- **Planning Board** – Mr. Whitlow said a public hearing had been held on October 15 with the major discussion being the rewrite of the Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Warren noted that the Planning Director had indicated at that meeting that she would soon be sending out a survey to all the advisory boards for feedback on a variety of issues.

- **Orange County** – Mr. English was not present, so no report was given.
- **Walkable Hillsborough Coalition** – Ms. Espersen said that the International Walk to School Day had recently been held, with 58 people participating. She said they had not yet heard any update about Safe Routes to School, but they continued to work on that.

- **Park Stewards:**

Gold Park – Ms. Donegan said that she had recently visited Gold Park and noted it was being heavily used and was in good shape. She said the dog park in particular was getting a lot of use.

Ms. McNally said she had visited the park recently and had noticed that some of the new signage appeared to be cloudy. Ms. Trueblood said that was because there was air between the sign and the Plexiglas, but that dried out as soon as the moisture level in the air decreased.

Ms. Donegan said one comment she had heard regarding the map showing the trails was that the map did not indicate where you were at that point. She wondered if a “you are here” indicator could be added to the sign. Ms. Trueblood said she believed that would be possible.

Mayo Park and downtown sidewalks – Ms. Espersen said all appeared to be well and she had nothing to report.

Murray Street Park – Ms. Donegan said she had visited the park a couple of weeks ago and all was well.

Turnip Patch Park – Ms. Espersen said that the Garden Club would be weeding the garden very soon.

Hillsborough Heights Park – Mr. Warren said there was one place on the fence on the right side where the top rail had been knocked off. He asked Ms. Trueblood to report that so it could be repaired. Mr. Warren said

people were not making good use of the trash can, but other than that it was in good shape.

Kings Highway Park – Mr. Whitlow said trash was evident in the parking lot, and believed someone may have moved the railroad tie to allow a vehicle to drive back into the park. He said that needed to be put back into place.

Mr. Warren remarked that prior to that people were driving over top of it.

- **Staff Updates** – Ms. Trueblood said that Public Works had done the maintenance at Turnip Patch Park to remove the weeds from the paths and added Chapel Hill gravel to the places where erosion had occurred. She said the doggy bowl portion of the fountain that was not draining properly had also been repaired. Ms. Trueblood said the green buffer landscaping had been installed, noting that landscaping was replacing the fence that had originally been planned.

Ms. Trueblood said that there were limbs in need of pruning at the Murray Street Park, which had now been accomplished. She said the dog park had also been mulched, and trash and grass that was coming to the surface had been removed. Ms. Trueblood stated that on November 4 the Tree Board would be planting 9 trees in Gold Park, 7 of which would be planted on the east side of the playground to create shade for the play equipment. She stated that two native Cedars would also be planted on the east side of the dog park. Ms. Trueblood invited the Board to join the Tree Board in what would be a community planting day.

Ms. Trueblood said she had attended the Intergovernmental Parks Work Group meeting last week, and that group had talked briefly about implementing the Community Use of Schools Initiative. She said also discussed was using Web technologies to link the different programs in the County, and staff was working together to accomplish that now. Ms. Trueblood stated it had been noted that the County Commissioners would be looking at recommending the primary route for the Mountains to the Sea Trail very soon, and there was still concern from Chapel Hill and Carrboro that they were not located on the primary trail. However, she said, through the course of the discussion the Work Group had made a recommendation to support the primary trail going through Hillsborough but to also recommend that there be an alternate route shown on the maps that would go down into Chapel Hill and link into the Carrboro trail system.

Mr. Gering said there already was an alternate route, and that recommendation would be an addition to that alternate route. Ms. Trueblood said that was correct, that the recommendation was to extend the alternate route over into the Carrboro and Chapel Hill existing greenway network. Mr. Gering said

there was a concern that telling the State that they were not happy with the proposed primary or alternate routes would be a disadvantage to everyone in the County.

Ms. Trueblood said that the Town was on the verge of launching the new Website, with thanks going to Mr. Gering, Aspen Price, and Donna Armbrister for working to completely overhaul the old Website and create the new one. She said it would be a much improved tool for the public, including the capability for citizens to make park reservations on-line.

ITEM 5: Discuss updates to the Master Plan and make recommendation to the Town Board.

Ms. Trueblood said she had highlighted the changes that had been made in the Master Plan for easier review, and explained some of the updates which included noting in the introduction that there was updated demographic information in the Master Plan. She said she had also updated the maps to more easily indicate the ETJ and Town limits. Ms. Trueblood said she had also included in the Master Plan the existing trails and future planned trails in different colors, noting it included some of the Connectivity Plan recommendations.

Ms. Trueblood said in the Recreational Resources section, she had included the new information about the Cates Creek Greenway including changing the name of Waterstone Park to Cates Creek Park; the updated information about Fairview Park based on the changes to the Master Plan that had occurred over the last two years; added new pictures of Gold Park; added pictures of the HYAA ball fields and changed the definition of that now that it was located on Town-leased property; added Mayo Park to the Plan since it was a pedestrian resource; updated information on Riverwalk; and, included the Triangle Sportsplex in the inventory since it was a recreational resource. Ms. Trueblood stated the charts had been updated as well to reflect the most current information. She said the Needs Assessment was also updated to reflect the opening of Gold Park, as well as inclusion of interpretive trails, bike routes and recommended canoeing routes.

Ms. Trueblood said based on the Town's current population, the remaining needs in Hillsborough according to the National standards would be to have one additional tennis court, one volleyball court, almost a mile of additional walking trails, almost a mile of course trails, 13 miles of bike trails, 5 miles of bicycle routes, and camp sites. She said looking at that from a staff perspective all of those were things the Town was actually short in. Ms. Trueblood said the table that was included better expressed what the remaining needs were, and included existing and planned facilities.

Ms. Trueblood said on the Organized Sports recommendation page they had included the Intergovernmental Parks Work Group Community Use of Schools Facilities policy although there was still much implementation work to do to see that through. She said they had also included under the recommendations for

Bike and Ped Resources the creation of the Community Connectivity Plan which was a recommendation of the Master Plan in 2007 and had now been accomplished.

Ms. Trueblood said most importantly, the park districts had been updated to include areas not included in the last update as well as the newly annexed areas of Town. She said now every area in the Town limits was represented by a park district, and the map had been updated to indicate the park resources located in each park district including the estimated number of dwelling units, estimated population, and land area based on the new boundary lines.

Ms. Trueblood said in order to keep the Master Plan relevant, she suggested the Board each October go through the process of highlighting any updates that should be reflected in the Plan. She said that any changes made to the Master Plan would have to go through the public hearing process, because it was a part of the Town's Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Trueblood said because of that, this Board could not adopt the changes to the Master Plan but instead would need to recommend to the Planning Board that the Updated Master Plan be placed on the public hearing schedule and after Planning Board review it would go to the Town Board for consideration of adoption. She said the next quarterly public hearing was January 2010.

MOTION/

VOTE: **Ms. McNally** moved to recommend to the Planning Board that updates to the Master Plan go to Public Hearing in January, 2010. **Ms. Esperson** seconded. The vote was unanimous.

ITEM 6: Review maintenance items and rank new amenities budget consideration.

Ms. Trueblood said she had included some maintenance items in the packet for information, noting they were items the Planning Department believed this Board should ask for and be planning for in next year's budget. She said if there were other items that they believed should be added, now was the time to do so.

Mr. Warren asked was there something other than asphalt that could be used at Turnip Patch Park that would give them the same use. Ms. Trueblood said that was included by the Planning Director in last year's budget for the current fiscal year but it had been moved to next year. She said that recommendation had come straight from Public Works because the gravel had been a maintenance problem for them. Mr. Warren said he suspected that concrete would be much more expensive.

Mr. Warren said perhaps they should consider other alternatives before they decided to use asphalt.

Ms. Trueblood said the recommendations pertaining to the dog park had notations as to which recommendation they were from the survey. She said she had included that to indicate the results from the dog park survey.

Ms. McNally asked if the mulch at Gold Park was just for the play area and not the dog park. Ms. Trueblood said mulch for the dog park was noted as a separate item because it was a different kind of mulch. She said they had gotten 55 responses to the dog park survey, which was a good indication of how many people were using it. Ms. Trueblood said the #1 recommendation from the survey was that trees inside the perimeter of the dog park made no sense because getting new trees to grow where dogs would naturally urinate was very difficult. She distributed an article that supported that statement, noting she believed they should perhaps rethink the decision to leave the new trees inside the dog park fence. Ms. Trueblood said in her opinion, the best place to put trees to shade the dog park would be on the other side of the fence on the west side so that the sun in the afternoon would be blocked.

Mr. Warren agreed that trees on the outside of the fence to provide some shade would be acceptable. Ms. Trueblood said one constraint to that was a Duke Power easement that ran on the west side of the dog park, so they would have to work with Duke Power to make sure any trees planted would not impact their utility lines.

Ms. Trueblood called attention to the list of new amenities, noting they were items that could be purchased and put in place easily once funds were identified.

Mr. Whitlow said he was continually shocked at the price tag just to provide shade on the playground. Ms. Trueblood said the cost noted did not include installation. She said as she had said earlier, the Tree Board would be planting 7 trees on November 4 on the east side of the playground to create shade for the play equipment.

Ms. Trueblood said it was difficult to choose between the maintenance and new items needed at the parks, but suggested they keep a figure of \$5,000 for each of the 6 parks in mind. She said they were not limited to that number, but that \$30,000 would be a ballpark figure to remember as they looked at the lists. Ms. Trueblood said no matter the cost, the Planning Director wanted to hear the Board's thoughts and suggestions.

Ms. Esperson asked about the location of the trash cans at Turnip Patch Park. Ms. Trueblood said there had been no decision made, but this Board may have some influence on the eventual location. She said Public Works would prefer they be placed as close to the street as possible for easier servicing.

Ms. Esperson said she believed the most important decision for the Board to make now was the location of the shade trees, based on the ranking from the survey.

But, she said, her personal preference would be to have that a lower priority, basically because of the cost. Several Board members noted that had been ranked very low on their personal lists.

Mr. Warren said there were three locations noted for bike racks, which were the Police Department, Mayo Park, and Town Hall. He said that Tarwheels continued to be willing to furnish additional bike racks, noting they were not that expensive. Ms. Trueblood suggested they look at all the items on the list and then go back and rank them. She said because this Board would not meet in November and December and the Town Board would hold its planning retreat in January, it was important to have rankings available for that retreat when the Town Board would begin budget talks.

Mr. Gering asked was Ms. Trueblood suggesting they each list their preferences in a similar manner that had been day with the Wayfinding signage, which used a point system. Ms. Trueblood said she was suggesting that they rank their preferences and then discuss them so that they could determine if there was an obvious pattern. She said there were 10 items on the new amenities list, and if the Board ranked them with 1 – 10 with 1 being the most important, that would be what she was suggesting. But, she said, if that were flipped and the most important was ranked 10 and the least important ranked 1, then the point system used with the Wayfinding signage could be assigned. She added that if someone were to rank only their top three, then the point system would be useless. Ms. Trueblood said for the other items she was asking that only the Board's top 3 be ranked, because the Planning Director wanted them to be reasonable about what could be accomplished in 3 to 5 years for the larger projects.

Mr. Whitlow said he personally would like to see a sidewalk all the way down Churton Street, but that would never happen because there were no funds.

Ms. Donegan said she would personally like to discuss the sidewalk issue, noting she would only feel comfortable ranking those she was familiar with since she did not walk on all the streets listed.

Mr. Warren said it appeared they had completed their discussion on the maintenance items and new amenities, and suggested moving on to the discussion of ranking large projects for budget consideration.

ITEM 7: Rank large projects for budget consideration.

Mr. Warren said this would be the time to discuss ranking the Board's top three choices for sidewalks, shared use paths, crosswalk projects, and the like that they would like to see in the next 3 to 5 years. He said when ranking, 1 would be most important and 3 would be least important. Ms. Trueblood said the reason that those items were grouped together was that they were things they would potentially be able to use NCDOT funding for.

Mr. Whitlow said if there were large projects that were depending on NCDOT then why even rank them. He said it would appear they should be concentrating on the smaller projects. Ms. Trueblood said that rationale could be applied, but on the other hand if a large project was the board's top priority then staff could be directed to approach NCDOT.

Mr. Whitlow said if their top three choices to be sent to the Town Board were a Churton Street sidewalk, the US 70 shared use path, and putting a shared use path underneath the railroad tracks at Exchange Park Lane, all of which were very expensive, then his question was what the Town Board would do with that information. Mr. Gering said that information would be weighed against other priorities, noting that other advisory boards would be sending in their priorities as well. He said there was no formula for how the Town Board would treat the information, noting it would be a matter of how much they could afford and which projects should be deferred so that funds could be banked.

Ms. Trueblood said the Planning Director had asked that this Board think in terms of 3 to 5 years out rather than just the coming year. She said that would allow the Planning Director to take that information and begin introducing those priorities as ideas for long range budgeting. Ms. Trueblood said once the ideas were put forth for a time, they would be easier as time passed to get them funded. Mr. Gering agreed, noting the Town Board looked at a 10-year budget horizon now and all of those projects could likely fit in that 10-year period.

Ms. Trueblood said she did not believe they would want to send the complete list to the Town Board at their retreat because it would be unrealistic. She said she believed they would want to highlight some key projects that were the most important that should be worked into the budget over time.

Mr. Warren said on the Nash Street sidewalk project, they had been able to get funding from several sources. Ms. Trueblood said that was true, noting some had come from the economic stimulus money. Mr. Gering said about 50% of the funding had come from those other sources, and the same was true for the Riverwalk funding.

Ms. Trueblood said all of the projects on the list had come from the Connectivity Plan and the Master Plan, all of which were Parks and Recreation Board recommendations. She said tonight the Board was being asked to try to prioritize the recommendations from the Connectivity Plan.

Ms. Espersen said then they should be prioritizing the roads that were the most dangerous to walk on or the ones that people walked on the most. Several Board members remarked that they often saw pedestrians walking on South Churton to I-85.

The Board spent some time generally discussing the projects and how they should be narrowed down and ranked.

Mr. Whitlow said he hesitated to say he wanted crosswalks, noting that did not mean he wanted to send the message that he was not interested in sidewalks. Ms. Trueblood said all of the items on the list were important and the Town Board understood that this Board wanted to eventually see all of them. She said what they were trying to accomplish tonight was prioritizing. Ms. Trueblood said it would be helpful to have some idea of what the Board believed were the priorities before the Town Board's January retreat.

Mr. Whitlow stated he had some "pet" projects that he wanted to add to the list, and asked could he include those on the list under Pedestrian Easements and Greenways. Ms. Trueblood encouraged him to do so. Mr. Whitlow said specifically, he would like to have a pedestrian easement covered in mulch from Gold Park to Allison Street, which would allow people to get connected to the State park.

Ms. Trueblood said the path up to Allison Street was a part of Riverwalk Phase II.

Mr. Whitlow said another priority for him was getting a bridge somewhere across the Eno to Tuscarora Drive. Ms. Trueblood said that was a part of Riverwalk Phase III.

The Board members spent some time ranking the items on the list and then announced their choices.

Aspen Price explained the ranking results: benches were #1; bike racks were #2; the bulletin board and trash cans at each park were tied at #3 and #4; and, the swing set at Hillsborough Heights was #5. She said for large projects: Margaret Lane was #1; painted crosswalks throughout the historic district was #2; and a sidewalk connection from downtown to South Churton Street was #3.

Mr. Warren said it appeared the greenways and trails were unanimous, with Riverwalk Phases II and III and a feasibility study for Cates Creek Greenway scoring the highest and the trail West Hillsborough to Riverwalk also scoring high. Ms. Trueblood said it appeared that third item might need to be discussed further. She said she would take the rankings and put them in paragraph form as a summary so that the Board could look it over and get it ready as a recommendation for the Town Board's January retreat.

Ms. Trueblood reminded the Board that they would not be meeting in November and December, but she would communicate with them via email if there was any information that needed to be shared. She asked that the Board members continue their park inspections and email her their comments.

ITEM 8: Adjourn.

MOTION/

VOTE: **Mr. Whitlow** moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:29 p.m. **Ms. McNally** seconded. The motion was adopted unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Trueblood, Secretary