

APPROVED

Minutes of the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board Meeting

April 12, 2012 Regular Meeting

The April 12, 2012 Regular Meeting of the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board was convened at 7:13pm in the Social Room of the Recreation Center with Gerry Palau, Board Chair presiding. The meeting was delayed until a quorum was present.

Roll Call

Members present included: Sherith Colverson, Bob Cushman, Bridgette Ellis, Allen Eubanks, Gerry Palau, Laurel Patrick and Dan Robbins. Absent was Cathy Toth.

Approval of the March 8, 2012 Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the March 8, 2012 minutes was made by Laurel Patrick and seconded by Bob Cushman. The minutes were approved by a 5-0 vote.

Appearance and Citizen Comments

Tom Dunigan, Senior Trail Steward for Haw Ridge Park, appeared before the Board to discuss horses on Haw Ridge. Tom gave a brief history of the park that included motorized vehicle and mountain bike use in the early 1980's to mountain bike and horse use in the 1990's. He shared how many of the mountain bike trails were built by hand (pick ax and shovel) 'contour trails' (i.e., narrow trails built cut & fill into the side of slopes), with wooden bridges over water streams and ditches, and water diversion features on slopes to prevent rainwater erosion along the axis of the trail) to create a sustainable bike trail network. He also discussed the challenges facing volunteers to maintain over 25 miles of trails in the park. The park has seen dramatic increases in trail users as a result of recently constructed, nearby neighborhoods, as well as the extension of the Melton Lake Greenway (Phase IV). Although mountain biking has increased over the years, the current average user is younger and less experienced – often including young families either biking or hiking.

In the late 1990's, several equestrian events were held at the park prompting an increase in the use by horses. Damage to the trails increased and maintenance of the riding trails by horse owners decreased. As horse use increased, horse owners moved from the double track (old farm roads) to the single track (18"-24") trails reserved for bikes. Based on their construction as cut/fill, these narrow bike trails were not designed or envisioned to be sustainable under the weight of horses (especially in wet weather when the ground is soft). As a result, many of these trails are being significantly degraded and eroded (slope breakage) as a result of horses being on them. He also noted that horse feces not being cleaned up by the horse owners on these narrow trails on the sides of fairly steep slopes present both a sanitary and safety (sliding of the trail) concerns for bike riders.

He noted that the increase in horse traffic has reached a critical point where the park and trails can no longer be maintained in a safe and environmentally sound manner given the available financial and labor resources.

Following Mr. Dunigan's comments, Josh Collins reviewed a list of concerns regarding equestrian use of the Haw Ridge Park trails. The list was a compilation of comments received from frequent users of the Park, City staff observations and conversations with horse owners (see attached). Concerns centered around three areas: 1) Trail Damage by horses that affects trail stability, trail surface safety, and excessive soil erosion; 2) Clean up of horse feces (horse owners are not complying with City ordinances related to cleanup and removal of animal excrement); and 3) the City's Liability Exposure based on potential for injury to trail users (the highest risks result from falls due to trail/bridge damage, bike-horse encounters on narrow trails, and hiker-horse encounters on narrow trails). Mr. Collins discussed the City's effort to minimize the negative impact of the horse by restricting access during inclement weather conditions and limiting use to the double track trails. Appropriate signage was posted in an effort to control horse access. These signs have been vandalized by being removed or destroyed.

Mr. Collins outlined a potential process by which the Board could review the material prepared by the staff, gather citizen input, develop potential options and ultimately make a recommendation to the City Manager regarding use of the Haw Ridge trails.

Chairman Palau offered the following strategy to address the concerns with current use policies at Haw Ridge:

- Have a work session before the next regular meeting of the Board on May 10 to explore policy options -- with pros & cons of various strategies. Since the work session will be open to the public and advertised, members of the public may share additional observation that will assist the Board with fact finding.
- At the May 10 meeting, the Board will develop options to address the ongoing issues at Haw Ridge, evaluate the options and draft proposed policy plan.
- At the June 7 meeting, the Board will host a second quarterly open house/availability sessions at 6pm. The focus of that open house will be Haw Ridge. In the Board meeting following the open house, the Board can gauge whether adequate data/public input has been collected in order to make a recommendation to the City Manager and City Council.

Gerry will poll the Board to determine possible dates and times for the work session. The Board indicated support for the Chair's proposed strategy.

Committee Reports

Bike/Ped Committee- Sherith Colverson

Bob Cushman reported that the Committee's April 19 meeting at the Rec Center will be rescheduled for April 17 at 6pm at Elza Gate Park to walk a portion of the CSX rail line. Kathryn Baldwin has agreed to brief the group on the progress to secure the roadbed for a Rails to Trails project.

Bob reviewed a meeting with Steve Byrd, City Engineer and Staff Liaison to TSAB, regarding possible TSAB support to add banning cell phone while driving to the City's Legislative Agenda. Steve committed to discussing the issue with the TSAB Chairman.

Sherith Colverson reported that the Bike/Ped Committee was more interested in providing 'strategic' planning, advice and counsel on bike and pedestrian matters, less interested in consuming its energies and resources planning/sponsoring 'tactical' events such as the Community Bike Ride held last fall.

Dog Park Committee- Bridgette Ellis

Bridgette Ellis reported on the upcoming Earth Day event and the Dock Dogs Competition the weekend of April 28. The Dog Park Committee plans to have a booth and pass out info on the proposed park. Once the survey is approved, the committee hopes it will be another tool to help the group gauge the need for a Dog Park in Oak Ridge.

Bridgette reviewed the proposed survey and draft brochure. The committee used surveys from Kingsport and Lynchburg, Virginia as a sample. Several Board members questioned the length of the document and the question regarding "willing to contribute to the Dog Park". Big Turtle continues to be the preferred location because of the inertia behind previous proposals; however, the committee is open to other possibilities that might be more centrally located. The committee hopes to post the survey and brochure on line and distribute copies at Earth Day.

Two cities have responded to the second round of benchmarking questions regarding dog park operations. The Committee is still waiting to hear from Knox County.

Playful City USA- Allen Eubanks

Allen Eubanks reported that the Playful City USA application has been submitted. Allen will take the lead on organizing an initiative in the Children's Area at the Secret City Festival that would promote future play (after the festival), and plans to meet with City staff to co-ordinate the initiative with current activities.

Work Plan Deliverables

Chairman Palau discussed adding a recurring agenda item that tracks Board progress on deliverables for the 2012 Work Plan. He plans to have a more detailed report at the May meeting.

Unfinished Business

Haw Ridge Use Policy

This item was discussed at length during appearance of citizens.

By Laws

Chairman Palau reviewed the Board's brief discussion at the March meeting regarding by laws. After reviewing current by laws for the Convention and Visitors Bureau, Board member expressed support for using the enabling Resolution that created the Board as the guide for operation. This will reduce the amount of time and energy the Board has to focus on 'administration' – and allows the board to use its energy to provide more meaningful deliverables directly benefitting Rec & Parks.

New Business

Open House Follow Up (Athletics)

Chairman Palau asked each Board member to send him comments/concerns/observations from the Open House held on March 8th. Gerry will pull together a summary and send to Board members for discussion at the May meeting.

Director's Report

Melton Lake Greenway Update

Josh Collins reviewed progress on the MLG IV and showed the Board several pictures of the trail. City Staff and the Engineer are preparing a punch list of items for final inspection. All asphalt and concrete work has been completed. Final inspection could be scheduled within the next two weeks. Josh hopes to hold a ribbon cutting some time in mid to late May. City staff is finalizing a plan for benches, additional signage and water fountains.

Rec/Parks Spring/Summer Programming

Josh Collins briefly discussed an info sheet containing spring/summer program offerings for the Recreation and Parks Department (see attached)

The City Council Work Session held on March 22 with Elder Citizens Advisory Board and the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board to discuss the Needs Assessment for a New Senior Center was briefly discussed by the Board. Some Board members questioned the Rec Board's role in the Senior Center project. Josh agreed to provide electronic copies of the Phase 1 Feasibility Study and the Needs Assessment to the full Parks Board.

Allen Eubanks reported on a meeting that he had attended earlier in the day regarding a new Conference center and Hotel. A Needs Assessment will be conducted in the upcoming months to solicit input.

Chairman Palau reported on a March 30th meeting that he attended with several other Board and Commission Chairs to discuss state/City legal requirements such as Open Records, public input, ethics/conflicts of interest, public notices and communications. There also a focus on ensuring that boards and their meetings are administratively well run and organized -- including appropriate notice, agendas, and processes for citizen input. The session was conducted by the City Manager and the City Attorney. After attending the session, Chairman Palau indicated that his perception was that the Parks Board's organization and administration ranked highly in terms of maturity amongst the all the City Boards, and he thanked Josh for having facilitated the processes and working environment that was allowing the Parks Board to function as effectively as it currently does. He was also complimentary of the growth and maturity of the Board itself, as the members have developed into a cohesive team that works well together in sharing a diversity of views, but then finding common ground that allows the Board to move forward and make progress.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:03pm.

Discussion Regarding Horses in Haw Ridge Park

Several years ago, the staff was looking for options to provide equestrian opportunities within the City. The decision was made to allow horses at Haw Ridge Park on a trial basis. Over the years, concerns have been expressed regarding horses and other trail users sharing the narrow trails in the Park. Nearly 90% of the 25 miles of trails in the Park are narrow, hand built, natural surface single-track trails and include numerous light-duty wooden bridges designed for bikes and not horses. These trails and bridges have been built and maintained by volunteers.

It is difficult for hikers, runners and bicyclists to pass horses on the Park's narrow trails without spooking the animals. Due to the limited sight distance on many of the narrow trails, it difficult for all parties to follow common trail etiquette whether the encounter is face-to-face or a come-from-behind encounter. In some cases, it has been reported that horses are 2-3 abreast on the wider trails thus creating a dangerous situation for horse and biker.

In an effort to separate the different uses, the City purchased and posted signs ("Not Recommended for Horses") on those trails deemed unsuitable for horses. The effort would move horse traffic to some of the double track trails and away from the single tracks. Horses continued to use the posted trails and in some cases removed/destroyed the signs.

Later, staff purchased additional signs (No Horses). These signs were again ignored/ removed and the horses continued to use the trails.

Areas of concern with regard to the use of Haw Ridge Park for horseback riding:

Trail damage

- The weight of horses and the high ground pressure transferred through their hooves easily damage these trails, requiring increased volunteer trail maintenance.
- The horse hooves tend to knock the edges off of narrow side-hill trails thus requiring ongoing maintenance to keep the trail from washing.
- Mountain bikers and hikers assist with trail maintenance and take a responsible role in keeping the park in good condition. Horse owners perform no trail maintenance and continue to ride during wet conditions when the trails are closed to bikers
- Signs are posted at the park requesting the trails not be ridden when wet to prevent trail damage. Some horse riders have indicated that they intentionally ride when the trails are wet because there are fewer other users. This compounds the damage created by the horses and indicates a general disregard for the well-being of the park and the efforts of the volunteers who maintain the trails.
- Many trails have light-duty bridges and boardwalks built to protect sensitive areas that trails pass through. These are also volunteer-built and maintained.
- Damage to these trails and structures has occurred as a result. Evidence shows that structures have been damaged by horse use and that horses have gone around the structures, avoiding them but causing damage to the sensitive areas the structures are designed to protect.
- Due to their remote locations, it is not practical to build structures capable of withstanding the forces generated by horses. Tools and materials must be carried to the work sites.
- Trails determined to be especially susceptible to damage from equestrian use have been posted to prohibit horses. Hoof prints, manure piles and visual observations have shown that these postings are frequently ignored.

- Horses are not allowed on the new paved greenway that passes along much of the northern edge of the park in order to prevent damage to the light-duty paving from steel horse shoes. This largely inhibits access to the rest of the park for horses.
- Although horse use is light when compared to the use by hikers, runners and biker, there is nothing to prevent large groups of equestrians from using/abusing the Park

Clean Up

- Horse owners do not clean up after their horses thus leaving droppings along the trail and in the parking lot. Pet owners on City greenways are required by City ordinance to clean up after their animals.
- Horses deposit manure piles in the park, in violation of the city ordinance 25-32.1, which requires owners to remove animal waste from public property. The manure piles are difficult for other park users to maneuver around, especially on the narrow trails that are most common in the park. Manure deposited near the many streams in the park or along the lake shoreline can enter the water, creating a pollution problem.
- Some horse riders regularly “muck out” their trailers in the parking lot, again in violation of the ordinance and creating a nuisance for other park users. Requests to cease this behavior have been ignored.
- In spite of signs posted to prevent horses on the paved trail, manure piles have been found on the pavement, indicating the signs are being ignored.

Liability Exposure/Injury

- The City has a liability exposure as a result of horses and bikes sharing the same trail
- DOE does not allow horses on the North Boundary Greenway or the Gallaher Bend Greenway due to liability concerns and trail damage.
- With the construction of the new apartments along Edgemoor Road and the extension of MLG IV onto Haw Ridge, the opportunity for bike/horse encounters becomes more frequent.
- Although no serious encounters have occurred between horses and bikers, there have been numerous reports of near misses on the single track trails, around blind curves and while topping hills.
- If trail and bridge damage resulting from horse usage is not repaired in a timely fashion, the City’s liability exposure increases beginning the minute we are notified or become aware of damage.

Horse owners have ample locations within the area to ride. Opportunities are offered at Norris, Frozen Head, Big South Fork, The Smokies, TWRA Wildlife Management Areas and Panther State Park in Morristown.

Recreation and Parks Department – Spring/Summer Update

Scarboro Community Center

Community Share Day

The 10th annual share day to take place on April 28 from 1:00pm - 5:00pm; it is a time for the community to come out and share in fellowship, games, hands-on activities, and food. Share Day is

community wide sponsored by four Churches, Team Investment, City of Oak Ridge, and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. All activities are free.

Community Bingo

Community Bingo is offered on a monthly basis for the 55 and older. It is offered on the last Thursday of each month from 5:30 – 6:30 with door opening at 5:00pm. Light refreshments served as available.

Scarboro Summer Camp

The Scarboro camp is offered for children ages 6 – 12 starting on June 6 and ending July 27. The program is Monday –Friday from 9:00am – 4:30pm at the Scarboro Center. The program includes games, sports, crafts, and field trips. Free lunches and afternoon snacks are available daily. Cost for the program is \$30 per week or \$7 per day. Additional fees are associated with field trips.

Spring Athletic Programs

Oak Ridge Summer Softball begins the week of April 9.

The Men's program with 11 teams (2 divisions) playing on Mondays at Yearwood and Jefferson.

Registration Fee: \$265 for 10 games w/single elimination tournament

The Co-ed program with 20 teams (3 divisions) playing on Tuesdays at Yearwood and Jefferson.

Registration Fee: \$265 for 10 games w/single elimination tournament

The Women's league with 7 teams playing on Thursdays at Yearwood.

Registration Fee: \$265 for 10 games w/single elimination tournament

Free Oak Ridge Youth Tennis Clinics will be held on Wednesdays at the Jackson Square Tennis Courts beginning April 11 and ending May 16.

The first three Wednesday sessions are offered to participants in Grades 5 – 7. The last three Wednesday sessions are offered to participants in Grades 2 – 4.

This event is co-sponsored by the City and the Oak Ridge Tennis Club. The City has provided publicity, registration and facilities for the event. ORTC will be providing instruction and volunteers.

Free Play Summer Volleyball: Tuesday evenings 7-9pm Civic Center Gym

Youth Advisory Board Events

Freshman & Sophomore Dance – Paradox Teen Center – April 13 – The YAB is hosting this new event as an opportunity for underclassmen to have a fun event similar to the prom. The event will take place at the Paradox Teen Center on New York Avenue here in Oak Ridge.

Summer Jobs and Career Fair for Teens – ORHS – April 25 – Over 20 vendors will be on hand offering jobs, career advice, volunteer positions, and more. The event is free to all and door prizes for students include a laptop, a Nook Color, and gas gift cards.

Battle of the Teen Bands – Civic Center – April 27 – Local bands of teens will compete for prizes on the pavilion stage. Prizes include studio time and gift cards. Last year the event hosted 13 bands and approximately 300 spectators in the park.

Graduation Celebration – Civic Center – May 31 – The 16th annual event, “Mayan Apocalypse”, will protect ORHS graduates at an all-night party on the night of graduation, while also showing them with gifts and scholarships donated by local businesses. The event is free and typically hosts 85% of graduates while also utilizing over 225 community volunteers.

YAB Application Deadline – June 1st – Sixteen students will be recommended by the Screening Panel and will begin the new year on August 1st

The YAB is currently discussing the possibility of hosting a summer trip for teens to either Kings Island Theme Park or to Kentucky Splash Park in late July/early August.

Aquatics

Spring/Summer swimming lessons: Eight ½ hour sessions: \$60/142 students currently enrolled.

Spring: ORCA swim team (Recreational team meets 2 hours a week and works on strokes) Summer: ORCA swim team becomes a competitive summer league team that meets daily and competes weekly.

Public swim, lap, senior, Aqua Power and Water Exercise programs are open to the public. After hours pool party rentals are available.

The outdoor pool opens May 26-28 for the Memorial Day weekend noon to 6pm. Opens fulltime June 2nd and closes August 12th.

Oak Ridge residents have the opportunity to purchase season passes and/or books of tickets:

Season passes are \$47.50 for children, \$105 for adults, and \$187.50 for families. Books of 25 tickets are child \$29 and adult \$58. Daily pool admission is \$1.50 for Children and \$3.00 for adults.

The outdoor pool features 200 feet of zero depth entry, a high and low diving boards, an island, 25 meter course/100 meter course and a youth pool with zero depth and a rain umbrella. The pool will be adding a portable pool lift to assist patrons who need another way to access the pool this year.

Parks Division Project Updates

Melton Lake Greenway Phase IV

Greenway construction is nearly complete. The boardwalk structure is 99% complete, with only some curbing left to be installed. This should be finished early this week. The concrete section of the trail (all areas below 800' elevation) has been completed. The concrete subcontractor is returning on April 10th

to repair minor imperfections. Final asphalt paving is scheduled for Wednesday the 11th. Once final paving is complete the only work remaining in the contract will be final grading and rip-rapping along the trail edges, seeding bare soils, and construction of two information kiosks on the trail. Once adequate vegetation has grown in the remaining erosion controls will be removed.

Bicycle Racks

The City has purchased 40 bike racks which will be installed at 17 different locations throughout the city. JG Mullins Construction has been awarded a contract to pour concrete pads for the bike racks in each location. Utility locates have been performed in each spot and construction is expected to start today, with completion by early next week (weather permitting). Once the concrete has had adequate time to cure the racks will be installed by the Parks Division crew.

Big Turtle Park Softball Bleachers

A contract was awarded to Riikola Construction to pour a concrete pad for new, ADA compliant bleachers at Big Turtle Park softball field. The contract also included modifications to the existing sidewalk to bring the sidewalk into compliance with ADA standards. The concrete work was completed in March.

Stadium Pro's Inc. has been recommended for award of a contract to construct the new bleachers. Once the contract has been signed, installation is expected to take place within the next 30 days. The new bleachers will re-use seat and foot boards from the old bleachers, reducing the cost to the city. Stadium Pro's has done similar work for the city at Pinewood and Jefferson softball fields and Grey Strang baseball field.

Secret City Festival

Planning for the 2012 Secret City Festival is moving ahead. Children's Area activities have been finalized. New this year will be a Science Village sponsored by the Oak Ridge National Laboratory and a comedy show with clowns, dogs and trained potbellied pigs. There will also be an open car show in the field south of the AMSE parking lot. The BMX show will move to the parking lot on the north side of the municipal building and the water park will return to the field along Badger Ln. The zip line will also return this year. Additional harnesses have been purchased to allow more people the opportunity to try this exciting addition to Festival activities.

The Festival Committee has approved 14 food vendors for the venue with another 20 on the waiting list. Contracts will be finalized by late next week.

Senior Center Summer Events

8-Ball Tournament - May 23rd

The Tournament begins at 9 a.m. in the Senior Center Recreation Room, for people age 50 and older. There is a \$12 registration fee to participate. Any tournament player guest wanting to eat lunch with the tournament may do so provided if notified at the time of registration. Cost for the guest lunch is \$5.00.

Retirees' Secret City Bridge Party - June 10th

The party starts at 12 noon in Room 58 of the Oak Ridge Senior Center. Although the event is free, registration is required due to seating is limited. A plate of finger food refreshments to share for the buffet table is required. Call the Senior Center at 425-3999 by June 4th to make reservations

Transportation Coupon Recertification – June 28th and 29th

Business office hours during Transportation Coupon Recertification on June 29th and 30th will be 9-11 a.m. and 1-3 p.m. only. Please note the change in time for the Business Office for these two days. Individuals already enrolled in the program, will be sent a letter stating a time and a day to come for recertification.

Senior Citizens Day at the Anderson County Fair – July (Date TBA)

Senior Citizens Day at the fair lasts from 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Fair Grounds in Clinton, with free admission for those 60+. Refreshments and Musical Entertainment start at 11:30 a.m., the Program at 12:30 p.m., and Ice Cream Party at 1:30 p.m. Free goody bags while they last.

Senior Breakfast – August 11th

8 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. The cost is only \$5. Pre-registration required Deadline for registration and payment is Wednesday, August 8th.

CIVIC CENTER

Summer Camp

The 2012 Summer Day Camp will begin on June 4 at the Civic Center. The camp will run for 8 consecutive weeks ending on July 27, 2012 for children ages 6 – 12. There is space available for 140 campers. Camp activities include sports, recreational games, crafts, field trips, and swimming. A swim instruction opportunity is offered to campers for an additional fee. The weekly camp fee is \$85 per week. Online registration began on April 9.

Exercise For Fitness

Exercise for Fitness is an adult exercise program that meets at the Oak Ridge Civic Center on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings 9 – 10:30 am. This program offers aerobics, toning, Pilates, stretching, weights, step aerobics and fitness ball routines to provide a comprehensive workout for each participant. Cost for the class is \$28 per month or \$5.00 per class.

Pilates

Pilates is an adult exercise program that meets at the Civic Center on Monday and Wednesday

evenings Monday and Wednesday evenings 6 – 7 pm. Participants learn the proper techniques and movements of basic Pilates. Pilates improves breathing and posture, tones muscle, restores natural alignment, and improves strength, flexibility and endurance. Fee for the class is \$42 per six-week session or \$5 per class.