

APPROVED

Minutes of the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board Meeting

May 10, 2012 Regular Meeting

The May 10, 2012 Regular Meeting of the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board was convened at 7:03pm in the Social Room of the Recreation Center with Gerry Palau, Board Chair presiding.

Roll Call

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

Approval of the April 12, 2012 Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the April 12, 2012 minutes was made by Cathy Toth and seconded by Bridgette Ellis. The minutes were approved by a 5-0 vote.

Appearance and Citizen Comments

No one addressed the Board.

Committee Reports

Bike/Ped Committee- Sherith Colverson

Sherith Colverson updated the Board on the Bike/Ped Committee meeting held on April 19th. Sherith requested an extension until the August meeting on the following deliverables scheduled for May 2012:

Heart of Oak Ridge corridor and spot location enhancement recommendations

“TOP 10” list of potential funding sources for 2014 – 2016 for each of the integrated project spot location and corridor projects. The Board agreed to extend the due dates for both items.

Laurel Patrick asked about the New China Palace Restaurant timeline. Josh Collins responded by saying the restaurant timeline will be driven by the City Manager and he is currently fully involved with the City’s FY 2013 Budget. Once the Budget is approved, a decision on the restaurant could be coming forward. A notification letter on the City’s intent for the restaurant should be sent to the current leasee in late August or early September. The City can decide to move forward with a RFP on a new restaurant at the Park, could extend the current lease or repurpose the space for other park needs. The current lease is scheduled to end on February 28th.

Dog Park Committee- Bridgette Ellis

Bridgette Ellis reported on a successful Earth Day event and the well-attended Dock Dogs Competition. The Dog Park Committee set up a booth and passed out surveys on the proposed park. One hundred and fifty surveys were completed and returned. The committee has now heard from three benchmarked cities regarding dog park operations.

Bridgette encouraged the Board to go on line and vote for Oak Ridge in the Pet Safe Dog Park Grant program. Pet Safe is awarding \$100,000 grants to communities interested in building dog parks. The grant program has assisted with the construction of 4 dog parks in the Knoxville area. Voting started on May 1st and ends on June 13th. You can vote once a day, every day. The Board discussed how to handle press releases for the Pet Safe Grant program and bike rack installation.

Playful City USA- Allen Eubanks

In Allen Eubanks absence, Chairman Palau discussed the recent announcement regarding Oak Ridge's selection as a Playful City USA winner and the effort to pull together the application. He commended the staff on achieving the award on the first try. He also discussed briefly the Playful City USA activities that are scheduled for the Children's Area at the Secret City Festival. With the completion of the application and the designation in hand, Gerry questioned the need for an ongoing Playful City USA Committee. Josh Collins commented on the staff commitment to Playful City USA and the effort needed to continue the program. The City will need to recertify each year and must continue to expand play opportunities in Oak Ridge. Bridgette Ellis made a motion to suspend the Playful City USA committee and Laurel Patrick provided a second. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote.

Work Plan Deliverables

Chairman Palau distributed a copy of a draft "Recreation and Parks Advisory Board Work Plan Dashboard" for Board review and comment. (see attached) The document tracks Action Items/Projects giving a status, target date and comment section. The Board can review the status for tasks/goals/projects assigned to the Board on a monthly basis and update as needed. Chairman Palau highlighted a couple of completed items including Playful City USA and the inventory of Bike Rack locations.

The Board discussed "creating 10+ new positive press opportunities" under Increased Community Satisfaction Levels and Public Relations on the Work Plan. Opportunities discussed included Dedication of Melton Lake Greenway IV, Bike Rack installation, Playful City USA Children's activities at Secret City Festival and the Greenway Run.

Josh Collins updated the Board on the planned redesign of the Recreation and Parks Department web page. Although the page has a great deal of information, it needs to be more user friendly and easier to navigate. Any suggestions or ideas should be sent to Josh.

Unfinished Business

Haw Ridge Use Policy

Chairman Palau reviewed two documents dealing with use of Haw Ridge Park and one outlining general rules for use of recreation and park facilities. The first document was a "Draft of the White Paper on Haw Ridge Use-Policy Options" (see attached) that looks at the use patterns / history of Haw Ridge Park since the early 1980's including areas of concern regarding horse Back riding, trail maintenance, liability exposure and frequent users of the Park. The second document outlined the "Haw Ridge Trail Do's and Don'ts's" (see attached). The third document "Welcomed Uses and Managed Controls for City of Oak Ridge Recreation and Parks Facilities" (see

attached) pulled together use policies for several facilities and put a more positive light on how they are presented.

New Business

June Open House (Haw Ridge Park Users)

Chairman Palau discussed the planned June Open House to discuss Haw Ridge Park Users. The meeting will be held on June 7th at 6pm in the Social Room. Josh Collins reviewed a list of horse contacts and the planned posting of the meeting on the web page. The Board briefly discussed how to display the "Possible Options for Managing Use of Haw Ridge Park".

General Park Rules

These were discussed under Unfinished Business.

Director's Report

Melton Lake Greenway IV Dedication

Josh Collins updated the Board on the close out of the construction contract for Melton Lake Greenway IV and the planned Dedication scheduled for May 23 at 2pm at the parking lot along Edgemoor Road.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:27pm.



DRAFT - Recreation & Parks Advisory Board Work Plan Dashboard
 ● = Going well ●● = Area of concern ●●● = In Trouble ●●●● = COMPLETE!

Status	Action / Project	Lead	Target Date	Comments
●●●	1) Re-design and configure the boathouse area along Melton Lake Drive to insure the placement and construction of a new Pavilion donated by UT-Battelle as a linchpin project of the Melton Lake riverfront.			
●●●	a) Support construction and commissioning of new pavilion with reviews/consultation as requested by R&PD		September 2012	
●●●	b) Evaluate the Master Plan with available resources (ongoing as resources permit – minimum a written report)		December 2012	Little progress to date
●●●	c) Define a proposed plan for future executable projects (scope, cost estimates, coordination/integration, and ROM schedule)		December 2012	
●●●	d) Help staff address existing buildings repurposing/refurbishing with recommendation based on options and ROM cost estimates		October 2012	
●●●	2) Begin planning process and community involvement process for the first Dog Park in Oak Ridge and obtain necessary approvals and recommending budgetary capital levels . . .			
●●●	a) Benchmark comparable facilities – 1-2 page synopsis		June 2012	
●●●	b) Identify Oak Ridge community user needs & preferences		September 2012	
●●●	c) Define preferred facility infrastructure		October 2012	
●●●	d) Identify operational controls, ordinances, licensing, user permits, etc		October 2012	
●●●	e) Propose implementation schedule for construction in light of grants and CIP process		December 2012	

Status	Action / Project	Lead	Target Date	Comments
	3) Incorporate the Bike-Pedestrian Plan premises into all Parks facilities		March 2012	COMPLETE!
	a) Inventory of the proposed bike rack locations for appropriate space and placement ()		May 2012	
	b) Heart of Oak Ridge corridor and spot location enhancement recommendations; follow-on analysis of optimal ways to segment CSX rail-to-trail project into manageable chunks based on highest & best use of limited funding resources over time.		October 2012	
	c) "TOP 10" list of potential funding sources for 2012 – 2014, for each of the integrated project spot location and corridor projects		May 2012	
	d) Most relevant measure for City of Oak Ridge to make in terms of bicycle and pedestrian friendly policy/procedure (white paper)		August 2012	
	4) Develop planning for Playful City USA designation and integrate public input into community recreational events (i.e. Secret City, Earth Day, concerts, etc.)		March 2012	COMPLETE!
	a) Ass ist staff in inventory/map play spaces and evaluate play policies		March 2012	COMPLETE!
	b) Ass ist staff in submittal of Playful City USA application		December 2012	COMPLETE!
	c) Gap analysis in areas of weakness, including feedback from Playful City USA application process; determine priorities needs to enhance Playful City USA posture)			
	5) NEEDS ASSESSMENT: Identify the long-term community needs/investments beyond Council's four tactical initiatives . This is an ongoing,			

10-May-2012

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Status	Action / Project	Lead	Target Date	Comments
●	evolutionary process that helps define mission and vision			
●	a) Quarterly open house-style availability sessions (e.g., topics such as athletic facilities/programs; parks; human-powered; individual activities (hiking, etc.), city programming		Quarterly	
●	b) Working draft of needs assessment (~10 page report for CY-2012) including a spreadsheet containing key data			
●	NEEDS ASSESSMENT: Evaluate the current recreation & parks mission & vision			
●	a) Consider R&P mission statement; & it to provide a diversity of quality community recreation opportunities for citizens and guests to the city?			
●	b) Consider the 5, 10, and 20 year vision for R&P (25 years ago the city's R&P vision was to develop a park system, and resources were focused on that			
●	6) Establish a methodology to prioritize projects			
●	a) Research 'community ROI' benchmarks in other communities			
●	b) Establish 5-10 metrics that would help quantify the costs and value added of CIP investments			
●	7) FUNDING FOR GROWTH & IMPROVEMENT			
●	a) Develop a menu of 'funding mechanisms'			
●	8) INCREASE COMMUNITY SATISFACTION LEVELS & PUBLIC REALTIONS			
●	a) Create 10+ new, positive press opportunities			
●	b) Identify and target getting an agendas of 3 community groups' meetings			



DRAFT - Recreation & Parks Advisory Board Work Plan Dashboard

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Status	Action / Project	Lead	Target Date	Comments
	9) Maintain a backlog list of potential of ideas for CY2013 arks Board initiatives that are low/no cost			

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 = COMPLETE!

City of Oak Ridge
Recreation & Parks Advisory Board
White Paper on Haw Ridge Use - Policy Options

Issue:

Haw Ridge Park is a multiple user area where there are increasing concerns regarding safety, liability and maintenance. Of particular concern are the issues created by horseback riding in and around the park (on trails, in parking lots, and along the Melton Lake Greenway).

Background/History:

- 1980's
 - o During the early 1980's, park use was dominated by motorized vehicles and mountain bikes.
 - o Vehicles used the pre-existing gravel roads (old double-track farm roads also nicknamed "Jeep" trails).
 - o Mountain bikers also used the gravel roads, but branched out onto a few dirt trails.

- 1990's
 - o City staff, looking for options to provide equestrian opportunities within the City, decided to allow horses at Haw Ridge Park on a trial basis.
 - o The mountain biking community undertook an initiative to begin building additional, sustainable biking trails throughout the park. This initiative has continued to today.
 - These mountain bike trails are typically built by hand (pick ax and shovel) 'contour trails' (i.e., narrow, 18"-24" wide trails built, using a cut & fill technique, into the side of slopes).
 - These trails were reserved for light-duty-use (trail bikes, runners and hikers). Based on their construction as cut/fill, these narrow bike trails on mountain slopes were not designed or envisioned to be sustainable under the weight of horses (especially in wet weather when the ground is soft).
 - In order to make the trails sustainable, the trail-builders construct lightweight wooden bridges over water streams and drainage troughs, and water diversion features across the width of the trails on slopes to prevent rainwater erosion along the downhill axis of the trail.
 - o Volunteers also organized to maintain the trail system – repairing areas that became damaged, replacing bridges and water diversion features, etc.
 - The City signed a memorandum of Understanding with the 'Friends of Haw Ridge' that authorized the group to make improvements and perform maintenance on bike trails.
 - o In the late 1990's, several equestrian events were held at the park prompting an increase in the use by horses.

- 2000's
 - o The trail system grew to be over 25 miles in length.

- o The park started to see significant increases in trail users as a result of recently constructed, nearby neighborhoods, as well as the extension of the Melton Lake Greenway (Phase IV).
 - The bulk of the increase has been within the mountain biking community, and has included a number of mountain biking events and competitions.
 - Horse use also increased, including some horse owners and commercial stables that use the park for training horses to use mountain trails. There was a significant increase of horses using the mountain bike trails in addition to the Jeep trails.
 - Damage to the trails increased and maintenance by members of the of the horse riding community decreased.

Identified Areas of Concern with Regard to the Use of Haw Ridge Park for Horseback Riding:

• **Trail damage**

- o The weight of horses and the high ground pressure transferred through their hooves easily damage the narrow biking/hiking trails, resulting in unstable trail surfaces and soil erosion.
 - The horse hooves also tend to knock the edges off of narrow side-hill trails reducing their width and safety.
- o Damage to soil base trails is particularly severe when they are wet following a period of rain.
 - Signs are posted at the park requesting the trails not be used when wet so as to prevent trail damage.
 - By and large, mountain bikers have been very respectful of this use restriction.
 - Because the mountain bike community does the bulk of the trail maintenance, there is a self-policing of trail usage by the biking community.
 - 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. It also seems to indicate a level of general disregard for the well-being of the park and the efforts of the volunteers who maintain the trails.
- o 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.
- o Many trails have volunteer-built light-duty (<500 pounds) bridges and boardwalks built to protect sensitive areas that trails pass through. These structures have not been designed for use by bikes and pedestrians.
 - To date, existing structures have been volunteer-built and maintained.
 - Evidence indicates 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 economically practical to build structures capable of withstanding the forces generated by horses. Tools and materials must be carried to the work sites.

- o Signage Controls: In an effort to separate the different uses, the City purchased and posted signs ("Not Recommended for Horses") on the narrow mountain trails deemed unsuitable for horses.
 - The effort was intended to move horse traffic back to the double track trails and away from the single tracks.
 - Despite this, horses riders have continued to use the posted narrow trails.
 - Many of those signs were vandalized (removed/destroyed).
 - Later, staff purchased additional signs ('No Horses').
 - These signs have also largely been ignored, and have also been vandalized and removed.

- **Sanitation/Clean Up**

- o There are frequent examples where horse owners do not clean up after their horses-- leaving droppings along the trail and in the parking lot.
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - 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.

- **Liability Exposure/Injury**

- o The City has a liability exposure (personal injury to users) as a result of its management policies and ordinances.
 - Horses and bikes sharing the same trails (especially narrow, mountain-side trails) create a risk for injury for contact encounters, people being forced over the edge of the trail slope, etc.
 - There have been numerous anecdotal reports of near misses on the single track trails, around blind curves and while topping hills.
 - It is difficult for hikers, runners and bicyclists to pass horses on the Park's narrow trails without spooking the animals. Over the years, concerns have been expressed regarding horses and other trail users sharing the narrow trails in the Park.
- o If trail and bridge damage resulting from horse usage is not repaired in a timely fashion, the City's liability exposure increases as a result of potential negligence in monitoring or maintaining the park resources in a safe condition.

- o With the construction of the new apartments along Edgemoor Road and the extension of MLG IV onto Haw Ridge, the opportunity for bike/horse/pedestrian encounters that could result in injury is becoming more frequent.

Other Relevant Information

- 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.
- 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.
 - o However, given that horse is currently permitted in Haw Ridge park, horse riders have been migrating onto the adjacent greenway trails and greenways edges.
- There is currently nothing to prevent large equestrians groups from using the Park simultaneously.
- The mountain bike and hiking community have assimilated into a group called Friends of Haw Ridge who 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
- The current average user of the park is younger and less experienced than in the past – often including young families either biking or hiking.
- 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 others.
- DOE does not allow horses on the North Boundary Greenway or the Gallaher Bend Greenway due to liability concerns and trail damage. In terms of over municipalities, the City of Knoxville doesn't allow horses in its parks; the City of Nashville limits horse riding to two parks, and it requires a special permit.
- The Board has received citizen input that the given current uses of the park, there are growing concerns as to whether the trail system can be maintained in a safe and environmentally sound manner given the currently available financial and labor (both City staff and volunteer) resources.
- Frequent User activities in Haw Ridge Park:
 - o Cross-Country running / jogging
 - o Geocaching
 - o Horseback riding
 - o Mountain biking
 - o Orienteering
 - o Scouting activities

Possible Options for Managing Use of Haw Ridge Park

OPTION	PROs	CONs	Comments
Leave all uses and policies as they are		Doesn't address currently identified environmental, maintenance, and liability concerns.	
Park "OPEN/CLOSED to all non-pedestrian users" system	Clear message to all users	Staff labor required to post status (an electronic sign controlled from CC?)	Would require closure criteria/policy, enforcement
Develop Permit System for uses other than pedestrian	Opportunity for users to 'sign up' to park rules & policy	Staff labor intensive; Requires enforcement	
City Ordinance on Park Use	Creates enforcement through fines	Would require policing to enforce fines/citations	
City Policy – Two-tier trail system with clear signage and enforcement	Segregate users based on trail suitability and safety	Difficult to enforce trail usage inside park boundaries	
City Policy – No Horses at Haw Ridge with clear signage and enforcement	Reduces greatest source of current concerns with safety, maintenance, and city liability	Reduces diversity of park users; has potential minor economic impact	
Work more closely with horse user community to establish a 'User Group' comparable to the biking user group	Potential to develop an active partnering relationship with the horse community		Would necessitate that the horse community take greater responsibility to 'police' itself
Allow all uses at all times by upgrading all trails to allow safe, environmentally conscious coexistence of all users/usages in the park	Maximizes users in a safe, well-maintained park facility.	Cost prohibitive; significant ecological impact to forests and mountain slopes to increase trail widths to 8'-10'	

City of Oak Ridge
Recreation & Parks Facilities

Welcomed Uses and Managed Controls

The City of Oak Ridge provides an extensive parks and recreation system intended to improve the quality of life within our community. Users of our parks and recreation facilities are welcomed and encouraged to use these amenities for physical exercise and wellbeing, as well as places for social engagement and community events. Within that spirit, it is intended that these facilities be used as follows:

- ❖ *In a way consistent with the intended use for which the facilities were designed;*
- ❖ *In a way that is respectful of the other users as they too use the facilities;*
- ❖ *In a way that encourages community health and wellness;*
- ❖ *In a way that cares for and preserves that facilities for those who will use them next;*
- ❖ *And with a spirit that promotes community harmony and a spirit of mutual wellbeing.*

General Park Use Controls

The following activities are generally prohibited in City of Oak Ridge Recreation and Park facilities:

1. Profanity, abusive language or behavior.
2. Loud or amplified music unless authorized in writing by the Recreation and Parks Department for a public event.
3. Operation of motorized vehicles off designated roads or parking areas.
4. Feeding of any wildlife.
5. Cutting or removal of vegetation such as trees plants or shrubs
6. No pets, glass products or food within the borders of a playground area
7. Solicitation, advertising or signage of any kind unless approved by the Recreation and Parks Department.
8. Leaving vehicles or boats in parking lots with "For Sale" signs posted.
9. Camping, erection of tents or canopies larger than 10 x 10, inflatables, dunking machines, carousels or other event equipment rentals without a public special event use permit issued by the Recreation and Parks Department.
10. Open fires or any fires outside picnic grills/fire pits.
11. Use of sports fields for activities other than informal or incidental play without written approval by the Recreation and Parks Department
12. Riding of horses on public property is limited to Haw Ridge Park.
13. Discharge or possession of firearms, fireworks, explosives or paintball guns (unless by permit from Recreation and Parks)
14. Pets off-leash or failure to clean up after your pet
15. Skateboarding at locations other than the skate park
16. Hitting golf balls on public property other than the Golf Course
17. Operation of vending or concessions without an event permit or lease. Roving concessions on park property and parking areas such as ice cream trucks are not permitted at any time.
18. Leaving trash/garbage on the park area
19. Overnight parking
20. Damage to public property including open spaces, fixtures, benches, water fountains and signage.
21. Public picnic shelters are on a first come basis.
22. Park Hours are Dawn till Dusk

Note: Other exceptions for special events may be approved in advance by obtaining a City of Oak Ridge Recreation and Parks Special Use Permit. To discuss special use permit options, please contact the Recreation and Parks Department at 865-425-3446.

Haw Ridge Trail Use Do's & Don'ts

Do:

- Respect other trail users
- Signal loudly to other users when you are approaching from behind to pass
- Always pass on the left
- Always move to the right when being passed
- Respect trail maintenance volunteers – avoid damaging trails & structures
- Pack out what you pack in – leave only footprints and bicycle tire tracks
- Remove animal waste, as required by city code
- Wear a helmet and appropriate safety gear when riding the trails
- Use trail etiquette – bikes yield to pedestrians and both yield to horses
- Horse riders shall slow their horses to a walk or slow trot when passing persons on foot or on bicycles.

Don't:

- Ride when the trail tread is muddy – it damages the trail
- Use trails marked as unsuitable for your use
- Use unauthorized motor vehicles, including motorcycles & ATV's
- Litter
- Build trails or modify existing trails without Rec & Park approval
- Remove wildflowers and other vegetation
- Ride horses on the paved trail
- Muck out horse trailers in the parking lot
- Hunt, except for permitted hunters during TWRA quota hunts

Camping at Haw Ridge Park

- Camping is allowed at Haw Ridge Park on a permit basis only. Camping is not allowed on any other City Property. The following is required for those wishing to camp on the Ridge.
- Facility Permit in hand-
A Facility Permit will be issued by the Recreation and Parks Department with the approval of the Department Director. The permit will list the date, time, location of the camp, list of the names/ addresses of everyone taking the trip and the responsible party requesting the permit.
- Burn Permit-
If a campfire is planned, the Oak Ridge Fire Department must issue a Burn Permit. Campers will not be allowed to cut trees for firewood. Dead material lying on the ground may be collected and burned in an enclosed fire pit. To obtain permit, contact Josh Waldo at 865-425-3525.
- Parking-
It would be best to have someone drop the camping party off near the white farmhouse. Vehicles left on Old Edgemoor Road may be damaged or ticketed for illegal parking.
- Trash/Litter
All trash generated by the trip must be carried out. Do not plan to bury cans, bottles or plastic. If you bring it in, plan to take it back out.
- Emergencies
Notify the Fire and Police Departments for emergency purposes.