

Minutes of the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board Meeting

June 27, 2019 Regular Meeting

The June 27, 2019 meeting of the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board was convened at 7:02 pm in the Craft Room of the Oak Ridge Civic Center with Brad Spears, Chair, presiding.

Roll Call

Present: Mark Cantrell, David Kitzmiller, Melissa McMahan, Dan Robbins, Ken Rueter, Brad Spears

Absent: Naomi Asher, Ray Garrett, Jerry Williams

Approval of the April 11, 2019 Regular Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve: David; second: Melissa. The April 11, 2019 meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Appearance and Citizen Comments

- Doug Colclasure commented on the Commemorative Walk in AK Bissell Park, referring to it as one of the prettiest areas in town. He also complimented the Parks maintenance crew on their landscaping efforts there and around the Civic Center.

Unfinished Business

- Discussion continued on the proposed letter of support for the construction of multi-use trails in the greenbelt east of California Ave. Brad updated the Board on the survey posted on the CVTA website. About 200 responses have been received, 3 were unfavorable. Brad suggested that the next step be a public forum to discuss the proposal with members of the neighborhood.
- Dan expressed concerns he had about the plan, particularly with regard to environmental damage. He has discussed those concerns with Brad and has received assurances that those issues can be adequately addressed. He has also discussed it with the Greenway Oak Ridge Board. GWOR now cautiously supports the proposal, as long as environmental damage is prevented.
- Suggested revisions to the letter of support have not yet been incorporated; a vote on the letter was postponed to allow incorporation of those comments.

New Business

- None.

Board Work Plan

Rails to Trails:

- Staff reported that NEPA work documents have been submitted to TDOT and are awaiting approval. In the meanwhile, AMT is moving ahead with preliminary design work. Brad confirmed that RSI will provide support for environmental testing once the protocols from TDOT and CSX have been confirmed.

Trail Development:

- Brad reported that CVTA continues to work on the Haw Ridge Skills Area, making good progress with the help of a mini track-loader. They are also working to define design standards for trail features being built, some of which do not have a recognized standard established.
- Four bridges have been constructed on the East Fork Riparian Trail with the assistance of CVTA and the Breakfast Rotary Club.
- Ken updated the Board on discussions with DOE for approval to build an additional trail on the ED-6 parcel. DOE is discussing the trail with TWRA representatives to ensure there are no concerns with potential conflicts on the neighboring Black Oak Ridge Conservation Easement (BORCE). Ken expects approval of the trail by the end of July.

Blueprint Integration into Long Range CIP Planning:

- Ken asked that all Board members read the Blueprint in its entirety so that it can be integrated into re-prioritization of the CIP and other long-range planning efforts for the department.

Community Events:

- Since the last Board meeting, the City has hosted Graduation Celebration, the Nine Lakes Wine Festival, Secret City Festival, Lavender Festival and the US Cycling Time Trials National Championship. The events were generally successful, with the exception of adverse weather during the Secret City Festival, which led to the Festival, including the final concert, being cancelled Saturday afternoon.
- David expressed appreciation for Recreation & Parks staff for their efforts during the Secret City Festival, working with Celebrate Oak Ridge to make the best of a difficult situation.
- Dan reported that his recent ORICLE bird walk on Melton Lake Greenway was not as well attended as hoped because about half of those signed up could not find the meeting spot on Melton Lake Dr.

Recreation & Parks Integrated Natural Asset Development:

- Ken reported that Carol Evans, Executive Director of the Legacy Parks Foundation, recently provided an update on the study to the Contractors Forum. The group working on the study are on track to deliver the report as scheduled.
- Jon Hetrick provided a report on a tour staff provided to the study work group, providing an overview of many of the natural assets within the city limits. The study group indicated that they got a lot out of the tour and learned a great deal about what Oak Ridge has to offer.

Communication Integration with Explore Oak Ridge:

- No report.

Exploratory Objectives:

- Rec & Park Staffing – Jon Hetrick reported that the recently approved FY2020 budget includes the addition of another Parks Technician position, beginning in January. Jon expressed the belief that this, along with the recent addition of a second crew chief, achieved the goals of the objective. He thanked the Board for their support and expressed his belief that their support, even without formal action, had played a key role in the approval of these new positions. He suggested that the item be removed from the agenda for this year. Dan made a motion to do so, Ken second. The motion was unanimously approved.

- After School Programs & Events for Pre-teens & Youth – Melissa is evaluating the Blueprint and other documents, along with evaluating current opportunities in the community.
- Integrated Youth Sports Strategy – David provided an overview of recent challenges the Boys & Girls Club has been facing. He expressed the belief that the City, Boys & Girls Club and Girls Inc. should partner on youth sports programming.

Updates and Observations (Non Action Items):

- Dan reported that he has treated 90 fire ant mounds so far this year; he expects it to be the worst year for fire ants so far.
- Brad reported that the Velodrome Committee met in May. They are working on a detailed plan to present to the Park Board. They then plan to respond to any comments or questions from the Board and follow up with meetings with City Council members. Ultimately they plan to take the plan to City Council for support in the form of providing a location for the velodrome to be built.

Director's Report:

- Department staff have been very busy, working on all of the recent events, along with opening the outdoor pool and summer camp for the season.
- Staffing continues to be a challenge, with recent turnover in both Parks and the Rec Center. Ultimately, staffing is expected to end up stronger as a result of these changes.

Future Agenda Items:

- A vote on the revised letter of support for a trail system in the Greenbelt east of California Avenue.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:09 pm.



Brad Spears
Chairperson