

MINUTES

City Council Parks, Trails, & Recreation Committee

Wednesday, May 17, 2023 at 3:30 PM
City Hall Council Chambers

Members Present: Mac Morrow, Chair, Council Member
Aaron Baker, Vice-Chair, Council Member
Nancy DePippo, Citizen Member
Howie Granat, Citizen Member

Absent: Ryan Olson, At-Large Member
Tim Robinson, Citizen Member

Staff Present: Wilson Hooper, City Manager
Paul Ray, Planning Director
Aaron Bland, Assistant Planning Director
Becky McCann, Communications Coordinator
Denise Hodsdon, City Clerk

Guests: Daniel Sapp, **Year of the Trail Initiative**
Nora Jane Montgomery and Kevin Gallo, Residents

A. Welcome & Call to Order

Committee Chair Mac Morrow welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm.

B. Certification of Quorum

Quorum was certified by City Clerk Denise Hodsdon.

C. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Mr. Baker, seconded by Ms. DePippo, to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

D. Approval of Minutes from April 19, 2023 Meeting

Motion by Ms. DePippo, seconded by Mr. Baker to approve the minutes of the April 19, 2023 meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

E. Year of the Trail – Daniel Sapp

Aaron Bland explained that he had invited Daniel Sapp to come talk about what hosting a Year of the Trail event might look like here in Brevard. Mr. Sapp noted that one of the goals of the campaign is to have an event in every county in the state and there have been approximately 400 events across the state so far. The object of the campaign is get more people out on the trails, educate people about trails, help break down barriers, and through getting more people out, that will ideally lead them to encourage their legislators to vote for more trail funding. Mr. Sapp noted that trails bring a huge amount of benefits to North Carolina, with \$28 billion in tourism and 260,000 jobs. He discussed events that other counties have done, such as festivals, stand-alone events, an ongoing trail passport or a scavenger hunt. For example, Pinehurst is doing a Pinecone Pathways Program where they worked with local glass artists who made 100 glass pinecones that have been hidden across trails and they have seen really high engagement. Mr. Granat suggested that the upcoming BrackenFest event in the fall could be a Year of the Trail event. Mr. Baker thought the idea of a scavenger hunt was intriguing because it is passive as opposed to planning a day-long event. Mr. Sapp recommended finding a local artist who could quickly produce something unique to Brevard. Mr. Baker recommended that the focus should be on Brevard trails: the Estatoe Trail, Bracken Preserve, Silvermont trail and the French Broad Paddle Trail from Hap Simpson to Wilson Road. Committee members suggested that entities such as SORBA, Pisgah Conservancy, Friends of DuPont, Mountain True and FIND Outdoors may be willing to help implement a program. Mr. Hooper will contact Clark Lovelace at TDA to find out if they are planning any marketing for the Year of the Trail. Mr. Sapp noted that the next steps would be to figure out who to get the scavenger hunt items from and he will get more details about the Pinehurst program. Mr. Granat volunteered to be a part of a sub-committee to help coordinate a scavenger hunt.

Mr. Sapp also suggested that any trail-based events that are happening in Transylvania County could be uploaded to the Year of the Trail event website. Committee members will reach out to their local contacts and encourage them to add their upcoming events to the site.

F. Update re Bracken Preserve Expansion

Mr. Hooper reminded the Committee that Council pledged \$73,000 toward the \$330,000 purchase price and the remainder was to be made up of private fundraising. The Council had said at the time that they would revisit their pledge and consider an additional pledge around budget season, however no money was allocated for Bracken Preserve in the FY 2023-2024 budget and there is no additional money available in the current year budget. Mr. Hooper noted that there is still one month before the fundraising period that we agreed upon with Conserving Carolina ends, and it might be worth one more conversation to see if the City is willing to help close the fundraising gap.

Mr. Granat reported that there is still approximately \$30,000 left to make Conserving Carolina whole on the purchase. There is an ad hoc group that is continuing efforts to come up with ideas for grant fundraising and continue conversations with potential donors around the city and county to close that gap. The question is does the property stay with Conserving Carolina as we do the trail work and add the trails before it transitions over to the City. Mr. Baker said that the TDA is prepared to help with this, but their funds could only be used for trail development and not for property acquisition.

Mr. Granat said the ad hoc group is also trying to transition into the next phase of fundraising for the trail construction and maintenance. He explained that Phase 1 will be the easier climbing trail, which will require an easement from Brevard Music Center, and possibly the Taylor family, and assistance from Public Works. Phases 2 and 3 will be the construction of new trails.

Following discussion Mr. Hooper recommended the following next steps: ask Conserving Carolina for extension, request funding from TDA for trail building, and use that funding to try to persuade possible benefactors for trails to instead apply their pledge to the acquisition. Mr. Sapp said he will also look into possible grant funding. He also mentioned that SORBA would be willing to enter into an agreement with the City to maintain trails on Bracken.

G. Update re Wilson Rd. Recreation Area/Mountain True Partnership

Mr. Hooper reported that following the presentation at the last meeting, he and Paul Ray had an additional conversation with Jack Henderson of Mountain True. The plan is to break his proposal into two phases. The first phase would be a short agreement between the City and Mountain True, giving them access to the site and permission to put together a rendering for a more concrete proposal for the next phase of project. They will bring a proposal for phase two back to us for consideration by Council.

H. Committee Member Applications – Review and Recommendation

The Committee had voted at its meeting in March to recommend reappointment of Nancy DePippo and Howie Granat. In April the committee decided to keep the application period open until the end of April to allow time for Committee members to recruit additional applicants. Four additional applications were received and reviewed by the committee and Mr. Granat moved, seconded by Mr. Baker to recommend the appointment of Wyn Birkenthal, Reba Osborne and JD Powers. The motion carried unanimously.

Additional Comments

Ms. DePippo requested an update on the Community Garden, the skate parks, and the Adopt-a-Green Space program.

Mr. Granat said he was glad to see the crosswalk signals along the new section of the trail, but noted that there is still a need for one at McLean Road.

Mr. Hooper informed the Committee that Staff has submitted a PARTF grant on behalf of TYSA. TYSA has submitted their plans and the project is moving ahead.

Mr. Ray reported that we will find out this month whether or not we get the Carbon Reduction grant. He said NCDOT Division 14 applied for a separate grant through the same program for construction of a Rosman Highway crossing and extending the sidewalk to the Marathon gas station on both sides of the street.

Mr. Bland reported that Staff is adding traction strips to the bridges in Bracken.

I. Set Date for Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Parks, Trails & Recreation Committee was scheduled for Wednesday, June 21, 2023 at 3:30 PM.

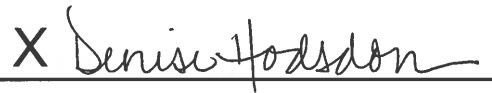
J. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:48 pm.

X 

Mac Morrow
Chair, Council Member

Minutes Approved: June 21, 2023

X 

Denise Hodsdon
City Clerk