

MINUTES
City Council Parks, Trails, & Recreation Committee

Wednesday, July 19, 2023 at 3:30 PM
City Hall Council Chambers

Members Present: Mac Morrow, Chair, Council Member
Aaron Baker, Vice-Chair, Council Member (Arrived at 3:35 pm)
Howie Granat, Citizen Member
Nancy DePippo, Citizen Member
Wyn Birkenthal, Citizen Member
Reba Osborne, Citizen Member

Absent: JD Powers, Citizen Member

Staff Present: Wesley Shook, Acting Public Works Director
Paul Ray, Planning Director
Aaron Bland, Assistant Planning Director
Becky McCann, Communications Coordinator
Alex Shepherd, Assistant to the City Manager

Guests: Kevin Gallo, Resident

Media: Jon Rich, Transylvania Times

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 Assistant to the City Manager Alex Shepherd.

C. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Mr. Morrow, seconded by Mr. Granat, to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

D. Approval of Minutes from May 17, 2023 Meeting

Motion by Ms. DePippo, seconded by Ms. Osborne to approve the minutes of the June 21, 2023 meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

E. Estatoe Trail Map

Mr. Ray said the original trail map was complete completed by Susan Evans back in 2016. Portions of the map are incorrect and Main Street does not appear to be on the map as well. The current map would need to be redone because the trail now connects to Main Street.

Ms. DePippo asked the question if it would be possible to get a new map created.

Mr. Bland and Mr. Ray said that we would have to contract and pay someone to design and complete the new map. However, we could provide them with the GIS data plots.

Mr. Granat noted that we should change the name of the map from Brevard Greenways to the Estatoe Trial Map. He mentioned the idea of creating a trifold brochure that included the map, restrictions and uses, and to have the brochures put in bike shops and the visitor center.

Mr. Morrow ask if it would be possible to get the TDA to pay for the completion of the new Estatoe Trail Map.

Mr. Ray said that he would examine the next steps and would have a meeting with Wilson Hooper and Clark Lovelace about the creation of a new map.

F. Unopened Rights of Way

Mr. Bland said that he has received a few responses from some of the committee members on what they would like to do regarding the unopened rights of way. Some of the responses from committee members is that they do not wish to close any of the rights of way. He discussed making a list of Rights of Way that we would like to keep for future potential use in case a property owner petitions to have one of them closed.

Mr. Baker said instead of making a list we should just set them aside for future use and that any petition should come through the Parks, Trails, and Recreation Committee as well as the Planning Board.

Mr. Ray stated that the Planning Board would now also seek consideration from the Parks, Trails, and Recreation Committee involving any petitions to unopened rights of way.

G. Ecusta Trail Update

Mr. Ray explained that the City was awarded \$24.5 million from the RAISE Grant for the Ecusta Trail and NCDOT was awarded \$21.4 million from the NSFLTP Grant for the trail as well. We anticipate being able to use both grants for the Ecusta Trail. However, we are unsure how these two grants will work together. We are using an entirely different pot of money for the engineering of the Ecusta Trail after receiving a million dollars last

year through the Federal Land Access Program. We hired NCDOT to administer this grant. I have a meeting with our NCDOT representative on Friday, July 21st to go over the 30% engineering fee review. Mr. Ray stated that he does not think the million-dollar grant will be enough to get the entire trail engineered, so we may need to talk with our financial partners, who have pledged matching funds for the Ecusta Trail to see if we can use those funds to cover engineering cost overruns. We will know more about the costs after meeting with NCDOT. If we spend any of our match money prior to being under contract with USDOT, we need permission first because one of the things they look for is to make sure that all the match funds we said we had been still available. Aaron Bland and Mr. Ray attended a webinar on July 18th which was a high-level overview on administering the RAISE Grant. We will be assigned a representative from an operating agency in the next three to four weeks. For our project, our operating agency will either be the Federal Highways Administration or the Federal Railroad Administration. Mr. Ray said that we plan on using NCDOT to administer this grant too because that is what we said we would do on our grant application and that is what USDOT is expecting us to do. It is too soon to talk about the timing of this project, but from everything we are hearing our best-case scenario would be to begin trail construction in two years. Technically, according to the terms of our grant, we have until September 30th, 2027, to obligate the funds and September 30th, 2032, to spend all the funds.

Mr. Birkenthal congratulated the grant writing team on a job well done.

Mr. Baker asked if there would be a design review and if the committee could review the plans before are official.

Mr. Ray said that we will continue to explore way to add amenities to the trail whether that be from the grant dollar or through the matching funds.

Mr. Baker said that the committee should focus on the Estatoe Trail and do our best to ensure that we can make the trail experience perfect because it connects to downtown Brevard. He noted that the Ecusta Trail already has its own advisory committee.

H. Bracken Preserve Update

Mr. Granat informed the committee that Brackenfest is set for Saturday, September 23rd and will start and finish at the Depot. It will include festivities and lunch at 185 King Street. The event last year raised around \$25,000. We are working with the TDA and City to help close the gap and purchase the 35 acres of land Conserving Carolina currently owns. Moving forward, we plan to update the trail through three phases. The first phase will fix the existing trail and build an easier climbing trail. To construct an easier climbing trail, we will need a change in the easement from the Brevard Music Center. We have been working with Jason and Keith to review the location of the easement. The second and third phase will be building three to four additional miles of trail. Home Trust Bank has offered to donate two of the four lots on Waterford Place that are still available to help in the trail construction of Phases 2 and 3.

Mr. Baker said that initially the County Attorney stated that TDA funds could not be spent on property acquisition even though this project does impact tourism. However, the County Attorney has said that the TDA can give money for the trail construction. Mr. Baker said he is speaking with Clark Lovelace about whether their funds could be used for the purchase.

Additional Comments


Ms. DePippo said she volunteers at the Ranger Station and people are requesting information about riding their bikes into town. They don't have any map to give people and it would be very helpful to have a map to hand out.

I. Set Date for Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Parks, Trails & Recreation Committee was scheduled for Wednesday, August 16, 2023 at 3:30 PM.

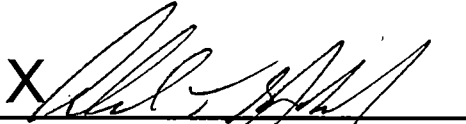
J. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:31 pm.

X 

Mac Morrow
Chair, Council Member

Minutes Approved: August 16, 2023

X 

Alex Shepherd
Assistant to the City Manager