AGENDA
BREVARD ECUSTA TRAIL ADVISORY BOARD - REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday, September 30, 2026 - 3:30 PM
City Council Chambers

A. Welcome and Call to Order

B. Certification of Quorum

C. Approval of Agenda

D. Approval of Minutes

1. Draft Minutes — May 27, 2026 (Amended)
2. Draft Minutes — July 29, 2026

E. Public Comments

F. Unfinished Business

G. New Business

1. Introducing New ETAB At-Large Member
2. Ecusta Trail: 60% Design Phase Cost Estimate

H. Remarks / Future Agenda Considerations

I. Next Meeting - October 28, 2026 at 3:30 PM

J. Adjourn

_____
Agenda Posted, Website, Sunshine List (9/23/2026)
V. Gass, Board Clerk

To review Agenda materials, go to the City's website www.cityofbrevard.com. Select "Your Government" tab followed by "Council Agenda Packet" tab. Agenda packet materials are posted on Thursday afternoon prior to Council's Monday meeting.

MINUTES
ECUSTA TRAIL ADVISORY BOARD 2.0

Wednesday, May 27th, 2026 – 3:30 PM
City Hall Council Chambers

Members Present:	Aaron Baker, Co-Chair, Council Member Dean Lytle, Co-Chair, Council Member Larry Chapman, Transylvania County Commissioner Dee Dee Perkins, Transylvania Development Authority Mark Tooley, Friends of Ecusta Trail Shelia Carland, Transylvania Economic Alliance (via Zoom) Doug Miller, Heart of Brevard Kathy Klepfer, Conserving Carolina
Absent:	Madeline Hanley, At-Large Appointment Meredith Carli, At-Large Appointment
Staff Present:	Maureen Copelof, Mayor, Ex-Officio Chris Burns, Ex-Officio Wilson Hooper, City Manager David Todd, Assistant City Manager Paul Ray, Planning Director Edievith Gass, Board Clerk
Guests:	Hunter Marks , Watermarks Laura Rice, Director, Friends of the Ecusta Trail Christy Stoudt, McAdams Lonnie Watkins, NCDOT Teresa Buckwalter, McAdams (via Zoom) Clark Lovelace, Transylvania County TDA (via Zoom)

DRAFT

I. Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Aaron Baker at 3:31 PM, following a brief welcome to all attendees.

II. Certification of Quorum

A quorum was established and certified by Board Clerk Edievith Gass.

III. Approval of Agenda

Chairman A. Baker requested a reordering of the agenda to address Item B prior to Item A. Due to the temporary absence of the presenter for Item B, the committee maintained the original agenda order. D. Lytle moved to approve the agenda as written, M. Tooley seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Upon a motion made by D. Lytle and seconded by D. Perkins, the draft minutes from January were approved unanimously.

V. Unfinished Business

None.

VI. New Business

A. Signs and Amenities / Way Finding for Existing Section of Trail

W. Hooper introduced a proposal to accelerate the Ecusta Trail branding and signage project, focusing on installing branded signs from the Oskar Blues area to downtown Brevard. Hunter Marks of Watermark, the firm handling Henderson County's trail signage, was introduced to brief the committee on local sign locations, deployment considerations, costs, and implementation strategies.

H. Marks delivered a progress report on trail amenity integration for the Ecusta Trail segment from Oskar Blues to downtown Brevard. Reviewing standardized designs created with Equinox, Marks confirmed the segment will feature consistent station setups, orientation signage, interpretive markers, and half-mile markers to ensure design continuity.

H. Marks detailed the proposed signage and amenity framework spanning from downtown Hendersonville to Main Street Brevard. He reported that mile markers are established at half-mile increments, positioning Oskar Blues at mile 19.6, Jimmy Harris Depot at mile 21.5, and Main Street at mile 22. H. Marks reviewed the standardized amenity package, which includes bike racks, waste receptacles, repair stations, counters, and overlooks. He noted that while a signature Equinox bench serves as the primary trail standard, the City of Brevard has the option to utilize a Leisure Craft alternative to maintain consistency with existing urban furniture. Furthermore, he presented orientation and station signage mockups approved by the Friends of the Ecusta Trail, noting that station signs are designed to display trail rules on the front and directional maps on the back. H. Marks reported that the initial six miles of the project will feature custom informational signs covering the French Broad River Valley, local history, and geology, along with approved trail etiquette signage. Following minor revisions, the amenity and signage package is scheduled for

DRAFT

bid within one month, with on-the-ground installation expected in two to three months.

H. Marks reviewed the regional layout of the trail, identifying the completed Henderson County East section, the Transylvania County/Brevard West section, and the upcoming Ecusta Trail extension from Oskar Blues to downtown Brevard. He noted that the extension encompasses Jimmy Harris Park and the depot at mile 21.5, reaching downtown at mile 22. Regarding the deployment of amenities and signage for this section, H. Marks advised that the process would be straightforward and could be bid similarly to the initial six-mile phase. He recommended that the City of Brevard and ETAB identify exact signs, station locations, and finalize any necessary design modifications, while cautioning against excessive changes to maintain aesthetic continuity across the entire trail system.

D. Lytle noted that a historical station site exists in the unbuilt Pisgah Forest section. A. Baker suggested that station placement should expand beyond just historical locations. H. Marks agreed, clarifying that while historical significance was considered, current necessity and practical placement are the primary drivers for station location decisions.

H. Marks noted that the upcoming bidding process will secure definitive pricing for specific quantities of benches and stations. He recommended collaborating with the Friends of the Ecusta Trail and P. Ray to draft a preliminary site plan for initial installations, which will be brought to ETAB at a future meeting for feedback and final approval.

Responding to an inquiry from L. Chapman regarding public concern over restroom placement, H. Marks noted that restrooms are not part of the current discussion. Mayor M. Copelof clarified that the under-review trail segment is adequately served by existing facilities at City Hall and the Jimmy Harris Park Depot, eliminating the need for new restroom construction in this section.

H. Marks suggested permanent vaulted restrooms as a mid-term solution for areas with utility constraints. L. Rice reported that a potential site at the Crab Creek Road boat launch is being transferred to the City from Conserving Carolina. To address parking conflicts between trail users and boaters, a localized expansion concept plan has been drafted. Additionally, city staff will meet next week with Pisgah Labs to discuss acquiring or accessing a parcel near Everett Road.

D. Lytle asked if the area is serviced by gravity sewer or force main. W. Hooper noted it is likely gravity, transitioning to a force main closer to town.

D. Miller questioned the strategic reasoning behind installing Ecusta Trail branding and amenities on the active Estatoe segment prior to the Transylvania County construction phase. He requested clarification on the funding mechanism, emphasizing that amenity procurement must be integrated into the broader, multi-

DRAFT

jurisdictional trail budget rather than managed in isolation. Additionally, he questioned if existing grant funds had been formally approved or allocated for this stretch.

W. Hooper clarified that infrastructure and branding for the Ecusta-Estatoe extension are ineligible for current project grant reimbursements, requiring local funding or alternative municipal revenues. Because certain primary trail amenities are also excluded from grants, the city plans to use existing Tourism Development Authority (TDA) and local capital fund allocations. Hooper identified attending Downtown Development (DD) stakeholders as potential future financial contributors, reiterating that all extension amenities must rely solely on local funding.

D. Miller emphasized that non-grant amenities like restrooms and signage compete for the same local dollars. He questioned the rush to proceed, recommending a holistic evaluation of all trail amenity funding rather than viewing this segment in isolation.

A. Baker noted that while the project could be deferred, its scalable design allows the committee to review upcoming competitive bid pricing before making final commitments. He emphasized that baseline assets like mileposts are necessary for continuity with Henderson County and identified Jimmy Harris Park Depot and the Pisgah Health Foundation junction as high-priority wayfinding sites with potential TDA funding interest. Baker concluded that moving forward would show visible public progress and generate cost savings through a consolidated bid.

D. Todd asked if the upcoming bids would feature unit pricing to grant the city flexibility to purchase extra signs later at locked-in rates, despite potential variances from bulk averages. H. Marks confirmed that the bid framework will require unit pricing for additional signage.

D. Perkins acknowledged valid arguments for both deferring and accelerating the signage project. Providing TDA historical context, she noted that this path and its wayfinding have been discussed for five years. Citing heavy trail use and merchant feedback from 185 King Street, Perkins argued that while delay was once justified during the Ecusta Trail transition, the current high volume of users urgently needs wayfinding. Moving forward now resolves an immediate safety/navigation need, builds public excitement, boosts fundraising, and validates the project ahead of final construction bids.

D. Miller cautioned that the proposal prioritizes immediate spending over comprehensive planning, arguing that amenity procurement must be part of a macro-level budget that considers competing capital needs like public restrooms. He also warned that mixing legacy Estatoe Trail markers with new Ecusta Trail signage could cause user confusion. Miller urged the committee to practice fiscal restraint and complete a system-wide trail asset assessment before approving localized funds.

DRAFT

L. Watkins acknowledged that the design team has fallen behind on the amenities phase, which should have been initiated earlier. He urged immediate action to ensure mile markers and critical wayfinding signs are installed by the time the new segment opens. L. Rice agreed, stating that a lack of clear signage is currently the top complaint received from the public.

D. Miller raised concerns regarding long-term operational liabilities, noting that a comprehensive maintenance strategy lacks establishment. He pointed out that Brevard has no finalized MOUs for fundraising or asset management, unlike Henderson County which utilizes a dedicated Parks and Recreation department. Given current city budget constraints and Public Works personnel shortages, Miller cautioned against isolated asset procurement and urged the committee to prioritize system-wide maintenance planning.

D. Perkins proposed integrating Mr. Miller's feedback into a comprehensive plan by mapping all amenities—such as signage, mile markers, and benches—across the entire Transylvania County section. By calculating full-trail cost estimates now, the project can be phased systematically. The current Ecusta Trail segment would function as Phase One, enabling data-driven financial decisions for the immediate rollout while setting a clear framework for future phases extending toward Hendersonville.

C. Stoudt announced that the county's amenities design phase begins this summer, mapping benches, kiosks, and restrooms. Because this section links at the Oskar Blues kiosk, she urged immediate municipal planning alignment. C. Stoudt also warned that NCDOT's upcoming R-5800 project will build a parallel trail along US 64, making distinct wayfinding coordination essential to differentiate the Ecusta Trail corridor.

Responding to D. Lytle's request for a procedural critique of the amenity timeline, L. Watkins stated that amenity planning should have begun much earlier due to the long lifecycle of the project. However, he noted Brevard will benefit from a streamlined process now that the core design frameworks are complete. Clarifying D. Miller's concerns, Watkins emphasized that the committee is only being asked for conceptual approval of the aesthetics (stations, benches, signs) rather than funding. Once approved conceptually, cost estimates will be gathered so the city can scale its purchases according to budget availability.

W. Hooper asked if the upcoming summer design and cost estimates would include both grant-eligible and non-eligible trail amenities. Teresa Buckwalter (via Zoom) clarified that their current scope covers only grant-funded amenities, including benches, wayfinding signs, mile markers, and stations. She added that they are identifying a few additional station sites and are drafting concept plans for up to three parking and trail access areas to function as centralized amenity hubs. T. Buckwalter noted that amenity locations are nearly finalized, and establishing the exact counts for benches and signs now is vital to determining the trail's overall cost estimate. She

DRAFT

stated that specific sites for these features were mapped out with the committee's assistance during the 30% design phase.

C. Stoudt recommended that the city begin its downtown corridor planning now so that both trail sections can be implemented simultaneously. She reported that the county segment is moving forward, with construction documents expected to be complete by the end of the year.

D. Miller argued that unless funding deadlines require immediate action, the city should defer spending to conduct a comprehensive review. He noted that because the TDA funds infrastructure county-wide, a single, holistic grant application could secure a larger package of amenities—such as benches and signage—for both the Estatoe and Ecusta segments together. He concluded that focusing solely on immediate signage for the existing section could shortchange future funding opportunities.

A. Baker clarified that the meeting's primary objective was to align active stakeholders on the structural and aesthetic integration of both trail segments. He noted that the committee's scope now includes evaluating how the existing municipal path will interface with the design standards of the federally funded Ecusta Trail. Baker emphasized that securing parallel cost estimates is necessary to determine baseline funding for critical assets like half-mile markers. Additionally, he recommended evaluating the feasibility of a phased, incremental asset deployment if a long delay occurs between initial structural work and total project completion.

W. Hooper requested a proposal from C. Stoudt to expand their design scope for in-town trail amenities, which Stoudt agreed to review with Hunter Marks. D. Miller cautioned that adding this work to the active contract is legally prohibited due to project limits, warning it would disrupt environmental clearances and the primary construction timeline. He recommended a separate contract instead. H. Marks expressed flexibility regarding the contract vehicle and agreed with Miller, noting that because the same design personnel overlap across all four trail segments, regional design continuity is inherently preserved without requiring a single, consolidated contract.

D. Lytle supported an early layout of initial amenities to build community credibility but advised fiscal caution until definitive construction costs are revealed this summer. He noted that amenities are strong fundraising tools and reminded the committee that current capital campaign donors are already owed recognition for future assets. A. Baker agreed with this financial overlap, noting it was his original motivation for reordering the agenda items to allow the construction update to provide context for the amenity debate.

D. Todd proposed a dual-signage system similar to the Mountains-to-Sea Trail to manage overlapping routes. He suggested using prominent Ecusta Trail signs with secondary Estatoe Trail markers where they intersect between Main Street and the

DRAFT

high school, noting this mirrors shared stretches of the Appalachian and Mountains-to-Sea trails. D. Lytle agreed, stating that this framework should be included in the scope of work to prepare for future co-branding with the upcoming Hellbender Trail system.

A. Baker warned that overlapping names would confuse the public, arguing that the Estatoe Trail name should only apply from Oskar Blues toward Pisgah Forest, with a new name chosen later for the high school segment. He provided historical context from the city historian regarding the original Cherokee "Estatoe" route into Rosman and South Carolina, noting that because "Ecusta" is also a word of Cherokee origin, the trail's native history remains fully honored under the new layout.

W. Hooper recommended requesting a quote from C. Stoudt and H. Marks for a separate contract to design amenities from Oskar Blues to downtown Brevard, to be reviewed at a future meeting. A. Baker asked if the scope would focus specifically on location recommendations and installation feasibility. C. Stoudt and H. Marks confirmed the scope would evaluate the corridor to place signage at trail entry points, select final amenity sites, and offer optional bidding and project oversight, which can be phased according to the city's preferences.

D. Miller noted that the design team's overarching project knowledge allows them to balance amenity counts across different sections to prevent over-installation downtown. A. Baker accepted the recommendation as the next step. There being no further questions, he transitioned to the next agenda item, requesting a current status report, an overview of next steps, and an updated project timeline, noting the committee had not met in four months.

B. General Update – Trail Status: Design Work/Next Step

C. Stoudt presented the project status, schedule, and milestones using printed materials due to a hardware delivery failure. She noted that Henderson County's phase is moving faster than the local segment because of historical grant sequencing and a "locally let" project delivery model, which avoids complex state DOT procurement channels. Since January, the team expanded the environmental study area to secure FHWA clearances for future trailheads and amenities. This expansion required additional technical reviews, including supplementary wetland and community impact assessments.

C. Stoudt reported on the systematic identification of natural resources within the expanded study areas, providing critical data for the environmental clearance document ahead of the summer field inspection. She also shared a concept layout of the Crab Creek Road parcel. This layout maps out local drainage channels, an active waterway, and protected wetlands, all of which are now included in the finalized Natural Resource Report.

DRAFT

Regarding stormwater management and infrastructure design, C. Stoudt noted that the drainage submittal was strategically bifurcated with regulatory approval. The initial phase was submitted in January to expedite utility utility-impact coordination, thereby proactively shielding the project from late-stage utility relocation liabilities. The comprehensive drainage plan for the remainder of the eight-mile trail corridor was subsequently submitted in March, passing review with negligible agency corrections.

C. Stoudt summarized the April and May milestones, noting that bridge designs were filed and the updated Natural Resource Report was approved. She highlighted an NCDOT collaboration along Old Henderson Highway that adds safety guardrails without disturbing utility poles, avoiding major relocation costs. Additionally, the team submitted floodway compliance packages for the Davidson and French Broad rivers to verify a no-impact design. Finally, erosion control plans are tracking three weeks ahead of schedule and are designed to fully protect existing wetlands.

C. Stoudt reported strong progress on the trail project, with several summer milestones approaching. The environmental document is on track for late June completion to secure funding, followed by the submission of 65% design plans and an updated cost estimate next month. Upcoming work includes subsurface utility investigations, surveying, and railroad geotechnical designs. This summer, the team will secure DOT right-of-way clearance while engineers audit the eight-mile corridor to ensure proper drop-off railing offsets. Additionally, a specialized culvert evaluation is underway, which could save $500,000 in grant funding.

C. Stoudt shared that a full (and expensive) flood evaluation or Culvert Survey Report will not be required for culvert replacements. Because any necessary replacements will be "in-kind," they can be noted directly on the plans, saving the project significant time and money.

W. Hooper noted that the city can use dedicated stormwater funds to cover culverts requiring local dollars, maximizing cost efficiency by syncing repairs with trail construction. Ms. Stoudt agreed, noting that alternative methods like culvert lining are being considered to extend infrastructure life. McAdams has evaluated these costs, and a strategic decision will be made after the 65% design, and updated cost estimates are approved. Stoudt highlighted two specific sites: a dual culvert supporting wetlands between the park and Oskar Blues, and another beneath the former paper mill landfill pond.

A. Baker asked if the culvert evaluations accounted for stormwater capacity and structural wear from trail traffic. C. Stoudt explained that the primary risk is internal corrosion and erosion during heavy storms, which could compromise trail stability and trigger a 90-day closure. On bridges, she detailed challenges with a deteriorating private bridge near Enon Baptist Church. While a driveway relocation alternative was ruled out due to a $400,000 retaining wall requirement, the team secured permission to use NCDOT's post-Helene "Private Roads and Bridges Program" standards. This

strategy meets federal AASHTO requirements while cutting replacement costs in half to $400,000–$500,000.

W. Hooper highlighted the new bridge approach as a major success, emphasizing that it simultaneously secures critical cost savings and protects a highly scenic corridor from being disrupted by a large retaining wall. Stoudt expressed agreement, confirming that the team will explore two structural options to present to the board. The first option will completely span the area, while the second will mirror the current structure's existing look to retain its historic character.

A. Baker confirmed that the NCDOT program provides a more affordable design standard rather than direct funding. C. Stoudt noted that adopting this standard will yield major project savings and that the bridge design will quickly realign with the project timeline. This summer, the team is also coordinating with Pisgah Labs regarding their request for a city fence permit next to the trail. This dialogue has led to preliminary discussions about leasing a scenic, vacant parcel owned by Pisgah Labs northeast of Everett Road for a new trailhead. Stoudt concluded by emphasizing that current trailhead concepts are preliminary sketches; the team must still evaluate sightlines, design drainage, and secure DOT driveway permits for safe access.

T. Buckwalter noted that the initial trailhead concepts originated from the original RAISE grant funding. Stoudt agreed with the clarification, adding that these preliminary ideas were developed years ago during the initial Ecusta Trail feasibility study.

C. Stoudt walked the board through the complex NCDOT federal compliance flow chart, noting that the project schedule is reverse engineered from a firm letting date of April 20, 2027. To meet this target, all final design work must wrap up by the end of 2026, with permitting and bid documentation finalized in early 2027. The team is pushing toward the 65% design milestone, with the final Plans, Specifications, and Estimates (PS&E) package due in January 2027. Refined cost estimates will be delivered in July/August and November 2026, with each update lowering the project's contingency rate as hard data replaces unknowns. Lastly, Stoudt suggested structuring certain amenities as "add alternates" in the bid package to give the city financial flexibility ahead of a March 2027 advertisement date.

L. Watkins provided critical context on the strict timeline, explaining that because the project exceeds $5 million, the letting process must be handled by the NCDOT Central Unit in Raleigh rather than the local division office. This centralized oversight requires all finalized materials to be submitted three months prior to the April 20 letting date for an exhaustive review matching plans to official DOT pay items. Watkins noted this phase involves intense coordination, leaving no room to accelerate the advertising schedule. C. Stoudt added that NCDOT's strict compliance procedures naturally lengthen the timeline, as administrative tasks like contract reviews often take six months instead of two, requiring built-in schedule patience.

DRAFT

W. Hooper asked if the projected 12-to-18-month construction window was a flexible estimate or a hard contractual requirement. L. Watkins clarified that the NCDOT Central Unit will embed mandatory completion deadlines and strict environmental moratorium dates directly into the contract. Regarding a potential January 2029 wrap-up, Watkins noted that an 18-month build window starting with the April 2027 letting will capitalize on two full summer construction seasons (2027 and 2028). As a result, the team is targeting a more favorable completion date around October 2028.

D. Todd requested clarification on the timeline for the contract award and the subsequent notice to proceed following the April 20 date. L. Watkins explained that after bids open on April 20, a standard one-month administrative window occurs for the contract award, insurance verification, and bonding, placing the official "date of availability" around May 20. Watkins emphasized that while the final completion deadline is legally binding, the contractor retains total flexibility over their start date and staging. Some firms may choose to delay mobilization and utilize double crews later to meet the mandated schedule.

C. Stoudt shared comparative timeline data from colleagues, noting that Phase 1 required approximately three years from its summer 2022 design start to its 2025 opening. The current phase began design in 2023, placing the team roughly three years into the workflow. Stoudt noted that while this state-regulated process is inherently slower, the team will provide hard milestone dates to help the public track progress.

A. Baker raised concerns about potential pre-construction delays, questioning if extensive revisions and comments from the NCDOT Central Unit in Raleigh could stall progress. L. Watkins reassured the board that while numerous comments are expected, the three-month pre-letting window explicitly accounts for this rigorous review process. Watkins noted that the team does not anticipate any project "showstoppers" during this phase. Because environmental permits will already be secured, any remaining state comments can typically be resolved in time to maintain the April letting schedule.

W. Hooper addressed potential budget shortfall risks tied to the upcoming August 2026 cost estimate, noting that while current indicators remain reasonable, a significant funding gap unresolved by value engineering or private donations would cause a temporary project pause. L. Watkins reinforced these concerns, stating that existing funding is already insufficient for the current estimate. He noted that if the 65% design estimate reveals a wider gap, the board must evaluate scaling back the project scope or seeking new funding. Watkins emphasized that the August timeline provides a critical window to pursue alternative revenue before final deadlines.

C. Stoudt noted that the design-build process for the project's middle section should enable that phase to quickly catch up to the current schedule. Because design-build allows contractors to begin early site work like clearing while simultaneously

DRAFT

finalizing design plans, its timeline tracks just a couple of months behind this phase, keeping the broader project on a parallel track.

A. Baker noted that the board had previously discussed upcoming cost estimates for the middle section in January. L. Watkins clarified that because the design-build contract is already awarded and encompasses both design and construction, those project costs are locked in. Baker then inquired if these established figures could help the city better forecast or refine its own upcoming construction cost estimates.

D. Todd advised that the design-build nature of the middle section limits direct cost comparisons, urging strict adherence to April letting deadlines to avoid severe delays caused by environmental moratoriums. He demanded immediate reporting of any potential schedule slippage to allow for prompt remedial intervention by the city.

D. Todd raised concerns that overlapping bat tree-cutting restrictions and trout stream regulations could freeze construction for a year if the schedule slips. L. Watkins explained that a "pay-to-cut" framework acts as a flexible, $7,000-per-acre contingency plan. Because fees are only charged on an as-needed basis if clearing occurs during restricted dates, pre-approving this mechanism serves as a zero-upfront-cost insurance policy against environmental delays.

L. Watkins noted that the trout stream moratorium relies on different rules than the bat restrictions, with D. Todd adding that their opposing timelines create a narrow work window for bridges and culverts. C. Stoudt clarified that most of the physical work occurs well above the critical impact zones. She stated that the team is evaluating trout variance requirements while awaiting a final decision from the NCDOT division. Todd concluded by reiterating the board's commitment to absolute accountability and strict schedule adherence.

A. Baker asked if the upcoming 65% design milestone would include the final recommendations for the types and numbers of amenities in the Transylvania County section. Ms. Stoudt replied that this timeline remains flexible because amenities are currently covered by the project's contingency budget. She explained that the engineering team must first finish evaluating drainage and spatial constraints for these features, assuring the board that finalized numbers and placement data will be delivered as soon as the technical assessment wraps up.

A. Baker highlighted that the upcoming project milestone will provide a strategic decision-making window. By combining the refined cost estimate and amenity plans with real-world bid results from the Henderson County phase, the board will be positioned to make smart, data-driven choices about adding extra amenities. Stoudt added a slight clarification to the timeline, noting that while the technical package is submitted in July, the actual cost estimate report will likely arrive in August 2026 due to the multi-week processing time required after submission.

VII. Public Comments

DRAFT

A. Baker apologized for initially bypassing the public comment period and opened the floor to attendees.

An unidentified local resident requested that the city open safe, clear sections of the railroad right-of-way to the public to maintain community engagement during the upcoming year of construction inactivity. The speaker proposed a volunteer pilot project to clear brush behind Oskar Blues to foster community ownership and demonstrate the trail's value to skeptical neighbors. The residents suggested that safety and liability risks could be managed similarly to establish volunteer trail programs in Pisgah and DuPont forests.

D. Miller noted that volunteer work in Pisgah and DuPont forests requires formal service agreements to manage worker safety and liability. He emphasized that the city must thoroughly evaluate and establish similar legal and liability frameworks before bringing volunteers out to clear the railroad corridor.

A resident supported calls for volunteer opportunities, noting her family relocated from Asheville specifically for the trail, and expressed a desire to volunteer once liability frameworks are finalized. She noted that sparse online updates had mistakenly led the community to believe the project had stalled. Citing how reassuring the meeting's engineering updates were, she urged the city to publish these milestones online to restore local enthusiasm.

L. Rice highlighted a recent newsletter update from Stoudt detailing behind-the-scenes project progress. Regarding potential early trail access, L. Chapman noted that adjacent property owners must be notified in advance to mitigate complaints. W. Hooper agreed to review this protocol, noting that proactive communication with neighboring landowners is already underway.

L. Rice cautioned that opening early trail sections requires resolving dangerous road crossings. She noted Transylvania County has higher-speed roads and more blind spots than Henderson County's lower-speed first phase. Rice urged the committee to carefully evaluate these traffic hazards before granting public right-of-way access.

A *Transylvania Times* representative noted that groundbreaking remains the public's primary question and advised replacing sporadic press releases with a steady stream of smaller updates. Sharing minor design victories (e.g., signage or benches) in partnership with the newspaper will reassure residents of active progress. The representative and Laura offered to collaborate with the team on this continuous media strategy.

Clark Lovelace, Transylvania County TDA (via Zoom) thanked W. Hooper for the session's technical insights. He noted that the committee’s infrastructure and engineering updates directly impact the TDA, as these decisions will likely involve future TDA capital and funding resources.

DRAFT

VIII. Remarks / Future Agenda Considerations

A. Baker opened the floor for final committee remarks.

L. Rice announced that June and July roundabout construction on Highway 64 will block the trail thoroughfare at Little River Park. The city will actively issue communications advising travelers to avoid Highway 64 toward Hendersonville and directing trail users to stick to both ends of the path. Rice noted that consistent public updates maintain project momentum and support future fundraising readiness.

D. Miller recommended that the city swiftly finalize a contract with the Friends of Ecusta to unlock significant nonprofit fundraising for trail maintenance. He also warned of safety risks from e-bikes and mopeds traveling up to 30 mph on sidewalks and the Estatoe Trail. He urged the city to establish clear signage, public education, and law enforcement rules before trail construction concludes to protect pedestrians.

M. Tooley stated that the Friends of Ecusta are analyzing national e-bike trends, noting a rise in local ordinances across California and New Jersey due to a lag in state and federal action. He emphasized that future federal laws will only regulate manufacturing specifications, not local trail behavior. Warning that children are operating high-powered electric vehicles, Tooley urged Henderson County and the City of Brevard to enact local ordinances, noting that trail rules remain legally unenforceable without a local legislative framework.

L. Chapman outlined two operational priorities: executing a public relations update to share design milestones—potentially utilizing The Transylvania Times column to reassure residents of active progress—and immediately briefing local Police, Sheriff, and EMS leaders on trail security. Early emergency planning will avoid bottlenecks and establish a foundation for a public safety MOU.

A. Baker proposed requesting an operational brief on Henderson County's open six-mile trail section to review maintenance costs, safety incidents, and e-bike activity ahead of Brevard's August 2026 technical update. M. Tooley confirmed that Henderson County's existing tracking system can provide this data, which will help guide Brevard's future maintenance, security, and ordinance frameworks.

IX. Closing Remark and Next Meeting

A. Baker confirmed that the committee will reconvene for its next monthly regular meeting on Wednesday, June 24 at 3:30 p.m.

DRAFT

X. Adjourn

On a motion by D. Perkins, seconded by D. Lytle and carried unanimously, Chairman A. Baker adjourned the meeting at 5:04 p.m.

_____
Aaron Baker, Chair

Minutes Approved Date-_____

_____
Edievith Gass, Board Secretary

DRAFT

MINUTES
ECUSTA TRAIL ADVISORY BOARD 2.0
Wednesday, July 29th, 2026 – 3:30 PM
City Hall Council Chambers

Members Present:	Aaron Baker, Co-Chair, Council Member Dean Lytle, Co-Chair, Council Member Larry Chapman, Transylvania County Commissioner Dee Dee Perkins, Transylvania Development Authority Mark Tooley, Friends of Ecusta Trail Shelia Carland, Transylvania Economic Alliance Doug Miller, Heart of Brevard Kathy Klepfer, Conserving Carolina
Absent:	Meredith Carli, At-Large Appointment Chris Burns, Ex-Officio Maureen Copelof, Mayor, Ex-Officio
Staff Present:	Wilson Hooper, City Manager David Todd, Assistant City Manager Paul Ray, Planning Director Aaron Bland, Assistant Planning Director Edievith Gass, Board Clerk
Guests:	Tad Fogel, Friends of the Ecusta Trail Laura Rice, Director, Friends of the Ecusta Trail Lonnie Watkins, NCDOT Teresa Buckwalter, McAdams Jonathan Rich, Brevard Beagles Megan Foy, Equinox Lauren Faye, Equinox Drake Elder, Watermarks Hunter Marks , Watermarks (Via Zoom)

I. Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Aaron Baker at 3:30 PM, following a brief welcome to all attendees.

II. Certification of Quorum

A quorum was established and certified by Board Clerk Edievith Gass.

DRAFT

III. Approval of Agenda

A. Baker proposed amending the agenda under New Business to reorder the items. The final map of amenities and developments will be discussed first, followed by Watermark's involvement. Hearing no further amendments, D. Perkins moved to approve the agenda as amended. L. Chapman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Minutes Corrections (May 27, 2026): The following revisions were entered into the record:

- Dee Dee Perkins requested a correction to her pronouns from "he" to "she."
- Mark Tooley clarified that he was the sitting representative present on that day, rather than John Detillo.

D. Perkins motioned to accept the minutes as amended, which was seconded by M. Tooley. Hearing no further discussion, a vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

V. Public Comment

T. Fogel provided an update on the upcoming Cycle North Carolina event, noting that several hundred cyclists will stay at Brevard College over the weekend and ride various routes—including the Henderson County portion of the Ecusta Trail, despite construction closures. This marks the event's fourth time in Brevard, delivering a strong economic boost to downtown businesses, hotels, and restaurants.

VI. Unfinished Business

None.

VII. New Business

W. Hooper introduced the guest speakers, Teresa Buckwalter and her team from McAdams, who have been leading the development of the amenities menu. He turned the floor over to the McAdams team to conduct the presentation.

A. Map Amenities and Development

T. Buckwalter (McAdams) introduced the project team, noting that Christy Staudt serves as the primary project manager for NCDOT. She introduced support team members *Megan Foy* and *Lauren Faye* from Equinox, as well as *Drake Elder* from

Watermark, who has been collaborating with long-term project partner Hunter Marks.

Background: Amenity designs have reached the construction document phase, with NCDOT submissions completed for pedestrian signals, environmental reviews, and the Blade Creek bridge, while field inspections and parking scouting are underway.

Amenities are categorized into two levels:

- **Level 1 (Trailside Features)**, which covers final amenity designs utilizing a mix of grant and local funds, and
- **Level 2 (Trail Access Sites)**, which focuses strictly on initial conceptual investigations.

Estimated Amenity Unit Costs (Installed)- Grant Funded Level 1 Amenities:

- **Mile Markers**: Recommended at half-mile increments to match Henderson County's system ($1,950 each).
- **Bicycle Racks***:* Branded with the Ecusta Trail logo, grouped in sets of five ($6,000 per set).
- **Trail Stations**: Engineering reviews are underway for three to four recommended wayside structures costing $18,000 each.
- **Trail Benches:**
  - *Custom Wood Benches:* Trail-station matching units designed by Magenstein are estimated at $3,000 each.
  - *Prefabricated Metal Benches:* Leisure Craft will manufacture matching Henderson County trail benches for $4,000 each, installed.

D. Perkins proposed a community trail bench sponsorship program to meet local demand. Supported by T. Buckwalter, the program utilizes extra, unfunded bench locations already added to project maps and will maintain design consistency despite NCDOT rules requiring three manufacturer options.

Responding to L. Chapman's transparency and cost concerns, L. Watkins clarified that the low-bid process requires only one valid bid and that NCDOT can scale amenity quantities to accommodate private donations. D. Perkins confirmed the installed bench cost is $1,400.

T. Buckwalter reported unit pricing is finalized at $2,000; the purchasing timeline is a pending group decision.

D. Elder (Watermark) took the floor to report that the sign suite design with FOET is complete, with focus shifting to exact trail placement.

- **Orientation & Trailhead Signs ($3,600/ea installed):** High-traffic/parking tier signage incorporating modular replacement components, historic depot scheduling aesthetics, and navigation mapping.
- **Kiosk & Etiquette Signs ($2,300–$3,200/ea installed):** Post-mounted tiers delivering maps, partner branding, educational content, rules, QR links, and safety alerts.
- **Depot Naming Plates:** Side-mounted station title plates styled after historic railroad lines.

T. Buckwalter clarified that the upcoming menu items on the slide are not covered by the grant, meaning they will require local funding if the group decides to proceed with them.

- **Interpretive Signs ($3,800):** Pedestal-mounted local history/ecology panels.
- **Bike Repair ($2,500):** Concrete-mounted maintenance stations at key intervals.
- **Trail Counters ($6,000**): Infrared or pressure-wire usage tracking technology.

T. Buckwalter confirmed that the chosen trail counter model distinguishes between different user types, delivering empirical usage metrics vital for securing future maintenance grants and funding. She noted that unit costs are set, but final counts remain a work in progress. Additionally, the team's 30% design phase GIS mapping tool continues to guide asset deployment, which must navigate a variety of physical and regulatory restrictions within the trail corridor:

- **Wetlands:** Multiple historical railroad-adjacent wetlands, marked in blue on the project map, limit the available spatial layout.
- **Floodways:** Encroaching flood hazard zones near the Henderson County line legally prohibit large vertical structures (stations, benches, large signs) in the right-of-way.

Despite environmental constraints, the team identified viable locations outside restricted zones, currently planning 16 bench locations, three to four stations, and several dedicated sitting areas. Foy's team will develop "pocket park" plans for these sitting areas as trail pull-offs for scenic views or conversational spaces featuring benches, bike racks, or repair stations. Bridge-attached seating was eliminated due to structural limitations. M. Foy highlighted specific scenic "pause points" currently under evaluation:

- **Davidson River / Unnamed Lake Area:** High-elevation flat spot identified past the river bridge crossing; provides elevated views of the river and lake.
- **French Broad River Area:** A potential viewing area has been identified in a field location further north, navigating around the strict floodway constraints closer to the river bank.

Ecusta Trail Design Update & Spatial Walkthrough via Google Earth: The design team's exported layer displays the physical trail alignment in *white,* safety fencing/guardrails in *orange,* and planned amenity zones in *yellow:*

- **Oskar Blues Segment**: A primary "pause area" is designated near the start of the trail. This footprint is a strong candidate for a major trail station or an expanded seating layout.
- **Ecusta Road Triangle***:* Where the rail tracks split, a triangular parcel has been secured for a pocket park. The design team (led by M. Foy) is actively incorporating landscape buffers here to address local requests for physical separation.
- **Davidson River Bridge & Overlooks**: The bridge offers panoramic mountains and water views. An additional small, single-bench pull-off is planned further down to capitalize on the mountain vistas.
- **Thrash Branch**: A dedicated bench asset is placed near the stream to offer trail users an acoustic, nature-focused resting point.
- **Everett Road Access & NEPA Status:** Landowner agreement finalized past Everett Road; site officially locked into NEPA environmental documentation.

T. Buckwalter reported that her team is conducting an immediate site visit with the highway division to finalize the driveway entry point for maximum seating and parking capacity.

In response to D. Lytle inquiry, T. Buckwalter clarified that sitting areas are chosen opportunistically based on topography despite right-of-way constraints, whereas standard trail benches are distributed evenly to ensure user accessibility, with 16 benches currently planned.

To illustrate how geographic constraints directly dictate the trail layout, T. Buckwalter highlighted the segment running past the airport.

- **Airport Corridor Constraints**: An orange safety fence heavily constrains the airport runway section, creating a narrow right-of-way that requires trail users to remain strictly within pavement limits.
- **Crab Creek Node (Midpoint Station)**: Upon clearing the airport corridor, the trail crosses Crab Creek into a major planned amenity node.
  - *Strategic Spacing*: This location sits perfectly at the three-mile midpoint between the Henderson County line and the western terminus.
  - *Multimodal Access*: Situated near an existing French Broad River access point, this site features a concept plan for a full sitting area and future parking expansion to prevent overcrowding and support river-to-trail connectivity.
- **Design Status:** Approaching 65% completion milestone; grading and drainage plans finalized while preserving flat footprints for future features.
- **Seating Locations:** Includes a mountain/river scenic overlook sitting area outside the floodway and a final minor pull-off just south of the county line.

- **Restricted Zones:** Strict northern floodway boundaries limit pull-offs, substituting standard low-profile benches instead.
- **River Access:** Grove Ridge Road node features a sitting area using existing lower river-access parking (private land acquisition for extra parking was unsuccessful).

In response to public inquiries, the team confirmed that immediate restroom facilities are excluded from the active trail segment due to water and sewer infrastructure limitations, though a future site placeholder is mapped at Crab Creek. D. Miller proposed utilizing existing project grants to fund an immediate temporary vault toilet, arguing that grant-funding a restroom now protects private fundraising capacity for high-donor features like benches. M. Tooley advised that staff are actively researching cost data for vault structures.

With vault toilets estimated at $50,000–$80,000 plus ongoing maintenance, the group discussed strategic funding allocations. D. Perkins and M. Tooley reinforced that private donors heavily prefer funding highly visible features like rest stations, kiosks, or benches rather than bathrooms. To address long-term infrastructure, A. Baker suggested exploring nearby municipal water and sewer extensions near Vista Labs to potentially support a fully plumbed restroom at the Everett Road staging site.

T. Buckwalter confirmed no restrooms are planned on the Henderson County side of the trail. L. Rice and A. Baker noted that the "trail partner" business restroom model is restricted to the first three miles; past Laurel Park, a three-mile gap with no businesses poses an infrastructure challenge. To address this temporarily, Buckwalter proposed a trail partner arrangement with a gas station near a newly identified property opportunity, though talks must continue to resolve roadside safety access issues. Moving into the signage phase, D. Elder mapped out six orientation sign locations from Grove Bridge to Oskar Blues, noting that Oskar Blues and Crab Creek Road will function as primary entry hubs with comprehensive trailhead signs.

D. Miller pointed out that Brevard City Hall is the official downtown trailhead. He argued that while it may not be considered for this specific round of funding, it must be included in future downtown signage planning. D. Elder agreed, explaining that the City Hall location belongs on the Estatoe Trail mapping layer but was accidentally placed on the Transylvania County layer.

D. Elder outlined the remainder of the signage plan:

- **Trailhead and Etiquette Signage Program:** Plans include 2 trailhead signs and 18 double-sided etiquette signs (36 total panels) focused on intersections, property lines, and traffic/waste management.

- **Interpretive Signage Proposals:** 6 locations proposed at trail pause areas; currently excluded from grant funding but matches Henderson County's existing signage density.

In response to D. Lytle's question regarding emergency location tracking, T. Buckwalter and D. Elder clarified that the trail features consistent half-mile markers (indicated by red dots on the map) for safety tracking. L. Watkins noted that trail-advisory signs at all intersections will display crossroad names, adding that signs near DOT roads require district approval for sight distance and right-of-way compliance. Furthermore, any signage outside immediate project limits requires local funding rather than project grant funds.

Responding to queries from D. Miller and D. Perkins, T. Buckwalter clarified that the waste receptacle mapping is still a work in progress, while D. Elder confirmed there will be 12 total orientation signs across six intersection locations. Buckwalter added that the overall trail map remains ongoing as final amenity quantities depend on the upcoming construction budget. She noted that trail access points were added during the 30% design phase to secure parking property, adding that a formal driveway and concept plan for the smaller Old Hendersonville Highway access lot will be presented later.

T. Buckwalter introduced M. Foy, who presented the concept plan for the Crab Creek access point. The layout features ample parking with a one-way entrance from Crab Creek Road and a two-way entrance/exit via Apex Drive to optimize traffic flow. The site includes a restroom, bike racks, a trail marker station, trash receptacles, a short greenway connection to the Ecusta Trail, and a central stormwater catchment basin required by floodplain and impervious surface restrictions.

The structural engineer is reviewing the trail stations while the team locks down final amenity quantities to stay within the overall construction budget. Concurrently, concepts for pocket parks and trail access points are being designed for upcoming board review, with the landscaping plan focusing strictly on providing natural buffers near homes. Finally, "special provisions" are being compiled to outline technical specifications for pre-manufactured items.

L. Chapman recommended proactive coordination with County EMS and law enforcement for emergency planning, prompting T. Buckwalter to note that emergency services were engaged at a public meeting a year ago. In response to queries from A. Baker, Buckwalter clarified that a grand total for amenities will not be compiled until baseline pricing is finalized next month. She confirmed that benches, mileposts, and wayfinding are top project priorities, whereas larger items like the four proposed rest stations remain flexible based on future budget constraints.

A. Baker provided initial feedback regarding amenity funding, suggesting that benches should be excluded from immediate grant allocations. He expressed

confidence that benches could successfully attract private donors and sponsors. By relying on private fundraising for the benches, the organization could strategically preserve its grant funds for other critical project needs that are more difficult to fundraise for externally.

M. Tooley and T. Buckwalter reminded the group that several previous capital campaign donors are still owed naming opportunities. These existing obligations must be factored in before selling sponsorships for new amenities. Additionally, Tooley shared a successful manufacturing example from a past collaboration with Leisure Craft, who built amenities featuring the trail logo alongside built-in mounting points for donor plaques.

T. Buckwalter confirmed to P. Ray that the team is seeking immediate amenity list approval to keep the project moving forward. While formal budget figures will be reviewed next month, she emphasized that initial feedback on prospective cuts helps staff optimize procurement for the grant-funded "Level 1" list.

D. Miller strongly advised removing bike fix-it stations from the plan, labeling them a waste of money due to high risks of tool theft, vandalism, and frequent malfunctions (e.g., pumps deflating tires). D. Lytle and D. Miller also raised long-term upkeep concerns, emphasizing that the project must proactively plan and fund ongoing operational requirements for all proposed amenities, including basic infrastructure like trash cans.

T. Buckwalter corrected a misunderstanding by W. Hooper, clarifying that public restrooms are grant-eligible but categorized lower on the slide under "Level 3 Gateway Features" rather than being excluded. L. Watkins advised that grant funds likely cannot cover short utility line extensions to the bathroom area since they would run outside project boundaries. However, L. Rice shared a verification from H. Marks confirming that restroom construction is legally permitted under the trail's rail-banking agreement.

P. Ray noted that if utilities are successfully extended to the trail corridor boundary, running the service lines directly inside the corridor would likely be a grant-eligible expense.

Responding to W. Hooper's inquiry about alternative restroom sites, L. Watkins and T. Buckwalter stated that locations outside the right-of-way are off the table due to advanced NEPA environmental documentation. Regarding logistics, M. Tooley emphasized that all restroom sites require vehicular pumping access. D. Miller confirmed that while Crab Creek and Pisgah Labs offer sufficient intermediate coverage alongside existing urban amenities, a dedicated facility is vital for the remote stretch past Oskar Blues to mitigate private property trespassing.

T. Buckwalter identified a restroom location that serves as the strategic midpoint between the county line and Oskar Blues. A. Baker backed this site over the Everett

Road layout, noting its superior spatial distribution provides better utility for trail users.

A. Baker noted that Blantyre property owners will likely embrace the trail to drive local commerce and private amenity growth. He also highlighted a major opportunity to connect the trail with local river access points, allowing river users to "self-shuttle" by bicycle between nodes like Hap Simpson, Wilson Road, Penrose, and Etowah, and requested this multi-modal connection be promoted in trail signage.
T. Buckwalter recommended planning trail counters as an integrated network rather than isolated units, citing successful infrastructure scaling in Philadelphia and on the Swamp Rabbit Trail to evaluate long-term traffic patterns. Addressing a query from D. Miller, M. Tooley confirmed Henderson County currently relies on temporary counters and highlighted that accurate user counts are vital inputs for an economic impact model being developed in partnership with NC State University.

B. Scope of Watermark

A. Baker introduced a proposal to extend Watermark's scope of work, utilizing the firm to assist with planning and amenities for the existing city trail section as it officially integrates into the Ecusta Trail.

P. Ray announced a proposed scope of work from Watermark for amenity and signage design along the Ecusta Trail extension between Oskar Blues and City Hall. Ray clarified that the review focuses strictly on scope completeness and adjustments rather than cost; staff will negotiate pricing and secure funding once the scope is approved before returning to the board with a final service agreement.

D. Elder detailed that Watermark's adjustable scope encompasses site analysis, conceptual design through final construction documents, and DOT/McAdams coordination for upcoming roundabout work, while bidding and construction administration remain optional add-ons. Addressing branding, Elder noted that because the Estatoe Trail lacks established branding, co-branding with the Ecusta Trail requires a separate design phase. Additionally, future itemized amenity pricing will strictly reflect capital construction costs and exclude long-term maintenance burdens.

M. Tooley suggested breaking the Watermark contract into two phases—starting with conceptual design—to let the board pick exact amenity types and quantities before scoping the remaining development and construction document work, preventing over-payment on cut features. In response to A. Baker's question on costs, D. Elder clarified that the design development phase deals with sign content rather than physical units, requiring substantial GIS mapping and graphic design to completely update maps with new mileages and locations.

D. Perkins requested that a high level of safety awareness be built into trail crossings. H. Marks and D. Elder explained that traffic engineering falls outside Watermark's

wayfinding scope but can be coordinated as a separate task through McAdams, who P. Ray confirmed is actively reviewing intersection concerns. T. Buckwalter clarified that regulatory safety signage is funded and handled via the main trail construction contract rather than this way-finding project, though the final intersections will match top safety standards.

M. Tooley noted that NCDOT's R-5800 project will cover safety features at most intersections except for locations like McLean Road, requiring the team to coordinate amenity placement with DOT plans. D. Miller and A. Baker supported phasing the contract into two parts to complete conceptual work first, which Miller noted could trim down subsequently design costs once sign quantities are known. D. Elder clarified that because this is an hourly contract rather than a lump-sum fee, the total cost remains similar either way. W. Hooper confirmed staff will renegotiate the contract into a two-part agreement and noted that while currently unfunded, staff are discussing underwriting options with FOET and the TDA, with City Council as a backup.

The project focus remains on integrating the final two-mile stretch from Oskar Blues to downtown into the larger, cohesive trail system to provide a seamless user experience. Co-branding strategies with the Estatoe Trail remain under evaluation, and D. Elder emphasized that the committee should establish a definitive direction on this branding partnership in the near future.

A debate emerged over trail naming conventions for the segment past Main Street. D. Miller advocated for exclusive Ecusta Trail branding, citing a past City Council resolution and warning that dual names confuse trail users; he proposed honoring the Estatoe Trail strictly through interpretive signage. A. Baker and H. Marks defended co-branding options, emphasizing the deep historical value of the Estatoe name and suggesting a joint designation. While Miller asserted that implementing co-branding legally requires a return to City Council to amend the existing resolution, Baker countered that the council's baseline terminus decision never formally dissolved the historical Estatoe designation.

P. Ray then cleared up the confusion by explaining how the co-branding would actually look to a trail user, mapping a route where you ride on the Estatoe Trail, connect onto the Ecusta Trail, and then transition right back onto the Estatoe Trail.

A. Baker agreed with D. Miller on preserving the historically significant Estatoe Trail name but noted limited public awareness. To avoid visitor confusion, Baker recommended establishing a clear boundary at the Oskar Blues T-intersection: the branch toward the sports complex should remain the Estatoe Trail, while the branch toward downtown should be the Ecusta Trail, adding that the upcoming segment from Main Street to the high school will eventually need its own name. D. Perkins observed that the public will likely naturally default to call the corridor the Ecusta Trail anyway. M. Tooley suggested delegating the naming decision to the Parks and

Trails Committee to avoid group bias, prompting W. Hooper to state he would look into asking City Council for a formal committee referral.

A discussion arose regarding whether an established trail corridor requires immediate buffering. D. Elder and A. Baker noted existing paths minimize new property owner friction, but D. Perkins and H. Marks successfully advocated for a proactive screening review, citing historical neighbor pushback on a prior trail segment. Addressing route adjustments, W. Hooper confirmed to D. Miller that Watermark's planning scope will include the official realignment of the Estatoe Trail behind a cluster of local gas stations.

D. Elder concluded the presentation and thanked the committee for their input. He noted that the project team is fully prepared to adjust the contract scope based on the group's feedback and invited the board to submit any subsequent questions.

VIII. Remarks / Future Agenda

A. Baker opened the floor for final committee remarks.

Addressing L. Chapman's concerns over broader government budget cuts, W. Hooper and L. Watkins confirmed that the project's grant funding is entirely secure and currently held by the State of North Carolina. For long-term operations, Hooper updated the board that maintenance discussions are pushed to the final 35% design phase after the 65% cost estimates are delivered in September. This delay ensures the project is financially viable first and allows the team to incorporate actual annual maintenance metrics from the neighboring Henderson County trail segment.

Highlighting that Brevard lacks the municipal personnel infrastructure of Henderson County to sustain independent trail upkeep, D. Miller proposed a codified public-private partnership. He pointed to the Bracken Trail Extension as a successful precedent and urged the city to secure a formal, written agreement. This structural approach is intended to secure a dependable maintenance framework, maximize private fundraising and external grant opportunities, and efficiently scale volunteer labor.

Anticipating public friction, M. Tooley urged a proactive update to Brevard's e-bike ordinance to regulate high-powered "e-motos" and mitigate severe congestion risks along this narrow urban trail segment. P. Ray confirmed that municipal staff are already addressing the concern, with Aaron Bland's team researching successful e-bike regulatory frameworks from other regional trail networks.

IX. Next Meeting

A. Baker confirmed that the committee will reconvene for its next monthly regular meeting on Wednesday, August 26th, 2026, at 3:30 p.m.

X. Adjourn

On a motion by D. Lytle, seconded by M. Tooley and carried unanimously, A. Baker adjourned the meeting at 5:20 p.m.

DRAFT

_____
Aaron Baker, Chair

Minutes Approved Date-_____

_____
Edievith Gass, Board Secretary

STAFF REPORT
Ecusta Trail Advisory Board, Wednesday, September 30, 2026

Title: Introducing New ETAB At-Large Member

Speaker:
Prepared by:
Approved by:

Introducing New Ecusta Trail Advisory Board At-Large Member — Joseph "Joe" Moore

Attachments:

STAFF REPORT
Ecusta Trail Advisory Board, Wednesday, September 30, 2026

Title: Ecusta Trail: 60% Design Phase Cost Estimate

Speaker:
Prepared by:
Approved by:

Attachments: