MINUTES
City Council Parks, Trails, & Recreation Committee

Wednesday, February 21, 2024 at 3:30 PM
Administration Conference Room

Members Present:	Aaron Baker, Chair, Council Member Lauren Wise, Vice-Chair, Council Member Howie Granat, Citizen Member Nancy DePippo, Citizen Member Wyn Birkenthal, Citizen Member Reba Osborne, Citizen Member Mayor Maureen Copelof, Ex-Officio Member
Staff Present:	Wilson Hooper, City Manager Wesley Shook, Acting Public Works Director Paul Ray, Planning Director Alex Shepherd, Assistant to the City Manager Aaron Bland, Assistant Planning Director Becky McCann, Communications Coordinator
Guests:	Gary Lowden, Daniel Sapp

A. Welcome & Call to Order

Committee Chair Aaron Baker 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. Wise, seconded by Mr. Granat, to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

D. Approval of Minutes from January 17, 2024 Meeting

Motion by Ms. DePippo, seconded by Mr. Granat to approve the minutes of the January 17, 2024 meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

E. Bracken Preserve Maintenance Update

Mr. Hooper informed the committee that he has learned about an agreement between the City of Asheville and Pisgah SORBA for a similar trail. By the next meeting, I should have a better idea of what the agreement between the City of Asheville and Pisgah SORBA looks like.

Mr. Lowden mentioned that in December, we submitted a draft MOU based on the City of Asheville agreement. The draft outlines the roles and responsibilities for maintaining Bracken Preserve. Our partnership with the City of Brevard can be whatever we want to make it. It can relate to existing and ongoing trail maintenance, reroutes of existing trails, creating new trails, marketing elements, and trail tool training and certifications. We are part of a national organization that includes a code of conduct and ethics, making our organization very professional.

Mr. Sapp stated that as an organization, Pisgah SORBA is interested in working in communities surrounding Pisgah National Forest to build and maintain healthy trail systems. Bracken Preserve is an important area because it is a gateway into Pisgah Forest.

Mr. Hooper asked what we should do to be a better partner to you if we are to build a partnership together.

Mr. Lowden replied that it is essential to recognize the value the City of Brevard sees in Bracken Preserve, along with the expansion possibilities and opportunities. Additionally, the willingness of the City to assist and be a genuine partner is crucial.

Mr. Sapp emphasized the importance of good communication, transparency, and a willingness to collaborate to find solutions that benefit the community and contribute to building a healthy community.

Mr. Baker mentioned that in terms of the next steps, Mr. Hooper is collaborating with the City of Asheville, and we have the draft MOU.

Mr. Hooper stated that he will receive the document from the City of Asheville and then work to craft an MOU that we can share with the committee and Pisgah SORBA.

Mr. Baker inquired about how the MOU works alongside Phase 1.

Mr. Granat stated that the Phase 1 trail work is contingent on whether it will be Conserving Carolina or the City of Brevard contracting Long Cane Trails. However, it will likely be Conserving Carolina. We will be able to involve Pisgah SORBA in some of the trail construction and maintenance. Then, it transitions into the trail maintenance that Pisgah SORBA will be assisting us with. He mentioned that we have the announcement for the American Trails Grant coming up during the first week of March. Additionally, there is a group of people discussing forming a Friends of Bracken

Preserve organization, and I have discussed with Mr. Hooper how exactly that would fit in.

F. Pump Track Update

Mr. Bland mentioned that last year, we retained a company under contract named Velo Solutions to design a pump track at Tannery Park North. There are two tracks: one that is more child and family-friendly and another for more advanced riders. It is something that can be used by cyclists of all ages and abilities and can accommodate anything with wheels. The pump track is built to the specs of the Red Bull World Cup races. It would be a beneficial amenity to install on a brownfield because it would encapsulate the contaminated soil. The price tag for the pump track construction is $800,000. We are exploring substantial grants, but to become competitive, we need a large local match.

Mr. Sapp added that there are several grants we could potentially apply for, including the Great Trail State Fund, which was recently established through trail advocacy during the Year of the Trail. This grant allows for funding of up to $500,000 with a minimum of $100,000. The grant covers paved, natural surface, or any sort of trail feature. The administrators of the grant are seeking turnkey-ready projects, and after speaking with them, they seem interested in this project. Additionally, there are many private donations we could pursue from corporations in the outdoor recreation industry.

Mr. Bland mentioned that we shouldn't only focus on private donations from the Brevard and Transylvania County area. He stated that pump tracks are regional draws, so we could seek funding from outside of this area.

Mr. Granat asked if there would be the option to build a dirt BMX track as part of the overall plan.

Mr. Sapp replied that there has been some discussion about including dirt jumps.

Mr. Bland informed the committee that the survey results indicated people wanted dirt jumps, but that would increase the cost to build and maintain. He suggested a phase 2 where dirt jumps could be implemented.

Mr. Baker inquired if there is an outside organization that would spearhead this effort because the City has other priorities, such as the Estatoe Trail, where momentum is needed to build all the sections.

Mr. Sapp stated that we have a membership base enthusiastic enough to spearhead this effort. He offered to guide the project but noted his limited time resources. However, he believed it shouldn't be too difficult to share the workload.

Mr. Lowden stated that Pisgah SORBA's priorities this year are Butter Gap and Bracken Preserve, so this does leave some time and resources that we could devote to the pump track.

G. Additional Comments

Mr. Hooper stated that the issue we heard about last month concerning the easement request should have been directed to another committee. I made a mistake by sending it to this committee when I heard that Bracken Preserve was part of the discussion. He clarified that it is actually a policy discussion, and I will reassign the request to the Public Works and Utilities Committee. Mr. Hooper also mentioned that HomeTrust Bank has offered us additional parcels, but the City would have to continue paying the HOA dues on those extra parcels.

Ms. DePippo inquired about the bathrooms at the soccer field.

Mr. Hooper responded that it will be part of our budget discussion in the weeks to come.

Mr. Baker asked if there was any update on the Tannery North section of the Estatoe.

Mr. Ray replied that Mr. Watkins is still working on the environmental aspect of it and is getting close to completing that.

Ms. McCann mentioned that our top-performing posts from last year across the board were parks, trails, and recreation-related. The posts included the pump track, Estatoe, Tannery South completion post, and the Ecusta Trail Grants.

H. Set Date for Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Parks, Trails & Recreation Committee was scheduled for Wednesday, March 20, 2024 at 3:30 PM.

I. Adjourn

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

X _____

Aaron Baker
Chair, Council Member

Minutes Approved: March 20, 2024

X _____

Alex Shepherd
Assistant to the City Manager