MINUTES
City Council Parks, Trails, & Recreation Committee

Wednesday, August 20, 2025 - 3:30 PM
City Hall Council Chambers

Members Present:	Aaron Baker, Chair, Council Member Lauren Wise, Vice Chair, Council Member Howie Granat, Citizen Member Reba Osborne, Citizen Member Daniel Jesse, Citizen Member Jackson Tate, Citizen Member JD Powers, Citizen Member Mayor Maureen Copelof, Ex-Officio
Staff Present:	Wilson Hooper, City Manager David Todd, Assistant City Manager Paul Ray, Planning Director Aaron Bland, Assistant Planning Director Wesley Shook, Public Works Director Becky McCann, Communications Coordinator
Guests:	Dave Bradley, Gary Lowden, Doug Miller

A. Welcome & Call to Order

Committee Chair Aaron Baker welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:35pm.

B. Certification of Quorum

A quorum was certified by Communications Coordinator Becky McCann.

C. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Baker asked that agenda be amended to swap the Bracken Trail Update (item E.2) and the Estatoe Trail Update (item E.1). Mr. Hooper asked to add Main Street Bike Route Concepts as item E.4. Mr. Wise made a motion to approve the modified agenda, which was seconded by Mr. Powers. All voted in favor.

D. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Powers made a motion to approve the minutes, and Ms. Osborne seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

E. Presentation by Pisgah Health Foundation

Dean Saint Marie, a board member of the Pisgah Health Foundation, was in attendance to discuss the potential to allow Conserving Carolina to take Pisgah Health's donation of eleven acres of land to the Conserving Carolina executive committee on July 28. The Pisgah Health board also approved a contribution of $4,000 to help with closing costs on this land. Pisgah Health provided this land to assist with continuing to build out the park and trailhead. Mr. Saint Marie shared that the vision for the land was for the city to receive the land to develop it out to fit its parks and recreation goals.

The committee expressed that they support Pisgah Health turning the land over to Conserving Carolina and then the city working with Conserving Carolina to create a vision for a park in that area in the future and potential for future grant funding.

F. Updates

1. Bracken Trail/Climbing Trail Loop Follow-up

Mr. Lowden reported that Pisgah SORBA has received 3 bids for the trail work, and they are evaluating the bids. He noted that all were local bidders. Once they finish SORBA's internal review, they will meet with city staff. He noted that they are looking at opportunities for grant funding and that the bids ranged from $50,000 to over $100,000. Mr. Lowden suggested that the bids may come before the committee in a month or two. The committee discussed the potential for price changes during the time that Pisgah SORBA and the city reviewed the bids and SORBA is working to find funding for the entire project.

Mr. Granat shared that Bracken Fest is Saturday, September 27, 2025, and distributed flyers and shared information about the event. It was noted that Bracken has been nominated as an "Old Growth Forest."

2. Estatoe Trail Update

Mr. Hooper shared that the city has received $111,000 grant from the N.C. Great Trails program to complete the design work for the trail from Main Street to Mary C. Jenkins Community Center and from Rosman Highway to the High School. This grant was intended all the design, but council had asked staff to use city money last year to start the project early. Mr. Hooper also updated the committee that staff had negotiated with the state regarding the 4-F Certification, a certification for federally funded highway projects impacting recreational assets must obtain before proceeding. He stated that affecting a recreational facility requires a 1:1 replacement. Because R5800 will be impacted by state work, they will put back what is comparable there now. This will mean that they must advertise on the trail

offering the opportunity for the public to have input. The committee discussed the importance of encouraging public input.

Mr. Hooper shared that the right of way had been marked, and staff discovered that the property lines were in the middle of the rail bed and there would be some irregularities because of this. The committee discussed the work with homeowners and the construction of the trail at length.

3. **Estatoe Boardwalk Update**

Mr. Hooper then asked the committee whether the city should permanently reroute the trail onto the railbed or repair the boardwalk, with possible different alignments. He noted that this project is a good candidate for a specific grant that the city needs to repair the bridge. He shared that the reroute behind CVS has not been planned and designed yet and would likely not be a competitive candidate for the grant.

Mr. Todd then shared more about the boardwalk materials options. He stated that he had asked the city's designer to consider four options for replacing sections of the boardwalk. His recommendation was to figure out a way to get the trail off Highway 64. The committee discussed the grant and timing challenges.

Mr. Hooper asked the committee to make a recommendation to city council on which alignment should be submitted for the grant. Mr. Granat indicated that it seems that the committee would like to align the boardwalk with the old railway bed and complete the second boardwalk at grade. The committee discussed this option. Mr. Hooper asked if the committee was agreeable to spend some of the designated trail funds to pay the designer for the plans.

Mr. Granat a motion that the committee recommends moving forward with the grant application for the railroad bed realignment, moving the CVS section to on-grade, and allocating $15,000 from the Multi-Use Path Fund to pay for the planning and design. Ms. Osborne seconded this motion. All committee members were in favor.

4. **Main Street Bike Route**

Mr. Hooper reported that the goal is to enhance several blocks of West Main Street to extend the Estatoe trail into the heart of downtown. He noted that the Downtown Master Plan Committee has already considered the concept, and he felt it important to share the concepts with this committee. Mr. Todd detailed the options as driven by the Downtown Master Plan Committee. He shared that each option had its own challenges, especially regarding downtown parking. In detailing the options, Mr. Todd noted the following points:

a. Bi-directional bike lanes – Loss off more parking going to Clemson Plaza than to England Street.
b. Sharrows – These were proposed as a way to look at not losing as much parking spaces.
c. Dedicated bike lanes – Staff hopes that these will reduce the loss of parking.

Mr. Todd illustrated the options on the monitors as he described each option. The committee discussed the various options, but action was not necessary.

G. Public Comment

Doug Miller suggested that the committee try to use the best option for getting people away from the roads when they are riding their bikes.

H. Set Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for September 17, 2025 at 3:30pm.

I. Adjourn

Mr. Wise made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Ms. Osborne. All voted in favor and the meeting adjourned at 5:20pm.

Approved: September 17, 2025

Aaron Baker, Chair or
Lauren Wise, Vice Chair

Selena D. Coffey
Assistant to the City Manager