MINUTES
City Council Parks, Trails & Recreation Committee

Wednesday, June 17, 2026, at 3:30 PM
City Hall Council Chambers

Members Present:	Aaron Baker, Chair, Council Member Lauren Wise, Vice Chair, Council Member Jackson Tate, Citizen Member Howie Granat, Citizen Member Maureen Copelof, Mayor, Ex-Officio
Members Absent:	Daniel Jessee, Citizen Member JD Powers, Citizen Member Reba Osborne, Citizen Member
Staff Present:	Wilson Hooper, City Manager Aaron Bland, Assistant Planning Director Shawnee Cummings, Assistant to the City Manager
Guests:	Gary Lowden
Media:	David Bradley

A. Welcome and Call to Order

Committee Chair Aaron Baker welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:30 PM.

B. Certification of Quorum

Assistant to the City Manager Shawnee Cummings certified that a quorum was present.

C. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Granat motioned to approve the agenda. Mr. Tate seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

D. Approval of Minutes – May 20, 2026

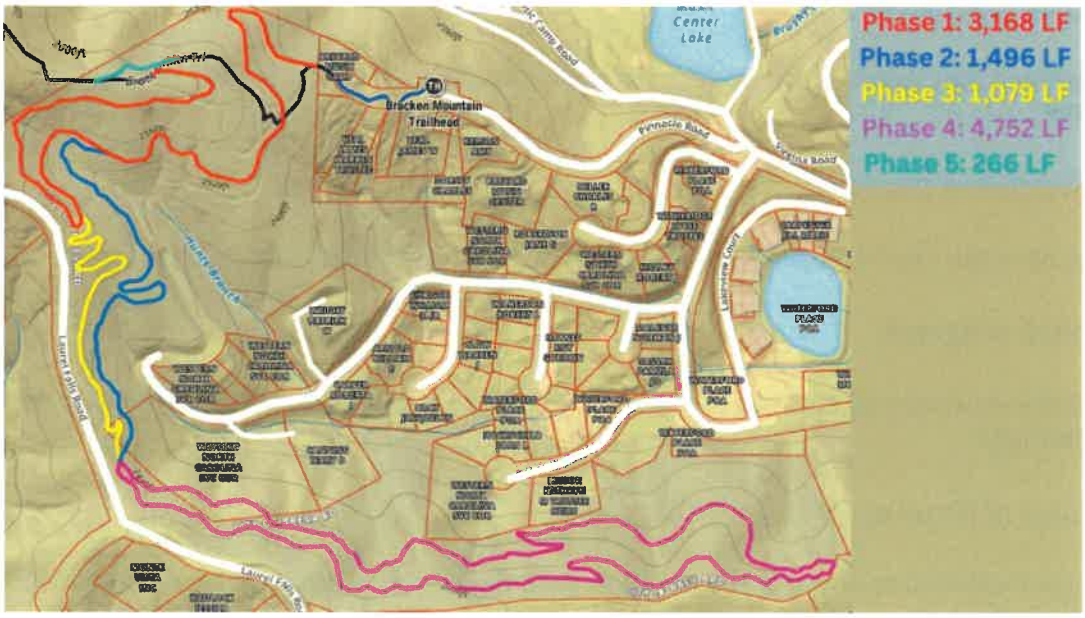
Mr. Wise motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Granat. The motion carried unanimously.

E. Naming and Direction of New Bracken Trail

Mr. Bland said the original concept plan for the new Bracken trails included an additional trail that was not covered in the last discussion. Todd Branham, who is building the trails, offered to add that trail into his scope of work for no additional cost. A new trail name is needed for the fourth trail and the previously offered options were: Mountain Rush (rare plant found in Bracken), Squawroot (plant found in Bracken), Galax (plant found in Bracken), Rich Cove (habitat in Bracken), and Hunts Branch (creek with headwaters in Bracken). Mr. Bland said these are names related to the features of Bracken, but suggestions are welcomed. All that is needed is a name recommendation, but the Committee can also make this a directional trail, as it may be more conducive to being downhill only. Alternatively, they can also wait to see if directionality arises after the trails are opened for use, as it can always be changed later.

Mr. Granat noted that the recommended names for the loop and connector, Laughing Water Loop and Laughing Water Connector, were changed at a Council meeting to Bailey Loop and Bailey Connector. There was no substantiating historical evidence behind the Laughing Water story, which described a Blackfoot woman who escaped slavery and settled in the area. At the risk of perpetuating a legend, Council opted for trail names that honored a family whose history can be traced back to the Pinnacle Community.

Mr. Bland displayed the map below and stated that the red trail is the Mac Morrow Trail, the blue trail is the Bailey Connector, the pink trail is the Bailey Loop, and the yellow trail is the one in need of a name. The unnamed trail parallels the Bailey Connector but has more turns and elevation change. Mr. Lowden said the trail is next to the gravel road and was originally eliminated because the pitch did not accommodate an intermediate slope level, but everyone kept it in mind as a potential higher-level trail.



Mr. Granat asked if the trail is downhill only, will it be an impediment to other users. Mr. Lowden said it creates a shorter path from the Bailey Loop if you are going up and Mr. Bland said if you wanted to do the Bailey Loop, it does not prevent you from doing that

in the quickest and easiest way. Mr. Granat suggested waiting until the trail is open to see traffic patterns before deciding if it should be directional. Mr. Bland agreed and said they could wait to see what happens organically and if there are any conflicts to address. Mr. Granat said he likes Mountain Rush for a descending, fun switchback trail.

Mr. Baker said it seems like the Bailey Connector and the new trail are very tight together and asked if you can see one trail from the other. Mr. Bland said yes, but there is a grade difference and from the yellow trail, you are looking down on the blue trail. He added that it is visible right now due to how much brush was cut back while doing the trail work but it will fill in naturally. In the winter, there will be spots you can see.

Mr. Tate agreed that he likes Mountain Rush, as it seems fitting for the trail. Mr. Wise agreed, noting its double meaning.

Mr. Baker said everyone loves the signage at Bracken, but he knows it was not cheap. He added that we have not really talked about how signage factors in here. Mr. Bland said it is being talked about internally and they discussed using one of the box structures from the existing trails and repurposing it in the new area to get signage along the trails relatively soon. He added that the box structures are not hard to install, but they are big and have to be moved. A graphic designer will be needed to design a decal to affix to the structure and all of the decals will need to be updated, as the maps are outdated. Mr. Bland said at the very least, there will be some of the flexible trail signs you see at Pisgah, but more informative signs are in the works. He added that they also plan to have a donor recognition sign that acknowledges the donors who helped the City get the land, and a sign with wayfinding that identifies private property and the quickest way back to the parking lot. Mr. Granat said there are a couple box structures along Brushy Creek Trail that can be used, as there is redundancy. He added that as part of the graphic design, the QR codes need to be updated because they currently do not lead to anything and if the QR code leads to a map, users will worry less about the directional piece of it.

Mr. Tate motioned, seconded by Mr. Granat to recommend the yellow section of trail be named "Mountain Rush Trail." The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Lowden said they have had 12 volunteer days, totaling 240 hours of work, and 2 field inspections with the contractor and the City. The Mac Morrow Trail is 50% done, is naturalizing for proper use, and will have a soft opening on July 1st. The Bailey Connector is complete and naturalized. The Bailey Loop and the trail recommended as Mountain Rush Trail are 50% done and are having roots cut and removed. Once done, the trails will need to naturalize before completion. There are 2 more volunteer days scheduled and more will be added if needed. By the end of June, all trails will be complete and naturalized, allowing a few weeks of aging prior to the ribbon cutting.

F. Schedule Bracken Trail Opening/Ribbon Cutting

Mr. Bland said the ribbon cutting is scheduled for July 10 and the plan is to assemble at the Jimmy Harris Railroad Depot at 9am. From there, people who are interested in a group ride will ride their bikes up to Bracken beginning at about 9:15am and there will

be shuttles for people who do not want to ride up to Bracken. Around 10am, a few people will say some remarks at the trailhead, they will cut the ribbon, and everyone will walk up to the new trails from the parking lot. After visiting the trails, people will return to the Depot for refreshments.

Mr. Baker asked if someone has talked to Mac Morrow to make sure he can be there. Mayor Copelof said he needs to be there so she will extend the invitation to him. Mr. Granat said Rebekah Robinson with Conserving Carolina will be there and Mr. Bland said Chris from Pisgah Area SORBA will also be there. Mr. Wise asked if there are any members of the Bailey family around. Mr. Hooper said he will call some people in Rosenwald and see if they know of any members of the Bailey family that are still in the area. Mr. Granat said he will also ask Edith Darity at the Juneteenth celebration.

Mr. Granat said they are working on the permanent signage to recognize donors at different thresholds but asked about donor recognition at the ribbon cutting. Mr. Bland said that they will have something at the Depot that lists major donors, but it has yet to be designed. Mr. Granat said Jenn Tutor at Conserving Carolina is contacting donors to see if they are okay with being recognized and to also invite them to the ribbon cutting.

Committee Comments

Mr. Baker stated that there has been a lot of discussion about bathrooms at parks during the budget process and he did not realize that there were external bathrooms at Mary C. Jenkins Community and Cultural Center (MCJCCC). Mr. Granat said those bathrooms are never open and he does not know why. Mr. Hooper said he has some information with the caveat that the hours have been different since Tyree has been on paternity leave. The bathrooms are open 8am-5pm Monday through Friday when Tyree is there and as needed for special events. Mr. Baker asked how we can extend those hours into the evening because there is not a ton of activity during the day, but there are people at the park almost every evening. Mayor Copelof said there are always people on weekends.

Mr. Baker said he knows it is tricky and we have had problems with restrooms getting vandalized in the past, but even though it is a challenge, he would like to figure out a way to extend the restroom hours. Secondly, he said we need to publicize that with signage on the exterior of the restrooms and at Silversteen Park.

Mr. Wise asked how the bathrooms at the Depot get locked/unlocked. Mr. Hooper said they are remotely locked/unlocked or can be set on a timer, which is likely similar to what would be in place at MCJCCC, but the trouble is when people find out the bathroom locks at 5pm and they go in at 4:59pm and then stay in there all evening after it locks.

To keep the facilities open after hours, there will need to be designated Staff who check to ensure the bathrooms are vacant at closing time. Mr. Hooper said it is possible but it takes some extra effort and time on Staff's part. He added that when you have police, who work around the clock, lock and unlock the bathrooms, you run the risk of them missing a day because they are on a call or handling an urgent matter. For that reason, they are not necessarily the best group to lock/unlock the bathroom reliably, but their

schedules are the most conducive to it. Public Works could unlock the bathrooms in the morning, but they get done with work at 3:30pm so they cannot lock them at night. Mr. Hooper said it will be incumbent upon Staff to determine the appropriate person to lock the restrooms in the evening and to set the schedule so that person could do so reliably.

Mayor Copelof added that if the restrooms will be open over the weekend, they will need to be cleaned. Mr. Granat asked if we have a sanitation crew that does the cleaning for City facilities. Mr. Hooper said we have in-house custodian who cleans the Depot bathrooms, MCJCCC, and City Hall, but she works business hours. When there is a vandalism in bathrooms over the weekend, a non-custodian employee is called in. Mr. Wise asked if the bathrooms inside of MCJCCC are available. Mr. Hooper said if someone is there and the building is open, then yes. Mr. Baker said once we know how we are going to execute it, signage will be critical. Mr. Granat asked with proper signage and longer hours for the MCJCCC bathrooms, would we get rid of the porta-johns at Silversteen Park. Mayor Copelof said no, it is too far for little kids and there are some ADA accessibility issues given that it is on a hill. Mr. Hooper added that Tyree will be back on the 29th and Staff will discuss further upon his return. Mr. Baker requested that we follow up on this item next month and Mayor Copelof suggested discussing it with the Rosenwald Community Advisory Board first rather than surprise them with signs.

Mr. Granat said upon careful consideration and the fact that the Bracken project is almost complete, next meeting will be his last Committee meeting. After 6 years, he decided to put his volunteer efforts into other avenues. Mayor Copelof said it will not be the same without him and we will need to advertise for the vacancy. Mr. Granat was appointed in 2020 to fill a vacancy, reappointed in 2021 and 2023, and reappointed for the current term in May 2025. The Committee thanked Mr. Granat for his service.

Mr. Baker said he has been following up with Staff on the Tannery North project because he knows there were some delays. He heard that our design work was accepted and the let date on June 23rd is still set, but we do not know how long it will take the contractor to mobilize. Mr. Wise asked when the smokestack demolition is scheduled to start. Mr. Hooper said we are still awaiting approval of the environmental management plan (EMP). Mr. Wise asked if those two things can work in conjunction. Mr. Hooper said it will be helpful for the smokestack contractor if the trail construction starts first because they will have to build a road and if the trail contractor builds the road, it gets a little easier for the smokestack contractor. He added that the work of the two contractors may overlap some, but they will be on opposite ends of the property.

Mr. Wise mentioned that the Committee is the proud new owner of the Parks and Recreation Capital Fund, which is partially funded to handle the Sports Complex design, which includes bathrooms and the parking lot. The fund will house funding for all of our parks and recreation facilities, but currently contains one targeted project. Mr. Hooper said it has $11,000 and on July 1st, it will have another $46,000, for a total of $57,000.

Mr. Tate asked if there is an update on the Friends of Franklin Park. Mayor Copelof said they are active and working with Mr. Todd. Mr. Hooper said they have cleaned up, removed of overgrown vegetation, and identified longer-term projects that need to be

done. He said eventually they may say it is too much for them to do alone and that they need help, but so far, they have been relatively autonomous with Mr. Todd's supervision.

Mayor Copelof said she saw Mr. Ray started a conversation with the County about doing a joint parks and recreation plan because the existing plan is 10+ years old. If the plan is over 10 years old, they cannot use it to apply for a PARTF grant, which is what will be needed for parks and recreation improvements, like replacing the playground equipment at Franklin Park. She added that it was encouraging to see that the County was at least initially interested in starting a discussion about trying to do a joint plan.

Mr. Hooper said there will be a lot of activity this fall and next spring in relation to the Ecusta Trail and a lot of big decisions will come in quick succession. The trail crosses two culverts that are not at their end of life, but should probably be replaced, and we anticipated it being prohibitively expensive and/or that it would change the project scope. He said we got good news this week, which is that they will not be as expensive as anticipated and are eligible for grant funding. If there is leftover grant money, the culverts can be replaced during construction. If there is no grant money left and the City can find the money, the culverts can be replaced cheaply because the ground will already be torn up due to construction. Mr. Baker asked if the culverts are in City limits. Mr. Hooper said yes, they are by Oskar Blues and along Old Hendersonville Hwy.

G. Public Comment

No members of the public spoke during public comment.

H. Set Date for Next Meeting – Wednesday, July 15, 2026, at 3:30 PM

Committee members set the date for the next meeting on July 15, 2026, at 3:30 PM.

I. Adjourn

There being no further business, Mr. Wise motioned to adjourn, Mr. Tate seconded, the motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:25 PM.

Approved: July 15, 2026

Aaron Baker, Chair, Council Member, or
Lauren Wise, Vice Chair, Council Member

Shawnee A. Cummings
Shawnee Cummings
Assistant to the City Manager