MINUTES
City Council Parks, Trails & Recreation Committee

Wednesday, September 16, 2026, at 3:30 PM
City Hall Council Chambers

Members Present:	Aaron Baker, Chair, Council Member (left at 4:16pm) Lauren Wise, Vice Chair, Council Member Jackson Tate, Citizen Member Daniel Jessee, Citizen Member Maureen Copelof, Mayor, Ex-Officio
Members Absent:	Reba Osborne, Citizen Member Shanna Powell, Citizen Member JD Powers, Citizen Member
Staff Present:	Wilson Hooper, City Manager David Todd, Assistant City Manager Aaron Bland, Assistant Planning Director Shawnee Cummings, Assistant to the City Manager
Guests:	None
Media:	Vivian Bikulege; Jonathan Rich

A. Welcome and Call to Order

Committee Chair Aaron Baker welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:31PM. Note: The audio recording of the meeting did not start until 4:00PM.

B. Certification of Quorum

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

C. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Baker asked to address Item G, "Revisit Visioning for Next Phases of Multi-Use Path," first, making it Item E. Mr. Wise motioned to approve the agenda as amended. Mr. Jessee seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

D. Approval of Minutes – August 19, 2026

Mr. Wise motioned, seconded by Mr. Jessee to approve the minutes of the August 19, 2026 meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

E. Revisit Visioning for Next Phases of Multi-Use Path

Mr. Bland displayed a map with the potential trail segments discussed by the Committee at the last meeting. Many future connections are in the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and several are being scored in the STIP. Mr. Bland said the Committee was unclear as to the goal of this conversation in Mr. Baker's absence and suggested possibly ranking the connections and creating an addendum to the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

Mr. Baker said with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, most of the planned connections are on main roads and asked if we are relying on NCDOT to complete those. He noted that NCDOT's projects are so far out in the future that it will likely be decades before the multi-use paths get built. Mr. Bland said we are not entirely relying on NCDOT but many of the paths are planned on main roads so that we can take advantage of NCDOT's Complete Streets policies to get the paths built. Mr. Bland added that Old Hendersonville Hwy/US 64 has the best chance of getting a multi-use path due to its "express design," meaning that it has a quick turn-around design with greater accuracy in utility relocation, right of way, and construction cost estimates.

Mr. Baker said the only trail in the City that was constructed with NCDOT assistance is Tannery North, which is currently under construction, and it is not because the project was in the STIP. He added that all of the multi-use paths constructed in the City were created because the City worked to create them and asked if the City is committed to continuing that work once the section of the multi-use path from Rosman Hwy to the High School is complete. The main section that is missing is on the eastern side of town, and if completed, it would create a loop. The Committee discussed that the main road that could create the eastern loop is Neely Rd. but given that there are sections that are unsafe for bicyclists, alternatives are needed. Alternatives discussed include potential easements through farm land, in between housing and the French Broad River, and possible use of a strip of land behind the Summit St. neighborhood.

Mayor Copelof agreed that the eastern side of the City has little access to the multi-use paths and that it is hard to say we are a "bike city" when there is a portion of the City that lacks connectivity. She emphasized that the community should have access to the multi-use paths as a form of transportation and be able to live in the City without a car.

Mr. Baker stated that we need to have more of a vision for our trail system outside of NCDOT and advised that we need to look into alternatives for the eastern side of the City. It was discussed that the vision should really have 2 components, 1 that takes advantage of NCDOT projects so that multi-use paths can be constructed using State funding and 1 that prioritizes connections to activity centers in our community.

Mr. Todd brought up a potential connection to DuPont State Forest and Mr. Jessee said that the Friends of DuPont organization is very interested in creating connections to other multi-use paths in the City. Mr. Baker said that he thinks that would be another project since it does not really support connectivity within the City.

Mr. Baker advised Staff to research potential routes for an eastern leg between Neely Rd. and the French Broad River. The Committee will hold a future discussion on creating a prioritized list that will be an addendum to the Bike and Pedestrian Plan.

F. Update on Friends of Franklin Park Meeting

Mr. Todd stated that he and Mr. Hooper met with Ron White, who is leading Friends of Franklin Park's (FoFP) efforts, and discussed having a more regular dialogue and potentially bringing their organization to the next level. Mr. Hooper stated that they shared the menu of projects that Staff created for Franklin Park, totaling about $1 million, and discussed projects that the FoFP could assist with. Mr. White indicated during the meeting that their organization would be willing to help fundraise for the projects but did not think they would be able to fundraise anything close to $1 million. Mr. White said he would assess how the other neighbors feel about fundraising and their willingness to be involved and that he would report back to Staff. Mr. White further advised that FoFP would be more likely to fundraise for design or the creation of a master plan for Franklin Park, rather than for the project costs themselves, and that the design/master plan could be used to obtain funding for construction/updates.

Mr. Wise asked if we have a number for the renovations to the pool yet. Mr. Todd said they reached out to several contractors, and at least one came to the site, but they do not have a firm number for the cost of repairs yet.

G. Update on Sports Complex Improvements

Mr. Bland explained that Mr. Ray is refining the McAdams proposal because it came in slightly over budget, but as long as there are no surprises, we should be under contract in the next week. Mr. Wise asked how close this gets us to construction drawings, to which Mr. Bland said it will include construction drawings and permitting. Initially, it was thought that the trail re-route behind the skate park was excluded due to cost, but after reviewing the proposal, Mr. Bland said the proposal also includes design for the potential trail re-route. The design will take about 3 months to complete. Mr. Todd added that design is usually about 10% of estimated construction costs, so if that holds true, construction will be at least $600,000. The Committee discussed that there is currently no money set aside for the project construction costs, as there is only $60,000 in the Parks and Recreation Capital Fund for the Sports Complex design. Mr. Baker said it is great news on the Sports Complex and we should have something early next year.

Committee Comments

Mr. Hooper said Mr. Todd has come to an agreement with the little league on the terms for which we would accept lighting on one of the baseball fields. The terms will be recorded in an amendment to the lease and presented to the little league this week.

Mr. Baker asked if Staff have talked with the little league about the maintenance requirements for the fields. Mr. Hooper confirmed and said he has indicated to them that before the City resigns the lease, there will need to be a discussion about the

service levels, how taxing it is on the City, and whether they can take on some of the maintenance responsibilities or lower their expectations of service levels. He added that that is an example of a service level that could be reduced a little without a huge impact on the league. Mr. Baker said he doesn't want to speak for them, but they probably have folks willing to help out with those kind of responsibilities and asked if there are any liability issues with parents and coaches helping out. Mr. Todd said they have parents and coaches helping out now, but Staff have indicated that often, they have to spend a significant amount of time redoing the work. Staff also lets volunteers use some of the equipment, but not the nicest equipment, because sometimes volunteers are inexperienced and unintentionally tear up the equipment.

Mr. Wise asked if the lease with the little league is year to year. Mr. Hooper confirmed and said he thinks we need to let the little league know by January if we intend to renew. Mr. Baker asked if we know the costs and amount of time spent on field maintenance historically and for example, if we are spending more time on it now than 5 years ago. Mr. Todd said he would have to ask.

The Committee discussed the next meeting, a joint meeting with the Downtown Master Plan Implementation and Downtown Advisory Committee, and the lack of agreement on the proposed bike lane options and the goals to prioritize. It was agreed that there will have to be discussion on goals before reviewing concepts. A decision is not required at the meeting, as the project is unfunded, but with less options, Staff will be better able to seek outside funding. The Ecusta Trail funding will be going towards the trail itself first and if there is any money left over, it could potentially be put toward the bike lanes.

H. Public Comment

No members of the public spoke during Public Comment.

I. Set Date for Next Meeting – Wednesday, October 14, 2026, at 3:30 PM

Committee members set the date for the next meeting on October 14, 2026, at 3:30 PM, which will occur jointly with the Downtown Master Plan Implementation and Downtown Advisory Committee. It will take the place of both Committees' monthly meetings.

J. Adjourn

There being no further business, Mr. Jessee motioned to adjourn, Mr. Tate seconded, the motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:20PM.

Approved: October 14, 2026

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

Shawnee Cummings
Assistant to the City Manager