MINUTES
City Council Parks, Trails, & Recreation Committee

Wednesday, September 17, 2025 - 3:30 PM
City Hall Council Chambers

Members Present:	Aaron Baker, Chair, Council Member (via Zoom) Lauren Wise, Vice Chair, Council Member Howie Granat, Citizen Member Daniel Jesse, Citizen Member Jackson Tate, Citizen Member JD Powers, Citizen Member Mayor Maureen Copelof, Ex-Officio
Members Absent:	Reba Osborne, Citizen Member
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 Selena Coffey, Assistant to the Manager
Media:	Dave Bradley, *Transylvania Times*

A. Welcome & Call to Order

Mr. Wise welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:35pm.

B. Certification of Quorum

A quorum was certified by the Assistant to the Manager Selena Coffey.

C. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Grant made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Mr. Jessee. All voted in favor.

D. Approval of Minutes – August 20, 2025

Mr. Powers made a motion to approve the minutes from August 20, 2025, and Mr. Jessee seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

E. Updates

1. Bracken Trail/Climbing Trail Loop Follow-up

Gary Lowden was present and shared that the SORBA committee had reviewed bids for the trail project, which were managed through a formal review process. This process included a comparative matrix, rubric scoring, and Q&A sessions with the bidders. He noted that two primary contractors are being considered and that both are local, and the committee is confident in the capabilities of either one. He further shared that there was a significant price disparity between the two main bids in that one contractor submitted an "extremely low bid," stating a personal connection to the area as the reason, while the other contractor's price was more in line with typical expectations. Mr. Lowden shared that one of the contractors had shared a potential alternative, shorter route. He stated that this route is under a mile, compared to the original concept of approximately 1.2 miles and avoids a very steep ridge line by utilizing a "large soft switchback" on a less sloped area. He noted that the pricing for this shorter alternative is much closer to the other bids. Mr. Lowden concluded that the next step is to coordinate meetings with the two finalist contractors and the city, which will hopefully occur during the week of September 22, 2025. These meetings will aim to clarify the price disparity and other contract elements. After a decision is made, committee members will be contacted for approval before moving forward. If a decision is made by mid-October 2025, project completion is estimated to take three to four weeks, with follow-up work occurring after the first freeze.

Mr. Granat shared that "Bracken Fest" is scheduled for September 27, 2025. He shared that the event would offer raffle prizes and an after party. He noted that the committee has put out a call for volunteers for the event. The committee continued further discussion about Bracken Trail.

2. Estatoe Trail Update

Mr. Hooper shared that City Council approved the committee's recommendation to apply for funds to realign the permanent trail and build it along the abandoned railroad track. This application has been submitted. He also shared that a temporary trail with a gravel surface is down and usable but is not yet officially open. He noted that the trail currently ends at Pender Lane during this temporary period.

Mr. Todd noted several crosswalks that should be removed to improve the trail. The committee continued their discussion regarding the sidewalks and crosswalks as well as appropriate signage for public safety. Mr. Hooper stated that the committee will continue this conversation once the design documents are received.

3. Estatoe Boardwalk Update

Mr. Hooper shared that, at an upcoming meeting, the committee will need to decide which alignment it prefers for the stretch from Main Street to Mary C. Jenkins. He stated that the city had been granted funds to finish design for this segment of the trail. He then noted that Public Works has started the work on the crossing at Rosman Highway that has been discussed earlier. Once this is finished, NCDOT can begin working on their portion of the project.

Mr. Ray shared that the Tannery North project is back on track now and the city has applied for several grants for the city's projects. The committee continued its discussion of grants, trail grades, ADA accessibility, and the impact on residents' backyards.

F. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

G. Set Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for October 15, 2025 at 3:30pm.

H. Adjourn

Mr. Jessee made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Mr. Powers. All voted in favor and the meeting adjourned at 4:40pm.

Approved: October 15, 2025

Aaron Baker, Chair or
Lauren Wise, Vice Chair

Selena D. Coffey
Assistant to the City Manager