MINUTES
City Council Parks, Trails & Recreation Committee

Wednesday, July 15, 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 Daniel Jessee, Citizen Member Reba Osborne, Citizen Member (arrived at 3:33pm) Maureen Copelof, Mayor, Ex-Officio
Members Absent:	JD Powers, Citizen Member
Staff Present:	Wilson Hooper, City Manager David Todd, Assistant City Manager Wesley Shook, Public Works Director Becky McCann, Communications Coordinator Shawnee Cummings, Assistant to the City Manager
Guests:	Ron White (Friends of Franklin Park)
Media:	Jonathan Rich

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. Baker requested that we add Tannery North for updates on the smokestack and the trail, and MCJCCC bathrooms. Mr. Hooper also asked to add an update on pending litigation. Mr. Wise motioned to approve the agenda. Mr. Granat seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

D. Approval of Minutes – June 17, 2026

Mr. Granat motioned, seconded by Mr. Wise to approve the minutes of the June 17, 2026 meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

E. Franklin Park Discussion

Mr. Hooper said there has been a lot of community feedback on the maintenance of Franklin Park and Staff have done some small repairs to address some of the issues. He thinks the Committee wants to talk about the bigger picture of the medium- and long-term future of Franklin Park and Staff can offer comments but are ultimately here to listen to the Committee. In the weeks to come, Staff will be refreshing the mulch on the playground, as it has been washed around by the rain, worn thin, and is uneven. Mr. Hooper explained that it is expensive due to the type of mulch and the amount required. Initial guesses were around $30,000, but Staff received a quote for $15,000. Mr. Wise asked how often we replace the mulch and Mr. Shook said every 3-4 years.

Mayor Copelof asked how often we inspect the playground for safety issues. Mr. Shook said Staff inspects the playgrounds every 2 weeks and are primarily looking for bees but they also look at the structure. Mayor Copelof asked how much life the playground has left, whether it is another year or another 5 years, and how much longer it will be functional. Mr. Todd said in his opinion, the playground is beyond end of life, but we can keep it working. He added that what you consider to be "functional" and "safe" can be ambiguous because today's standards would not allow you to build a playground like that playground is built. It is safe in that if Staff identify safety issues and fix them, but it is not safe compared to standards for new playgrounds. He said there are nails and screws popping up constantly just due to the equipment being at the end of its life. Mr. Wise said he assumes all new playgrounds are pre-manufactured, but you cannot really build a playground anymore. Mr. Todd said he thinks you could build a playground, but it is expensive and hard to do safely, so most just order pre-manufactured pieces. Mayor Copelof said they chose several pieces from a booklet for Silversteen Park. She added that the only two options moving forward are to replace the playground equipment or close the park, because at a certain point it will be beyond the City's ability to keep fixing the things that are breaking. Since there is no plan to replace it, she stated that we really need to come up with a plan and find out the cost so that we can look at grants and other funding sources in the next couple years. Mr. Wise said even though we are keeping the playground safe and working, people are very dissatisfied with the condition. He said it is not at the fault of Public Works, it is just in rough shape.

Mr. Hooper said he has no problem closing things when there are safety risks and referenced the Estatoe Trail boardwalks as an example. He does not think from a safety and risk perspective that the playground has crossed that line yet, but people are unhappy and asked if the Committee thinks it is worth closing now. Mr. Granat and Mayor Copelof said it is in constant use and there would be an uproar if we closed it.

Mr. Baker said he agrees with Mayor Copelof that we need to come up with a plan. He added that we had in-depth discussions about the Sports Complex parking lot and bathrooms during the budget process, but we have a lot of projects piling up and no idea how we are going to pay for them. Mr. Granat said we had a lengthy discussion about Franklin Park sometime in the last year and he suggested municipal bonds due to there being so many different projects. He added that these City amenities are valuable and people may be willing to pay for amenities they use or that are very visible, as they

contribute to the overall value of the community. If there is a replacement plan or a path forward, it might help calm some of the complaints from the community.

Mr. Hooper said the grants we typically look at for recreation projects, such as PARTF, all having matching requirements and even a match for a project this size would be several hundred thousand dollars. He stated that we will need to find another source to fill that gap, whether it is donations or money from a foundation. The Sports Complex is a little different in that it has some big donors who have been making improvements to the fields and infrastructure. Mr. Hooper said even if there is some City involvement and grant involvement, there will need to be private involvement in this project. Mayor Copelof said you cannot go to a donor without a plan and a cost estimate, and we do not even have any money in the budget to plan a new playground. Mr. Hooper said he believes Staff can put together a reasonable cost estimate to perform deferred maintenance on the pool, renovate the pool house, and replace the playground. Mr. Hooper said it would not be a plan done by a landscape architect, but we can create a scope of work with a reasonable degree of accuracy that could be taken to a donor. Mr. Todd reached out to the Boys and Girls Club, who recently replaced their playground, to get an idea of cost and use as a comparison. Mr. Todd said just the equipment was $250,000, but he sent a list of questions regarding costs and is awaiting a response. Mr. Ray said for Silversteen Park, the playground manufacturer helped Staff create a plan and identify equipment needs. If the company feels confident they will get the work, they will send a representative to help craft the playground and recommend pieces.

Mayor Copelof said we can certainly start a funding campaign, contact big donors, and go for a PARTF grant, but we need a plan. Mr. Ray said the problem with PARTF is that you have to have a comprehensive parks plan that was created within the last 10 years. For our last plan, the City joined in Transylvania County's plan and it just aged out at 10 years old. Mr. Ray said he has reached out to the County to see if they would be willing to pursue a joint plan again, so that the City and County can be eligible for PARTF grants. Mayor Copelof said that is ultimately what we need, but she does not think we can wait on a joint plan before we start doing something about Franklin Park.

Mr. Baker asked if it would be possible to go through a selection process for a playground designer, have some sort of public envisioning session to come up with what the replacement would look like, and then the designer could put together an estimate. He added that he thinks the public part is important for community input and the best way to do it if the City intends to fundraise. Mr. Todd said he thinks we could call a vendor to come out here and help us develop a budget for this, but he starts thinking about fencing around the playground, the amphitheater, the picnic sheds, and how all of that needs to be tied together. Mr. Todd added that the sidewalks, ensuring accessibility, putting gates in the right area, and ensuring sight lines so that parents can see their children will all be a part of it. Mr. Baker asked if the picnic sheds at Franklin Park are equally as run down. Mr. Shook said the picnic sheds are newer and in good condition.

Ms. Osborne asked if we could offer a naming right for a big donor. Mayor Copelof said the name is just related to Franklin St. and we could offer naming rights. Mr. Baker said if Mac Morrow were here, he would be filling us in on the history of the Franklin Hotel.

Mr. Hooper suggested Staff do some more work to quantify known costs for a like-for-like playground replacement and come back to the Committee with more information on the full scope of the project. Costs will include the significant pool maintenance, pool house maintenance, playground replacement, and additional accessibility features.

Mr. Baker asked what work needs to be done on the pool. Staff advised that some of the tile needs to be replaced and possible replacement of the Gunite lining of the pool. Mr. Shook said the pumps were replaced a couple years ago and the filter is fairly new. Mr. Baker said so we are not talking about digging a whole new pool. Mr. Todd said no, at worst, we would need to re-Gunite the whole pool, update the surface and paint, and fix the broken tile. He added that the pump house needs to be painted and a new roof. Mr. Shook said the kiddie pool is in decent shape but probably needs some cleaning.

Mr. Baker asked if we have been told by our insurance company that we are in any danger of losing coverage on the playground. Mr. Hooper said no, the recreation feature that the insurance company is most nervous about is the Tannery Skate Park.

Mayor Copelof asked when Staff could bring back the quantifiable expenses to the Committee. Mr. Todd and Mr. Hooper said they could have a scale at the next meeting. Mr. Todd added that some of the stuff is a little difficult because it depends on what we want. For example, in the pool house locker room area there are open showers, as opposed to individual stalls, and the plumbing is exposed. He asked if they want to make that nice, where there are individual stalls and concealed plumbing, because painting the concrete floor and staining the wood is one cost, while making it look and feel much nicer is a vastly different cost. Mayor Copelof asked what Rosman's pool has. Mr. Hooper said their pool is smaller, but the pool house is the same in terms of its style and finish.

Mayor Copelof said she thinks there are some cosmetic things we can do to show we are giving a little more love to the playground and the pool that would not cost a lot. She said it may show the public that we are working on it and listed the examples of painting the walls in the bathroom and painting the sign. She added that we may be able to ask the Friends of Franklin Park group or the Rotary to help with these projects. Mr. Todd said the Friends of Franklin Park have made a big difference in a short amount of time, noting that they have cleaned signs, picked up trash, cleared downed branches, and offered to replace the fence on Lakeview Ave. at their own cost. Mayor Copelof said if we work with the Friends of Franklin Park to make small improvements and Public Works continues to address safety concerns, it will show the public that we are not ignoring them while we work on a replacement plan. Ms. Osborne asked if Friends of Franklin Park is a 501(c)(3) that can receive funds. Mr. Hooper said not yet, but he wants to work with them and see what their appetite is to grow as an organization.

F. Tannery North Smokestack and Trail Updates

Mr. Ray said they just finished working through some utility relocation plans with NCDOT and Duke Energy. The contractor was selected on June 23rd and they are working with NCDOT on their pre-construction requirements before the contract can be

signed, which typically takes about 30 days from the date the contractor was selected. The NCDOT engineer who is responsible for delivering this project has scheduled a pre-construction meeting for July 20th and construction will take place this summer. Mayor Copelof asked once they start construction, how long he thinks it will take. Mr. Ray said NCDOT thinks it will move pretty quickly and said it should be done in a few months. Mr. Todd said that may be ambitious and it may be more likely to be done by spring. Mr. Ray added that the trail contractor is comfortable working with the contractor handling the smokestack demolition and vault removal, and the intend to communicate throughout.

Mr. Wise asked how long the smokestack removal is planned to take because he knows it will be more of a dismantling. Mr. Todd said he believes it will be about 4-6 weeks. He added that they plan to do the smokestack and vault sequentially, in no particular order, and not at the same time. Mr. Baker asked if the vault is not within the trail footprint, to which Mr. Todd said it is not, but the access route to the vault is on top of the trail.

Mr. Todd said the environmental management plan (EMP) for the vault was submitted first and then the EMP for the smokestack was submitted a week or two later. He said they got feedback on the vault EMP today and he was surprised at the amount of NCDEQ comments. NCDEQ has started reviewing the EMP for the smokestack.

A contract has been signed with the contractor, DH Griffin, and they have ordered the geotextile materials so they can knock down pieces of the stack and it will keep the debris out of the dirt. Mr. Todd said DH Griffin will save some bricks and it will be about $1000/pallet, each pallet consisting of about 100-150 bricks.

Once we get the EMP back, Mr. Todd said we may have to adjust their contract. After that, DH Griffin will need a couple weeks to mobilize and then they can start.

G. MCJCCC Bathrooms

Mr. Hooper said this item is a topic of discussion at the Rosenwald Community Advisory Board meeting tomorrow, and now that Tyree is back from paternity leave, Staff has more options and operational ability to do things. He added that Tyree is opening and closing the bathrooms daily, including on the weekends, making the bathrooms more accessible. So far, there have not been any problems with individuals being in the bathrooms after hours. Mr. Baker asked that the discussion also cover extended hours and the potential for signage, to which Mr. Hooper agreed.

H. Update on Pending Litigation

Mr. Hooper stated that the Councilmembers will get a closed session on this at Monday night's Council meeting, but there is some information he can share publicly. Last week, the City was issued a civil summons for the case entitled James Veal and Roy Ray Robinson v. City of Brevard. The Plaintiffs are individuals who own parcels adjacent to the Bracken Preserve parking lot and trailhead, and claim that the City's Board of Adjustment (BOA) did not follow due process when it denied Mr. Veal a permit for a driveway that would have interfered with Bracken's biking and hiking trail. They also

claim that the City legally erred when it used eminent domain to acquire a private right of way to obtain access to the preserve from the parking lot in 2006. Mr. Veal purchased two parcels near Bracken in 2021, fully aware that those parcels had limited automotive access. City administrators expressed a willingness to consider closing the access portion of the trail and deed the right of way to Mr. Veal if he was willing to pay to realign the trail to a new location, but Mr. Veal refused. The City is confident it followed proper legal procedures both in 2006 and 2026 and that Mr. Veal and Mr. Robinson were conferred all the due process the law requires. Last year, prior to filing the lawsuit, Mr. Veal began posting yard signs near Bracken to draw attention to his complaint. Mr. Hooper added that the City hopes that while the case is pending, the Plaintiffs show respect for the legal process and refrain from inappropriate public comments.

Mr. Baker asked for clarification on the BOA part. Mr. Hooper explained that Mr. Veal applied for a permit with the Planning Department, which we denied, and it was appealed to the BOA, who also denied the appeal. The BOA hearing took place over 3 months, and the decision was issued in May and took effect in June.

Ms. Osborne asked if there are signs up near Bracken currently. Mr. Granat said Mr. Veal has scattered them around and has a website that states his case and has a video of Mr. Robinson in front of City Council saying his family was wronged. Mr. Granat said they were compensated, and it wasn't a lot of money. Mr. Hooper said he cannot say much, but he does not know if the Robinsons were the owners of the right of way that we used eminent domain on 20 years ago, so he does not know if they were compensated. Mr. Granat said given his attorney fees and efforts, he could have just paid to reroute the trail already and it would have been done. He said instead, he chose to go down this path, which is disappointing, because they could have worked together to figure it out.

Mr. Hooper said he wanted to share it publicly with the Committee before the Council meeting on Monday, which is a little irregular, because of the Bracken ribbon cutting event on Friday. He was not sure if the signs would be back up or if Mr. Veal would be there and he did not want anyone to be blindsided. Mr. Baker asked if we have a plan in case there are some negative things happening, to which Mr. Hooper said he would bring the statement with him and will repeat it to anyone who is interested.

Committee Comments

Mr. Jessee expressed concern regarding vehicles using the greenway at the sports complex. Mr. Hooper asked if it has occurred in the last couple weeks, as they asked Staff to refrain from doing so a couple weeks ago. Mr. Jessee said he last encountered a City official operating a vehicle on the greenway about 1-2 weeks ago when he sent his last email, but he is also referring to the general public. Mr. Todd asked for the exact location, to which Mr. Jessee provided more detail on the section that connects to Pisgah Dr. and suggested either a split rail fence or a boulder to limit the amount of space for vehicles to get through. He added that you cannot see cars turning onto the path and you would not expect one, but he does understand there are instances where City officials may need access. Mr. Baker said there is another way to go that does not put

you in conflict with greenway users, so there should not be vehicles on the greenway. Mr. Jessee said he had not heard back on this issue but thanked Staff for addressing it.

I. Public Comment

Ron White, of Friends of Franklin Park, said when they first started the group, they canvassed the area and got a majority of residents involved and on an email list. When there is an activity they are going to do, they are lucky to get 30-40% but everyone is supportive of their work. He added that they pick up trash and clear branches, and it is in their best interest that the park be the best it can be. He said their group is willing to help out with small projects, painting, the fence, and fundraising as well. They started power washing the pavers and will confer with Public Works to replace the paver sand. The Committee thanked Mr. White and their organization for all of their work.

J. Set Date for Next Meeting – Wednesday, August 19, 2026, at 3:30 PM

Committee members set the date for the next meeting on August 19, 2026, at 3:30 PM.

K. Adjourn

There being no further business, Mr. Wise motioned to adjourn, Mr. Jessee seconded, the motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:49 PM.

Approved: August 19, 2026

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

Shawnee A. Cummings

Shawnee Cummings
Assistant to the City Manager