Buncombe County Open Space Bond: Passive Recreation Lands Subcommittee

Minutes
17 September 2024

Subcommittee Members in Attendance: Ann Babcock, Bob Gale, Bob Turner, David Burdette, Kevin Conrecode, Lena Richards

Staff in Attendance: Allison Dains, Amy Broughton, Angelica Tyler, Angelyn Johnson, Jennifer Harrison, Nnweyna Smith, Rachael Sawyer, Robert Brown, Sara Joss, Thomas Gull, Timothy Love

Buncombe County Administration: The September 17, 2024, meeting of the Buncombe County Passive Recreation Lands Subcommittee was called to order at approximately 12:04 pm. Six subcommittee members were in attendance.

Approval of Agenda and Minutes
The Subcommittee voted to approve the agenda for the September 17 meeting and the minutes from the August 20, 2024.

Public Comment
Emily Boyd and Jill Raymond participated in Public Comment.

Review of Project Selection Process
- September 17 – Passive Recreation Lands Subcommittee Meeting: Vote on project recommendations & discuss use of any potential remaining funds
- October 1 – Board of Commissioners Briefing Meeting (3:00pm): Brief board on funding process & recommendations
- October 15 – Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting (5:00pm): Request board approval of funding recommendations

Meeting Logistics
Chairperson Kevin Conrecode was experiencing connectivity issues during the meeting and lost his connection. Since Vice Chair Matt Fuscola was not in attendance, Bob Gale facilitated the remainder of the meeting.

Update on Presenters for October Commissioner Meetings
Kevin and Matt are available to cover the two meetings. Matt will present at the October 1 briefing meeting and Kevin will present at the October 15 regular meeting. These meetings are open to the public, and other subcommittee members are welcome to attend. Staff will share a copy of the presentation materials with the full subcommittee with time for feedback.

Discussion of Projects for Funding Consideration
Rachael Sawyer reviewed the process that had been used so far. The spreadsheet from the last meeting was reviewed, which included the previous seven funding recommendations that were voted on during the August meeting as "Scenario 1". A "Scenario 2" column was added for today's meeting.

There are a couple of updates for projects that were voted on during the last meeting.
Camp Grier - Worx Community Forest Trail Development: They received an award from the State of NC for $200,000 for the same project. The follow-up information indicated they would request to adjust the scope of work for the $200,000 state award. However, staff is not comfortable adjusting the state award because it is already contracted with the State of NC. Their revised request was for $750,000 from the bond; however, $75,000 was removed due to being ineligible. If awarded, they would need to adjust their bond project budget. This is for informational purposes and does not impact the funding recommendations.

Town of Black Mountain – Ridgecrest Connector: Project budget includes 35% contingency ($182,662.27). Buncombe County uses standard 10% contingency, which is consistent with other projects' budget. Staff is requesting to reduce the award amount to lower that contingency to 10%, which would reduce their award amount to $575,000. The subcommittee agreed with this recommendation, so the Town of Black Mountain's recommended funding amount was updated.

The other four projects that were not voted on during the August meeting were discussed individually.

Balsam Gardens: 33 +/- acres on Sandhill Road
During the last meeting, the subcommittee put a placeholder for up to $990,000, based on appraised value. Based on internal discussions within the county about administrative costs (such as appraisals), the county recommends adding an additional $100,000 for those costs. The award amount would be up to $1,090,000 to include these administrative costs and would be based upon the appraised fair market value.

Friends and Neighbors of Swannanoa (FANS): Woodmen Trailhead & Educational Park
Was originally proposed for Buncombe County to purchase property. There were multiple tiers to the proposal. The major change to this project is that the parcel was purchased by someone else. The follow-up received from FANS in August provided two options that were reviewed during the August meeting. Another follow-up letter was received from FANS asking for flexibility. The letter was shared with the subcommittee and included in today's meeting packet. Staff has had conversations and done some research and it is not feasible to purchase easements for potential future projects. At this time, because of the significant changes and the unknowns associated with this project, staff is recommending the subcommittee to consider not recommending funding for this project at this time. Staff could continue working with the

applicant, and the subcommittee could reconvene in the future to reconsider this project once they have more solidified plans. The subcommittee would like to include a recommendation to the Board Of Commissioners to hold some of the remaining funds for this project. Approve on concept, hold back funds for future award dependent on additional due diligence.

Town of Weaverville: Weaverville Watershed Trails and Wildlife Preserve Riverside Park Improvement

An additional follow-up was received and was shared with the subcommittee and included in the meeting packet. At this time, based on the significant changes and unknowns associated with this project, staff is recommending the subcommittee to consider not recommending funding for this project at this time. The subcommittee would like to include a recommendation to the Board Of Commissioners to hold some of the remaining funds for this project. Approve on concept, hold back funds for future award dependent on additional due diligence (including parking/access planning, vetting options, and community engagement.

Town of Woodfin: Riverside Park Improvement

Their request included a $817,429 line item that the Town had already budgeted and contracted out of their general fund. In doing so, they created a financial obligation for that funding, which is not an eligible expense within the bond guidelines. With that disallowable amount removed, it would leave their request amount at $2,195,231.

Meeting extension

The subcommittee decided to extend today's meeting in order to finalize discussion of the projects and vote on the funding recommendations.

Vote on Funding Recommendations

1. Asheville Greenworks – recommendation for funding at an amount of $312,834 was unanimously approved
2. Balsam Gardens – recommendation for funding at an amount of up $1,090,000 based on fair market value was unanimously approved
3. Camp Grier – recommendation for funding at an amount of $675,000 was unanimously approved
4. Friends and Neighbors of Swannanoa (FANS) – recommendation not to fund at this time was unanimously approved
5. Haw Creek Community Association – recommendation for funding at an amount of $102,182 was unanimously approved
6. RiverLink – recommendation for funding at an amount of $200,000 was unanimously approved
7. Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy – recommendation for funding at an amount of $1,000,000 was unanimously approved
8. Town of Black Mountain – recommendation for funding at an amount of $575,000 was unanimously approved

9. Town of Weaverville – recommendation not to fund at this time was unanimously approved
10. Town of Woodfin – recommendation for funding at an amount of $2,195,231 was unanimously approved
11. Warren Wilson College – recommendation for funding at an amount of $141,580 was unanimously approved

The subcommittee would like to add a recommendation to hold back remainder of the funds for future PRL subcommittee recommendations. Future recommendations could possibly include awards for the 2 projects not recommended at this time (FANS and Town of Weaverville) as well as potential funding cycle.

Next Steps for the Subcommittee
Staff will share the prepared presentation for the Board of Commissioners with the subcommittee prior to the meetings.

The subcommittee will pause after the recommendations are made to the Board of Commissioners and staff will reconvene the subcommittee in the Spring. Staff will keep the subcommittee apprised of any updates throughout the process.

Staff will reach out to all applicants to let them know the subcommittee's recommendations.

Once the Board of Commissioners vote on the awards, staff will work with organizations to develop contracts.

Next Regular Meeting Date: TBD
Meeting Adjourned: 2:26 pm