

Bristol Tennessee Parks and Recreation
Advisory Commission Meeting Minutes
January 5, 2023– 6:00 P.M.
Slater Community Center – Room 202

Present: Susi Chandler, Doug Harmon, Margaret Feierabend, Clyde Downs, April Norris, Payne Ladd

Staff: Terry Napier, Angie Rutherford

Absent: Sherry Willinger, Charlie Taylor, Curt Rutherford, Logan Tudor, Ronda Baker, Justin Hutchison

I. Called to order at 6:07 P.M.

- Called by Susi Chandler
 - Officers:
 - a. Chair- Susi Chandler
 - b. Vice-Chair- Doug Harmon
 - c. Secretary- Clyde Downs

II. Minutes of the November 3, 2022, meeting approval

- Motion to approve by Margaret Feierabend, second by Doug Harmon, motion passed.

III. Old Business

a. Staffing / Contractors

- Terry provided an update. The department is three from being fully staffed and having equal difficulty with contractors. We continue to deal with staffing issues internally and externally. We continue monitoring attendance and have found the trend that is concerning is now folks need three days vs. one day previously (pre-Covid). Contractors are experiencing the same issue. For example, we had a reasonable mowing contractor with good credentials (they had done some work for JC). The city signed the contract and mowed one cycle/one week, then the contractor came forward and said that he could not do it, so we had to pick up those eight parks after not having them in the plan for the summer.

b. Nature Center

- Terry provided an update. We are still progressing. We discussed the last two exhibits to wrap up our fixed displays and will still have a rotating exhibit room. The tree upstairs/Life of a Dead Tree is probably 80%. The hard work has been completed. The downstairs exhibit, the Giant Sloth, is perhaps 50% finished, as there have been contractor issues obtaining the sloth.
- Jeremy is working on the accreditation and is resubmitting information. Staff anticipated the process to be challenging and a lot of stuff to work through, but we are continuing on that process for accreditation.

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c. Projects

- Nature Center Build Out –
 - Terry provided an update. We are still progressing. We discussed the last 2 exhibits to wrap up our fixed exhibits and will still have a rotating exhibit room. The tree upstairs/Life of a Dead Tree is probably 80%. The challenging work is done. The downstairs exhibit, the Giant Sloth, is 50% finished, as we need help getting the sloth. The contract was signed, but the contractor still needs to deliver. The cave is finished.

- Food City – Dog Park
 - Finally getting close after five years, with one section of fence in the middle to put back up, add some drinking fountains, and finish some landscaping. We should be able to have a grand opening this spring. Long overdue, but critical things bumped it out of the way.

- Nature Center Accreditation Process
 - Terry provided an update. We talked about working on accreditation. Jeremy has brought one of the documents they put together, as they need all the details about caring for current items we have and how we loan them out. The first round of information was sent for accreditation, which was sent back for revision, so it is being resubmitted. The process was anticipated to be challenging but progress is being made with continued hard work.

- Skate Bristol / Skate Park
 - Our Skate Bristol Group is active and doing a great job pulling the community together to support our skate park. Tuesday night, the council will approve an agreement with Lose Design as a first step for the skate park. They will then review some assessments of potential sites and make recommendations in conjunction with our community group. Terry is working on his CIP to turn in next week and is making a funding request for \$1M to build a skate park. We will obtain funds from some donations and anticipate a contribution from the Hawk Foundation. Terry thinks the total cost of the project will be around \$1.3 million. The pavilion is hopefully going to be funded by rotary.

- Pickleball Park
 - Terry stated the pickleball park is beside the Sportsplex on Bluff City Highway. We have one design we are picking apart and working on setbacks to see how we can improve and pick up space.

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Terry would like to see this go out to bid by mid-March/first of April and start moving some dirt quickly. We are still very early in the layout. Conversations have been held with some large tournament groups that could bring 900 people to a weekend tournament. They approached us, and the one thing that they wanted was a championship court. Our goal is 20-24 courts for these big tournaments. Our most significant issue is parking. There is plenty of parking right now across the street, but we may not know if we can count on this forever. Several established organizations are looking at the Tri-Cities for some of these larger tournaments, as JC and Kingsport both have courts. We currently have three at Haynesfield and six at Anderson, plus two tennis courts at Ida Stone Jones are ghost-lined for pickleball. These were old tennis courts that were resurfaced in-house and are temporary fixes.

- Melrose Community Center Update
 - Terry provided an update. Lose will start work on the community center. They will look at our programming and needs, creating concept plans for what it should look like inside and out. That will probably be a 3- or 4-month program.
Terry will put money in CIP for council to pay for that project. If everything works out, we will have concept plans for council approval before July 1st. Money is authorized to start construction so we can move right on to construction documents and renovations at the facility. Terry estimates a \$2.5-\$3M cost for that project. The Melrose Center will have no age constraints and will be open to everyone and arts/crafts classes can also be offered. Our senior grant pays for all our contracted instructors. We will look for assistance with after-school programs for kids. Slater has evening programs that are open to the public and paid for through the general fund, not the senior grant money. When we have a community center with no age specifications that the general fund is funding, we set our own rules.

IV. New Business (Capital Projects & Proposals)

- DeFriece Park Master Plan
 - Terry provided information: The area is off 5th St., which is an old, tired park. The cost of building a new park here today would be \$12 million. We hired a contractor and looked at space. One potential location for

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the skate park would be in the bottom section. Building in the top area may affect some infrastructure as far as water, sewer, and electricity. It has a spring-fed pond, wetlands, and an arboretum that was never certified, that we would finish and certify. All the drainage and stormwater come into the pond, becoming the creek. We have to consider the stream for anything we do with the pond.

There is an upper tier and a lower tier. We looked at a couple of vacant lots across the street we could obtain and use for parking. The basketball court could be moved up if the skate park is constructed in the lower portion. There could be a large playground in this area where some of the rocks and natural depressions are located.

There would be a park perimeter sidewalk and a sidewalk to connect to the middle school. Because this sidewalk would follow the natural terrain, it would be ADA-legal. The lower section would have a remodeled parking lot, the skate park, a pavilion with restrooms, some storage, and a small soccer field.

- Shelter F Rebuild/Bristol Host Lions Club
 - Bristol Host Lions Club approached us about paying to rebuild the shelter so they could put their name on it. After many delays, we started setting timbers this week. We should order trusses tomorrow, which will take about three weeks. We will have to put the roof on it, and the Lions Club will also pay for that.

- Lodge Party Room Renovations
 - If you have been there recently, our lodge was getting dated, so we are currently remodeling the party room. The party room will have a new ceiling, walls, floors, and a fireplace when we finish. Next year we will shut down rentals in January, February, and March and do the same in the main room. This is about a 3 yr. project, and we will bring our 1960s-era Lodge back to life.

- FY24 Budget Process
 - The next few months will involve detailed budget allocations. Angie, Terry and his programmers are his budget team. Terry is walking them through the budget step by step so they can do his job if he is not here.

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- Other Winter Projects

- None of the baseball fields have heat, so the lines will be disconnected and blown out. We had one small freeze at George Sphinx and the lines at a bathroom in Whitetop Creek Park froze. Winter also allows our mowing and landscaping crews to do most of our trail maintenance.

Extending the Lakeside trail all the way around the lake is not feasible, and Terry is asking CIP this year for \$250K to hire a contractor to come in and start rebuilding some of our mountain trails. We can do about a mile a year over the winter, but with 25 miles of trail, we will never get caught up. Of our main trails, remember that most of our trails are roads that were cut in to remove timber from the knobs, and they didn't care about erosion, just what the mule could drag logs down, so they are not built in the right places. We have made a lot of major repairs, but we cannot keep up with 25 miles of trails when they are so bad. Maybe after a few years, we can get them all caught up. If you walk any of them on the east side, you will see what trails can be if the time is taken to build them right.

- We are staying very busy with our winter projects, including snow removal and baseball field preparations for a February start, ending in October.
- Library has a HVAC system that is basically failing. We will be asking both cities to step up on the HVAC replacement. We have done everything else, the new ceiling and dome.

There are four baseball/softball fields at Whitetop Creek Park. We do rentals on the weekends, and that concept works but doesn't create the revenue through the tournaments we had hoped.

Looking at the feasibility of moving Little League baseball out there and forgetting about the rentals, but now, we are also looking at the feasibility of taking the field on the left and a kind of a 3-way agreement with Boyd Sports, Bristol Baseball Inc., and us and building a stadium with artificial turf, a field house, and seating. This would be about a \$5M project.

It was brought up before the council as a concept, but there was yet to be a vote as there is still much work between the three organizations. It can be a great idea as it does become many things we can use it for. We have to work through all that for it to benefit our community. Artificial turf is a lot of work and ultimately is not cheaper than grass as it does have a lot of maintenance. The field will be a stadium and will be fenced. Boyd Sports cannot serve alcohol. Bristol Baseball Inc. is a non-

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profit and can get permission to sell alcohol on city property. Technically it can be done within the property as there is the potential to have kids playing on the other three fields.

V. Board Comment

- Peyton Ladd (new student rep): I really like the Pickleball Park. That's huge right now and it is crazy how fast it has grown. Did have some questions about the college baseball league since the Appalachian league is no more.
- Susi Chandler: East Ridge is the most beautiful trail in the park. When that portion was cleared, it is absolutely gorgeous.
- Doug Harmon: Glad to hear progress on the pickleball park. Hopefully there will be progress on farmer's market. We have a lot going on and one question for Margaret., where do priorities lie for city council with all the projects we have proposed?
- Margaret Feierabend: Pickleball is pretty much an in and so is skate park so they are pretty much definitive. Skate Park has not been voted on yet. There were a lot of things on the table and we chose the Lakeside Trail, which was kind of surprising. It is all over the board. I am very much in favor of the farmer's market but I do not like that design and figuring out the best place to put it. The idea of just that little narrow area is such a waste. For the farmer's market, I am the one that shops there. I think it is very important for the community. What happened when we built the new library, we got a lot of new people. If we can get an exciting new location (for farmer's market), we will see that. There used to be a lot more with music and chef cooking.
- Terry Napier: Pickleball money has been approved. Basically, I have the check for that one. Skate Park in theory is approved. I would say the rec center is approved. It is hard to buy the building and not approve the money to renovate. Slater is one of the easy ones. The battle will be trail maintenance and I think I will have to put in a pretty good fight for that. The thing I like about the building is that it is multi-purpose. You know, it's Farmer's Market on Saturday, a birthday party on Sunday. If we are going to spend \$1.5M, let's build something that can be used 365-days a year. The Farmer's Market is bigger than the vegetable sales on Saturday morning. Some of you that have been around have heard my conversation and what I really want and why I want the building is we do SNAP and Sullivan County Health Department does WIC, Women, Infants and Children. They give out vouchers and the problem is, these young mothers they come to the market and look at those uncooked vegetables and don't know what to do with them. It is an educational gap. One of the projects I am working on right now, with Integrated Health concepts, some other groups is we are doing cooking classes at the Boys and Girls Club with what the kids have at home, like a microwave. We need to expand that as kids don't know how to cook. The

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Market is important but there is another huge piece to that. I have watched the kids for years at the market, these young mother's, throw their vouchers in the trash because they don't have a clue how to cook these vegetables. They don't have a clue because they aren't in a freezer bag or a can. So there is another gap. In high school, I had Home Ec. They don't have kitchens anymore, so we are doing a very small piece of that. They have Culinary Arts in high school. Home Ec taught basic life skills. We quit doing the chef cooking because the only people that took advantage of it were the vendors. We probably missed by a week (on getting Cameron Marlow).

- April Norris: The Farmer's Market is very important since we utilize SNAP. Over the years, one thing I have been very impressed with the programming that has been put on and all of the projects coming up. I am super excited about Bristol having what should be end up being a true community center. That is a huge, huge gap in our community. I think about it from a lot of different standpoints. My little one spends a lot of time at the Y and the programming offered there is a lot different from what could be offered at a community center. It is super exciting to see the growth from a Parks and Rec standpoint to see those come to fruition.
- Angie Rutherford: We are in the planning process for music and Movies in the Park, etc. We are still looking for a June 3rd act and have contacted several artists. We have reached out to a promoter for a Travis Denning date. He is an up-and-coming country music artist, so we are still working on it.

VI. Adjourned

VII. Next Meeting Date – March 2nd, 2023