**Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting Minutes**

The Zebulon Parks and Recreation Advisory Board met Monday, January 22nd at 6:04 PM.

This meeting was held at Zebulon Town Hall, 1003 N. Arendell Avenue.

**Present Advisory Board Members:**

Garrett Underhill, Brandon Wiggins, Dexter Privette, Wendi Watson

**Meeting Agenda**

1. Call to Order

Brandon called to order at 6:04 PM

1. Approval of Agenda

Dexter motioned

Wendi 2nd

All in favor

1. Public Comment

Public comments are limited to 3 minutes. Anyone wishing to speak must sign up by 5:50 PM. Public comment may be limited to 15 minutes.

None.

1. New Business
2. FY 25 Budget Goals

Sheila presented on several topics covered in a packet given to the Board. Sheila started the presentation reviewing Master Plan identified goals and reviewed major findings from How We Play. Key findings are consistent with the Master Plan which means we did a good job considering growth and industry trends. Pickleball stood out as more of a need with How We Play, but that is not surprising.

She spoke about staffing from 2019 vs. 2024 highlighting how much the Town and our needs have grown. We are near 11,000 population currently. New FY 25 positions are being requested and the reasons they’re needed were discussed. This included a Facility Maintenance Worker to perform janitorial/maintenance duties at the Community Center, clean bathrooms, and handle small things such as refill soap, fix broken toilet seats, etc. Two Park Maintenance Technicians are being requested, a Program Coordinator, and a Park Planner as well. The Park Planner will help ensure the community is engaged in our planning. Sheila provided an insight on future staff needs for upcoming fiscal years as well.

Wendi asked about the projects that were listed under each future staff role. Sheila stated that these are all projects that are a part of the Master Plan.

Sheila spoke about recreation impact fees and the number of new homes that are already here or almost here. She stated that we need to be intentional about how we use the funds from the impact fee, especially since not every town has the right to charge one.

167 acres of park land and open space is being managed by ZPRD. This included nearly 2 acres of new property that has been acquired this year. We also maintain 2.25 miles of greenway.

There are potential Wake County partnerships such as preserving Little River. This includes about 30 new acres.

Future neighborhood parks were presented on a map. Getting land is a huge priority to the department because it’s going quick and it’s expensive. We need to be in the process of looking.

Spoke about park maintenance needs and the impacts the parks are facing such as heavy use, clean up, and wear and tear. This wear and tear happens to our staff as well since it can become overwhelming with only three park maintenance workers. Peak grass season requires an exorbitant number of hours, leaving little time for other needs.

Developing Little River Park will substantially increase the level of maintenance required at that site.

Sheila showed the Board a chart showing amounts of participants of youth athletics by season from year to year. Right now, we pay $16,000 to rent the middle school gym. It’s going to be expensive but right now we’re going to need to use the middle school gym more due to the amount of growth since the community center gym isn’t properly fit to handle so much. There will be a request for additional use from the middle school. There have been efforts to find an additional basketball court to use but have been unsuccessful.

Kaleb, Nick, and Justin have been working on promotions for baseball and we expect those numbers to start increasing again.

The Board was shown a chart highlighting the growth of recreation programs from FY 22 to 23. This shows there is an increase in in community center use. There are staff safety concerns regarding employees staying late by themselves. Sheila recalled a time in the past when a patron was being verbally and physically aggressive to an employee when he was at the front by himself. We have started having programs on Sunday nights since the community center is being used so much that it’s the only time for additional programs. There is especially limited availability during winter basketball.

New efforts include enhancing our disc golf course. It is a great course and has been around since the 90s. So many people use it and enhancing it would be very beneficial. There have been many requests for pickleball courts. There is an area being considered that would be great for pickleball since it’s not too close to any houses. There have been issues nationwide with pickleball courts in neighborhoods being too noisy.

Nick has been speaking about joint use agreements with ZES. There has been an issue with trees messing up the new asphalt on the track. We need to make improvements, but need an understanding on the future plans for the school campus.

Spoke about UDO and development standards for open space, and standards we’re establishing such as all the elements we plan to have at each playground (mulch, shade structures, climbing, slides, bathrooms, etc.) What it is we want for Zebulon needs to be established and put in a document. This gives us more teeth when working with developers to ensure we’re getting best quality. This will be a policy already set when developers come. Nick gave an example that if a developer wanted to add an athletic field, our standard would dictate what type of turf would be put in, etc.

Dexter asked about the use of part time staff at the community center and the current hours. Sheila stated more part time staff will need to be used especially for the hours later at night.

The advisory board was asked if there was anything they wished to discuss further or would like to see that we missed. The Board indicated that it was through and they supported what had been discussed.

1. Code of Conduct

Staff will present the existing Code of Conducts with the Advisory Board and engage in discussion. Staff will ask the Advisory Board for additional feedback at their next Advisory Board meeting.

1. Open Discussion

None.

1. Staff Updates
2. Department Update

Amy introduced Hope, our Special Events Coordinator. She has been with us for many years and has had many roles with us. Amy went over our 2024 Event Schedule.

Wendi asked us how we come up with which movies we show for movie night. Amy stated that the company Swank sends us a list of what movies we can buy and show, and we pick from that. Stated that Top Gun was one of them but got rained out last time, so we hope to show that this year.

Amy introduced our new Family Fun Night program, spoke more about programs that are being held on
Sunday nights such as open gym basketball, as well as additional new programs and benefit fundraisers we’ve partnered with. There is a new crochet class that has been introduced which filled up within one day, so they opened another one as well. Switching the ages and combining youth and adults has been even more beneficial in helping classes fill up and getting great community involvement.

Sheila stated that the Chamber raised just over $1,400 dollars from sponsorships collected for Deck the Hall-Z to go towards Youth Financial Aid.

Nick presented on Athletics and what we are looking forward to for spring youth sports. Baseball and softball are looking a little slower, but t-ball has picked up more compared to last year, and soccer registration is going well.

Nick presented park updates and repairs that are in the works. This included the dirt mounds in the baseball fields, which all age groups can now play on since we now have portable mounds. There are dugouts that are being repaired since there are safety concerns. They were an Eagle Scout project years ago and it’s time to have updates. They have been removed now and will be replaced. There will be new shade structures over the dugouts which will be sent out by the end of February. Parks maintenance will also be installing additional updates by the end of February.

Sheila highlighted that Nick has been working on sustainability efforts with our sustainability intern, including a survey that was given to the community, Bee City, and Tree City. When you look at our master plan it emphasizes how we need to take sustainability efforts seriously and not just check boxes.

Slated to do a retreat sometime soon and has been looking at RRS advisory board training. Wendi asked how often the retreats are. Sheila answered that we try to do one a year, either spring or winter, but we didn’t do one last year since RRS wasn’t ready for one. Wendi stated that she would like to do a tour of existing parks. Nick suggested the greenway be included.

1. Adjournment

Motion: Wendi

Garrett 2nd

All in favor