

## Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting

The Zebulon Parks and Recreation Advisory Board met Monday, January 27<sup>th</sup> at 6 PM.

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

The following advisory board members were present: David Field, Brandon Wiggins, Wendi Watson, Marcus Bennett. Quinton Taylor arrived at 6:10pm

### Meeting Agenda

1. Call to Order

Brandon called to order at 6:01 pm

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion: Marcus

2<sup>nd</sup>: Wendi

All in favor.

3. 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.

4. Consent Agenda

A. November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024 (pg. 2-9)

Motion to approve: Marcus

2<sup>nd</sup>: Wendi

All in favor.

5. New Business

A. FY 2026 Operating Budget

The Parks and Recreation Department will provide an update to the Advisory Board regarding the Advisory Board's discussion in FY 2026 operating budget goals and the Parks and Recreation Department's recommendations to the Manager's Office.

Sheila Long stated we are currently in transition so the budget process is different this year. Sheila wouldn't have the update we typically have at this point. The priority remains carrying out the master plan and maintain level of service with parks and programs. Sheila recapped the Advisory Boards previous budget discussion.

Some items discussed in the budget discussions with the Board did not require us to wait until FY 26. Sheila showed the Little River Park tab on the Public Input website with project updates. Stated we currently can't get town water because we're not annexed and we are going through the process to meet park needs.

David mentioned water testing and chemical levels in City of Raleigh water. Sheila recommended David reach out to the City of Raleigh or Zebulon Public Works with any questions or concerns.

Sheila mentioned the annexation neighborhood meeting added to the website. Wendi asked how long the annexation process takes. Nick explained how the process works.

Marcus asked if residents could echo sentiments that could slow process. Sheila said they could show up for comment. Common questions are, “Am I going to be annexed? How?” She would be surprised if people speak against it as there have been multiple public input opportunities on the development of Little River Park. There has never been a need to annex it except to get the water.

David stated this would be a good time to announce he got a job trucking and will have to resign after the meeting since he won’t be able to make many meetings. Expressed sentiment about how much he appreciates the board. (He verbally gave his resignation to the Board and Sheila at 6:22 PM.)

Sheila shared that staff’s operating budget submission to date has been consistent with the Advisory Board’s budget goals. Specific items mentioned included:

- Athletic Staff has a large workload, and the challenge of managing change and rapid growth on constant basis is catching up with us. We want to bring in a seasoned Athletics Supervisor so that the experience level is there where they can support the programmer.
- Discussed utilizing specialists and partners to fill gaps. Our Parks staff are stretched thin. Nick is primary playground inspector but needs a second set of eyes. There are companies you can hire to do playground inspections. Nick will do it monthly; they will do it quarterly. Brandon asked if this will be a contract and Sheila confirmed yes.

Sheila presented a recommended change to the department’s organization structure.

- new Athletics Supervisor role.
- Move athletics to the Recreation Division, consistent with the Master Plan.
- Additional park maintenance positions

Marcus asked to clarify if the positions on the chart in red are new. Sheila answered that these are the new positions being requested but not approved yet. They may be funded, or they may not.

Brandon gave feedback about his and Quinton’s meeting with the Mayor. Brandon stated he and Quinton met with the Mayor in an effort to explain how they as an Advisory Board take their role seriously. They spoke about Advisory Board priorities and that they’d like present to the Board of Commissioners. They are on the BOC agenda to present what their priorities are such as land acquisition, additional parks as we continue to grow, and things of that nature and to ensure additional staff to keep up with the growth is considered. A lot of work in short period of time. Presenting next Monday.

Marucs followed up with how important this is in all aspects for everyone, especially in youth athletics with growth and participation. These people will find what they need regardless of whether we provide it or not. Our people will fall off due to discouragement and burnout which he went through as well trying to get everything done where families feel comfortable. He has been treated like a daycare. Need a safer environment. Don't have positions to stay up to par, they won't be getting utilized again, it's inevitable. As far as land acquisition, everyone else will be buying land around us and we will get boxed in.

Brandon stated as he hears Marcus speak, it was important they know they can speak at public comment or submit a letter to be read at a Board meeting. It will let the Board know we're here and ready to work.

Brandon stated his goal is to make one BOC meeting per quarter to have representation from the Advisory Board. Marcus explained how he won't be able to this Monday but will look at another opportunity to express the need for support for their priorities, especially these new positions. Wendi also stated she wants to attend.

Marcus stated that since he's been on the Advisory Board he's been able to quell concerns from frustrated participants. Engaging in conversation and advocating has been very helpful. It helps to have the information they get as an advisory board member and share it with people that they encounter.

#### B. FY 2026 Capital Improvement

The Parks and Recreation Department will provide an update to the Advisory Board regarding the Advisory Board's discussion in FY 2026 capital improvement budget goals and the Parks and Recreation Department's recommendations to the Manager's Office.

Sheila highlighted continuing capital projects and there was discussion on items such as:

- multipurpose recreation facility
- land acquisition
- Little River Park phases two and three
- Continuing amenity replacements and adding ADA options
- General park repairs and improvements (ex: sidewalks)
- Downtown Park
- Open space policy and design standards. Will give us more structure when working with developers.
- Community Park site specific plan, with community engagement. Maximize space we have there to get more amenities and provide more services. Challenges to overcome. Can we find room, get creative with alternative parcels, and find room to make multipurpose facility at that park? Brandon stated that crossed his mind as well to potentially build facility at that location and put park at another location. Sheila stated we could move ball fields and establish those at a sports complex. We will have to navigate former grants funds associated with the park, but it can be done.

David asked if we gain land, is it ours in perpetuity? Sheila stated it depends on the deed. If it's not restricted the Town could sell their land. Little River will have PARTF funds attached to it for the next 25 years. Some grants required perpetuity such as LWCF and if you wanted to move or change the park use substantially, you have to go through federal government. You will likely have to buy the equivalent and put equivalent park facilities somewhere else. David stated that buying land now is important. Brandon shared his is part of what he and Quinton discussed with the Mayor.

Sheila shared we also need to explore joint use opportunities, such as Zebulon Elementary and Wakelon. Has to benefit both parties, not just one. Future schools might be built, define putting groundwork in to find partnerships to enhance amenities youth are going to use daily. A single ball field doesn't benefit us, just stretches us more. We need to also seek partnership that include indoor gym space.

Marcus asked when we will have improvements to Community Park. Sheila answered it depends on whether or not the Town has money to put towards those improvements, the town votes for a park bond, or partners for grants. Marcus stated his only request is to not get rid of basketball courts. Sheila stated a full renovation of basketball courts is needed. Marcus asked if there will be a way to add water fountains in that space, kids have to go all the way out to get water. Has seen new designs of courts being built around state. Starting to cover court with shade structure to protect the court from the elements. Sheila stated when we get there for Marcus to absolutely provide that feedback. Sheila said we would look into existing water available near the courts for water fountains.

Sheila stated there is demand for pickleball courts. You have to be very careful putting pickleball courts in residential areas. Marcus spoke about a pickleball court he's seen close to the Knightdale Station by Smithfield Rd. and how nice it was, suggesting we could piggyback off some of that design.

The board agreed that everything that has been listed is consistent with what they had in mind for capital.

Sheila discussed Gill Street Park. We are still waiting on DEQ. Once they've done assessments and community engagement, they will go through reclamation of the site. Sheila will go to board at the work session in February and suggest moving all the current capital funds allocated to Gill St. Park projects to a capital project fund. That means the money is restricted for that park and will not be used otherwise and it recognizes that the project will take more than one year to complete. We would like to engage in site specific plan for that park. We should consider all options including the possibility of another space in that neighborhood where we can serve the neighbors really well and build what they need out of a park. Sheila shared an example of undeveloped land on the other side of cemetery that neighbors both Zebulon Middle School and East Wake Academy. We can put money in a capital fund, go ahead and engage in site specific planning, and get moving in designs. Brandon expressed agreement. Lower income part of town, don't want anyone to feel like they're left out of any projects or development. Tap into what that community has to say, what their desires are in a park space. Wendi agrees in getting the

community feedback for a plan and asked what the difference between the process is now and moving money somewhere else. Sheila answered that it's currently a capital line item. At the end of June, the fiscal year ends. The money goes back to the general fund and is no longer allocated to Gill St Park. We have to ask the Board to relocate it every year. With capital project fund it is spoken for and can't use if for another purpose unless the Board releases it. Little river is in a capital project fund. The current available funds if placed into a Gill St Project Fund is enough for us to do site planning and begin the designs for the desired park including a small community building and bathrooms. Brandon added he believes there will be a huge level of excitement there primarily with the older demographic who is familiar with the history of that site. Marcus spoke about a similar experience about where his mom lives in Georgia where there was a hurricane. Many individuals saw potential and wanted to invest. Now there's new businesses, money is funneling back, town has been revitalized, and town looks completely different. If you put money into the community in that regard, make it better and work to right the wrongs for the community. Having a new standard, what a park should look like for a community. Puts eyes on it and others will see and invest. Sheila shared there are opportunities to have the conversation about past wrongs when site planning a park. There are towns in NC who have done it. If we can move forward with site plan and get to have those community conversations, it would help build something great for the community. Wendi asked for confirmation of the amount of money currently allocated for Gill St. Park which Sheila stated is \$785k.

Kellianne stepped in and Sheila took a moment to introduce her as the Assistant Town Manager. Kellianne spoke and introduced herself. Marcus asked Kellianne how she will be able to help the Advisory Board with different needs such as with budgeting things they prioritize. Kellianne answered not only is she the new Assistant Town Manager, but she's the first. She supports department heads and keeps attention on the departments in ways they haven't had before. She oversees Planning, Parks and Recreation, Communications, HR, Economic Development, and Public Works. She supports the Parks and Recreation Department by being there for Sheila, providing guidance, and can help advocate needs or concerns to the Manager and the Board. Marcus stated it's good to have someone else we can go to.

The advisory board each introduced themselves to Kellianne.

#### C. March Retreat

The Advisory Board is scheduled to hold their annual retreat in March. Staff will seek engagement from the Advisory Board on topics that interest them and if the Advisory Board would be interested in visiting Recreation facilities in another community. Staff will ask the Advisory Board for feedback on ideal days and times to hold the retreat.

Sheila asked for input from the board if they would like some training and/ or a field trip to see other community facilities. having a field trip to check out how recreation is being done in different communities. Brandon stated he would personally love a field trip. Marcus asked if anyone has been to Knightdale Station and a few have. Sheila stated she'd love to go on a field trip with them, can line up transportation. She can also see if staff in the community would be

able to share their experiences and highlight any challenges. Sheila suggested the new Community Center in Fuquay, it is believed to be the largest in Wake County.

Discussed days and times that work best. It doesn't have to be March, just a general time around then. Sheila will send an email to board, retreat can be late March or early April,

David made a Motion to be dismissed at 7:18 PM: David

Wendi: 2<sup>nd</sup>

All in favor.

## 6. Open Discussion

Brandon suggested going to staff updates.

## 7. Staff Updates

### A. Department Update

Sheila stated we extended an offer, and it was accepted for the Program Coordinator. We expect a start in February. We're very fortunate to have a great selection this time around. We have been trying to get this filled since August.

MLK concert had great attendance. It was our first year as a partner. They have been doing this from 15 years. We hope to continue being a part.

### B. Programs & Events

Sheila spoke about upcoming events such as Sweetheart Bingo, fundraiser with PD, Massey School of Dance Fundraiser where proceeds go to Financial Aid Program. Next month, we will look at how much we've raised for the financial aid program and if we want to make changes to policy.

Sheila spoke about the Teen Mural Program. It's a six week program where students are taught about development of murals, display work at Spring Fest, community votes which one they want painted in the Alley. It take place Tuesdays after school, March through April.

#### a) Spring Fest

Sheila shared that we released vendor registration and the event will be April 26<sup>th</sup>.

Quinton asked how bands get into Rock the Block. Sheila answered that they should email Hope.

### C. Athletics & Parks

Nick shared the following Updates:

- Spring registration underway with currently 288 registered.
- 334 total winter youth basketball participants.
- Adult basketball had eight total teams.

- Scoreboards at ZES were installed, pool fence at Whitely Park removed, and we completed the Wakelon fence extension.
- Last week we received 12 new picnic tables and three new ADA tables.
- Interviews for new Park Maintenance Tech position occurred.
- Little River Park neighborhood meeting is on January 29, joint public hearing on February 10, and Board of Commissioners on March 3.

D. Next Advisory Board Meeting: March 17<sup>th</sup>

Sheila stated the plan of action calls for the March meeting to focus on Volunteer Appreciation and the Financial Aid Program.

- a) Volunteer Appreciation
- b) Financial Aid Program

8. Adjournment

Motion: Quinton

2<sup>nd</sup>: Wendi

All in favor.