

Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting

The Zebulon Parks and Recreation Advisory Board met Monday, November 18th, 2024 at 6 PM.

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

The Advisory Board members in attendance were Wendi Watson, Dexter Privette, Brandon Wiggins, Quinton Taylor, Garrett Underhill.

David Field arrived at 6:11 PM.

Meeting Agenda

1. Call to Order

Brandon called to order at 6pm

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion: Wendi

2nd: Garrett

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. September 16th, 2024 (pg. 2-5)

Motion to approve Consent Agenda: Quinton

2nd: Wendi

All in favor.

5. New Business

- A. Fee Schedule Review (pg. 6-10)

The Board of Commissioners adopts the Fee Schedule annually during the fiscal year budget adoption. Fees for park rentals, programs, and other department services are assigned in the Fee Schedule. The Parks and Recreation Department must submit recommended changes by January 31st, 2025, for the Fiscal Year 2026 budget. Staff is not recommending any changes at this time. The Advisory Board will engage in discussion regarding the fee schedule.

Sheila Long explained what the fees are set for. Not recommending any changes at this time except staffing cost. Does not have recommendation for that yet as it will depending on the organization as whole to approaching staff pay costs in the fee schedule. Would like to open the floor for any questions or feedback.

Brandon asked how athletic field sponsorship fees work and what it entails. Nick Rummage answered that it is for the seasonal banner to put on the field.

Wendi asked if fees are ever decreased. Sheila stated they could be, but not generally, because of inflation. We avoid raising fees if possible. For example, the fee for the Get Fit Day Pass has been the same since 2009. There has not been pressure to be a revenue

generating department. Seek to cover costs for programs but recognize there are those in the community that would not be able to afford private options. Our fitness class fees are still consistent with those you'd see in other communities. Depends on skill, instructor cost, and supplies.

Sheila told the Board to take this home with them and continue to look through.

B. FY26 Budget Goals

Each year the department submits a budget to the Town Manager for consideration. The Manager will consider the departments requests and make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners must adopt a budget each year by the end of June. The adopted budget will include operating, capital and fee schedules. The Advisory Board will engage in discussion and provide recommendations on the FY 25 Budget Goals.

Sheila presented the budget goals to the Board with a PowerPoint. Went over the three staff priorities such as wanting to continue with Master Plan implementation and growing capacity to maintain parks and programs.

Sheila reviewed feedback received from the Advisory Board during their one on one meetings. The summary included:

Capital Projects

- New priority facilities included:
 - Multipurpose recreation facility
 - Land acquisition
 - Sports complex
 - Pickleball
- Complete Little River Park development.
- Aquatics are a wish list, but we should begin planning.
- Park branding, wayfinding and consistent signage will continue to be important.
- Focus on enhancing function and maximize existing facilities (find low hanging fruit).
- Incorporate current technology and modernize the park system.
- Safety
 - Lighting, cameras, emergency phone, safe access, general maintenance.

Operating

- Currently have a good variety and full plate.
- Focus on impact 1st and recognize it is ok to let some things go.
 - Don't overextend. Be effective.
- Staffing is necessary to maintain and balance expectation and growth.
 - Have the appropriate staff for the basics (programs and maintenance).
- Afterschool and all-day camps are wish lists but not top priority.

- The Town can focus on teens more.
- Evaluate interest and expand when we have the resources.
- Offer more adult programs.
- Continue growing inclusion efforts.

Additional Feedback

- Support Economic Development efforts for commercial youth & family opportunities.
- Continue volunteer coach incentives.
- Identify ways to keep the public engaged regarding projects (ex: Little River Park)
- Consider kiosks around town about parks, programs, and events.
- Continue working on creating an identity for ZPRD to connect with the community.
- If demand isn't there, put resources elsewhere.
- Incorporate more data collection and engagement into events.

Brandon stated that from looking at the slide, the Board is generally on the same page and asked each person their top priorities for the 2026 budget:

- Quinton stated a multisport complex.
- Dexter stated finding low hanging fruit and what we can do now to show the community that we're doing something. Quick items.
- David stated we already have great programming and doesn't want to take away what we offer. Wants to make sure what we're offering right now is taken care of and funded.
 - Wendi added on that this includes having staff to maintain and maximize what we're doing now.
- Wendi asked about the land acquisition process. Takes years to get it, do we start the process, when would that be? What are we saying about safety, does that need to be number one?

Process for a government buying land can take up to six months, if it goes well. Site planning can take up to six months, three months to bid, year in designs, three months to bid again, then a year in construction. So if you decide to build a new park it could be three years before you actually have it.

Sheila asked what the Board is thinking when we talk about enhancing safety. Dexter said cameras, well lit, first aid. There are not cameras in any parks.

Garrett stated land is getting smaller and more expensive. Takes a long time to develop land and build fields. Maintenance; can only have so many games on a field. Land is the big thing for him. Wendi added, what needs to happen to get the land?

Sheila stated land cost is going up. Currently budgeted \$1M. Put it is on hold by the Board of Commissioners. They will need to decide to let us move forward with it.

Members of the Advisory Board discussed how to elevate the importance of acquiring park land to the Board. Brandon spoke about submitting something as a collective or having a public comment. Great opportunity to let them know they want to see this happen and bring momentum. Important to let them know we're not an Advisory Board in name only, but care about the direction that Parks & Rec is going.

Discussion amongst the Advisory Board on how to go about their conversation to the BOC, formalities, how to get things onto the consent agenda, etc. Sheila stated it can go a variety of ways. Members of the Advisory Board could draft a statement: Could come to public comment and you don't have to schedule it in advance. The Advisory Board can reach out to Mayor to be asked to be added to agenda for presentation. It could be worth meeting with him before.

Brandon stated it would be great opportunity to share with the community and Board about what they are working on. Reflection for collaborative effort. The Advisory Board can decide how they want to do that. Could set a follow up meeting or authorize Brandon and Quinton to have meeting with Mayor and prepare statement and presentation in motion.

David asked what happened to money in the budget that does not get spent and where the money from parks and recreation comes from. Sheila stated any funds that don't get spent go back into the Town's general fund. Ask for what you truly need and plan for that. Find revenue source, like what we did with park projects. Revenue sources are grants, some come from general fund through property tax, parks and rec bond, dedicated tax percentage such as a one cent tax. General Fund allocation depends on what other departments need.

Wendi asked about the demand for pickleball, and Sheila stated it is a national interest. Explained how we have some access for pickleball, programs, and lessons. We will need to expand more with pickleball infrastructure. Garret asked about the cost. Nick stated six court complex was \$300k without lights. This was a general estimate and was for outside Town Hall, flat land, not bathrooms or anything extra.

Brandon stated his priority is land acquisition.

Wendi stated her priorities are focusing on enhancing, land acquisition, branding.

David stated his priorities are the programming that we have, no loss of programming, and land acquisition. Also likes the sound of pickleball court. We have to grab the land while it's available or it's going to turn into suburbs.

Garrett stated his priority is land acquisition.

Quinton stated his priority is land acquisition then sports complex.

David asked about the land around five county stadium and if it is set aside for us. Sheila stated the future of that site depends on how the County and Town proceed with planning for the site. No guarantee. Don't need to put all eggs in that basket. Look for property that can accommodate similar amenities. David suggested just getting land and sitting on it for a little while.

From operating standpoint, the Advisory Board spoke about their priorities.

David stated his priority is not losing programming.

Wendi, Brandon, and Garrett all stated their priority is staffing. Without it you can't implement or grow programming. Quinton asked how likely is it if staffing is priority for the Town? Sheila stated the department will have to stick to staples that everyone knows and loves. As we get more staff, do more things. Means potentially reducing "extra stuff" programming to keep up with growth in the priority program areas. Adding more people or reducing what we do. Spoke about metrics of people that come to events. Garrett stated he thinks about staffing also in terms of parks maintenance and is concerned that full time parks maintenance has been turned down.

Wendi asked Amy and Nick to provide input on priority staff needs. Amy Hayden stated she is thankful we're getting a program coordinator but acknowledges that Nick really needs help with parks maintenance. Nick stated the department doesn't have staff to maintain what we have now. Consistently have about 26 work orders a week and have a backlog of work orders always trying to catch up with. Visitors can see increase in litter and damage as town grows. To cut back in athletics would mean limiting how many kids can play.

Sheila stated there are many things we can't control such as mandates. We have to communicate our capacity and balance that with expectations. Advisory Board is part of our story and how we communicate that.

Amy spoke about staffing and starting a teen program. Sheila stated we have struggled to fill program coordinator. There was a discussion amongst the group up creative hiring practices.

Wendi asked if coaches get incentives. Sheila stated they started this past fall that whoever agreed to be a volunteer head coach, will be credited on their account for the registration fee at the end of the season. Nick explained the rates that are being credited.

Nick stated we got a slight uptick in registration. For basketball, Nick is expecting to see the biggest rate of head coaches coming back. Brandon stated he will be back to coach next year.

Wendi asked what supporting Economic Development efforts for commercial youth and development looks like. Sheila stated that it's consistent with master plan; for example, collaborate with them to bring people downtown. Looks a variety of different ways over time. The Advisory Board engaged in discussion about creating partnerships with businesses to support recreation.

Brandon stated currently the plan is for him and Quinton to meet with Mayor to discuss primarily two things: land acquisition and staffing. From there, the goal is to get on the agenda for BOC meetings where they can present Advisory Board goals. She needs to submit hers in January. Shooting for Jan 6 meeting with Board. The plan is to meet with the Mayor before mid-December.

David asked about Faith and Blue and if there's anything that Parks and Rec does that is similar to that to appreciate PD and Fire. Sheila stated that they are active at most of our events and we have other programs that highlight them. We incorporate them into programming all throughout the year. PD does Faith and Blue, Fire does open house. They also have Citizens Academy. We participate in Faith and Blue by being out there with them and bringing Rec on the Go.

Quinton stated he will email the mayor tonight to see if they can get on his schedule.

6. Open Discussion

Quinton spoke about a lady that works with youth athletes and focuses on their mental health. She's willing to open it up to any type of industries, not just athletes. Quinton will be doing something with her in the fall, so stay tuned. She can do any age group. Would be cool if she touched each industry throughout the year. Lives here in Zebulon at Weaver's Pond.

7. Staff Updates

- A. Department Update
- B. Programs & Events
 - a. Candy Cane Lane

Sheila stated we have Candy Cane Lane this Saturday. Going to be a great time, the tree has moved to the public lot, not Sycamore. The stage will be at Sycamore. We are expanding the footprint of the event, and will include Vance St.

The parade is Dec. 8 at 2pm. Offered to let board to walk with Parks & Rec during the parade and pass out candy. Will have Parks & Rec tractor as well. Santa may need elves to help pass out candy. If the Board knows any organization that would be willing to help out, please get them involved. As soon as they can register that would be great.

We worked to hear from the community on what they want from the parade. They wanted it to be entertaining and family friendly, Lot of marching bands will be difficult to deliver. Incorporating surprises into parade. Incorporating performance stops, stilt walkers, Disney performers, mobile DJ, parade balloons, etc. Still accepting parade entries and volunteers.

Amy stated we started teen program in afternoons, and asked the Board to let any teens they know about the program. We are doing another sensory friendly program on December 1. Has 15 registered, good traction. We are starting Santa letters. We have partnered with Share Thrift Boutique for toy drive.

Sheila stated we had the Teen Social last month and had 15 come. Not sure what we were going to end up with. Told by multiple kids and parents that if we had done it at the community center, they wouldn't have come. They came because it was at Creative Cup where they were comfortable and familiar. Sticking with Teen Social for November and incorporating volunteer aspect at that social such as making cards to take with them to give to people or give to rehab center.

C. Athletics & Parks

Nick stated youth basketball began with 335 kids. 15% increase from last year. Pushing capacity.

Registration is open for the 3v3 adult basketball tournament.

Little River design process is moving along. Schematic designs should be completed this week. Everything on schedule, groundbreaking this summer as of today.

Maintenance staff is keeping heads above water. Preparing for different events. Veteran's Day event, general tasks. During grass cutting season things build up. Hopefully catch up now doing bigger projects.

Sheila stated she thinks it's cool to share seeing the work the Board does come to life. Spoke about alleyway at Muter and Fall Line and doing the butterfly. We don't have to do the programming, because now those businesses are doing the programming. We took up the broken asphalt and made basic improvements. We started with ZDAC and Creative Cup on a shared vision to activate they alley even more to incorporate art and things that are family friendly. The Rotary Club has funding for a project downtown. Amanda and Sheila presented to the Rotary Club different aspects alleyway activation. The Rotary Club decided on a mural and the unveiling was today. These things are like dominos that line up and stack up together. Mural help create a walkable downtown. Art creates a more walkable downtown, vibrant space, where people want to meet and

gather. Spoke with them about next piece of alley. Small thing, but what we do at this table has a trickledown effect. Invited Board to go check out the mural.

- D. Next Advisory Board Meeting: January 27th
 - a. FY26 Capital Improvement Plan
 - b. FY26 Operating Budget

Sheila stated that the next meeting was scheduled for January. Brandon stated he and Quinton will meet with the Mayor in December and will advise if a December Advisory Board Meeting is needed. Brandon asked for a motion for he and Quinton to meet with the Mayor to discuss Advisory Board priorities and establish a plan to present to the Board of Commissioners.

Motion: Wendi
2nd: David
All in favor.

7. Adjournment

Motion: David
2nd: Wendi
All in favor.