



**Parks and Greenways Board
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 11, 2025 – 9:30 AM**

Chair John McGregor called the meeting to order at 9:33 AM on Tuesday, March 11, 2025.

In attendance were:

John McGregor, Chair
Judy Lyons, Vice Chair/Acting Chair
Denise Layfield
Todd Plessel
Pat La Salle, Secretary
George Banta, Commissioner and Council Representative
Cara Reeves, Town Manager
Bryan Hensley, Park Technician

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was unanimously approved on motion by Denise and second by Judy.

APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING MINUTES (2/11/2025)

No minutes were available for review or approval.

BUDGET REPORT

Town Manager Cara Reeves confirmed that approximately \$18,000 was left in the fiscal year budget. Invoices should be submitted to Town Hall by mid-June. Denise Layfield proposed that some of the remaining budget may be used to help remove and excavate the invasive plants and unhealthy/dead trees at Canal Park.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Board Member Recruitment** - One position is currently vacant, and a second will open upon Joe Robustelli's move. Regarding recruiting new board members, Denise Layfield suggested we prepare a mailer to send to all residents asking for volunteers to serve on the Parks and Greenways board and the various committees. Chair McGregor will talk with Printville in Hendersonville to get an estimated cost of the mailer. Judy suggested that we decide on the text and any graphics for the mailer at the next meeting in April

with Denise agreeing to draft the verbiage. Town Manager Reeves indicated that 2,000 would be an upper limit for the number of mailers needed to reach residents. There are 2 hard-copy Distribution Lists available – one for full-time residents (billing address= mailing address), one for part-time. Various means of communications were discussed along with the challenges for reaching residents and motivating people to participate. The use of Blackboard was discussed with Cara reporting that many people opt out even after signing up. As a side note, the use of Blackboard for communicating last minute cancellations, such as Volunteer Garden weather-dependent days was discussed. Cara agreed to look into whether Blackboard supports multiple Distribution Lists which could be leveraged for this purpose. Using multiple communication channels seems to be the most effective. The Board agreed to target the mailing for May and also to include an article in the May/June newsletter articulating the need and, potentially, describing the positions. It was noted that a Community Education session is scheduled for Tuesday, April 1st to describe the various Boards and Committees.

- **Bluebird Project Representation** – the need for a representative and/or endorsement support for the Bluebird Project was discussed. A follow-up with Mike Erwin is needed to determine current status.
- **2026 Comprehensive Plan** – Updates to be provided at the April meeting by Pat La Salle and John McGregor.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Goals 2025/2026** – distributed by John prior to the meeting, there were no updates, and these were accepted as our aspirations for '25/'26, unanimously after motion by Denise and seconded by Judy. Cara Reeves clarified that FEMA funding will bring our parks “back to pre-Helene status” and that future improvements would need to be funded by the Town. Further, she reported that Canal Park was not included in the FEMA Assessment, so we can spend our time and budget here without jeopardizing our FEMA application. A lengthy discussion of what needs to be done at Canal Park and who will do it ensued, with a more detailed discussion needed after a planned site visit on March 27th at 4:00 PM. Discussion to include a vision for the Park as well as a better idea of the Park boundaries.

PARK TECHNICIAN’S REPORT

Bryan reported that, in addition to normal spring activities, he’s been hosting the FEMA assessment walk-throughs, replacing the tubing for the fountain in Laurel Green Park and installing the 3 historical markers. The recent new-hire, Laura, is working out very well and is much appreciated. Board members noted that there are still trees on the 5th Avenue berm that need to be remediated/shorted up.

INVASIVE SPECIES COMMITTEE REPORT

John reported that the Committee is planning a workday and asked the Board members for suggestions as to a safe location that needs invasives removed that could serve this purpose. A new website (<https://www.floraoflaurelpark.com>) is under development – comments and feedback needed. The site is in its infancy and in the future will include an inventory of invasive plants in Laurel Park, photos and links to resources and other material of interest.

BEE COMMITTEE REPORT

Denise reported that May 20th is World Bee Day and June 16 – 22 is Pollinator Week and that we need a declaration. Pat reported on the success of the February 27th Landscape Resiliency seminar and the follow-up email planned. The Committee is working on “what’s next” and is including ideas from the recent meeting with Phyllis Stiles (Asheville Bee City contact). A leading contender is a Garden Certification process for Laurel Park residents. Denise also reported on the work that she is planning to do around the gazebo in Laurel Green Park.

CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE REPORT

None available.

BOARD AND COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Banta has received a request for a family-friendly bicycle route for viewing all of the historical markers. Todd Plessel indicated that such a route already exists and is available in front of the Town Hall. However, this may need to be updated to include detours due to Helene and updates for the new markers.

George also reported that the welcome to Laurel Park sign on 5th Avenue by the Ecusta Trail needs to be replaced as it is disintegrating. He asked that the Board have a look and make a recommendation.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Denise Layfield moved to adjourn at 11:30 AM, seconded by Judy Lyons and unanimously approved.

SITE VISIT:

A site visit will be made to Canal Park on March 27th at 4:00 PM.