



**TOWN OF HOLDEN BEACH
PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
REGULAR MEETING
THURSDAY, JULY 1, 2021- 2:00 P.M.**

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) of the Town of Holden Beach, North Carolina met at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, July 1, 2021 in the Town Hall Public Assembly. Present were Members John McEntire, Olivia Gomez, Suzannah Tucker and Candace Vick. All other seats are vacant and have not been filled due to not meeting during Covid. Assistant Town Manager Christy Ferguson was also in attendance.

CALL TO ORDER

Member McEntire led the meeting and called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Motion to approve the agenda as written by Member Tucker; second by Member Vick; approved by unanimous vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion to accept the minutes as written by Member Vick; second by Member Tucker; approved by unanimous vote.

PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES UPDATE

Assistant Town Manager Ferguson reported that the court repair in Bridgeview Park is complete. She stated that the contractor still has to come back and do some fence work. Those parts are on delay. She continued that concerts are having a large turnout, with very happy patrons. She reported that the tide dye program is going well. The second week it got cut short because of rain. She said the call for volunteers had been successful with some community members agreeing to assist. She stated the costs to the Town are increasing for supplies, so the fee may need to be raised for the program in the future. She said there has been a sign posted at Halstead Park with hours for the park after neighborhood citizens complained about occurrences after nightfall. The beach rangers program is going well with positive response to the promotional items being distributed. Assistant Town Manager Ferguson pointed out that program numbers show approximately 4500 people served during the year despite Covid. Member Vick asked about the new duties for the PRAB. Assistant Town Manager Ferguson said she would have additional information at the next meeting. Member Tucker asked about board member seats and the board asked about vacancies. Assistant Town Manager Ferguson reported that the Town is currently taking applications and interviews would be held at the July BOC meeting.

MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Assistant Town Manager Ferguson introduced Mike Norris from McGill Associates, P.A. Mr. Norris stated he was excited to be here and provided the board with a presentation (hereby included in the minutes). He stated [Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Regular 7/1/2021]

that McGill has worked with a variety of folks with the master plan update. He is looking for thoughts, ideas, and any items that may need to be added to or embellished. Mr. Norris stated that staff has been good to work with and engaging. He said he will go through the highlights of the plan. He stated he will go over survey results and information from focus group interviews. He highlighted the sections of the plan and demographics. He explained that they approached the plan as taking the pandemic out of the realm and instead looked at what the Town will be like in the future. The needs assessment highlights what homeowners are saying versus visitors. The Town was benchmarked against other communities and from there the group developed recommendations.

Mr. Norris discussed population saying that Holden Beach has a little over 1100 residents on the island. He stated that according to the Cape Fear Council of Governments, the estimated peak season population is 20,000+. Regarding existing facilities, circles on the map shown are service areas. Different sizes of circles are different types of parks. The two larger circles are community parks, smaller circles are mini parks and neighborhood parks. He said the team held a variety of different meetings for engaging the community. He also said that the surveys had good response. He discussed the community event held on April 2nd at Bridgeview Park and the Easter Egg Drop that evening. He continued that on Saturday, April 3, 2021, McGill staff members went to different beach access points to engage the public. They met with a lot of visitors who may not be property owners on the second day. The most popular items requested were more beach access points, additional parking, restroom facilities, dog park, pickleball/tennis courts, water access locations, and more trails. Visual preference surveys were used that showed pictures of various amenities. These were based on amenities that would be appropriate for Holden Beach. Residents and property owners were differentiated from the visitors in preference for amenities. He stated that the top seven from both visitors and homeowners were all the same.

As related to the survey he stated that there were 358 participants. Property owners and second homeowners were differentiated. They ranked park facilities. Over 93% of survey participants were property owners. The top 10 amenities on the survey were the top 10 of 32 choices that he highlighted. There were no anomalies from what was seen in meetings. A program ranking put concerts at the top, followed by festivals and special events and senior and children's programs. He stated that 84% wanted to expand recreational opportunities. Mr. Norris then discussed the focus group meetings in more detail. He stated they had different types of park users to participate. Major themes were that recreation is important to quality of life, water access is critical, and accessibility is important. Walking and biking trails should be extensive, and the dog park is being missed. The team conducted benchmarking based on state guidelines and it tells us how we match to other communities. He reviewed the guidelines and then moved to recommendations.

- Bridgeview Park- install fishing platform, wildlife observation deck, more shade and seating
- Jordan Boulevard Pavilion- repave and improve ADA accessibility
- Sailfish Drive- provide accessible canoe/kayak area, picnic facilities, waterless restroom facilities, ADA accessibility
- 796 OBW- Consider reuse of structure as community recreation resource
 - Bathroom, classroom, rentable meeting space with kitchen
 - Improve parking layout, improve accessibility ADA
- Halstead Park- repair existing pier and fishing platform, install fishing cleaning station, install canoe/kayak launch, add educational signage, evaluate parking layout efficiency, evaluate facility for code compliance
- Pocket Park- provide area for revolving art sculpture; improve ADA accessibility
- Holden Beach Fit Trail- Update equipment and improve ADA accessibility
- Olden Holden Bike Route- Improve accessibility and wayfinding

- Beach/Water Access Sites- install high visibility signage where parking is located, high visibility crosswalks. Have a lot of rights-of-way (ROW) that are undeveloped and feels like it is an opportunity to put waterless restroom facilities.
- Scotch Bonnet-Install dog park, install natural surface trails, canoe/kayak launch, install restroom, bench seating, disc golf course, construct parking lot, parking
- Holden Beach Pier has potential. Unique location, very limited opportunities and more limited in the future. Very appropriate, very unique for community park.
- Future Intracoastal Waterway access points- ROW lead up to Intracoastal, observation areas, canoe/kayak launch
- Linear Park- nice walkway that connects destinations. Wide paved pathway that can have sculpture and seating. Can turn it into an amenity that is greater than a sidewalk. Feels like there is opportunity with a lot of civic spaces with the possibility of a strong connection for walking and biking to destinations. Have it turned into a linear experience with signage such as the history of Holden Beach. Can serve as an area to notify residents of future activities and events.
- Future linear park that would connect streets (Sandspur Water Walk)- soft trails and boardwalks. Some of what is shown is town owned and some is not.
- Dog Park recommendations as far as other locations Ocean Boulevard West and at the end of Brunswick Avenue West, also at the end of Scotch Bonnet Drive. Not proposing a lot of smaller parks. Thinks the Town should look at the park at Scotch Bonnet.

Mr. Norris said the plan meets, at minimum, 10 year needs for the Town at a little over \$6.8 million. He moved to staffing next.

- Staffing-Add full time positions as needed. He said when parks are added, staffing needs to be considered and staff added. Member Tucker made a statement that there is not a director dedicated to parks and recreation, as the Assistant Town Manager does the job as part of her duties.

Regarding other recommendations, Mr. Norris suggests that you should not build anything until you can maintain what you have. He also stated the need for tennis and volleyball courts, pickleball courts, a picnic shelter, and a dog park. In terms of priorities, he highlighted things from a list including shade, parking, canoe/kayak launches, a picnic shelter and waterless restrooms at Sailfish. He also recommended an additional site-specific master plan for Scotch Bonnet.

Mr. Norris asked if there were questions. Member Vick said she had comments not so much on the presentation but on the document itself. She outlined the following:

- Pg. 11 - If you are going to create a list, make sure that list includes locals like Beach Fun and Boomers
- Lists Fort Fisher and Carolina Beach as attractions, but does not have the Aquarium
- Describes community input as community public meetings activity-these were not public meetings in traditional sense
- Pg. 23 had focus group interviews-what you presented on slide needs to be in document
- Asked about return rate for surveys. May not know it, by the way it was conducted. Mr. Norris said it was over a 20% response rate. Member Vick said that needs to be stated. She thinks it should be added.
- Pg. 50 -Bike trails- She does not consider the 25.25 acres listed as separate than the road.
- Pg. 68-Dog Park- This site and seven other recommendations were considered. These are in the middle of residential areas.

Member Tucker said that a lot of the recommendations fall under signage and maintenance. She does not know where that falls in the budget. It may be an entirely different budget line. Mr. Norris said that some communities have maintenance in their recreation department lines. Others fall under public works for paving and some of those sorts of things. If it is not in the plan, it gets lost. Member Tucker said there was a lot of
[Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Regular 7/1/2021]

Town discussions on parking and the pier purchase. Parking is a huge discussion and has its own subcommittee. She thinks this may be overlapping on the Town's business.

Member McEntire said the citizens have been told Scotch Bonnet is the only place that spoils can be dumped right now. He said if that is true, doing something at Scotch Bonnet would be ruled out quickly, if that situation could happen again. He is worried about developing it. Member McEntire said he would share the rest of his comments and edits via email. He would like to see more time spent in defining populations that the plan needs to address and needs to serve and what that means for development. He stated that we are limited in lots that can be built out. He stated that other issues are that part of the justifications do not hold water. He does not think that building the trail will allow shops because of zoning. He stated that he would like to see full-time residents, second homeowners and their renters, day trippers, and then a category of all the stuff that was mentioned. He said that puts us in the unique position that we have to find funding for things that is not island related stuff, that we still have to deal with. Mr. Norris said we know what is here now and how much growth will occur. Member McEntire says he thinks that is insignificant compared to outside pressure. Mr. Norris said that comes back to recommendations and asks if they are dramatically changed. He suggests thinking about people that stay the week and may be staying at the campground. Member McEntire thinks that it will be hard to put numbers on it but thinks we should define the populations. He said on question 19 there was a free for all with the chance to add comments. One person responded: why are you messing around with all this stuff because we are just here to go to the beach? Mr. Norris said that is true, there are two different sides, but 85% wants expansion.

Member Vick said if it is in the master plan, it gives the ability to show items for a grant. The document gives the Town the ability to have great leverage. Member Tucker wondered if we could get more input. She said she would love to see to a chart that shows what percentage of survey participants said what. Mr. Norris said the results are consistent based on what he has seen with other coastal areas. He thinks if you conduct more surveys or public engagements, you will get larger numbers to say the same things. Member McEntire said that one point stuck out to him. He said the plan says we have 202 school aged kids living on island and he questions that number. Mr. Norris said the numbers came from the census. Member McEntire asked if comments and edits should come through Assistant Town Manager Ferguson.

Assistant Town Manager Ferguson asked for an opportunity to highlight the increased number of folks donating memorial benches for the parks and how that assists with keeping costs down for the Town. Member Tucker asked how they should move forward. Assistant Town Manager Ferguson stated they could bring it back to the August meeting. Member Tucker said she could not endorse a dog park in a residential neighborhood. Mr. Norris said he will look at the language, but they had to present options for the BOC. Member Vick said any document that the PRAB does not approve will be a red flag to granting agencies. They have to be comfortable with the plan. Assistant Town Manager Ferguson said that any PRAB comments will have to be forwarded to her to send to McGill to abide by open meetings laws. Member McEntire asked Member Gomez if she had anything additional to add. She said only what was already mentioned. Member McEntire asked about follow-up action. The board agreed to have their suggestions and edits to Assistant Town Manager Ferguson by next Wednesday, July 7, 2021.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments or questions.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn (3:25 p.m.) by Member Vick; second by Member Gomez; approved unanimously.
[Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Regular 7/1/2021]