



MEETING MINUTES

Huntersville Parks and Recreation Commission

Wednesday, August 15, 2018

Members Present: Deanna Baumgardner, Kathy Jones, John Mielke, Geoff Steele, Hank Stiene

Absent: Magic Cypress-McNairy, Rich Lange, John O'Neill, Edward Parks

Guests: Commissioner Nick Walsh

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by John M, Vice-Chair, at 6:30 pm with a quorum present.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Geoff moved to approve the minutes for the July meeting; Kathy seconded the motion. All approved.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

1. Veterans Park – We just hit our 60th day since official opening. Have had eleven events so far with 8,000 people attending. The feedback we have received has been very positive and people are saying they are so glad we are having more events downtown.
2. Other Upcoming Events
 - Car Show at Veterans Park – September 15th
 - Field of Honor – September 4th - 11th
 - Growers' Market still going
3. We will have our first family night at the Rec Center this Saturday – an end of the summer party. Huntersville Police Department is partnering in this event. Activities include pickleball, basketball, Ball with a Cop, and others. The last movie of the season will be playing at the Huntersville Athletic Park as well.
4. Rec Center Incident – On Sunday, July 22nd during the open gym time, we had a paying customer come into the facility and who presented his I.D. as part of the requirement of open gym. After playing some games, he left the building. When he came back in to play more basketball, he had pulled a gun on the court due to a dispute with someone from an earlier game. When staff members learned about this, the police were called and by the time they arrived, the individual was gone. The police did question those at the scene and obtained identification information

about the individual from HPRD staff. We made the decision to close down the gym for the rest of the day. As a result of this incident, we are not offering open gym for all ages at this time. We are, however, still offering the program to the middle schoolers and 50+ adults. We reached out to Mecklenburg County to find out if they offer open gym at any of their facilities and they said they do at certain Recreation Centers. We are trying to see if there is any way to open this up again safely. As an alternative option, the Police Department suggested we look at pre-registering participants, providing some control over who is coming in to the facility. Since we have a lot of programs going on now, there will be limited time for open gym during the upcoming season.

5. Fitness Zone at Huntersville Athletic Park – I am happy to announce that we have received enough funds to do the outdoor fitness zone at the Huntersville Athletic Park. Parks and Rec staff met with HFFA, the Police Department and CPCC to get ideas on what amenities to include. We have complete funding for the project. The Mayor received \$25,000 from Keffer Automotive and Novant donated \$30,000; the Town will not need to contribute any monies towards this project. Our goal is to serve multiple purposes. We will post this new amenity on Facebook and request feedback from the public on what they would like to see included. We are very excited about this. There are no other outside fitness zones in the area. Once we get community input, we will bring a final plan of the fitness zone to the committee for endorsement.

COMMISSIONERS REPORT

1. Deanna – Reached out to Lake Norman Giants but have not heard back from them yet.
2. Kathy – Commented that Alison Ahrens is doing a great job with the Public Art Commission.

PROGRAMMING REPORT

1. Summer Camp – Finishing up this week.
2. Movies in the Park – We have two make-up movies this week –Thursday and Saturday - the 16th and the 18th.
3. Registrations ended for softball and volleyball leagues.
4. See Fall Guide provided to you for programs and events coming up this fall and winter.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

NONE

NEW BUSINESS

1. Leash Ordinance for Parks. We are looking at passing a new leash law due to the increase in calls and complaints we are receiving about pets not on leases at the parks. Over the past few years,

we have had two staff members bitten as well as a child. We have also received complaints about dogs on the athletic fields and tennis courts. Michael met with the Police Chief and Town Attorney regarding the proposed ordinance. The current ordinance does not require pets to be on a leash but states that the dogs “need to be under owner’s control.” We believe that the solution is to adopt a leash law that would solely govern town parks and events.

We might receive some push back on any new regulations since we do not have any public dog parks for them to take their dogs to in Huntersville. A dog park is in the Town’s 5 year CIP and currently shows potential funding next fiscal year. The first step would be to request money to begin the design process. The land that was donated to the Town near Ranson and Rosedale would be the ideal location for the park since the park is connected to the a greenway and there are hundreds of single and multifamily homes within walking distance.

Part of the current ordinance states dog owners are supposed to pick up after their dogs. The new ordinance would not allow any dogs on the fields or courts. The committee discussed in detail if it should or shouldn’t allow dogs on fields, courts and playgrounds. But after much discussion, the committee came to the consensus that mixing dogs with children playing, screaming and running, does not provide a safe environment. Even though the current ordinance requires dog owners to pick up after their pets, there is no guarantee that these areas are completely clean and sanitary for kids to play on. The Town Attorney will draft the language for the ordinance once we provide her with what we want in it.

Nick Walsh suggested that the committee vote on the specific proposed restrictions during tonight’s meeting so we can keep the process moving. Other Leash Law examples were passed out (see attachment). Below is the list of restrictions the committee would like to see in the ordinance:

- All dogs are required to wear a leash at all town parks and events.
- Leash must not be over 6 feet long.
- No dogs allowed on athletic fields, courts or playgrounds.
- Dogs will be allowed at special events as long as they are on a leash.
- Fines will be cited as follows: \$50 for first offense; \$75 for second offense, and \$100 for third or more.

Kathy made a motion to approve these restrictions; Deanna seconded. All approved.

Michael and possibly the vice-chair of the PRC will present the proposal to the Ordinance Advisory Board at its next meeting on September 6th. Michael will reach out to Board to get this on its agenda.

2. Special Events Packet. Staff has been working on streamlining our event permitting process. Alison Ahrens has been working on a draft permit guide, which all of you have received a copy of. She has been working with the Police Department, Public Works, Planning, and the Fire Department to put this together. This guide should assist those who want to close roads for events or rent out Veterans Park for various events. Michael asked the committee to review the packet and let him know if they have any questions or concerns. I do not expect a decision tonight on supporting this but will look for a recommendation at the next PRC meeting. Geoff commented on the timeline stating he was concerned about the 60-day requirement to apply.

He thinks it is too short. Nick responded that if someone is doing a big event, they should start the process months in advance - 60 days is the minimum amount of time to apply.

OLD BUSINESS

NONE

There being no other business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, September 19th at 6:30 p.m.