

MINUTES OF CARTER COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD

MEETING HELD December 28th , 2021 at 801 East Elk Ave, Elizabethton, TN 37643

OPENING: Chairman Ken Gough called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

ROLL CALL: Erik Anderson conducted a roll call. A quorum was present.

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| Patty Woodby (Mayor) | Present | Aaron Frazier (Commission Liaison) | Present | Michael Warren (1) | Present |
| Erik Anderson (2) | Present | Mel McKay (3) | Present | Lisa McGinnis (4) | Present |
| Ken Gough (5) | Present | JR Campbell (6) | Present | Charlie Mattioli (7) | Present |
| Mike Melton (8) | Present | Eliz Park and Rep | Absent | | |

GUESTS: Mr. John Thompson (Johnson City Press); Mr. Bob Richards (Bob's Trails, Trees and Gardens)

PREVIOUS MINUTES: Minutes of the November 23rd, 2021 meeting were provided to members. They were approved with corrections by common consent.

PRESENTATIONS: NONE

OLD BUSINESS:

1. **Financial Report:** Ken reported that expenditures to date totaled a little more than \$19,000. Significant outlays are expected in the coming months as work on Gap Creek Park progresses. Ken will meet with the new Finance Director to validate our fund balance.
2. **Birding:** Nothing Significant to Report
3. **Website:** The 2022-2027 Carter County Park and Recreation Master Plan is now on the website.
4. **Erik Anderson Community Park:** Erik reported that the RMRF successfully bid \$3300 on one of the two County surplus mowers. It will require a new battery and spring servicing. Park activity is normal for this time of year; lot of walkers and a few folks playing disc golf.
5. **Elizabethton Park and Recreation:** Mike Melton discussed potential maintenance by the City of Gap Creek Park. Some city representatives stated that the property would need to be deeded to the City and a vehicle bridge be emplaced before they could entertain the idea. Nothing has been resolved.
6. **Green Bridge Landing (GBL)** – Lisa reports that the Unaka HS Auto shop teacher will inspect the swing set in January to assess the work needed.
7. **Mountain Biking – Hampton Watershed Trails** – Nothing Significant to Report
8. **Fish Springs Park** – J.R. reports that the Friends of Fish Springs now own the 1.5 acre parcel of land next to the highway. When combined with the County owned property the future park will approach 5 acres. They have a plan to pay off the property within 2 years. They will have a meeting in two weeks to initiate planning and design of the park. The subject of ownership and how to combine the parcels will be addressed. One option mentioned was a County lease with a 2 year option to buy as a way to move ahead. The Board suggested that Fish Spring might be a good project for Army Corp of Engineers consideration.

9. **Tunnel Trail – Tweetsie Trail and Hampton Watershed Trail Extension** – Ken and Patty reported on their December 15th presentation to the Assistant Commissioner for Rural Tourism, Melanie Beauchamp, and the Director of Legislation, Trevin Ayers in Nashville. Senator Crowe was in attendance and advocated for the projects. The presentation appeared to be well received and we will know when the first draft budget come out in January. Steve Wilson of Wilson and Spoden Engineering is working on a report for Tweetsie Bridge options and it may be ready before our January 2022 meeting. We have 20 letters of support to include a critical letter from Johnson City. Ken’s travel voucher for the trip was approved.
10. **Gap Creek Park** – Charlie and Bob Richards reported that the pedestrian bridge was emplaced on December 14th. The next step is to build a retaining wall on both sides of the bridge and build up a ramp. In January Rocky Fork Engineering will do staking for the wall and plan for stormwater protection. The approaches will be ADA compliant with a less than 5% grade. Other work for the next several months includes staking the Softball Field, laying out the Dog Park and planning for ½ of walking loop. Bob reported that he has been visiting other dog parks during his recent travels to gather information and ideas. We will plan a ribbon cutting once the bridge access are complete and the walking trail established.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Future Meeting Agendas: Mike Melton made a motion that future meetings be opened with a Prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance. Aaron seconded.** It was noted that this is the way that County Commission meetings start. Mike volunteered to lead the future prayers. A voice vote was taken. Yes:7 No:1 Abstain: 1. **The motion was approved.**
2. **Roan Mountain State Park Pool Closure:** Erik summarized the information that was provided to date on the planned closure of the Roan Mountain Sate Park Pool. The State Park had a public meeting on December 14th which sought public input on how to spend \$400K to offset the pool closure. Erik noted that four members of the Park and Rec Board were in attendance as well as three County Commissioners. The meeting was formatted in a manner to stifle any discussion on the decision to close the pool. The Roan Mountain Citizens Club and the Roan Mountain Recreation Foundation have formally asked for the decision to be revisited. Ken and Patty reported that Senator Crowe expressed concern over the planned closure with the Director of Legislation as a side topic at the December 15th Tunnel Bridge presentation. **Erik made a motion that the Park and Recreation Board send a letter to the Deputy Commissioner of Parks to revisit the decision.** With the concurrence of the Mayor and Senator Crowe the letter will include a proposal for a working group be formed to investigate options for the planned pool closure. **Mel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.** Ken presented the Board a draft resolution for the County Commission which expresses concern over the planned closure. **Michel Warren made a motion that the draft resolution be sent to the County Commission for approval. Mike Melton seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously by voice vote.**
3. **Smalling Road Bridge:** Ken and Mel further investigated the potential opportunity that TDOTs replacement of the Smalling Road Bridge over the Watauga may afford the County Parks and Recreation. The bridge is a historical bridge representing bridge building techniques not in use anymore. TDOT is seeking inputs from interested groups on disposition of the bridge. The Bridge could be abandoned in place or moved to another location. Mel thinks the bridge could be split into two sections if desired. Four potentials were discussed by the Board. 1- leave in place and turn the bridge into a pocket park; 2- take one section to use as a connector between two parcels of the Erik Anderson Community Park; 3- take two sections an try to revive the Doe River Trail

connecting all four parcels of the Erik Anderson Community Park; 4- take one section and use as a vehicle access at Gap Creek Park. The consensus of the Board was that we should inform TDOT that we are interested but do not yet have a definitive plan as to how we might use the Smalling Road Bridge. Of note, the bridge may be an ideal candidate for Army Corps of Engineers work during the next several years.

4. **Carter County Trading Cards:** Mel McKay will take the lead working with the Chamber to develop a set of trading cards for Carter County. These cards are inspired by a set of cards depicting famous Tennessean that were given to our presentation team during the recent Nashville visit . A Carter County deck would highlight people, places, and events. Once we develop the intellectual content the Chamber will find a sponsor, arrange for printing, and distribute.
5. **Recreation Opportunities:** Aaron updated us on the planning for a 2022 Watauga Lake Bass Tournament. He has been working with Hampton/Valley Forge Volunteer fire departments as well as other potential interested entities. He will keep the Board informed and identify any opportunities for our participation.
6. **Budget Workshop:** The Board accomplished a second review of the draft budget for FY 2022-2023. Minor adjustments were made with several of the Operation and Maintenance line items. The proposed budget contains two significant funding requests. The first is for Park and Recreation personnel. This would be an annual expense and is needed based on the growth of capabilities over the last 5 years. The budget also includes a major request for funding several increments of Gap Creek Park. It is noteworthy that funding for Park and Recreation rolls over from one FY to the next. This permits the Budget Committee and Commission to fund both short and mid-term capability improvements to Gap Creek at one time. The budget aligns with the Strategic Plan for the next 5 years.
7. **Commission Update:** Ken will provide an annual update to the Commission at its January meeting
8. **Next Meeting:** It will be on January 25th, 2022 at 6:00 PM in the Mayor's Conference Room.

ADJOURNMENT: The Chairman closed the Meeting at 9:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Erik Anderson
Secretary