



Recreation and Parks Commission

Meeting Minutes

August 15, 2023 at 12:30pm

Alamance Parks Admin Office • 3916 R. Dean Coleman Rd, Burlington

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

Vice-Chair Peter Dahl, Commissioner Bill T. Lashley, Mr. Dan Ingle, Mr. David Woody, Mr. Thomas Purcell, Mr. Craig Yokeley, Ms. Kelly Ronnow, Ms. Elizabeth Read

ALAMANCE PARKS STAFF PRESENT:

Jamie Merchel, Director; Nolan Carter, Trails & Open Space Coordinator; Anna Bowland, Grants & Communications Coordinator

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Andrew Sam, Alamance County Task Force Leader – Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail

1) COMMUNICATIONS

- a) The meeting was called to order and a quorum established at 12:30pm
- b) The July 18, 2023 meeting minutes were approved unanimously upon the motion of David Woody and second of Craig Yokeley.

2) PUBLIC COMMENT

- a) Andrew Sam, Alamance County Task Force Leader for the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail gave an update about the group's trail work. The Alamance County-focused volunteer group has been in existence for 2 years and continues to build and maintain trail and provide support to the Department.

3) REPORT OF CHAIRMAN

- a) Vice-Chair Peter Dahl introduced new board member, Elizabeth Read, to the Commission. Elizabeth lives in Glencoe and is an avid Alamance Parks program and facility user. She participates in the Archery program and enjoys camping. Elizabeth is employed with National Trust for Historic Preservation.
- b) Peter gave an update on the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail – Alamance County Task Force. Over the past 2 years, under the leadership of Andrew Sam, the group of over 60 volunteers have donated 3,511 hours to help improve recreation in Alamance County. He noted that what is unique about this group is that 2/3 of those hours were given for trail work other than the Mountains-to-Sea Trail; including work on the Pioneer Trail at Cane Creek Mountains Natural Area and the Regulator Disc Golf course at Cedarock Park. Additionally, with the help of local historian Bob Ellis, the group has contributed a substantial number of articles to the Department for inclusion in the newsletters. The main goal of the task force remains to help build and maintain the Haw River Trail and see its integration into the Mountains-to-Sea Trail. The group will



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continue to donate their time in service to the county and requests that the Department continue to keep land acquisition as a priority item.

4) REPORT OF STAFF

a) Monthly Department Report: Director Jamie Merchel gave Department updates:

- The Department is preparing for a busy fall of programming. The schedule includes: Archery, Youth Football, and Special Olympics sports. Registration for Youth Basketball and a Youth Disc Golf Program will open in September. This year the Department will offer two basketball options – a traditional competition league, and an instructional league based out of the community centers. Other upcoming fall events include The ALCOVETS Balloon Festival (September 8-10), the PDGA US Women’s Disc Golf Championship (September 21-24), and Alamance Adventure Race (September 30).
- Special Olympics Alamance County has coaches for all fall sports, but is seeking coaches for volleyball, cycling, softball, and golf in order to be able to expand programming and offer those sports. Additionally, SOAC is looking for soccer coaches for the spring season.
- The Department is due for a new Recreation Master plan by 2027. The last plan was completed in 2017 and expires after 10 years. Jamie is researching the options and costs for completing this plan so that the Department can budget and prepare for the work.
- July and August have been productive work months. Staff have continued to work on the Regulator Disc Golf Course and are also planning for the B. Everett Jordan Ballfield renovation and the new Cedarrock Park Playground. Department updates regarding specific projects were also given and are listed in Old Business.

5) OLD BUSINESS

a) Haw River Trail Updates:

- Nolan Carter, Trails and Open Space Coordinator reported that the first Haw River State Trail planning meeting was held on July 28. This meeting was the first gathering of the Haw River Trail MOU members, community group stakeholders, and NC State Trails staff to discuss how to organize the oversight of the Haw River State Trail. The first step of the group is to develop a 5-year plan for the trail to submit to State Trails. The 5-year goals will be developed for each segment of the trail (Rockingham/Guildford, Alamance/Orange, and Chatham). The group will meet again in September.
- Nolan reported that the new trail at Shallow Ford Natural Area has been flagged. He still needs the emergency numbers from Alamance County planning and then he will be able to install signage and open this section.

b) The Regulator Disc Golf Course:

- The course is now open (as of August 11). The Department is grateful for the work of the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail work crew who helped during several



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workdays to ensure the course was complete. Work continues to refine several of the holes but it is playable and has received positive feedback.

c) Cane Creek Mountains Natural Area – Phase 2:

- Phase 2: Construction of the tower is on hold for permitting. The engineer is working on updated tower drawings to submit for review. The Department is moving forward with plans to open the Lookout Trail and campsites in October. Work will be done during August and September to blaze and install signage in preparation for the opening.
- Phase 3: Nolan and Andrew flagged the trail in preparation for trail work of Phase 3 of the park which will begin in the fall. Phase 3 will contain 5-6 miles of trail which will be built with the support of the Friends of Alamance Parks – Trails volunteers.

6) NEW BUSINESS

a) New Park Opportunities:

- Troxler Property: Nolan and Jamie presented the opportunity for the Department to acquire 16 acres of land near AO Elementary School along Reedy Fork creek. The land is currently vacant and would be given by donation with the purpose of creating a community park. Potential park features would be connectivity to AO Elementary Athletic Complex, a walking track, an outdoor classroom, hiking trail, playground, and a paddle access. Staff requested the board's feedback on this potential project. Board members voiced their support for the idea and were enthusiastic about the potential connectivity to AO Elementary School. The board agreed that the project seems to fit within the Department's scope. Staff will continue to pursue this project. No official action taken.
- Mebane Oaks Property: Nolan and Jamie presented the opportunity for the Department to acquire approximately 7 acres of land off Mebane Oaks Road on the southwest side of Alamance County. The land is currently used as a privately maintained community park, and the owner has approached the Department with the desire to donate the park to the county to maintain. The park would need significant investment including new playground equipment and upgrades to existing shelter and gazebo structures. There is also the potential for the county to acquire an additional 41 adjacent acres by purchase. The 41 acres would be an ideal site for bike trail. Staff requested the board's feedback on this project. The board felt that the project would fit with the Department's goals if the project included the additional 41 acres. A small, 7-acres park that is an outlier to other parks in the county would pose challenges for staffing and maintenance. Staff will continue to explore options for this project. No official action taken.

b) September Parks Board Meeting & Commission Paddle:



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- The September Parks Board meeting time was moved to 12:30pm at the Eli Whitney Community Center to accommodate those who may wish to participate in the Alamance County Citizens Academy.
- Jamie will send out a doodle poll for availability for a paddle to take place in September along the Haw.

7) ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:41pm upon the motion of Dan Ingle and second of Billy Lashley.