



# Recreation and Parks Commission

Meeting Minutes

March 19, 2024, 6:00pm

Alamance Parks Administrative Office • 3916 R. Dean Coleman Road, Burlington

## **COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:**

David Woody, Mr. Mike Dunning, Dr. Harold Kernodle, Ms. Elizabeth Read, Ms. Kelly Ronnow, Mr. Thomas Purcell

## **ALAMANCE PARKS STAFF PRESENT:**

Jamie Merchel, Director; Nolan Carter, Trails and Open Space Coordinator; Mackenzie Barrier, Adaptive & Inclusive Recreation Coordinator; Anna Bowland, Grants & Communications Coordinator

## **PUBLIC PRESENT:**

Geryl and Naomi Gilbert, Barefoot Traditional Archery

Andrew Sam, Mountains-to-Sea trail Task Force Leader – Alamance

## **1) COMMUNICATIONS**

- a) The meeting was called to order and a quorum established at 6:02 pm
- b) February 20, 2024 meeting minutes were approved unanimously upon the motion of Kelly Ronnow and second of David Woody.

## **2) PUBLIC COMMENT**

- a) Geryl and Naomi Gilbert from Barefoot Traditional Archery gave a presentation about their club. The facility is located in Alamance County on highway 49 South of Burlington. They are a 501 4C non-profit organization with the goal to engage all members of the community in the sport of traditional archery. They would like to partner with the Alamance Parks' archery program to promote and offer traditional archery opportunities to past and current participants. Mr. Gilbert also expressed interest in supporting Special Olympics programming.
- b) Andrew Sam, Task Force Leader for the Mountains-to-Sea Trail Task Force for Alamance County, gave updates on the group's efforts. New trail is now open in Saxapahaw on the west side of the dam going north. This trail will eventually connect to the Haw River Trail in Swepsonville. Members of the leadership team for the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, Brent Laurenz and Betsy Brown hiked trail in Saxapahaw on a recent visit and were very impressed with the trail. The trail building crew has begun work on Phase 3 trails at Cane Creek Mountains Natural Area.

## **3) REPORT OF CHAIRMAN**

None

## **4) REPORT OF STAFF**

- a) Adaptive and Inclusive Recreation Presentation: Mackenzie Barrier, Adaptive and Inclusive Recreation Coordinator, gave a presentation about inclusive programming through Alamance Parks. Adaptive and Inclusive Recreation (AIR) is an umbrella term that encompasses the Department's adaptive opportunities through three programs:



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- Visually Impaired Program (VIP) – VIP offers monthly programs and trips for Alamance County’s visually impaired citizens free of charge. Past programs have included museum trips, boat tours, disc golf, adaptive painting, potlucks, and many more.
- Special Olympics Alamance County – Special Olympics is a global organization offering competitive sports competition to people with intellectual disabilities. The Alamance County chapter serves over 400 athletes and offers bocce, soccer, bowling, swim, basketball, bowling, and equestrian. Athletes compete in state and local competitions. The biggest event of the year is Spring Games which is held in April on Elon University’s campus. This is also the biggest volunteer event the Department hosts with over 700 volunteers. It is free for athletes to participate in Special Olympics and the program relies heavily on community volunteers and donations.
- Adaptive and Include Recreation (AIR) – Through the AIR program, the Department can make adaptations to most any offered program to align with participants’ needs. In the past, the AIR Program has sponsored yoga, trail hiking, functional fitness, family footgolf, family pickleball, and family kickball. The Department also hosts the AIR Alamance Inclusive Basketball Tournament. The purpose of AIR is to offer programs where persons of all abilities can play and enjoy the sport together.

### 5) OLD BUSINESS

- a) Alamance Athletics: Jamie Merchel updated the board that the football league will move forward in the fall under the new Alamance County Municipal League agreement. This new agreement makes the league stronger and allows the league to grow and add new teams in the future since each club covers their participation costs. Baseball, Softball, and Tee-ball season is underway now. The Department is moving forward with plans to offer a new 12-month athletics programming model moving forward.
- b) Haw River Trail: Nolan Carter updated the board that a new 0.2 mile easement has been acquired north of the 54 paddle access. Nolan is working with the City of Graham for access on their property from the easement to allow the addition of trail in this location. In Saxapahaw, the Department is working with the Alamance County Planning Department on a long-term plan to add sidewalk access to the new trail on the west side of the dam.
- c) Cane Creek Mountains Natural Area: The tower is in progress; the Department is finalizing paperwork and construction will begin soon. For Phase 3, the volunteer trailbuilders are nearly done with the 1<sup>st</sup> loop of Phase 3. The Department is beginning the process of engineering and permitting for the parking lot.
- d) Cedarock Park Playground: Jamie reported that installation of the new playground is underway and the new playground is expected to open in mid-May. The Department is planning a grand opening ceremony and will send out more information once it is known.



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- e) BE Jordan Elementary Ballfield Renovation: Jamie reported that the project is in progress and on schedule with the majority of construction planned during the summer. After the ballfield area is complete, the next step will be to install the walking track. The next ballfield renovation will be the AO Elementary Ballfield, if the project is approved on the County Commissioner's Capital Improvements list.
- f) Great Alamance Creek Development:  
The Great Alamance Creek Feasibility Study is nearly complete and the final report will be released in a few months. The Department continues to wait for Duke Energy to finalize a lease to allow the development of a paddle access at Great Alamance Creek.
- g) Equestrian Trail Ride Vendor:  
There have been no submissions to the request for proposal for an Equestrian trail ride provider. The Department continues to actively search for a vendor and is revising the verbiage of the RFP to show that they are willing to negotiate the details of the trail ride offerings. Jamie encouraged the board members to pass along the opportunity to their networks.
- h) Barefoot Traditional Archery:  
The board briefly discussed the presentation given by Barefoot Traditional Archery. Jamie will send out a copy of their presentation to the board and their request will be added to the agenda for discussion at the next Parks Board meeting.

### 6) NEW BUSINESS

- a) Grant Applications for the NC Complete the Trails Program
  - Haw River State Trail – Chatham County, Page on the Haw land acquisition:  
As the lead agency for the Haw River State Trail, the Department has applied for a grant for \$305,250 on behalf of Triangle Land Conservancy for land acquisition along the river in Chatham County. No county match is required.
  - Haw River State Trail – Alamance County, Alston Quarter land acquisition:  
The Department has applied for a grant for \$500,000 for land acquisition in southeast Alamance County along the Haw River. This grant serves as match funds for the Land and Water Fund grant which they applied for earlier this year. The grant requires no county match from the general fund.
- b) Grant Application for the AARP Flagship Grant – Pleasant Grove Community Center:  
The Department has applied for \$25,700 to add a pickleball court and outdoor shaded picnic area at the Pleasant Grove Community Center. This project will pair well with the Young at Heart Lunch Brunch program which will begin at the center in April and is sponsored by Meals and Wheels and Golden Corral. The project match is in-kind labor; no cash match is requested.



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### **7) ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:47pm upon the motion of David Woody and the second of Kelly Ronnow.