OAK RIDGE PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
MARCH 21, 2013 – 7 P.M.
OAK RIDGE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Members Present
Bill Edwards, Chair
Tracy Street, Vice Chair
Barry Knight

Teen Advisor Absent
Marisa Baker

Walkability Sub-Committee Absent
Ellen Langlois, Chair

Staff Present
Sandra Smith, Town Clerk
Terry Lannon, Parks & Recreation Director

Members Absent
Tony Cooler
Marcy Cook
Paul Beitz, Alternate

1. CALL TO ORDER

Bill Edwards called the Parks & Recreation Commission meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

2. APPROVE MARCH 21, 2013, AGENDA

Bill Edwards made a **motion** to approve the agenda of the March 21, 2013, meeting. **Tracy Street** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (3-0).

3. APPROVE MINUTES OF JANUARY 24, 2013

Bill Edwards made a **motion** to approve the minutes of the January 24, 2013, meeting. **Tracy Street** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (3-0).

4. APPROVE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 27, 2013

Bill Edwards made a **motion** to approve the minutes of the February 27, 2013, meeting. **Tracy Street** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (3-0).

5. P&RC ADMINISTRATION

- **P&RC alternate member resignation.** Because Paul Beitz has an ongoing conflict with meetings and has not responded to attempts to contact him, Edwards suggested he be removed as an alternate member of the Commission.

Bill Edwards made a **motion** to recommend to Town Council that Paul Beitz be removed from his position as an alternate on the Commission. **Barry Knight** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (3-0).

- **P&RC alternate member application.** Liz Tice had filled out an application to be an alternate member of the P&RC and was invited to attend the meeting. Because she was not in attendance, the Commission agreed by consensus not to vote on a recommendation to Council until Tice could attend a P&RC meeting.

6. STAFF REPORT

Parks & Recreation Director Terry Lannon presented the staff report:

- **Finances and budget.** Revenues are currently at 85.4 percent and expenses are 71.68 percent of what was budgeted for the year. Lannon estimated coming in at or below budget for the current fiscal year.
- **Dog park subcommittee.** Minutes from the last dog park subcommittee meeting were available. Lannon said sponsors were being recruited for the Canine Capers fundraising event for the dog park, and it looks like it will be a good event.
- **Union Cemetery.** A contractor had been chosen for clean-up of the cemetery and to take down dead/diseased trees. Maintaining the site will become part of the park staff's functions.
- **Bridge to Oak Ridge Commons.** No update.
- **Field laser grading.** Work had been completed a couple of weeks prior to the meeting, and good feedback on the work by adult and travel teams using the fields had been received.
- **Damage to walking path.** The path along Field 3 was damaged. Repair estimates had not been obtained.
- **Repair to electrical box.** Repairs, which had been held up because of insurance issues, have been completed. The electrical panel was damaged when it was hit by the concrete truck pouring the apron last year.
- **Pond fountain.** No update. The lowest of three bids had been selected and work should be completed in the next few weeks.
- **Other.**
  - Adult softball leagues are in their third week of play.
  - ORYA soccer and lacrosse seasons and baseball practices have begun.
  - Tournaments are starting, and shelter reservations are up.
  - Park staff is working on its ongoing punch list of items to be addressed. The next big project will be installing mulch in the planting beds.
    - Edwards asked when mulch would be installed again on the playground, and Lannon said it is funded for next fiscal year which starts July 1.

7. YOUTH ADVISOR REPORT

None

8. OLD BUSINESS

- **Ray Parrish Charity Walk.** Edwards said the fundraiser held at the park on March 9 was a great event, and it may become an annual event to raise money for the We the People team at Northwest High School.

- **Pedestrian Plan.** Edwards reported the committee had met on March 12. At this point, a request for $20,000 to build a sidewalk is in the Town's budget for FY 2013-14.
- **RidgeFest 2013.** Two RidgeFest planning meetings have been held. Organizers are considering opening the carnival rides for a third day, with rides also available on Thursday night; there is no additional cost.
- **Mountain Bike Trails.** Bart Wellisley is working on rules for the trails and solutions to crossings and is helping plan the grand opening of the trails in conjunction with RidgeFest. Edwards reported Wellisley has been very active and responsive in working with the Commission.
- **Donated landscaping materials.** Barry Knight reported that a nursery has offered to give the park plants. There are a variety of plants and sizes, including Carissa hollies, compacta hollies, rhododendrons, etc. The plants are all free. Edwards said he was thinking an area could be tilled and the plants placed there until a location to plant them has been determined. Knight said many of the plants are root-bound, and Edwards said they had pretty much been abandoned.
- **Farmer's Market.** Edwards asked if the Commission was still interested in holding the event, and Commission members indicated they were. After additional discussion, it was decided to hold the event beginning Saturday, May 11, from 8 a.m. to noon in the gravel lot at the maintenance building. Vegetables, flowers, honey, etc. will be sold.

9. NEW BUSINESS

ORYA presentation. Dave Maxson, president of Oak Ridge Youth Association, had asked to be put on the agenda to speak to the Commission. Because Maxson had not yet arrived at the meeting, Edwards asked to skip this item and come back to it when Maxson arrived.

10. OTHER DISCUSSION ITEMS/ANNOUNCEMENTS/REMINDERS

- **Cascades update.** Edwards read from an email from Alex Ashton of Guilford County regarding the Cascades. Ashton asked if P&RC members would like to walk the proposed trail and/or help work on it.
- **Next P&RC meeting.** The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 18, 2013.
- **Living History Weekend.** Edwards said he had spoken with Mike Nelson, who will help plan the event. Nelson wanted to get together to discuss the proposed event the following week.
- **Other.** Lannon said he had spoken with Matt Fortun, who is ready to start working on his Eagle Scout project in the park. Construction materials for the proposed bridge will be dropped off at the end of the week, and Lannon said he would make arrangements to get the materials to the construction site. Edwards asked when the project would begin, and Lannon said Fortun planned to do the project on April 6.

9. NEW BUSINESS (Continued)

ORYA presentation.

- Angela Holland introduced herself as a member of the OYRA Board. The Association is a 501(c)(3) that runs seven sporting activities and serves about 1,200 youth per year. By that time, Maxson had arrived and Holland turned the meeting over to him.
- Dave Maxson introduced himself and said he and the several other ORYA Board members in attendance were there to discuss the fundamentals of who they are and

how they feel like the organization is being pushed out of the park a little more each year. While appreciative of the Town, he called attention to several items in the Town's contract with ORYA. He said he understood the park was built with the understanding that ORYA would use it as its training facility and that they would use the storage building in return for pay; recently ORYA felt it was not being able to use the athletic fields as often as it would like. He said it was difficult to reserve baseball/softball fields in advance when it was unknown how many players and how many teams they would have; once that is determined, practices and games are set up. When they asked to use the fields on certain dates, they were told that they had been rented to other organizations. Maxson said ORYA is not angry and understands the Town's desire to maximize field use, but that the fields should be there for them first. Now they have games and practices to hold, but no home fields available to them.

Maxson continued that ORYA had tried to practice football in the open fields at the park, but parents had demanded that they move back to Oak Ridge Elementary because there is not enough grass at the park and the ground is too hard for the kids. In the past, ORYA had provided grass seed and turf for the park, but had chosen not to use that money for seed at the park this year. He said he understood Lannon had decided not to paint the fields for ORYA this year because ORYA had not provided grass seed – something Maxson said seemed like "punishment" to him.

Maxson said ORYA had "gone out of our way" to set up nets at the back of each lacrosse goal – which cost "many thousands of dollars" – to ensure bystanders do not get hit by a stray ball. It takes ORYA volunteers a couple of hours before each game to set up the nets. Maxson said if the contract says the Town will prep the fields, then ORYA could theoretically say it is the Town's job to set up those nets – an avenue ORYA did not wish to take.

According to Maxson, ORYA was caught off guard by the change in the contract requiring ORYA to paint the fields. Maxson said Lannon had told him in a phone call that the Town "subsidizes" ORYA, and he was "stung" to hear that because it is not true. Maxson also brought up the fact that the Town gets additional money from ORYA by requiring that ORYA pay an $8 per player surcharge for players living outside the Town. Since ORYA is not passing that cost on to the players, it is taking money away from their organization. ORYA had recently asked the Town to remove that requirement from the contract, but the Town had refused. Maxson said that $8 per play surcharge should be used by the Town to paint the fields.

- Chuck Cave added that with multiple sports teams, there are not enough fields on which to practice.
- Chuck Reid said he was worried about injuries when there is, for example, a softball team practicing on a field and football teams also practicing in the outfield.
- Maxson said the game fields at the park are great and ORYA doesn't want to wear them out, but added that he felt they could be used by some age groups. He added that Lannon had said the Town is willing to work with ORYA to develop practice fields, but he didn't know where to start. If the Town is sincere, Maxson said ORYA would like some suggestions brought to them. Edwards responded that the process would be to schedule a meeting with P&RC and show where ORYA would like to try to develop practice fields. He added that the Redmon field area is fairly level, although rocks would need to be removed.
- Holland said it was a long way from the parking lot to the Redmon field, and said a parking lot in that area would also be good.
- Brent Streeter said he had also seen other organizations using the playing fields, and asked if ORYA could pay to rent the playing fields for practice. Lannon responded that

the rugby group is not allowed to wear cleats on the playing field; Stokesdale football and First Christian had only used the fields a couple of times each. Holland said one of the rugby players would do more damage to a playing field than a 5-year-old. Streeter added that ORYA's agreement with the Town says if fields are damaged they will be repaired by ORYA, something that has never been an issue.

- Edwards asked how long it would take to prepare a soccer field, and Lannon said ORYA would need to come back with a proposal saying their soccer program is growing, and explain what age group a field is needed for so the proper size would be considered. Edwards added that the practice field issue would need to be solved in a way that did not preclude future amenities – such as volleyball or tennis courts – being built.
- Streeter said lighting at practice fields is also needed, something that becomes much more of an issue when Daylight Savings Time ends.
- Maxson said ORYA would like assurance that if they helped develop practice fields that those fields would be there in the future for ORYA use, and not replaced by something like a gazebo or tennis courts. Another ORYA Board member commented that ORYA had the same issue with installing batting cages, and Streeter said ORYA would have to answer to parents who had donated money for a specific purpose if those items later disappeared. Barry Knight explained ORYA's position when the park was first built and said ORYA had also approached the Town about building a large storage shed and allowing ORYA to pay for part of it in exchange for its use.
- Maxson said he appreciated the Town's efforts with the storage shed, but said if ORYA cannot practice on park fields, then the shed does them little good. He said the contract between the two groups seems to change every year and more things are being taken away from ORYA. He again said it seemed like the Town was punishing ORYA for not paying for grass seed by refusing to paint fields. Edwards responded that there was no retribution and that the changes in the contract should not be a surprise because they were highlighted in an email sent to ORYA last August.
- Lannon said the Town had been running weekend tournaments at the park for three years, and he had repeatedly asked the person in charge of scheduling the fields for ORYA what dates the fields were needed. Knight, who was a longtime member of the ORYA Board, said he had never known ORYA to practice on weekends; an ORYA Board member responded that baseball fields are also taken on Thursday and Friday nights by Town leagues, so those nights are unavailable as well. Lannon said his personal philosophy, which had been adopted by P&RC, was that organized groups would pay for field use and nonresidents would pay at a higher level. ORYA is providing a valuable function and deserves a different rate than other groups who rent space, he said. Although "subsidizing" might have been a poor word choice, Lannon said the Town does provide around $20,000 worth of items that directly or indirectly benefit ORYA. The Town only has two full-time groundskeepers charged with maintaining 80 acres, and the money the Town makes on renting park facilities enables it to purchase items to make it a better facility – which is why rentals of facilities book up early. In addition, the Town receives no revenue from sales at the concession stand and signage on the fences because that money all goes directly to ORYA. Lannon said many people who want to rent facilities on weekends get turned away; if the Town were only interested in money, there are adult soccer leagues that have asked to use the fields but were turned down. He added that players outside the Town should expect to pay more because their parents aren't paying taxes here, and that probably 95 percent of municipalities charge nonresident fees for park use.
- Streeter said selling two signs would pay the $8 per player fee, and he was going to take over selling sponsorships for ORYA. He reiterated that lighted field space is an issue.

- Edwards said the Town had goals to ensure the limited space at the park is used for both active and passive activities, and that the entire park would not be turned into athletic fields. A survey of residents mandated that both active and passive areas are wanted.
- Knight said P&RC was initially surprised that Lannon had ever agreed to have park personnel paint the fields, something that takes about 10 man-hours each week to do.
- Several other issues were discussed, including allowing very young players and/or cheerleaders to use the playing fields for practice, what the Town would charge to paint fields for ORYA, how requiring volunteers to do extra work would burn them out faster, and how the people on the ORYA Board were not the same as the ones serving three years ago; P&RC members stressed the importance of communicating with new volunteers to ensure that they understand the issues. Regarding the field painting, Lannon said the painter belongs to ORYA and that ORYA could hire someone to paint the fields each week.

Edwards said he thought a lot of good communication had occurred between the two groups, and that P&RC loved seeing people use the park. He said P&RC is totally supportive of ORYA's efforts, but there is limited space for fields. While the Commission doesn't always see eye-to-eye with other groups, it tries to make good judgments based on the information it has. He urged ORYA to look for next year's park usage agreement in August, and said other issues will be reviewed and discussed further at the next P&RC meeting.

Maxson said he was proud of ORYA, but that the Board was getting pressure from parents about things that were happening at the park. If the issues don't get fixed, larger ones will develop, Maxson said. He added that it would put a burden on the Town if ORYA dissolved, and said the Town needs to let ORYA know if it needs to pay more money to be considered a top priority.

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

12. ADJOURMENT

Barry Knight made a **motion** to adjourn the meeting at 9:11 p.m. **Tracy Street** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (3-0).

Respectfully Submitted:

Sandra B. Smith, Town Clerk

William Edwards, Chairman