



**OAK RIDGE PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
FEBRUARY 19, 2025 - 6:30 P.M.
(Held electronically via the Zoom platform)**

MINUTES

Members Present

Adrian Eckenrod, Co-Chair
John Browning, Co-Chair
Mike Kimel
Caroline Ruch
John Garrett, Alternate (Sitting)
Chelsea Young, Alternate (Sitting, left at 7:55pm)
Ty Lindsay, Alternate (Not Sitting, joined at 7:07pm)

Staff Present

Brock Dunigan, Parks Superintendent
Ashley Royal, Deputy Town Clerk

Members Absent

Phyllis Anders
Kyle Anders
Randy Collins

Reese Bell, Teen Advisor

Note: This meeting was conducted remotely under N. C. Gen. Stat. § 166A-19.24 by use of simultaneous communication using the Zoom online platform and in which Parks & Recreation Advisory Board members participated by simultaneous communication. Board members joined and participated in the entire meeting, unless otherwise noted.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Adrian Eckenrod called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Co-Chair Adrian Eckenrod suggested moving item nine (9) – Public Comments - from the agenda to occur after item three (3).

Co-Chair Adrian Eckenrod made a motion to approve the amended agenda, moving agenda item nine (9) to item four (4) and Mike Kimel seconded. The motion passed unanimously (6-0).

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Co-Chair John Browning made a motion to approve the minutes from January 16, 2025, regular meeting, and Co-Chair Adrian Eckenrod seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (6-0).

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Barb Cronin, President of the Northwest Guilford Woman’s Club, requested a fee waiver for use of meeting space at the Farmhouse Community Center for the following dates: March 10 and/or April 14, May 12, June 9, August 11, September 8, October 13, November 10 and December 8, 2025. The request was documented in

an email which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes. Cronin consented to operating as a test reservationist for their first meeting and to provide feedback to Park Superintendent Brock Dunigan and Deputy Town Clerk Ashley Royal on the operation of the facility and its reservation process. Cronin explained that the organization was a volunteer service organization with a limited budget that serviced communities in Oak Ridge, Stokesdale, and Summerfield. Mike Kimel voiced concern about setting a precedent in waiving fees for any non-profit organization. Discussion focused on how to manage requests for fee waivers on recurring dates and on setting guidelines for non-profit fee waivers. Caroline Ruch pointed out that encouraging people to use the Farmhouse would stimulate increased interest in and use of the Farmhouse by others.

Co-Chair Adrian Eckenrod made a motion to approve the request by the Northwest Guilford Woman's Club to waive all fees for use of the Farmhouse on nine scheduled dates in 2025 with a review in 2026 to renew the request. Mike Kimel seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously (6-0).

- Ann Schneider stated that the decision to approve the free use of the Farmhouse by a well-established service organization was a good precedent to set and that it would encourage greater use of the Farmhouse by others. She pointed out that food and beverage service were allowed at the Farmhouse. She stated that the Farmhouse was built to be used by the community and not just to make money.

4. STAFF REPORT

- Parks Superintendent Brock Dunigan presented the financial report and noted that 64 percent of the fiscal year had occurred with 40 percent of operating expenses spent. He noted that expenses would increase as the Park entered into the spring season with a resurgence in maintenance needs and increased usage.
- Dunigan reported a total of four existing memorial trees had been dedicated at the Park.
- Dunigan noted that an eagle scout project had been postponed due to inclement weather.
- Dunigan reported that drainage issues persisted at Heritage Farm Park. He stated that McGill Associates Engineering Services had determined that an area retaining water at Heritage Farm Park had not been constructed according to specifications and that they would provide an engineer design plan which Bar Construction Company would use to repair the area at Bar's cost.
- Dunigan noted that one memorial bench had been dedicated at the Park.
- Dunigan reported that pet leash law signs had been erected at Heritage Farm Park to alleviate the instances of off leash pets.
- Dunigan reported that a water line had been installed by All Star Plumbing to the Veterans Honor Green site. He stated that bid-outs for construction of Phase II of the Veterans site would begin this week until the middle of March. He said that staff would review the bids and make their recommendations to the Board in April.
- Dunigan stated that 80 yards of mulch had been spread across both playgrounds at Oak Ridge Town Park. He noted that the wooded trails and planting beds at the Park and Town Hall would be mulched next.

5. ORYA REPORT

- Dunigan reported that the initial two payments from ORYA for the 2024 non-resident surcharge had been processed on February 5 in the amount of \$5288. He stated that two more payments of \$2600 each would be due on February 28 and March 31.
- Dunigan reported that spring sports would begin in March and April with sports schedule submissions due to the Town by March 1.
- Royal added that work was ongoing to develop the Field Usage Policy by the working group which consisted of herself, Dunigan, Town Manager Bill Bruce and Councilmen Jim Harton and Michael Greeson. She pointed out that the policy would apply to all organizations and not just to ORYA.

6. NEW BUSINESS

Consideration/Approval of Oak Ridge Park Projects for FY2025-26

Royal explained that the list of FY2025-26 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Recommendations, which is incorporated by reference and made a part of the record, was separated into two groups for consideration. The first group listed the projects voted on by the Board to be included in their recommendations for capital improvement and the second group listed the remaining projects which did not meet the expense threshold for a capital improvement project.

Dunigan reviewed each item on the first list:

1. Farmhouse Community Center additional parking – Dunigan placed this item on hold explaining that the need for additional parking was pending a review of the volume of activity at the Farmhouse during its first year of operation.
2. Park entrance signs – Dunigan removed this item from consideration because it was included in the Town’s FY2025-26 CIP as Phase Two of the Town Park Entrance Master Plan project.
3. Security fence around Heritage Farm Park maintenance building – Dunigan noted that this item was in the FY2025-26 CIP at a cost of \$21,408 which was a cost that would be valid through December 31, 2025.
4. Sports Courts – Dunigan explained that the sports courts’ project design was currently under review by staff and would not be presented to the Board for consideration until a design scope based on community surveys had been developed and bids had been submitted. He added that the project’s viability would be impacted by the progress of the existing municipal water system project. He noted that the item was not planned for the FY2025-26 CIP but would be a consideration for future years’ CIP.
5. Union Cemetery (ground penetrating radar (GPR) and parking lot) – Dunigan explained that the cost for the GPR service was included as a FY25-26 budget line item under “Consulting” and that the parking lot would be delayed pending the results of the GPR study.
6. River Birch tree asphalt repair (Oak Ridge Town Park - ORTP) – Dunigan described this item as a safety hazard in need of attention. He explained that the asphalt repair would be limited to just the affected areas which involved approximately ten of 24 trees and that the cost to repair the area would be added to the regular operating budget.
7. Shade structure (ORTP playground) – Dunigan noted that this item had not generated any interest and would be removed from consideration.

8. Small baseball/softball field (ORTP) – Dunigan noted that the need for this item was not immediate, and it would not be programmed in the FY2025-26 CIP but would remain as a consideration for future years.
9. Paved lot outside of ORTP maintenance building – Dunigan saw no need for this item and removed it from consideration.

Dunigan proceeded to review the list of projects which did not meet the CIP cost threshold but would be considered for inclusion in the FY2025-26 operating budget:

1. Inclusive playground fencing – Dunigan described the fence as four-feet tall with four lock gates at an estimated cost of \$10,770 to install.
2. Additional security cameras – Eckenrod explained that additional security cameras would be considered in secondary areas in the park which would be determined with assistance from the sheriff's departments. He pointed out that additional cameras would likely not be needed at Heritage Farm Park because of its single point of entry and exit. Dunigan stated that additional cameras would require Council's approval.
3. River Birch tree asphalt repair – Dunigan repeated his concern for the hazard posed by the damage to the asphalt caused by the trees. He estimated the cost to repair the affected areas would be \$10,000-\$14,000.
4. Keyless entry for Park's eight restroom doors – Dunigan explained that a keyless entry system for the Park restrooms would remove the daily physical need for staff to unlock and lock the restroom doors. He described various system features and Eckenrod estimated a cost of \$200 per door for the system.
5. Speaker system at ORTP around concession stand – Ruch explained that a public announcement system at the Park would be used by the Special Events Committee during events such as Light Up the Night for making announcements and for piping in music throughout the Park during the holidays. She added that the system might also be useful to sports teams using the athletic fields. Discussion focused on cost, scope of work to install and operate the system and allocation in the budget to cover the expense.
6. Disc golf – Dunigan favored removing the item from consideration due to low interest and lack of space to install the game.
7. Golf practice net – Dunigan favored removing the item from consideration due to the availability of driving ranges nearby.

Dunigan recommended a list of items to include for consideration in the FY2025/26 operating budget in order of his preference. Board members concurred with his suggestions.

Chelsea Young left the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

Mike Kimel made a motion to recommend the following projects to be considered by the Finance Committee followed by consideration by Town Council for inclusion in the Parks & Recreation operating budget for FY2025/26:

1. *Inclusive playground fencing*
2. *River Birch tree asphalt repair*
3. *Keyless entry for Park's eight restroom doors*
4. *Speaker system at ORTP*
5. *Additional security cameras*

Co-Chair Adrian Eckenrod seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Dunigan suggested that he and Ruch meet to discuss the scope of need for the speaker system and inquire into the possibility of sharing the cost of the system with the Special Events Committee.

7. OLD BUSINESS

A. Reconsideration/Approval of Property Management Proposal for Park Property located at 8326 Linville Road

Royal stated that with the discovery of a utility meter on the property at 8326 Linville Road, a review of the monthly rental rate to recommend which would not include utilities was in order for discussion. She pointed out that the property's monthly utility cost in 2023 averaged \$125.67, and that the monthly rate excluding utility costs recommended by the property manager was \$1495. Dunigan added that estimates to erect a 48-foot by 48-foot privacy fence in the rear of the property for materials only were \$2,300 for a wood fence and \$2,800 for a vinyl clad white fence. He stated that Park staff would install the fence and continue to maintain the property outside of the fence. Dunigan stated that the property's septic tank would be pumped that week.

Co-Chair Adrian Eckenrod made a motion to recommend a monthly rate excluding utility costs of \$1495, and Caroline Ruch seconded. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

B. Update on Farmhouse Community Center Construction Project

Royal described the project as 97 percent complete while awaiting issuance of an encroachment permit from NCDOT to allow Piedmont Natural Gas to install and connect a gas line and meter to the Farmhouse. She noted that appliances and furnishings had been received but not installed, and that she would be interviewing cleaning companies in the coming week. She added that a plaque to hang at the entrance containing a brief history of the Farmhouse was being developed by Town Clerk Sandra Smith and Councilwoman Ann Schneider and would be submitted to the Board for their consideration and approval when completed.

C. Update on the Park Entrance Master Plan

Royal reported that concrete was being poured and that sidewalks were 90 percent complete. She noted that lighting solutions had not yet been obtained, but bollards and light poles operated by Duke Energy were being investigated.

D. Update on 2025 Music in the Park Series

Royal reported that bands had been confirmed for all events in the series. She displayed a draft version of the advertisement for the event. She noted that Oak Ridge Commons would return as a platinum level sponsor, Ramilya Siegel of Keller Williams Realty and Dominos of Oak Ridge had confirmed their Gold level sponsorships, and Merchants of Oak Ridge and DeVaney Dentistry had obtained Silver level sponsorships. Ruch indicated ongoing efforts to obtain additional sponsorships and Royal spoke on food and beverage vendor offerings.

E. Update on 2025-2026 Music on the Lawn at Farmhouse Community Center

Royal briefed the Board on Phyllis Anders' efforts to develop the Music on the Lawn program at the Farmhouse Community Center. She explained that local bands were being sought to perform on a Sunday, from 2 until 4 p.m., in August and September 2025, and May and June 2026. She commented that food trucks would not be included and that expenses would be presented to be included in the Parks & Recreation operational budget for the FY2025-2026.

8. OTHER DISCUSSIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS/REMINDERS

Next regular meeting: March 20, 2025
Royal indicated that presentations by five frozen treat vendors and one fundraiser for Urban Ministries, and a discussion of vending machines would be on the agenda to discuss at this next meeting.

Spring Arts & Craft Show: April 5, 2025
Music in the Park, featuring Brother Pearl: April 12, 2025
Canine Capers: April 26, 2025

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS

John Browning acknowledged the efforts of Royal and Ruch in planning Music in the Park.

Ann Schneider commented that community outreach and input from the Board would be essential to her when considering sports courts at Heritage Farm Park.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Co-Chair John Browning made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m., and John Garrett seconded. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Respectfully submitted:

Ashley Royal, CMC
Deputy Town Clerk

Adrian Eckenrod
Co-Chair