



**OAK RIDGE PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
APRIL 17, 2025 - 6:30 P.M.
(Held in person & electronically via the Zoom platform)**

MINUTES

Members Present

John Browning, Co-Chair
Adrian Eckenrod, Co-Chair
Phyllis Anders
Kyle Anders
Caroline Ruch
John Garrett, Alternate (Sitting)
Ty Lindsay, Alternate (Sitting)

Staff Present

Ashley Royal, Deputy Town Clerk

Staff Absent

Brock Dunigan, Parks Superintendent

Members Absent

Mike Kimel
Chelsea Young, Alternate
Reese Bell, Teen Advisor

1. CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Adrian Eckenrod called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Co-Chair John Browning made a motion to approve the agenda, and John Garrett seconded. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Kyle Anders made a motion to approve the minutes from March 20, 2025, special called meeting, and Co-Chair Adrian Eckenrod seconded. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

4. STAFF REPORT

Deputy Town Clerk Ashley Royal presented the Staff and ORYA Reports in Parks Superintendent Brock Dunigan's absence.

- Royal presented the financial report and noted that 80 percent of the fiscal year had occurred with 62 percent of operating expenses spent.
- Royal reported that the memorial garden located above the pond area had been constructed by Roots & Ranch, and that plantings would take place on April 26.
- Royal reported that the damage to walkways created by River Birch trees would be repaired on April 28 and be completed in two days.
- Royal stated that the Park's wooded trails had been chipped and the rest of the Parks would be mulched during the week of April 28.

- Royal pointed out that the last of the punch list items at Heritage Farm Park involved the grading of the athletic fields outside the fence line. She stated that the water retention issue at the area known as the frog pond had been backfilled.
- Royal reported that the multipurpose fields at Heritage Farm Park would open on May 5 or May 12 depending on the status of field grading.
- Royal noted that Parker Construction had been approved by Council to construct Phase 2 of Veterans Honor Green for \$66,000 and that the work would begin sometime between May and July.
- **Field Usage Policy:**
Royal explained that the Park's Field Usage Policy was revised to eliminate the annual usage agreement with Oak Ridge Youth Association (ORYA) and introduced a rebate program for ORYA with a requirement that they charge registration fees and run a minimum eight-week playing season. She stated that based on a registration roster, the program would offer a rebate of \$70 per Oak Ridge participant to ORYA at the end of the season. She noted that the rebate amount would be restricted from exceeding actual expenses for that season. She pointed out that priority usage would continue to be granted to ORYA, but that the new policy aimed to make fields accessible to other organizations and tournaments.
- **Facility Fee Schedule Changes:**
Royal explained that the current facility fee rates were well below rates charged by comparable venues in the area. After studying the market, rate revisions were proposed last year but not implemented in deference to ORYA's cash flow issues. However, the fee study was reintroduced with the rebate program, both of which were recommended to become effective July 1, 2025. She stated that field rates at all residency levels would be doubled, and notable increases would be made in tournament, staff, and field preparation costs. Additionally, refundable deposits would be eliminated, and ORYA's \$30,000 stipend would be removed. Royal noted that ORYA had been notified of the usage and fee changes, and flexibility by Council would be considered to assist with the upfront usage payments due to their cash flow issues.
- Royal explained that the new usage program would negate the need for an ORYA liaison on the P&R Advisory Board and a Town Council member's seat on the ORYA Board. She noted that the Board's membership would require adjustment and the ordinance regulating Board membership would need to be amended accordingly. She added that trail and Union Cemetery maintenance would also be included for consideration to amend in the Board's charter.

5. ORYA REPORT

- Royal stated that no report was available and that information on field usage would be incorporated into the Staff Report and the ORYA Report would be removed from future Board meeting agendas.

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. Consideration/Approval of BAPS Urban Ministry Charity Walk

No representative from BAPS was present to introduce the proposal and the agenda item was discontinued.

B. Consideration/Approval of Guilford Battle Chapter Flag Day / 250th Birthday of the US Army Celebration at Oak Ridge Town Park

Gigi Williams Danner and Barbara Engel, representatives from the Guilford Battle Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), requested approval from the Board to host a combined Flag Day and 250th birthday celebration of the US Army at the amphitheater and Shelter One of Oak Ridge Town Park on June 14, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. until noon. Danner explained that the event would include members of the Sons of the American Revolution in uniform, the color guard, and speeches with an estimated attendance of 50 people. She added that flags would be collected at the event to be respectfully retired. No rain date had been scheduled for the event. Caroline Ruch requested permission to hang temporary signage advertising the event. She was directed to speak with Planning Director Sean Taylor to obtain approval.

Co-Chair Adrian Eckenrod made a motion to approve a waiver of fees to use the amphitheater and Shelter One at Oak Ridge Town Park for the DAR's celebration of Flag Day and the 250th birthday of the US Army on June 14, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. until noon, pending Parks Superintendent Brock Dunigan's review. Co-Chair John Browning seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously (7-0).

7. OLD BUSINESS

A. Update on Farmhouse Community Center Construction Project/Grand Opening

Caroline Ruch explained that due to construction delays the grand opening of the Farmhouse Community Center had been tentatively rescheduled to May 18, 2025, with a proposed rain date of June 8, 2025.

Ruch reported that the parking lot had been newly paved and that paint touch-ups were underway inside the Farmhouse. She noted that the Farmhouse landscaping plans had been revamped with the help of Barbara Engel and that Doggett would prepare the beds while Park Staff would implement the planting plan.

Ruch stated that the grand opening ceremony would feature live music by the Saggy Bottom Band, ice cream donated by local builder Mr. Hedgecock, cakes and fruit donated by Lowes Foods, and a community flower garden planting supervised by the Oak Ridge Garden Club.

Royal added that a soft opening and test rentals would be scheduled, and the grand opening ceremony date would be announced once the Certificate of Occupancy was obtained.

Ruch reported that Town Clerk Sandra Smith and Councilwoman Ann Schneider had assembled information on the Farmhouse's history to document on a 12-inch by 16-inch entryway plaque which would be installed by the front door. She noted that the plaque would provide visitors with historical context about the property.

Board members agreed by consensus to the narrative which would appear on the Farmhouse entryway plaque.

Williams offered to donate a flag from the DAR to be hung at the Farmhouse.

B. Update on Park Entrance Master Plan

Royal noted that the update on the Park Entrance Master Plan had been included in the discussion of the Farmhouse Community Center.

C. Update on 2025 Music in the Park Series

Royal reported that the first Music in the Park event had been held the previous Saturday and was successful with attendance estimated at 350 to 400 people. She shared that the relocation of the food trucks to the parking lot area increased efficiency and reduced congestion. She recommended making this relocation standard for future events and encouraged relocating the Park’s concession trailer to the same area to stage food services in one common area. She indicated that placement of the alcohol vendors in the concession trailer’s previous spot had also proved to be more effective. Royal announced Gypsy Danger as the next featured musicians in May and anticipated much larger attendance and thus greater parking challenges. She reported that Dr. Devaney had increased his sponsorship from silver to Gold at the last event.

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

Phyllis Anders reported that events had been planned for one Sunday in August and in September 2025, and two more in 2026 for two-hour long performances. Royal noted that the budget to fund the event had been included in the FY2025-26 budget and she foresaw no reason for the budget item not to be approved in June.

8. OTHER DISCUSSIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS/REMINDERS

Next regular meeting: (Royal indicated that the meeting might be held at the Farmhouse Community Center)	May 15, 2025
Music in the Park, featuring Gypsy Danger:	May 10, 2025
Farmhouse tentative Grand Opening	May 18, 2025, rain date June 8, 2025
Canine Capers:	April 26, 2025

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Barbara Engel inquired if hamburgers and hot dogs remained on the menu for the Park’s concession trailer. Anders responded that the menu had not changed. Royal indicated that sale prices for the concession items required revision.

John Garrett inquired if the boy scouts had planted perennials at the bee hotels. Royal noted that she would follow up with Dunigan about this.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Kyle Anders made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 p.m., and Phyllis Anders seconded. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Respectfully submitted:

Ashley Royal, CMC
Deputy Town Clerk

Adrian Eckenrod
Co-Chair