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## *Buncombe County Open Space Bond: Passive Recreation Lands Subcommittee*

***Minutes  
21 May 2024***

**Subcommittee Members in Attendance:** Kevin Conrecode, Lena Richards, Bob Gale, Bob Turner, Ann Babcock, Matt Fusco

**Staff in Attendance:** Jill Carter, Rachael Sawyer, Jennifer Harrison, Thomas Gull

**Buncombe County Administration:** The May 21, 2024, meeting of the Buncombe County Passive Recreation Lands Subcommittee was called to order at approximately 12:04pm. Six subcommittee members were in attendance.

### **Approval of May 2024 Agenda**

The Subcommittee voted to approve the agenda for the May 21 meeting.

### **Approval of April 2024 Meeting Minutes**

The Subcommittee voted to approve the minutes from the April 16 meeting.

### **Open Space Bond Update**

Jill Carter presented an update on the status of the Open Space Bond. The update included the following items:

- Ally Howell resigned from both the Recreation Advisory Board (RAB) and the Passive Recreation Lands Subcommittee. Jill is currently working with the RAB staff liaison to secure another appointee to the Subcommittee.
- Currently, there are three board-approved Open Space Bond projects totaling \$1.7M. Additionally, there are known, anticipated commitments totaling \$7.2M. Finally, the Board of Commissioners approved two additional projects – Ferry Road Open Space (\$3M) and Deaverview Mountain (\$7.7M) – totaling \$7.7M. As such, the remaining funding available is \$10.4M.

### **Discussion: Ferry Road Open Space and Deaverview Mountain Allocations**

The Subcommittee discussed Board of Commissioners' allocation of \$10.7M in funding for the Ferry Road Open Space and Deaverview Mountain projects:

- Ferry Road is a County-owned property that will include housing, community services, and open space. The Ferry Road Open Space is a separate project that will include 1.9 miles of greenway, 1.7 miles of surface trails, 3 trailheads, parking, a boardwalk, and a conservation easement. The Commissioners to approve \$3M in Open Space Bond Funds for the project.

- Ferry Road Open Space is being treated as a separate project from the housing development on the property. As such, development of this project can happen more quickly and be open to the public as soon as possible.
- Deaverview Mountain is a 343-acre property in the Deaverview Mountain. Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy is currently raising funds to acquire the property. Upon acquisition, SAHC will transfer the property to Buncombe County to be turned into a park. The Board of Commissioners approved \$7.7M in Open Space Bond funding for the development of the park.
  - The pre-construction costs will cover appraisals, environmental and geo surveys, permitting and design, and other costs.

The Subcommittee discussed several questions and concerns related to these allocations, including:

- The remaining \$10.4M in Bond funding available **does not** need to be split evenly across the three project categories. The Subcommittee can recommend up to \$10.4M in funding for passive recreation lands projects. Additionally, most projects include elements from multiple categories (e.g., Ferry Road includes a conservation easement, a greenway, and passive recreation lands). As such, once all funds are allocated, all project categories will have received a considerable amount of funding. Currently, the breakdown of allocated funding is:
  - Conservation Easements: \$5.7M
  - Greenways: \$5.2M
  - Passive Recreation Lands: \$8.7M
- In the Passive Recreation Lands Application Guidelines, we do not allow Bond funding to be used for design and permitting. However, the Deaverview Mountain allocation includes funding for design and permitting. This discrepancy will need to be address.
- The Ferry Road Open Space and Deaverview Mountain allocations were approved directly by commissioners and did not go before an advisory board or subcommittee. Commissioners ultimately make the final decision on how the funding will be allocated, but they are expecting the Passive Recreation Lands Subcommittee's recommendations.

### **Discussion: PRL Project Scores & Presentations**

The Subcommittee discussed the score report, which includes the score breakdown for each project. The Subcommittee discussed the following questions and concerns:

- Each project was scored by a Scoring Committee of four staff members using the evaluation criteria and weights developed by the Subcommittee. The staff members represented the Planning, Parks & Recreation, General Services, and Human Rights & Equity Departments.
- There was a need for clarification between three projects:
  - The Hominy Creek project includes a condemnation issue on part of the property. This issue was raised as a flag by the scorers, and the Subcommittee asked for more information from the legal team regarding the impact of the condemnation process.



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The Balsam Gardens project would be a potential extension of the Enka Heritage Trail. There is a neighbor interested in acquiring an acre of the property. That portion would not interfere with any of the park/greenway plans.

- The Haw Creek Greenway is located on private property, but the project managers have permission from the landowners for a right of way through the property.
- The Subcommittee agreed that not all members need to attend the site visits, so long as at least 1-2 members are present and can report back.
- The Subcommittee decided to continue the conversation regarding which projects to invite for presentations at a special meeting on May 28.

### **Public Comment**

No members of the public wished to comment.

**Next Special Meeting Date:** May 28, 2024, at 12 PM

**Meeting Adjourned:** 1:16pm

