

**MINUTES OF THE HARMON FIELD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING**  
**Tuesday, March 7, 2023**

Chairman Nelon called the Harmon Field Board of Supervisors meeting to order at 5:30 PM at the Tryon Town Hall, McCown Room.

**Board Members Present:** Chairman Stephen Nelon; Secretary-Treasurer Miguel Santibanez; Rick Covil; Jamie Dunn; and Warren Watson

**Board Members Absent:** None

**Staff Present:** Jim Fatland, Tryon Town Manager; Travis Aldred, Harmon Field Superintendent; and Meg Rogers, Town Secretary/Cashier

**Approve Minutes from February 7, 2023 meeting and work session**

The Minutes from the Harmon Field Board's February 7, 2023 regular meeting were reviewed. Watson made a motion to approve the February 7, 2023 regular meeting minutes as presented. Santibanez seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 5 to 0.

**Approve Financial Report for February 2023**

The February 2023 Harmon Field financial report was presented by Aldred. According to the report, Harmon Field had received \$253,468.61 (71.74%) of its annual budgeted revenues as amended for Fiscal Year 2022-2023 and had spent \$210,666.34 (59.62%) of annual budgeted expenditures as amended for FY 2022-2023 leaving a fund balance of \$199,714.84 as of February 28, 2023.

Town Manager Fatland noted that Harmon Field tax district revenues of 96.79% of budgeted amount was a very good collection rate. Fatland also noted that the new budget line items had been added to the Harmon Field Budget Report as requested to monitor revenues and expenses of the maintenance building restoration and the equestrian facility operations. Watson made a motion to approve the financial report for February 2023 as presented. Dunn seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 5 to 0.

**Polk County Toy Run Request**

Barry Gee, representative of the Polk County Toy Run annual event submitted a request to use the Harmon Field open-air gym and adjacent parking lot and surrounding grassy areas for overflow parking for the 2023 Polk County Toy Run event to be held on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, November 25, 2023. The annual event raised funds and collected toys for distribution by the Polk County Sheriff's Department, Polk County Department of Social Services, Steps to Hope and Thermal Belt Outreach. Gee summarized the history of the annual event from its initial event in 2002 with 75 riders raising \$3,000 through the 2022 event with 560 riders and 165 passengers raising \$31,000 plus 66 bags of toys. The event staging location had been in Saluda at Saluda Elementary School, then at the Saluda Fire Department. However, the event had

outgrown those locations and the organizers needed a larger event staging location for 2023 and into the future. The staging area would be in use from 8 a.m. through 2 p.m. Setup would begin at 8 a.m. and the actual event would begin at 10 a.m. The original parade route that began in Saluda would be revised for a beginning at Harmon Field proceeding up US 176 to Saluda and then the remainder of the route would be the same as in the past ending at the Polk County Courthouse in Columbus, NC. Gee stated that event volunteers from the four benefiting organizations would be responsible to clean up the event staging area at Harmon Field after the event. Harmon Field Park Superintendent Aldred asked for confirmation that this event would qualify as a festival that would not be subject to prohibitions on food-trucks or outside caterers specified in the Harmon Field Concession Stand lease agreement non-compete clause. The Board confirmed that the Polk County Toy Run would be considered a festival for Harmon Field purposes. Gee had spoken with Tryon Arts & Crafts School (TACS) representatives about the proposal to change the event venue to Harmon Field, adjacent to TACS campus. Gee stated that the event should not add extra work for Harmon Field staff or Tryon Police Department, since Polk County Sheriff's Department handled traffic control for the event. Gee reported that the event included many spectators supporting the event in the communities along the route. Covil made a motion to allow the Polk County Toy Run to use Harmon Field open-air gym and adjoining facilities for the November 25, 2023 event. Dunn seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 5 to 0.

#### **Tryon Arts & Crafts School Lease Termination**

Fatland very briefly reviewed the history of the gym room six-month lease to Tryon Arts & Crafts School (TACS). On February 16, 2023, the Harmon Field Board voted to terminate the lease. The plan was to get estimates to remodel the space for short term rentals to generate revenue for Harmon Field. TACS Executive Director Will Barclift was advised to come to the next Harmon Field Board of Supervisors meeting to discuss the lease termination. Barclift and other representatives of the TACS Board of Directors were present and hoped to convince the Harmon Field Board that renewing the lease of the gym room space to TACS would benefit Harmon Field and the community. Barclift reviewed that he began a dialog with former Tryon Town Manager Zach Ollis in May of 2021 and corresponded with Harmon Field Board Chairman Stephen Nelon and Park Superintendent Aldred. Materials were provided to Ollis by TACS regarding the proposed improvements and intended use of the space. TACS had spent \$5,700 on architectural and hydrological services to determine the source of water leaking into the space and a channel drain was installed and cleaning, caulking and painting done in the space. The space had been prepared and was almost ready to use as a classroom after ceiling tile replacement. Barclift had considered the improvements installed as in-kind work as in lieu of cash rent. Chairman Nelon had clarified this misunderstanding and TACS had delivered a rent payment to the Town of Tryon offices that day. Barclift now understood that the Harmon Field Board of Supervisors had not been informed by Ollis regarding the work that TACS was planning to do on the space. Barclift also now understood that representatives of TACS should have been coming to the Harmon Field Board of Supervisors meetings to clarify TACS' relationship with Harmon Field. Barclift

stated that TACS was committed to being good neighbors and had promoted Harmon Field in its social media, website and marketing materials. TACS hoped to maintain a mutually beneficial relationship with Harmon Field. Barclift reviewed the improvements TACS had made to its own facilities and the surrounding property in the last five years. Barclift provided handouts regarding the photography program and storage that TACS had planned for the Harmon Field gym room that would include ongoing 12-month space & building upkeep, maintaining cleanliness of the facility and surrounding area for events, providing needed programming that would support the annual Tryon International Film Festival as well as other organizations and events to help bring the outdoors to life via sports photography, portraits and landscapes. Barclift had experience with a similar program in Highlands, NC that provided a big benefit to that community developing images for use in social media and regional marketing to promote tourism. TACS had hoped the photographic classroom with the backdrop of Harmon Field would provide good exposure for promoting Harmon Field and stimulating regional tourism. Barclift hoped that Harmon Field Board of Supervisors and TACS could have a win-win relationship and asked for a lease extension so that TACS would be allowed to continue to lease the gym room cooperatively while the Harmon Field Board of Supervisors pursued its plan to seek quotes on facility upgrades.

Watson expressed his concern that Harmon Field needed more revenue and the \$60 per month rent rate that TACS was paying to use of the room was very low. Plans to remodel the space with a kitchen for event rentals would greatly increase the revenue generated by the space. Watson did not see how the space could be rented for events while being shared by a TACS classroom and did not think kitchen facilities would be compatible with the classroom requirements. Santibanez was concerned about safety of the photo equipment when the space was rented for events. Barclift suggested that space rentals could be scheduled through TACS' office or in partnership with TACS to avoid conflicts. Watson stated that the Board needed to assess the space and determine the best use. Chairman Nelson stated that, at the time the short-term lease was approved, the space had not been used for years, except for storage of Harmon Field materials, and \$60 per month revenue looked like a good return on use of the space. Alternative rental spaces in the upstairs at the gym were suggested, but TACS did not consider those spaces feasible for its needs.

Fatland reported that the Harmon Field Board of Supervisors minutes indicated that the 6-month short term lease was a temporary rental until Harmon Field was ready to renovate the space. Fatland had been surprised that TACS had made so many improvements to the room with such a short term lease. Fatland asked if space at the former Tryon Middle School library building might be a better location. Condition and size of the building were cited as problematic. Julie McIntyre of TACS reported that TACS had rented portions of that building in the past, but were evicted by former Town Manager Ollis. Barclift had spoken to Ollis regarding purchase of the building, but Parks & Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) renegotiations to sell the grant-funded property had stalled. Watson stated that demolition of the building would be permitted after 2027 after the PARTF contract restriction ended. Pros and cons of restoration vs. demolition of the former middle school library building were discussed briefly.

Discussion continued with TACS representatives stressing the community benefit and improvements installed in preparation for use of the space as a photographic classroom with equipment purchased and now ready to install in the space for the classroom. Chairman Nelson suggested that the space might be divided, since events would not need all the space, so that TACS could rent part of the space for its classroom. Fatland stated that a partition that could be locked would be needed to secure the separate spaces. A compromise was suggested with a partitioning of the space with separate entrances for dual use. TAC representative and Architect Julie McIntyre offered to draw up an architectural plan for the divided space for consideration. Staff was directed by the Harmon Field Board of Supervisors to work with TACS on a plan to divide the space for use by TACS and a Harmon Field rental space. The TACS representatives thanked the Harmon Field Board of Supervisors for considering the compromise plan before making a final decision on the lease.

#### **Fire Ant Treatment Quote**

A quote from Nelson-Cole Termite and Pest Control Company to treat and eliminate fire ants infestation at Harmon Field was reviewed. Fatland suggested checking with Tryon Public Works Department to see if the treatments could be done for less. Discussion was tabled until April.

#### **Blue Ridge Hunter Jumper Association (BRHJA) Report**

Dunn reported that a two-day horse show was scheduled for March 17-18, 2023 with set up on March 16. A plumber had been scheduled to fix the irrigation system on March 11, 2023. An additional two-day horse show had been booked by a different group for the Harmon Field facility in September. Payment for the March 4, 2023 one-day show had been delivered to the Town of Tryon offices. Fatland thanked Dunn for working with staff on the Harmon Field equestrian facility operations. Aldred reviewed the revenues and expenses of the March 4, 2023 event briefly and reported that the event may have generated \$1,500 net profit for this one-day show.

#### **Rental Updates**

Aldred reported all rental payments were up to date. The concession stand electrical bill repayment was in process. Fatland stated that the concession stand tenant would be allowed to pay of the remaining balance of the electrical charges when business picked up in the spring and summer.

#### **Park Superintendent's Report**

Park Superintendent Aldred presented his report.

- Thermal Belt Outreach had contacted Harmon Field about partnering with them on a disc golf tournament as a new fund raiser. Aldred recommended waiting to consider this event partnership for 2024 instead of 2023 to give staff more time to discuss the proposed event and ask questions. The Board members asked that Thermal Belt Outreach present their proposal at a Harmon Field Board meeting for discussion.

- A bicycle ride event scheduled for July needed a lease agreement per the Harmon Field Board of Supervisors. Aldred had not received the requested lease from former Town Manager Ollis or the Town Attorney yet. The event would be using the Harmon Field cabin as the registration site, hydration station and finish line. The lease document was needed as soon as possible.
- Steve Martinez who managed the youth basketball program and the Harmon Field gym had asked to be allowed to operate the gym lights and track the hours of usage and pay for the electricity used. Chairman Nelson was in agreement with Martinez managing the lights for the youth basketball if he paid the hourly lights fee. Aldred was concerned because the light controls were in his current office at the gym and he would have to allow Martinez access to his office. It was unanimously approved for Martinez to be given access to the office to operate the Harmon Field gym light controls.
- Concession stand tenant had asked for permission to install a patio cover in front of the concession stand. The cover would cost \$9,000 and cover an area of 18 feet by 30 feet. The tenant would pay for the cover. Watson asked if the proposed cover would be structurally sound and safe from high winds so as not to be a liability problem for Harmon Field. The Board agreed that the outstanding electrical bills should be paid in full before the tenant was authorized to spend money on improvement projects.
- Clarification was requested regarding the coffee food truck that wanted to sell products at the Harmon Field horse shows. The Board confirmed that food trucks would not be allowed to operate at Harmon Field during horse shows.
- Polk County Recreation Youth Soccer Program fees - Aldred reported that Harmon Field lost approximately \$8,000 in 2022 due to the costs to prepare and maintain the soccer fields exceeding revenues from Polk County's soccer program. Aldred recommended increasing the per player fee to \$30 per player which would reduce but not eliminate losses. Santibanez agreed that Harmon Field could not afford to lose that much money on this program just to keep the fees low.
- Polk County Recreation Youth Baseball Program fees – Aldred reported that the updated rental rate for the baseball fields needed to be set now as the season would begin in early April. Aldred recommended raising the per field rate for one field to \$45 and for two fields to \$60, not including lights. Covil and Santibanez stated that Harmon Field needed timers for the lights controlled by smartphone so that keys would not be needed to give temporary access to lighting control. Santibanez offered to contact Mr. Lassiter who had originally recommended this type of lighting control to the Harmon Field Board. Watson stated that the rental fees should be set for Harmon Field to break even. Watson made a motion to increase the one-field rate to \$55 and the two-field rate to \$75. Santibanez seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 5 to 0.

- Polk County Recreation/YMCA requested keys for all it coaches to access the box to control baseball and soccer field lights – Pros and cons of allowing users to have keys to the electrical control box for the soccer and baseball fields were discussed. Aldred reported that Polk County Recreation was not charged for lights during practice sessions, but was using lights for practices anyway. Watson stated that users should be charged for electricity for every hour they used the lights. The problem was that Harmon Field staff was not available on-site to track the number of hours being used. Aldred reported problems with baseball lights being left on overnight. Charging a \$100 penalty each time the lights were left on overnight was suggested. The Board wanted to resolve the lighting issue and hoped that the information from Mr. Lassiter on remote control of lights via phone with or without timers could be implemented as soon as possible. Until the new remote control system could be implemented, Chairman Nelson told Aldred to give Latoya at Polk County Recreation one key and tell her that a charge of \$100 would be assessed every time the lights were left on overnight.
- There was a conflict between a church organization that wanted to use one of the baseball fields at the same time that Polk County Recreation wanted to use the field for practice. The Board stated that the fields were available first come-first serve when no rent was paid. If a scheduled baseball or soccer league rental was paid for a long term, the long-term rental would override any short-term rentals.
- Harmon Field maintenance building restoration project was discussed. Costs for remaining work, fixtures, equipment and soot cleaning were discussed. The electrical inspection had been done and approved, but Duke Energy had not yet hooked up the electric service to the building. Burrell Fuels had told Aldred that the entire system for propane would have to be replaced due to a busted pipe. Fatland requested a list of all work that remained to be done to match with quotes.
- Dogs in baseball fields – Watson reported that he had seen dogs in the fenced baseball fields. Aldred had been directed to install signs for all fenced playing fields and the playground that no dogs were allowed. Aldred reported that the signs had been ordered.
- Dog Park Signs – The Harmon Field dog park signs had blown down or were torn down and reinstalled numerous times. Aldred stated that one of the dog park rules sign was currently attached to the dog park fencing on one of the two sections of the dog park.

#### Other

**Festival clarification for community event scheduled for April 22, 2023.** The Harmon Field Board confirmed that the community event rental scheduled for April 22, 2023 would be qualified as a festival and food catering for the event would not conflict with the concession stand lease restrictions.

**Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, April 4, 2023, 5:30 pm at Tryon Town Hall, McCown Council Meeting Room.

**Adjourn**

Chairman Nelon adjourned the meeting at 7:45 pm.

**Submitted By:**



**Miguel Santibanez,  
Secretary-Treasurer**

**Approved:**



**Stephen Nelon  
Chairman**