

MINUTES OF THE HARMON FIELD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING
Tuesday, March 5, 2024

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; Vice Chairman Warren Watson; Rick Covil; and Jamie Dunn

Board Members Absent: Secretary-Treasurer Miguel Santibanez

Staff Present: Jim Fatland, Tryon Town Manager; Brad Gordon, Harmon Field Superintendent; and Meg Rogers, Town Secretary/Cashier

Harmon Field Master Plan Public Input Session #2

A public input session was opened at 5:30 pm with approximately 25 people in attendance. Fatland provided a short summary of Harmon Field improvements recommended by staff and suggestions provided by the large group of citizens who attended the February 6, 2024 public input session. Staff's preliminary recommendations for updates to the Harmon Field Master Plan included:

- 1) Renovate and turn old Tryon Middle School library building into a community center
- 2) Add additional pathway lighting and update sports facility lighting
- 3) Build an inclusive playground for the community
- 4) Move current dog park to another area of Harmon Field (i.e. hog heaven area across the river) and put the baseball field where dog park currently exists back in use for 8U and 12U baseball games.
- 5) Bring back the community garden space at Harmon Field
- 6) Add a sand volleyball court
- 7) Repave the walking path and pave the gravel parking lot near the school building – paving projects funded by Harmon Field, Town of Tryon and Polk County could be used as match funding required by some of the grants being sought.
- 8) At equestrian facility, replace boards around rings, add a lunging area with fencing, add a water truck to Harmon Field fleet and replace the horseshow office building with a permanent structure.
- 9) Add pickle ball courts to the area behind the existing tennis courts with garden area between them and put existing gazebo in center of proposed garden area.

Chairman Nelon solicited public input:

- Andy Glasscock asked where the dog park would be relocated at Harmon Field as proposed by staff. Gordon responded that the dog park would be relocated across the river in the "Hog Heaven" area where there is more tree shade. Glasscock was concerned about handicapped access to the dog park with longer walking distance from parking at the gym to get to a dog park on the opposite side of the river without vehicular access, since private vehicles were not allowed to drive across the bridge or on paved walking trails. Concerns about unleashed

dogs were discussed briefly with enforcement of Town of Tryon leash ordinance options. Gordon stated that staff asked owners to comply with requirement for leash at Harmon Field and Polk County Animal Control would be doing spot checks for rabies vaccination compliance and issuing citations as needed.

- Richard Norton, Tryon resident living on Markham Road, stated that citizens loved Harmon Field but expressed concerns about Tryon's financial situation and asked if Harmon Field tax revenues were used for Town expenditures not directly related to Harmon Field. Private donations had funded recent playground and baseball field improvements, so Norton asked what was being done to get more funding from the tax district for Harmon Field maintenance. Fatland explained that Harmon Field tax district revenues were only used for Harmon Field expenditures. The Polk County Board of Commissioners set the Harmon Field special tax district tax rate in its annual budget and there had been little change in this tax rate over the last 15 years. Expense to maintain Harmon Field's facilities had increased over the years and currently exceeded the tax revenue collected at the current tax rate. Fatland had revised the monthly Harmon Field financial statement, separating operating expenses from capital projects expenses to better show the shortfall between the tax revenue and true operating cost for the park. The new layout showed more clearly that all capital projects in recent years had been funded by grants because tax revenues were insufficient. Norton asked if Harmon Field was charging enough for facility rentals. Norton stated the Town is growing with the beautiful asset of Harmon Field and advised watching the pennies to get the most for the tax revenues spent at Harmon Field. Norton thanked Town Manager Fatland for helping the Town of Tryon get back on track with funding for infrastructure.
- Roger Dehnel, resident of Tryon, stated his particular interest in adding pickleball courts at Harmon Field. Dehnel explained that pickleball was becoming a very popular sport for all ages. Dehnel was directed to consult with Pickleball Steering Committee leader Nick Fischer on efforts to get quotes for court construction and consulting nearby city parks with pickleball courts on best practices and advice. Fisher stated that fundraising would really begin after they had good quotes.
- Ginny Plume, resident of Tryon, was also interested in adding pickleball courts to Harmon Field. Plume asked that the pickleball courts have perimeter fencing and fencing between courts. She asked if private investors would be solicited for the project. Staff responded that the master plan update would include addition of six pickleball courts. However, fundraising would have to wait until reliable quotes for construction were obtained.
- Greg Miner, Tryon resident and member of the Tryon Parks Committee, asked that the updated master plan include use of native plants as much as possible at Harmon Field and elimination of non-native invasive plants. Harmon Field could provide example to local landowners of successful land management supporting the native ecosystem and removal of invasives. Gordon informed Miner that a Harmon Field Garden Committee was being formed with members Denni Crowe, John Vining, Loti Woods, Corey Woods, and Mark Byington to help with selecting native plants for Harmon Field. Stream Bank Restoration engineer Warren

Eadus would be meeting with the garden committee to discuss streambank project area maintenance. Park Superintendent Gordon informed the Board that he was currently in training for herbicide chemical certification.

- Tracey Daniels, a Tryon resident, expressed her thanks to Harmon Field staff on the improvements at Harmon Field. Daniels' father had worked at Harmon Field many years ago. Daniels requested extending the paved walking path to complete the loop around the Harmon Field perimeter. Daniels had worked with Flat Rock Park Fund and offered to assist with Harmon Field fundraising.
- Marya Hoffman, a new resident of Columbus NC, had submitted a set of photos and diagrams showing proposed extension of the paved walking trail along Harmon Field Road to create a perimeter loop and a possible extension of the walking trail around the perimeter of the neighboring tomato field property if permission could be obtained from the property owner along with addition of two foot-bridges across the North Pacolet River at the river bends on the eastern end of the park to connect loops on both sides of the river with more benches and picnic tables along the river. She also included photos of examples of foot-bridges as well as native plants along the river bank and a beach area for families to access the shallow North Pacolet River for wading and water play. Her diagram included an outdoor stage and seating area at the school building.

Watson made a motion to close the public input session. Covil seconded the motion. The public input session was closed at 6:20 pm.

Approve Minutes from February 6, 2024 regular meeting

The Minutes from the February 6, 2024 regular meeting of the Harmon Field Board of Supervisors were reviewed. Watson made a motion to approve the Minutes from the regular meeting on February 6, 2024 as presented. Dunn seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 4 to 0.

Approve Financial Reports for February 2024

The February 2024 Harmon Field financial report was presented by Fatland. According to the report, Harmon Field had received \$427,436.60 (79.41%) of its amended annual budgeted revenues for Fiscal Year 2023-2024. Total Operating expenditures were \$204,916.93 (69.46%) and Capital expenditures totaled \$171,829.06 (70.63%) of amended annual budgeted expenditures for FY 2023-2024. Total Expenditures were \$376,745.99 (69.99%) of amended annual budgeted expenditures for FY 2023-2024 leaving a fund balance of \$167,278.02 as of February 29, 2024.

Fatland told the Board that Polk County requested that the Harmon Field proposed budget for FY 2024-2025 be turned in early so a proposed budget would be presented at the April 2 meeting for discussion and approval. Harmon Field would need to make a strong case to the Polk County Board of Commissioners when requesting an increase in the Harmon Field tax rate to meet Harmon Field's operating cost requirements.

Watson made a motion to approve the financial report for February 29, 2024 as presented. Dunn seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 4 to 0.

Champions for Wildlife Request

Park Superintendent Gordon presented information for Loti Woods who was unable to attend. Gordon summarized the Champions for Wildlife education program for children. The proposed free event on May 4, 2024 at the Harmon Field cabin would focus on hellbender salamanders with a live hellbender exhibited and a craft activity for the children related to hellbenders. It was estimated that approximately 100 people would be participating using the cabin and attached deck. Woods had asked that the cabin rental fee be waived for this free event for children. Loti Wood was also working with Harmon Field staff to organize a group of volunteers to develop and maintain a pollinator garden at Harmon Field. Watson made a motion that the rental fee for the Harmon Field cabin be waived as a special case for this free children's event on May 4, 2024. Covil seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 4 to 0. It was suggested that a donation jar might be put out at the event to collect donations to "keep this event free".

Authorize Grant Application with Dogwood Trust

Fatland reported that a pre-application was submitted for a grant from the Dogwood Trust and the Town of Tryon was invited to submit a full application. The grant application would be a bundle grant for several projects that would include 1) expanding the children's playground to be inclusive, 2) adding accessibility outside operating hours, 3) adding timers for lights for the gym, tennis courts, soccer fields and walking trail. 4) adding native plants, a pollinator garden and community garden and extending walking trails to connect the garden areas and 5) relocating the dog park and putting the 3rd ball field back in service for baseball/softball. If awarded, the Dogwood Trust grant would cover 100% of the project cost with no match required. If received, the Dogwood Trust grant could be used as match funding for other Harmon Field grants, such as NC PARTF grants.

Dunn asked how much area across the river would the relocated dog park need. Harmon Field staff responded that the dog park would take up approximately 2 acres near the bank and bamboo area to the left of the bridge and paved trail in "Hog Heaven" section of the park. Quotes for the dog park relocation were using 2 acres but the size might be reduced in the final plan. Current dog park in the baseball field was 1.5 acres or 0.75 acres for small dogs and 0.75 acres for large dogs. It was noted that dog park users did not regularly attend Harmon Field Board meetings to defend the needs of the dog park, but had attended a special public hearing held at the Harmon Field cabin when they requested more shade. The new location would include more shade provided by existing trees. Gordon had visited dog parks in Mills River and Brevard and consulted staff at those facilities who recommended having grassy and bare areas in the dog park, but fencing off the grass areas during the winter to protect the sod for the next season. The Harmon Field dog park was approved in 2020 by the Harmon Field Board in response to a donation offer and the baseball field, which was not being used at the time, was chosen as the location to reduce costs since the baseball field already had fencing and would need only divider fencing and new gates to be used. Laura from

Polk County Recreation/YMCA stated that there was now a big need for travel ball fields, but a minimum of three baseball fields were needed at the location. Harmon Field would need all three fields back in use to attract these rentals. It was estimated that Harmon Field might receive \$300 to \$400 per day during the travel baseball season. It was also noted that Polk County did not have any home teams and Atticus at Polk County Recreation/YMCA had told Gordon that Polk County Rec/YMCA would not be handling organized youth baseball in Polk County in the future and those activities would be managed by private parent groups. Covil was concerned that if the grant application included 2 acres for dog park, reducing to 1 acre would violate the terms of the grant funding because of non-compliance. Covil and Watson did not want to commit to 2 acres for relocated dog park, but were willing to consider a 1-acre dog park. Both Covil and Watson wanted to visit Harmon Field with staff to see exactly where the new dog park space would be located and asked Gordon to mark the proposed dog park new location boundaries for Board members to visit and review. Fatland stated that the Harmon Field disc golf was spread over a lot of Harmon Field space and could conflict with the proposed location of the community gardens, so Fatland wanted to meet with players regarding moving disc golf to Ziglar Field. Moving the dog park to Ziglar Field had been opposed by residents living adjacent to Ziglar Field. Gordon confirmed that the disc golf course at Harmon Field was being used by park patrons. Disc golf was included on the master plan for the Polk County Recreation Complex to be added at some time in the future. Chairman Nelson recommended applying for the Dogwood Trust grant and, if the grant is awarded to Harmon Field, decide at that time whether or not to accept the grant and its terms. The Board members agreed and authorized application for Dogwood Trust Grant.

Dunn asked if the pickleball steering committee had done any fundraising. Currently Fisher and the committee were seeking accurate quotes for construction. Variables included asphalt vs. concrete surface and exact location requirements for grading and gravel/rock compacted base for construction. Dunn asked if Harmon Field could get 100% funding with no match for the pickleball courts. Unfortunately, adding pickleball courts would score low for the Dogwood Trust grant. Fatland stated that the grant funding for the courts would probably require local match funding. NC PARTF grants would require 50:50 match. Landscape architect Mark Byington had agreed to do an updated Harmon Field master plan diagram for use in grant applications. A copy of the draft updated master plan would be provided at the next meeting. Including the pickleball courts in the future plans for Harmon Field could improve chances of approval of Harmon Field tax rate increase by Polk County Commissioners if Polk County Recreation was not planning new pickleball courts for county recreation facilities.

Equestrian Facility Update

Dunn reported that the horse show camper fee had been increased to \$50 per night effective January 1, 2024. The horse show campers used sites and hookups in "hog heaven" area of Harmon Field. Park Superintendent Gordon had asked that each horseshow rental contract include a diagram of available stabling to help staff with more efficient preparation for each event. Gordon wanted the smaller shows to use barns A & B only. Dunn stated that barns A & B were overused and the smaller C & D barns

were in better condition, so rotating barn use for the smaller shows would be more feasible. Dunn stated that the only six campers were expected at the next 3-day show. Access for these campers to get to the camper sites was discussed. Gordon had a contact number for the owner of the tomato fields adjacent to hog heaven area to request using their access road to get campers to hog heaven area, if needed.

Park Superintendent's Report

Harmon Field Park Superintendent Gordon provided a printed report.

- The new community event booking procedure was beginning to be used with community event coordinators asked to fill out a comprehensive event booking form for review by town staff to check for potential problem areas and allow staff and event coordinators to avoid problems and ensure events ran smoothly for all parties. The event booking forms were turned in at Tryon Town Hall to Meg Rogers or Lourdes Guitierrez and relayed, as needed, to review committee members with meetings held as needed to discuss events. The new procedure would be required for events after July 1 2024. A music event proposed for May had been declined. Toy Run event discussion would include inviting Polk County Sheriff's Department to send representative to discuss potential issues. Gravel bicycle event would also be discussed because of past problems.
- Dog park reopened on February 9 and updated rules had been posted in each sided of the dog park as discussed at the February meeting.
- Bridge over river to Harmon Field maintenance building had been pressure washed and stained with assistance from an anonymous volunteer who did staining of three-quarters of the bridge and a lot of compliments had been received about the improved appearance.
- Equestrian show office had been pressure washed with assistance from Tryon sanitation staff since Harmon Field staff had assisted sanitation staff with recycling.
- Staff had started removal of fascia boards on equestrian barns since most of them were warped or missing and began pressure washing barn 1 interior and exterior.
- Mowers and tractors would be serviced in March to get ready for mowing season.
- Since first master plan update meeting, Gordon had several meetings with various contractors and groups. Gordon was getting quotes on pathway lighting, light timers for tennis courts, gym & soccer fields lights, pickleball courts, sand volleyball court, wire fencing for new dog park and three-board fencing for show rings and round pen in equestrian area. Improved equestrian fencing would allow Harmon Field to attract different equine disciplines to Harmon Field.
- Kenneth Arrowood would join Harmon Field as full-time staff on March 4, 2024 bringing valuable experience.
- Gordon thanked the Polk County Middle School baseball team along with community volunteers who came out on a Saturday to help prepare the baseball fields for the upcoming season. Gordon was hoping to plan a Home Run Derby at Harmon Field in the summer as a fundraising event for the baseball program and Harmon Field.
- YMCA/Polk Rec had told Gordon that they would purchase new bases with sleeves and plugs and extra sleeves and plugs for the baseball fields as well as

new soccer nets for the goal frames. YMCA was eager to assist Harmon Field to help area kids.

- YMCA/Polk Rec had not paid rental fees for Harmon Field facilities for baseball and soccer since 2022. There was a discrepancy in the last invoice and Gordon spoke with Atticus at YMCA and Tryon Town Manager Fatland regarding billing. It was decided to charge 2022 rates for the 2023 season and begin talks on how to move forward.
- Harmon Field employee DeShawn would be leaving for the US Navy on April 22 and his last day would be April 19 2024. Gordon wished Deshawn good luck and following seas.
- Soccer, baseball and softball seasons were coming up and would help bring in revenue and park visitors. Gordon welcomed any help to keep the park clean and work on projects and wanted to start a volunteer group to help with park projects.
- A group was being formed as a Harmon Field Garden Committee to help with grants, beautification and overall tree and plant health.

Update on Open-Air Gym

Gordon reported sheetrock and plywood installation had begun. Location of appliances and electrical hookups had been discussed with contractor. The concrete slab and roof for the new screen porch was in the works. A quote for replacing the gym roof and repainting rafters was being sought.

Other

Manzolina dining area shelter – installation was stalled due to a problem with volunteer labor for installation now demanding cash payment to install. Champion Construction had been contacted about installing the shelter. Public Works Director Greg McCool was overseeing this project. Project materials on site were under protective cover but too heavy to move with available equipment while waiting for installation.

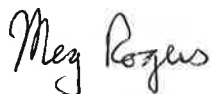
Next Meeting Date

The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, April 2, 2024, 5:30 pm at Tryon Town Hall, McCown Council Meeting Room and would include another public input session.

Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned by Vice-Chairman Watson at 7:12 pm.

Submitted By:



**Meg Rogers, substituting for
Miguel Santibanez
Secretary-Treasurer**

Approved:



**Stephen Nelon
Chairman**