

**MINUTES OF THE HARMON FIELD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING**  
**Tuesday, April 2, 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 April 2, 2024:** Chairman Stephen Nelon; Vice Chairman Rick Covil; and Jamie Dunn

**Board Members Absent April 2 2024:** Vice-Chairman Warren Watson; Secretary-Treasurer Miguel Santibanez

**Board Members Present April 9, 2024:** Chairman Stephen Nelon; Vice Chairman Warren Watson (arrived 6:19 pm); Secretary-Treasurer Miguel Santibanez; Rick Covil; and Jamie Dunn

**Board Members Absent April 9 2024:** None

**Staff Present:** Jim Fatland, Tryon Town Manager; Brad Gordon, Harmon Field Superintendent; and Meg Rogers, Town Secretary/Cashier; (on April 2 & April 9) and Greg McCool, Tryon Public Works Director (on April 9 only)

**Harmon Field Master Plan Public Input Session #3**

A public input session was opened at 5:30 pm with approximately 10 people in attendance. Fatland provided a short summary of Harmon Field improvements recommended by staff and suggestions provided in previous public input sessions. The Town of Tryon and Harmon Field staff were working with landscape designer Mark Byington on an updated master plan for Harmon Field and with grant expert Debra Torrence on finding funding sources for implementing the updated master plan.

Chairman Nelon solicited public input:

- Marie DuLong, a resident of White Oak Retirement Community in downtown Tryon, requested that the temporary taped-on pickleball court lines at the open-air gym be replaced with permanent painted lines since the taped lines are coming off. DuLong also requested that specific times and days be reserved for pickleball play at the Harmon Field gym. DuLong showed the Board members photos of Polk County's schedule for Stearns gym which had certain days and times reserved for pickleball use on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from noon to 1 pm. DuLong provided sample schedules for a Hendersonville multi-use gym showing two courts of pickleball and one court of basketball in progress at the same time at that facility. Current procedures for reserving the Harmon Field gym required payment of a rental fee of \$15 per hour plus additional fee if lights were needed. Currently only one pickleball court was marked out at the gym with taped lines. There was room for three pickleball courts at the Harmon Field open-air gym. Gordon confirmed that the Harmon Field gym currently was set up for two half basketball courts and one full basketball court. Four pickleball courts

could fit in the same space as one full basketball court. DuLong stated that the concrete floor of the open-air gym was safer for pickleball players than the broken asphalt surface at the Harmon Field tennis courts marked for pickleball play. Chairman Nelon stated that taking up the Flexcourt® surface from one tennis court and remarking the asphalt for pickleball was the only quick option for providing pickleball play area to meet the needs at the time. Chairman Nelon and Park Superintendent Gordon explained that the recent gym renovation had been done by the Lassiter family with donations collected to provide an improved basketball venue at Harmon Field. Any permanent changes to the gym that did not support basketball would have to be approved by the family that renovated the gym for basketball. Chairman Nelon assured Ms. DeLong that her suggestions had been heard and would be carefully considered and thanked her for the well-prepared presentation and references.

There being no others wishing to provide input, Chairman Nelon closed the public input session at 5:40 pm.

**Approve Guiding Reins Alcohol Permit for June 1, 2024 event at Harmon Field Gym//Hog Heaven**

Christine Cowles presented a request for permission to serve alcohol at a Tunes & Tastes of Tryon event on June 1, 2024 at the open-air gym and hog heaven areas at Harmon Field. The event would be a fund raiser for Guiding Reins, a 501(c)(3) non-profit that provided equine-assisted therapy for front line emergency and law enforcement workers suffering from post-traumatic stress. Cowles had opened a new business in Tryon and hoped to assist with events to increase Tryon downtown tourism and foot-traffic. The event had originally been proposed for downtown Tryon, but logistical problems arose and Harmon Field was suggested as an alternative venue. The event would involve a long dining table set up in the Hog Heaven area with food provided by Tryon restaurants and, after the dinner, a concert by a popular 8-piece Celtic rock band. Up to 150 tickets would be sold for the dinner and concert with up to 300 additional student tickets available for the concert only. Meals would include one glass of beer or wine with additional beer or wine available at a cash bar with NC ABC permitting. Concert would begin at 7 pm after the dinner was finished. The band would perform two 1.5-hour sets and the concert would end at 10 pm. Cleanup at Hog Heaven would be done immediately after the dinner ended. Cowles asked about access for setup and breakdown via the road along the neighboring tomato fields. Cowles had been in contact with Tryon Arts & Crafts School (TACS) about partnering and extended hours. A similar event in 2016 sold 365 tickets for a Farm to Trade meal event. Chairman Nelon confirmed that Park Superintendent Gordon had the event information submitted. Covil made a motion to approve an alcohol permit for the Guiding Reins fundraiser meal and concert event on June 1, 2024 at Hog Heaven and the Harmon Field open-air gym. Dunn seconded the motion. Motion was approved unanimously by a vote of 3 to 0.

**Approve Minutes from March 5, 2024 regular meeting**

The Minutes from the March 5, 2024 regular meeting of the Harmon Field Board of Supervisors were reviewed. Dunn made a motion to approve the Minutes from the regular meeting on March 5, 2024 as presented. Covil seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 3 to 0.

**Approve Financial Reports for March 2024**

The March 2024 Harmon Field financial report was presented by Fatland. According to the report, Harmon Field had received \$453,727.00 (77.84% of its amended annual budgeted revenues for Fiscal Year 2023-2024). Total Operating Expenditures were \$233,898.07 (72.53%) and Capital Expenditures totaled \$173,003.66 (66.44% of amended annual budgeted expenditures for FY 2023-2024). Total Expenditures were \$406,901.73 (69.81% of amended annual budgeted expenditures for FY 2023-2024).

Fatland noted that projected Rental Revenue line item that included monthly lease revenues were low due to the reduced rent approved by the Board for the concession stand while waiting on completion of the dining area shade structure. Usage Revenue line item was for rents collected for single day facility rentals. Operating expenses were now reported separately from capital expenses in the monthly reports for clarity.

Dunn made a motion to approve the Harmon Field financial report for March 2024 as presented. Covil seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 3 to 0.

**Discuss and Approve FY 2024-2025 Budget**

Tryon Town Manager Jim Fatland presented a draft Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Budget for Harmon Field. Fatland reported that two years ago the Harmon Field tax revenue paid for approximately 67% of the operating cost of Harmon Field. Facilities usage and rental revenues were required to pay the remaining operating costs with many maintenance needs unmet. In the coming fiscal year, new staff led by Brad Gordon were committed to excellence at Harmon Field providing a park for all ages. Good feedback had been received from Polk County Recreation/YMCA and users. In the last year, staff had been aggressively addressing the maintenance backlog and Polk County and Town of Tryon had provided funding for much-needed paving projects. Polk County Community Foundation had provided grant funding for the Harmon Field gym improvements project. Rotary Club of Tryon had provided donations for the gym improvements. The Town of Tryon Board of Commissioners had been asked to provide funding to install the Harmon Field concession stand dining area shelter, when volunteer labor for this work fell through. In Fiscal Year 2023-2024, \$229,000 was raised for Harmon Field capital projects outside of the operating budget. Since taking charge at Harmon Field, Gordon had repaired the gazebo, replaced rusted out grills, added two loads of mulch footing in the children's playground with recommendation to budget for one load each year, pressure washed bridge, concrete areas, boardwalk, concession stand and other structures, removed deteriorated equestrian facility boards discovered during pressure-washing, planted nine donated trees in the dog park area, trimmed trees and shrubs during the fall and winter and removed invasive ivy from trees. Greg Miner had coordinated a Polk County Appearance Commission grant

project to remove bamboo and kudzu at Harmon Field. Timers had been installed for the tennis courts, but had to be manually reset daily to come on at 5:30 pm and shut off at 9 pm. The manufacturer had been contacted to repair the malfunction requiring the daily reset. New toilets had been installed in the cabin. Gary Walker had helped regrade the baseball fields for a discounted fee and YMCA donated baseball bases and plugs, 12 basketball nets and soccer nets, although some of the soccer nets did not fit Harmon Field's soccer frames. Spring soccer season was scheduled to begin Saturday, April 5, 2024. Gordon had scheduled the initial meeting of the Harmon Field Garden Committee at the Harmon Field Cabin on April 11, 2024 at 5:30 pm. Harmon Field had employed three full-time workers in the past. Currently, Harmon Field staff consisted of two full-time workers and part-time workers as needed.

Fatland reported that over the last 15 years there had been no significant Harmon Field tax rate increases. Current tax revenues covered only 67% of the operating costs. Capital projects at Harmon Field had been funded by grants. New facilities added to Harmon Field increased the operating revenue needed to maintain the park. Maintenance of facilities had been deferred in recent years due to lack of funds. Harmon Field should be the recreational gem of the county into the future. Fatland distributed copies of the proposed Harmon Field Budget for FY24 and a preliminary Capital Improvement Program-FY24 and Beyond. Fatland would present the proposed updated Harmon Field Master Plan at the May 2024 meeting. The draft Capital Improvement Program (CIP) included a request for Polk County to raise the Harmon Field special district tax rate by two cents per hundred. Each penny increase would generate an additional \$50,000 in tax revenues to cover more of the operating costs of Harmon Field. Fatland briefly discussed prioritization of the CIP items to leverage various grant funding opportunities and matching funds requirements to implement the improvements. As grant funding was secured, various project elements would be moved into the current year in the CIP timeline. With the increased tax revenues covering operating costs, rental and usage fees could be directed to capital projects. A dedication of the renovated rooms at the Harmon Field gym would be combined with a basketball tournament sponsored by Dominion Energy with representatives of the Harmon Field Board of Supervisors, Tryon Board of Commissioners and Polk County Board of Commissioners involved in the dedication ceremony. As funding for paving at Harmon Field was supported by funding from both Polk County and Town of Tryon, Harmon Field would continue to request annual funding assistance from Polk County for additional facilities needed by residents county-wide such as pickleball courts. Fatland requested approval of this proposed budget to take to Polk County for approval. Covil felt the increased tax on Tryon Township property owners was unfair when many residents outside the tax district used Harmon Field facilities for free. Dunn was also concerned about the proposed increase. It was decided to continue discussion of the proposed FY24-25 Harmon Field Budget on Tuesday, April 9, 2024 when all five members of the Harmon Field Board of Supervisors would be present.

#### **Equestrian Facility Update – Revised Contract Forms**

Dunn reported that the recent horseshow went well.

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

Harmon Field Park Superintendent Gordon provided a printed report.

- Gordon thanked Tryon Arts & Crafts School (TACS) for collaborating with Harmon Field staff to help set up tents and participate in TACS' recent Hearth and Anvil event at Kaitlyn Farms and looked forward to future collaboration opportunities.
- Horseshow held March 15-17, 2024 went well with the few complaints handled quickly. Overall, everyone enjoyed Harmon Field.
- Gordon would be attending next Tryon Parks Committee meeting and talking about Harmon Field's response to help the environment and native plants.
- Quotes obtained and submitted to Town Manager Fatland
  - Pickle Ball-\$322,970 for 6 courts, add ~ \$170,00 for covering
  - Pathway Lighting & Basketball Court Upgrade-\$568,892
  - Timer for Soccer Lights-\$6,588
  - Fencing for equestrian rings & round pen-\$42,768.50
  - Fencing for relocated dog park – 2-acre size-\$27,762.50 (less for 1-acre)
- Fatland & Gordon were working with landscape architect Mark Byington on updating the Harmon Field Master Plan
- Resumed pressure washing barns, boardwalk behind playground, and sidewalk from concession stand to bathrooms and were finished on screen shed and its picnic tables. Noted that screen shed needed minor repairs (missing boards between joists, broken screen door closer & detached edges of screens) that staff were working on.
- Worked with Town Manager Fatland on FY 24-25 Harmon Field Budget.
- Kenneth Arrowood had been hired as full-time Harmon Field worker and a part-time employee would be hired to help with weekend coverage or when full-time employees were off.
- Worked with Polk Rec/YMCA Rep Brad Muse preparing fields for baseball and soccer seasons this spring. Polk Rec/YMCA did soccer field lines for practice and would be doing infield lines this week for weekend games. Harmon Field staff would be taking over spraying the lines. Polk Rec/YMCA had given Harmon Field 2 new sets of baseball bases with all components, plugs & cups, and 12 new outdoor basketball nets. Gordon thanked Muse and noted the relationship with this organization was amazing
- Mowing at Harmon Field had begun. It took current staff 2 to 2.5 days to complete depending on weather. Weedeaters were carried on mowers and as each section was mowed, weedeating would be done on that section before moving on.
- Harmon Field was getting two Tryon Sanitation Dept worker's labor after their usual working hours in exchange for allowing Tryon Sanitation to use the Harmon Field dump truck for recycling pickups, while their trucks were out of service.
- Harmon Field's new mower was in repair shop in Boiling Springs for hydraulic leak repair. Hoped to have mower back in 1-2 weeks (April 1 to 8) and had asked them to expedite repairs.
- Gordon thanked Gary Walker who came out March 7, graded and tilled in dirt on the baseball fields, smoothed out large swell behind second base on field B,

extended field B to 70-foot baseline length to match field A and cleaned the outfield edge on Field A.

Dunn asked if relocation of the dog park would impact use of Hog Heaven area for other events. Gordon responded that the proposed location should not significantly impact other uses.

#### **Update on Open-Air Gym**

Gordon reported that Olmsted Plumbing was working on extending water lines from upstairs locker rooms to project area. An RV plug was installed and a mini-split unit. Insulation and sheetrock installation was in progress.

#### **Other**

**Concession Stand Dining Area Cover Update** – Bob Scoggins and Chuck Britton were helping with quote to install the cover.

#### **Meeting was temporarily paused at 6:42 pm to continue on, April 9, 2024 at 5:30 pm**

Meeting was called back into session by Chairman Nelon at 5:30 pm on April 9, 2024 at 5:30 pm with four members present. A fifth member, Warren Watson, arrived late at 6:17 pm.

#### **Discuss and Approve FY 2024-2025 Budget (continued)**

Fatland reviewed current financial status of Harmon Field with tax revenues and rental fee revenues directed to operating expenses with nothing left for capital equipment and major maintenance projects. Fatland noted that the Harmon Field tax rate had not increased significantly over the last 15 years, although costs for personnel and materials had increased a lot. The proposed FY 2024-2025 Budget included a 2-cent per \$100 valuation tax rate increase that would allow tax revenues to cover basic operating costs and allowing rental revenues as well as other donations, grants or funding from various sources including Polk County and the Town of Tryon to be used for Harmon Field capital improvement projects and major maintenance and rehabilitation projects.

Covil had communicated with County Manager Pittman who indicated to Covil that the County was more willing to pay for Harmon Field capital projects rather than approve increased tax rate for Harmon Field. Covil had suggested to Pittman that the whole county should be paying for Harmon Field's maintenance. Fatland stated that, without a tax rate increase to cover operating and maintenance expenses, he could not recommend adding any new facilities at Harmon Field. Fatland recommended requesting the tax rate increase for operations and maintenance and also showing need for the County and Town of Tryon to help with adding any needed facilities. Fatland agreed that the County should be contributing to Harmon Field as the facility was used by residents across the county. Polk County Recreation/YMCA was pressing for

Harmon Field to reduce facility use fees for their programs. Non-profit organizations frequently requested rental fee reductions or waivers, but few local organizations were coming forward to offer free materials, funding or volunteer labor to keep up with Harmon Field's operations and maintenance. Chairman Nelon reported that Harmon Field's revenues in 1997 were higher than revenues in the FY24-25 proposed budget, even though operating and maintenance costs were higher now.

Before the return of Fatland as Town Manager of Tryon, Dunn was concerned that expenditures at Harmon Field had been wasted because of a lack of leadership and poor communication with Town of Tryon administration. Dunn was also concerned about adding new facilities at Harmon Field, without a well-considered plan to include funding and staffing to assure long-term maintenance of existing and new facilities. Fatland remembered, some years ago, that Noreen Cothran and the Blue Ridge Hunter Jumper Association (BRHJA) worked with Harmon Field to leverage BRHJA's grants and donations for equestrian facility improvements to match North Carolina Parks & Recreation Trust Fund funding for improvements at Harmon Field. Since his return, Fatland had worked hard to improve communication and cooperation between the Town of Tryon and Harmon Field Board of Supervisors and staff with encouraging results. Fatland had explained to local organizations, Rotary Club of Tryon and Tryon Kiwanis how Harmon Field's funding worked. Fatland had aggressively gone after available grant funding being offered for projects like a community garden and accessibility improvements.

Chairman Nelon stated that the Harmon Field dog park had brought a lot of people to Harmon Field as a big social gathering site. The project was done quickly, funded by a local donor, by converting an unused baseball field that already had perimeter fencing and adding divider fencing.

Watson stated, after reading the proposed budget and tax rate scenarios prepared by Fatland, he saw Harmon Field struggling every year to close the gap between available funds and ongoing maintenance costs. Watson wanted the Harmon Field Board to show Polk County that they wanted to maintain Harmon Fields existing facilities. If Harmon Field facilities grew, donation and rental fees would be used for capital projects. Watson strongly supported requesting a 2-cent tax increase.

Watson made a motion to approve the proposed budget with at 2-cent per \$100 tax rate increase. Santibanez seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 3 to 2 with Covil and Dunn voting against.

Covil asked about the status of donated funds that were held by the Fans of Harmon Field organization. A recent gravel cycling event caused some issues with Harmon Field's neighboring property owners. Fatland reported that Harmon Field staff and the Town of Tryon were introducing a new process for approving and supporting community events to reduce such problems. Dunn expressed concerns about the noise generated by pickleball facilities that might impact neighbors if pickleball courts were added at Harmon Field.

**Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, May 7, 2024, 5:30 pm at Tryon Town Hall, McCown Council Meeting Room and would include a fourth public input session.

**Adjourn**

Meeting was adjourned April 9, 2024 at by Chairman Nelon at 6:23 pm.

**Submitted By:**

**Miguel Santibanez  
Secretary-Treasurer**

**Approved:**

  
**Stephen Nelon  
Chairman**