

MINUTES OF THE HARMON FIELD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING
Thursday, July 17, 2025

Chairman Warren Watson called the Harmon Field Board of Supervisors meeting to order at 6:00 PM at the Tryon Town Hall, McCown Room.

Board Members Present: Chairman Warren Watson; Secretary-Treasurer Rick Covil; Steve Sloan; and Stephen Nelon

Board Members Absent: Vice-Chairman Lynn Cromer

Staff Present: Jim Fatland, Tryon Town Manager; and Meg Rogers, Town Secretary/Cashier,

Approve Minutes from July 1, 2025 regular meeting

The Minutes from the July 1, 2025 regular were reviewed. Nelon made a motion to approve the Minutes from the regular meeting on July 1, 2025 as presented. Covil seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 4 to 0.

Discussion of Recovery Funds and Potential Grant Funding

Tryon Town Manager Jim Fatland presented information on the current status of recovery funds and potential grant funding. Fatland distributed copies of the "Town of Tryon Tropical Storm Helene Project Budget Ordinance Amended, General Fund" adopted by the Tryon Board of Commissioners June 17, 2025 designating expected recovery project revenues and expenditures. The original Tropical Storm Helene Project Budget Ordinance was adopted October 15, 2024 after a State of Emergency proclaimed by the Mayor of Tryon on September 25, 2024 and was amended June 17, 2025 to reflect recovery estimates to repair, restore and rehabilitate Harmon Field, based on meetings with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Town staff, consultants and County officials. The ordinance directed the finance officer to set up a separate project budget fund to track all revenues and expenditures related to Tropical Storm Helene with sufficient specific detailed account records to satisfy the requirements of the grantor agency, the grant agreements and federal regulations. The ordinance also directed the finance officer to provide regular reports to the Tryon Board of Commissioners and outside agencies on the financial status of each project element and on the total revenues received or claimed.

Because FEMA recovery funding used a reimbursement process, the Town of Tryon initially allocated \$100,000 to the special fund to begin recovery work then increased this allocation to \$300,000 when the much higher immediate recovery costs became clear. When that allocation was expended, no further work could be done until FEMA reimbursements were received to replenish the fund for continuing the work. The State of North Carolina also established a loan program to assist western NC communities with cash flow during recovery. Tryon qualified for \$1.7 million from this loan program, however the state reduced Tryon's allocation based on a per capita spending cap to \$160,000 with five years to pay back the state loan with no interest charged. A second state loan of \$108,000 might become available to the Town of Tryon in the future.

Harmon Field Park Superintendent Brad Gordon and Tryon Town Planner Tim Daniels were continuing to meet with FEMA weekly on Fridays to work through the complex recovery funding process. Currently, it appeared that four structures, the board walk and screen shed which were destroyed, and the cabin and field house, which would probably have to be demolished

per new county flood map repair cost limit requiring demolition, would qualify for remediation funds from FEMA in the amount of approximately \$700,000 that could be applied to renovating the community center building. Permission to allocate the FEMA remediation funds to this renovation project had been formally requested from FEMA. FEMA reimbursement for recovery expenditures already made were approved but no reimbursement payment had been received by the Town of Tryon as of July 17, 2025. The payment was supposed to be issued within 20 days of completion and approval of the reimbursement request. A recent news report that FEMA funding for western North Carolina had been decreased by \$200 million was discussed. The Board members were concerned about how this news could affect Harmon Field's FEMA reimbursements. Fatland assured the Board that the consultant hired by the Town of Tryon was experienced in negotiating the best compensation deal from FEMA for Tryon's and Harmon Field's recovery.

Fatland reported that the Town of Tryon had applied for a grant of \$400,000. The grant application had passed the 1st round and the 2nd round of reviews and was still in competition for funding. Decision was still pending.

The Board expressed hope that the Polk County Commissioners would approve additional funding to help restore Harmon Field. More plans to approach funding sources were discussed briefly.

It was suggested that the Polk County Community Foundation Grant for the gym room renovation for an event rental space and classroom might be changed, with the Foundation's permission, to pay for irrigation for soccer fields or relocating the event space and classroom project to the community center space, outside the flood zone.

Park Status Update

Fatland briefly summarized the current status of Harmon Field. New fencing was being installed at the playground and the open-air gym to replace fencing lost in the flood. The gym floor repairs would begin soon after the fencing was completed.

Fatland estimated the cost to completely renovate the Harmon Field Community Center building was approximately \$1.3 million. Roof replacement would be the priority to stabilize the building. The location outside the 500-year flood plain and larger capacity space for larger events would make this space safer and more attractive to event organizers.

Chairman Watson was concerned about the slow process with FEMA. Fatland explained that the recovery would be done in phases with each phase dependent on when FEMA reimbursement was received for the preceding phase. Phase 1 was the Dallara baseball field restoration, open-air gym basketball courts repairs and restoring the playground at the original location as soon as possible. Phase 2 would include the soccer fields restoration. The Harmon Field Board had decided to leave the dog park as is and restore the playground at the original location to speed reopening and minimize disruption to public use. Once the community center renovation was complete, a second playground could be built later at a new location near the community center.

Estimated remediation funding for the field house bathroom facility, that would have to be demolished, was \$80,000. A new bathroom facility could be constructed behind the tennis courts where there was sewer line access. As a less expensive option, it was suggested that the gym room could be converted to bathrooms, instead of the catering kitchen and classroom

previously planned, since the gym building already had water and sewer access. Another option was to reconfigure the community center bathrooms to be accessed from the outside at all times. It was suggested that the slabs at the field house and cabin remaining after demolition might be converted to covered open-sided picnic shelters.

Harmon Field equestrian facility restoration was discussed briefly. Scope of the restoration would depend on total amount of donor funding and assurance of sources of revenue to cover maintenance and operating costs going forward.

Fatland provided more information on the options for restoring the Harmon Field soccer fields. The two options were sod installation or grass seeding. The Board asked for more detailed information on the timeline for each option from implementation to having the fields ready to host organized soccer play. Covil wanted to expedite progress on the soccer fields to get the players back to Harmon Field as soon as possible. If one method would be significantly faster to get the field back in play, it was suggested that the fast method could be used on one of Harmon Field's two soccer fields, and the longer process used on the other field with irrigation. Whether or not to add an irrigation system, which did not qualify for FEMA reimbursement funding, was discussed. The Board wanted to explore local grant opportunities that might fund the irrigation system. The Board unanimously agreed to hold the August 5, 2025 regular meeting at the Harmon Field Open-Air Gym so that the members could view the soccer fields and discuss options on site. The Board asked Fatland to consult Polk County Recreation/YMCA soccer program coordinator for recommendations on which option would be best for their program. Fatland explained that, due to the high cost for the soccer field restoration, the current cleanup, playground, bridge & gym repairs would have to be completed and reimbursed from FEMA before funds would be available to begin work on the soccer fields.

Draft Harmon Field Master Plan Discussion

Chairman Watson and the Board members supported relocating Harmon Field structures away from the flood zone as possible. Fatland clarified that FEMA was not mandating anything in the Master Plan, but did make suggestions such as relocating the playground away from the flood zone. Fatland stated that having an approved Master Plan was essential for competitive applications for large grants from other sources. Decision on scope of equestrian center restoration had not yet been made. The Board asked that the master plan be limited to facilities that could realistically be achieved in the near future. Nelson stated that public needs might be changed once the Polk County YMCA opened. Fatland urged the Board to include future facilities rather than only short-term goals. Including long-term facility plans in the master plan did not require that all planned facilities had to be built, but including them would leave options open if a targeted funding source suddenly became available for a specific type of facility included in the plan. Leaving pickleball and volleyball facilities in the master plan could fall into this category. The Board felt there were lots of reasons to focus on getting the community center building renovated and prioritizing existing facilities restoration to encourage public support and donations for those projects at this time and to avoid dividing public attention to future facilities until the short-term goals had been achieved. The Board requested that Mark Byington simplify the Master Plan draft for review and discussion at the August 5, 2025 meeting. Final tweaks could be completed for review at the August 21, 2025 meeting and the final draft Master Plan could be presented for approval at the September 2, 2025 meeting.

Next Meeting Date

The next regular meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, August 5, 2025, 6:00 pm at Harmon Field Open-Air Gym.

Adjourn

Sloan made a motion to adjourn. Nelon seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 7:00 pm

Submitted By:

Approved:



**Rick Covil
Secretary-Treasurer**

**Warren Watson
Chairman**