

Transylvania County Agenda Memo

Agenda Item: VI - B

Meeting Date: 06/12/2018

From: Jonathan Griffin, Management Analyst

Date: 5/31/2018

Subject: Update on Parks and Recreation Master Plan Implementation

Department: Administration / Parks and Recreation

Public Hearing: No

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Attachment: 1 Year Update Document and related Capital Improvement Plan and analysis of levels of service

Purpose: To present an update on 1 year of implementation of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Background:

In June 2017, the Board of County Commissioners adopted the Transylvania County Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

County staffs wish to provide an update to the Board of County Commissioners related to that plan.

Financial Impact: n/a

Strategic Plan Goal & Strategy: 5B, 6E

Recommendation(s): Receive update.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

1 Year Overview

Executive Summary

After adoption by the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners, county staff began to implement it as recommended. This has led to a sustained increase in expenditures on Parks and Recreation functions by County Government as well as extensive administrative action on behalf of Parks and Recreation staff and other County departments. While the foundation of the plan for guiding future action by the Board of County Commissioners is strong, we will need additional action by the Board, particularly in the field of land acquisition and facility development, to continue to fulfill the goals of the plan.

The Master Plan's levels of service goals, outlined in the form of park acreage and athletic field counts, were predicated on the consolidation of the City and County systems. However, because the City of Brevard has declined consolidation or a formal comprehensive partnership, it will not be possible to redesign the existing city parks to help meet those goals until agreement is reached between the two.

As a result, the County must pursue land acquisition to create additional park land and active recreation amenities to meet the goals of the plan. However, land acquisitions by local government can be difficult. The consultants who conducted the study and authored the plan concluded it would be difficult for additional land acquisition even under a city/county merger. As a result it may be necessary for the Board of County Commissioners, as they continue to pursue the master plan's implementation some amenities be prioritized over others, or it may even be necessary to select some amenities that the County will simply not offer. Future Parks and Recreation decisions will not be easy ones.

That said, the goals of the master plan are reasonable ones and were adjusted at their creation to take into account the immense natural resources of Transylvania County and the passive recreational opportunities that are a part of our national and state forests.

The plan ultimately recommends a well-run Parks and Recreation Department focused on activities that respond to unmet needs in our community (i.e. those that are not duplicating services offered by the private sector, public schools system or the charter school) and operates enough active recreation (athletic) fields that citizens have a reasonable access to uncrowded facilities. Staff believes these goals are still attainable within the framework of the Master Plan and the overarching strategy in spite of continuing challenges for local government and a lack of interlocal cooperation.

OPPORTUNITIES/STRENGTHS of the PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

Word is getting out and Parks and Recreation has a vocal base in our community: County Staff have been able to develop a basic marketing plan and our social media presence is growing and we are getting a lot of traction on advertising. This marketing plan has proved been able to meet our needs without relying on consultants to inform its development. The Parks and Recreation Director survey received almost 200 responses. Transylvania County's citizens continue to reach out to Parks and Recreation staff to ask about plan implementation, when it is going to happen, at what pace, et cetera. This is not a county department which has few stakeholders.

Elected officials support the plan: The Board of County Commissioners have so far been willing to support the plan – between the FY2018 budget and the FY2019 budget to be adopted, there will have been over \$500,000 worth of expenditures on the goals of the plan. The largest expenditures from there are funding on master plans (which will total over \$100k by next year) and \$190k on the HVAC system for the Activity Center. The Parks and Recreation reserved fund balance now has over \$800,000 available for use. We believe in FY2019 and FY2020 we will be able to bring forward concrete proposals for the usage of the reserved fund balance for Parks and Recreation.

The implementation goals for recreation have been easy. Our programs are experiencing steady and manageable growth, and with the recommended assumption of the day to day operations of Silvermont, we will have more room to do so. One of the master plan's proposals was to target senior activities as one of our core programs – this will allow us to tackle that goal head on. Similarly, the recommendations regarding co-location of the grounds maintenance staff and equipment with facility maintenance staff was reasonable and has created a quicker response time so far to parks-related work orders.

THREATS/WEAKNESSES of the PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

Multi-generational solutions remain a long term challenge: A comprehensive facility solution is still the construction of a multigenerational center, which faces hurdles due to land acquisition issues and financing. Without the land and acceptable financing method, we simply won't be able to implement this goal.

The City of Brevard is not a partner on comprehensive solutions. The Brevard City Council did not ultimately adopt the plan, which means they are not publicly committed to meeting the levels of service and goals outlined in the Master Plan, while there is a possibility we might be able to collaborate on a project by project basis, there is no formal framework for doing so which impedes comprehensive solutions.

The Blueways and Aquatics components of the plan don't float: Water-based recreational programs are, in county terms, effectively a victim of their success in getting Champion Pool operational. The transfer of Champion Pool to Rosman means that the County is effectively , and the struggle to add additional river access points means that creating additional Blueway sites is impossible unless individuals who previously indicated they are not interested in allowing the county to develop river access points change their mind.

It's Going To Get Cramped Or Maybe There Simply Isn't A Public Solution: Master Planning each park site will provide opportunities for phased scheduling that designs each park to meet the communities needs by relocating amenities to add room for others. That said, ultimately there is likely not enough room to meet all needs particularly with the inability to redesign County and City of Brevard facilities to increase amenities. The County Government may need to preemptively identify that there are needs or activities identified in the plan which it will not meet and formally acknowledge that as such so that the public has clear expectations.

Section 5.1 Vision and Mission

The Transylvania County Parks and Recreation Department's vision of its role in the community is as follows:

"To be the conservation, park and recreation leader of a vital, active, nature based community"

The mission statement for Transylvania County's Parks and Recreation Department as outlined in the master plan is as follows:

"Protect the region's natural heritage and provide quality recreation and parks facilities and programs that inspire a personal connection with the outdoors and health and wellness related activities"

Section 5.2 Recommended Vision for Park Land and Trails

- **Maintain and connect existing trails to neighborhoods, downtown and schools**

Transylvania County is not responsible for the development of trails within the City limits of Brevard, until the Brevard area trail system has reached the limits of the incorporated city, then the County can begin a process of developing greenways and trails that extend beyond the City of Brevard.

- **Maintain and upgrade existing park related facilities and amenities that support neighborhood housing values, economic development, community development and sports tourism**

The master planning process for our facilities is going to drive development and upgrades on existing facilities and parks.

- **Acquire additional park space for trail connectivity, youth sports fields and for an indoor community center to meet the level of service standards outlined in the Strategic Plan**

Staff continue to analyze the possibility of acquiring additional land both within City of Brevard limits as well as around the county for expanding recreational opportunities. That said, prevalent attitudes about property ownership are difficult. In FY17 and FY18 P&R staff failed to negotiate with property owners about adding additional river access points, and I personally was unable to convince a property owner to sell or allow development of a parcel of land smaller than a tenth of an acre adjacent to another park in the system.

- **Complete a network of open space corridors and trails in the City of Brevard and Transylvania County**

The City of Brevard uses its comprehensive plans to continue prioritizing and creating additional open space corridors within its corporate limits. Transylvania County is, through the Planning and Community Development Department, engaging with NCDOT to create a comprehensive bicycling plan which will inform the development of open space corridors and trails in the county.

- **Create destination parks, trails, waterways, waterfalls, and sports fields that connect the community to nature and active outdoor lifestyles**

Transylvania County Parks and Recreation is currently going through a multi-year project to redesign its existing parks through extensive master planning of each site in order to try to meet the levels of service goals outlined by the Master Plan.

The aforementioned bicycling plan will guide the development of trails and open space corridors to allow for further development of open corridors.

At this time, there is no movement possible on the blueways piece of the County's Parks and Recreation Master Plan, as repeated attempts to identify further river access points are dependent on local property owners' willingness to open their properties.

- **Establish and improve facility infrastructure design and maintenance standards to uphold the quality of the user experience and fiscal sustainability**

Parks and Recreation and County Operations/Maintenance are working closely to establish a comprehensive maintenance plan.

- **Develop design standards for park elements including sports fields, trails, benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, signage, lighting, parking requirements, ADA and safety requirements**

The County's Parks and Recreation Department is in the process of redesigning all of its facilities and will be developing recommendations for investments by the board along those lines. We have already completed a comprehensive review about ADA accessibility in our facilities and begun to invest heavily in completing those programs.

Section 5.3 Recommended Vision for Facilities

- **Update Champion pool and Franklin Park Pools to meet the needs of the county residents for learning to swim, competitive swim and family aquatic swim programs and activities. Develop and update partnership and lease agreements for facilities so they are fair and equitable over the next five years.**

Transylvania County has stepped away from the provision of aquatics facilities and thus cannot address these issues further. The transfer of Champion Park and Pool to Rosman allowed for grant funding to restore the facility, but it does mean that the County no longer operates any aquatics facilities.

- **Enhance and update playgrounds, loop trails, sports courts, and restrooms in neighborhood and community parks in the County to create a safe, clean and welcoming environment**

Transylvania County plans on enhancing the existing softball and soccerfields where possible, and staff have had preliminary conversations with Pisgah Forest Elementary staff about participating in a joint project to enhance the playground facilities there.

- **Update or replace existing and add new sports fields to support baseball, softball and soccer for local sports groups and for sports tourism in the County.**

Requires land acquisition and further development.

- **Develop a new multi-generational community center that includes spaces for gyms, fitness, aquatics, seniors and general community programs to serve people of all ages for the next 50 years**

County Administration has been working closely with the Transylvania Economic Alliance to move this proposal forward. At this time, given the difficulties inherent in purchasing property by local governments in North Carolina, particularly in the real estate market local to our community, the County Government continues to analyze the government's options when it comes to developing the large scale facility outlined in the Master Plan.

- **Update Silvermont Park that includes relocating the tennis and basketball courts, and restore the facility to serve community meetings and hospitality, including HVAC needs, while preserving the grounds as a destination park**

The Parks and Recreation Department is in the process of developing, in conjunction with the County's appointed Parks and Recreation Commission, a master plan document for the Board of County Commissioners, which will guide future renovations and developments on the site.

- **Add specialty parks and facilities such as a dog park, tennis complex, skate park, disc golf course, pickleball courts, aerial park, community gardens, and a special event space to meet the special group needs of the community**

The FY2019 budget proposal for Parks and Recreation includes some needed repairs to the tennis courts at Silvermont, a set of proposals for a set of pickleball courts at the Activity Center as well as beginning to implement the Silvermont Master Plan. The City of Brevard has taken the lead on developing an off-leash dog park adjacent to Transylvania Regional Hospital independent of the County.

- **Perform an accessibility inventory of the parks system in the ~~City and~~ County**

Transylvania County Parks and Recreation utilized DisAbility Partners to conduct an accessibility survey of its facilities in FY2018, has now addressed all of the level one improvements, and is moving on completing the others in FY2019 and FY2020. I am unaware of if such an assessment has been done of city facilities.

- **Update the existing Activity Center community recreation center with air conditioning, improved meeting room space and maintenance facilities**

The Board of County Commissioners authorized in FY2018 a plan to improve the Activity Center with an air conditioning system. County Administration implemented the plan to co-locate maintenance facilities with the rest of the County's maintenance operations on Public Safety Way. Staff have scheduled the activity center park master plan to be completed after all other sites

- **Consider helping to support the acquisition of Glen Cannon Golf Course as a recreation amenity to support the community and tourism needs in the County through a private partnership**

The Transylvania Economic Alliance has recommended economic incentives to assist with the development of the former Glen Cannon Country Club and Golf Course property, which the Board of County Commissioners approved in spring 2017.

- **Develop marketing and business plans for all major facilities to support the operational and capital needs of those facilities**

County Staff have currently developed their own marketing strategy, and are beginning to identify how to move forward on business plans after the facility planning stage of implementation. Once we move

past facility planning and into implementation of facility expansion, we will be able to update our existing maintenance plans to reflect those amenities.

Section 5.4 Recommended Vision for Programming

- **Consider the development of additional core programs in special events, health and wellness, outdoor adventure, aquatics and youth skill development**

County Recreation staff have identified eight core programs, as recommended by the Master Plan, which are youth basketball, youth flag football, youth volleyball, smart start sports, indoor fun play, Breakfast with Santa, summer camps and the adult summer basketball league.

Summer Camps, Indoor Fun Play, and Breakfast with Santa are the only programs you can consider as competing with others. There are other summer camps, pre-K programs, and the Twilight Tour in the county. The rest of the programs listed should be considered as meeting unmet needs in the county.

- **Allocate dollars toward marketing to increase program/park attendance and awareness of city and county recreation programs**

County staff have developed an advertising schedule and successfully implemented it with a multi-media approach, balancing paid advertising for county programs in both the traditional newspaper as well as social media.

- **Establish program standards for all programs provided for county residents, including cost recovery goals based on classification of programs as core essential, important and value-added**

County staff have identified the standard level of service they want to achieve with each program, and strive through professional development and coaching of volunteer staff to ensure that the County's recreational programs meet citizen expectations and provide value to all participants.

- **Increase recreation staff hours capacity in facility management, special events, youth and family programs, seniors and special needs participants**

The Board of County Commissioners have steadily increased hours available for part-time recreation assistants every year since FY2012 – in FY2019, they will consider a proposal to both expand part-time hours and also add an additional full-time staffer. The merging of the County's facility maintenance and grounds maintenance functions have increased the amount of manpower available across those functions.

- **Develop updated pricing, earned income and partnership policies for recreation service programs to support operational costs for recreation facilities and programs**

Developing cost recovery is currently on hold pending the further planning of recreational programs and recreation facilities.

- **Develop and identify more community indoor, multi-use recreational space with the school district, community college, Brevard College and private recreation suppliers**

Analysis of how to meet the community's recreational needs during the Master Planning process endorsed a comprehensive indoor/outdoor facility as the way to meet those needs, staff continue to analyze where to locate such a facility.

- **Consider a multi-sport complex in partnership with Hendersonville to serve both counties' recreation sports needs for sports tourism**

Staff have taken no action on this recommendation.

- **Develop a marketing plan, brand and communication strategy for Parks and Recreation in the County**

Staff have begun the process of developing an internal plan and communication strategy for the Parks and Recreation Department, however there are brand issues that do need to be addressed. The survey issued to the community regarding the Parks and Recreation Directorship gave some data that pointed to a broad lack of understanding about what services are actually provided by Transylvania County's government.

- **Form an association of Community Centers under the auspices of Transylvania County Government**

The Board of County Commissioners, in their FY2018 budget, approved \$50,000 for a grant program to help revitalize Transylvania County's community centers. Under the auspices of this program, county staff are appraising using the current set of approved community centers as staging areas for mobile delivery of county services, including recreation.

PROJECTS	MASTER PLAN	COUNTY SHARE	FY2018 and prior Expenditures	FY2019 Recommended
PARK AND TRAILS PLANNING				
Franklin Park	\$ 20,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
City Sports Complex	\$ 30,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Activity Center Park	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00		\$ 10,000.00
Hap Simpson Park	\$ 10,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
South Broad Park	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00		\$ 10,000.00
Rosman Community Park	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00		\$ 30,000.00
Island Ford Road River Access	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 7,500.00	\$ -	\$ -
Wilson Road River Access	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 7,500.00	\$ -	\$ -
Silvermont Park	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 75,000.00
ADA Evaluation of All Parks	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00	\$ -
County/City Greenway Master Plan	\$ 75,000.00	\$ 75,000.00	\$ -	\$ -
SUBTOTAL				
NEW PARKS				
Community Park / Sports Complex	\$ 8,000,000.00	\$ 8,000,000.00		
Clemson Plaza	\$ 274,469.00	\$ -		
Master Plan for Tannery Park	\$ 25,000.00	\$ -		
SUBTOTAL				
EXISTING PARK IMPROVEMENTS				
Champion Park Pool	\$ 1,100,000.00	\$ -	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00
County Parks Main Identification Signage	\$ 90,000.00	\$ 90,000.00	\$ 7,500.00	\$ -
Activity Center Recreation Center Improvements	\$ 200,000.00	\$ 170,000.00	\$ -	\$ -
Activity Center Gymnasium Air Conditioning	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 190,000.00	\$ -
Activity Center Park Fields and Concession Building Improvements	\$ 600,000.00	\$ 600,000.00		
Connestee Falls Park Parking Area Improvements	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	
SUBTOTAL				
FACILITIES				
Maintenance Building	\$ 300,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Multi-Generational Recreation Center/Neighborhood Park	\$ 19,000,000.00	\$ 19,000,000.00		
SUBTOTAL				

GREENWAY TRAILS									
Railroad Avenue - McLean Road to West Main		\$	392,504.00	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
West Main Street - South Oaklawn Avenue to English Hills		\$	370,336.00	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
English Hills to Rosman Highway		\$	691,120.00	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
Rosman Highway to Country Club Road/High School		\$	721,112.00	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
Music Center Greenway		\$	268,000.00	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
SUBTOTAL									
BLUEWAYS									
French Broad River Blueway		\$	75,000.00	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
SUBTOTAL									
TOTAL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN		\$	32,477,541.00	\$	28,170,000.00	\$	327,500.00	\$	175,000.00

THESE ARE PROJECTS AT CITY-OWNED/OPERATED FACILITIES

THESE ARE PROJECTS THAT ARE EFFECTIVELY COMPLETE

THESE ARE PROJECTS THAT REQUIRE ADDITIONAL COLLABORATION

PARKS AND RECREATION AMENITIES IN TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY

2017 Pop 33956

Outdoor Amenities		2018 Standard	County	Brevard	Rosman	Inventory	Needs
Picnic Shelters	1 site per	2500	3	3	0	6	8
Soccer/Multi-Purpose Fields	1 field per	4000	4	1	0	5	3
Youth Baseball Fields	1 field per	4000	0	5	0	5	3
Baseball Fields	1 field per	8000	1	1	0	2	2
Girl's Softball Fields	1 field per	4000	1	0	1	2	6
Adult Softball field	1 field per	18000	2	0	0	2	0
Basketball Courts	1 court per	4000	2	0	1	3	5
Tennis Courts	1 court per	4000	3	0	1	4	4
Playgrounds	1 site per	2500	3	2	1	6	8
Off-Leash Dog Park	1 site per	40000	0	0	0	0	1
Skateboard Area	1 site per	40000	0	0	0	0	1
Paved Trails	0.4 miles per	1000	0	5.5	0	5.5	8
Natural Surfaced Trails	0.2 miles per	1000	1.4	7	0	8.4	0
Outdoor Pool	1 site per	12000	0	1	1	2	1
*							
Parks							
Mini Parks	0.03 acres per	1000	0.1	0.28	0	0.38	0.64
Neighborhood Parks	1 acres per	1000	1.6	0.37	0	1.97	31.99
Community Parks	3 acres per	1000	70.66	29.2	3.97	99.86	2.01
Special Use Parks	1 acres per	1000	3.6	28.39	0	31.99	1.97
Greenways	0.5 acres per	1000	0	8.17	0	8.17	8.81
Indoor Amenities							
Gymnasium Space	2 per	33956	19225	1500	0	20725	47187

A. Parks and Recreation Master Plan Context

- ❑ The process to develop a joint city-county master plan began in 2014, when a joint effort began with the establishment of strategic planning task force between the City of Brevard and Transylvania County Board of Commissioners.
- ❑ This strategic planning task force oversaw a planning process conducted with the firm Barge, Wagonner, Sumner and Cannon, Inc at a total cost of \$103,000.
- ❑ The public input and leadership sessions that shaped this document occurred during the December 2015.
- ❑ The full formal document was presented before you on September 26th, 2016.

A. Parks and Recreation Master Plan Context

- ❑ In the winter of 2016 and following months in 2017, discussions with the Parks and Recreation task force broke down and the recommendation of consolidating the City and County facilities, planning and staff fell to the side.
- ❑ The two staff who most prominently led this effort have since parted ways from the City and County.
- ❑ One of the City Council officials who participated in the input process has also moved on.
- ❑ The Board of County Commissioners adopted parts 1 through 5.4 of the plan at their June 13th, 2017 meeting.

FY2013
\$15.85 per
capita

FY2017
\$26.47 per
capita

A. Where Are We Now?

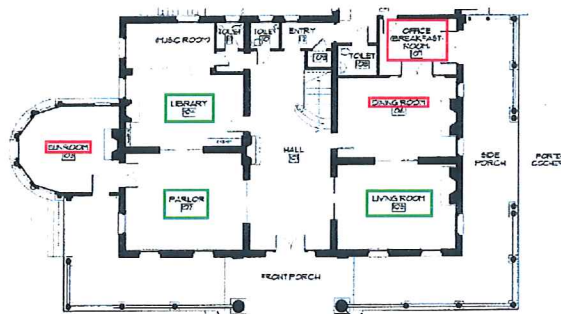
- ❑ County Administration and Parks and Recreation staff planned to begin implementation in FY2018.
- ❑ Highlights:
 - ❑ We completed a survey of all Parks and Recreation facilities to properly identify accessibility issues for individuals with disabilities to ensure ADA compliance.
 - ❑ We began the process of creating a master plan that will develop Silvermont Park in the spirit of the adopted plans' prescribed facility needs
 - ❑ Parks and Recreation has identified eight core recreation programs and has carefully evaluated whether or not its programs are duplicating existing privately-offered services or meeting unmet needs.

A. Recreation Improvements

- ❑ Staff have followed the recommendations of the plan and identified the eight core programs.
- ❑ With air conditioning at the Activity Center gymnasium, we've expanded our summer program offerings to meet a larger share of the need for summer activities for children.
- ❑ We've also developed and incorporated a proposal for a Rosman Summer Camp that we believe can meet the needs of the upper end of the county and made that a part of our annual budget.
- ❑ The Parks and Recreation Director Survey helped identify some potential gaps in our marketing and communications efforts (many individuals replied with concerns or thoughts about parkland we do not own, opinions programs we do not operate, etc)

A. Recreation Improvements II

- ❑ The biggest change coming to Parks and Recreation in FY2019 is the addition of day to day operations at Silvermont.
- ❑ We believe we can better coordinate services for senior citizens by operating this directly – linking the senior center more closely with our popular senior games, as well as better coordinate senior services across multiple sites.



A. Where do we go next?

- ❑ Given the lack of a comprehensive partnership with the City, and that the City's current focus is active recreation, many parts of the Master Plan as identified are simply not attainable for the county.
- ❑ Some serious challenges:
 - ❑ The Master Plan's recommendation was for a comprehensive not a piecemeal solution: the construction and operation of a multi-generational center to serve as the hub for active recreation fields as well as an indoor recreation space to serve all ages in Transylvania County
 - ❑ It assumed a City-County merger would allow for redesign of existing parks to meet community needs through more efficient and productive use of land. **This is no longer possible.**
 - ❑ Adding additional active recreation programming will require additional space.

Parks and Recreation Commission

- Transylvania County has a 9 member (all at-large) advisory board to assist with developing recommendations for Parks and Recreation facilities and services
- While there is a strong core group, frequent absenteeism and recruiting issues have created issues with keeping it functioning at a high level. (The County Commissioners had to consider appointments to the Parks and Recreation Commission 4 separate times in 2017)
- After careful deliberation, the PRC came to a recommendation that it be reduced in size by 2, from a 9 member board to a 7 member board.
 - 9 at-large members is large compared to the other advisory boards for the County
 - A board of 7 appears to be more sustainable
- The by-laws amendment attached to your agenda memo also includes an amendment allowing for staff to take minutes rather than requiring the PRC to take its own minutes.