

The Richlands Recreation Commission held a regular meeting at the Richlands Recreation Park on January 23, 2017 at 7:00PM with the following present:

Town Manager: Tim Taylor

Recreation Director: Fred Phillips

Richlands Town Council Members: Mary Ann Strong

Recreation Commission Members: Frances Meadows, Craig Earls, Ronnie Cordle, Tony Cordle, Joe McCall, LaRhonda Lindsey

Other Participants: Kevin Blankenship, George West, Jeff Hurst, Mike Bandy, Misty Bandy

Council Member Mary Ann Strong opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the Commission meeting.

Mary Ann Strong- It has been a while since this Commission has met on a regular basis and the Town would like to return to regularly scheduled meetings. For the first order of business, she advised the group that we should elect a Commission President, Vice-President and Secretary at minimum.

LaRhonda Lindsey- made a motion to for the Recreation Commission Membership to appoint Ronnie Cordle as President. Joe McCall seconded the motion. Mary Ann Strong asked for any comments. All in favor say Yes, all opposed say No. Motion carries 6/0.

LaRhonda Lindsey- made a motion to for the Recreation Commission Membership to appoint Tony Cordle as Vice-President. Joe McCall seconded the motion. Mary Ann Strong asked for any comments. All in favor say Yes, all opposed say No. Motion carries 6/0.

LaRhonda Lindsey – made a motion to for the Recreation Commission Membership to appoint Craig Earls as Secretary. Joe McCall seconded the motion. Mary Ann Strong asked for any comments. All in favor say Yes, all opposed say No. Motion carries 6/0.

Mary Ann Strong- We should keep regular meeting minutes per the Secretary and keep them on file.

Tim Taylor- After the meeting minutes are approved the Secretary will provide one copy to Fred Phillips for public request and a copy should be sent to Sue Whitt at the Town Hall to publish on the website.

Mary Ann Strong- I would like to request that the Recreation Commission have 2/3 members present as a quorum to conduct any official business. We can also develop by-laws if we have the need.

Tony Cordle – made a motion to for the Recreation Commission to only conduct official business if 2/3 members are present as an official quorum. LaRhonda Lindsey seconded the motion. Mary Ann Strong asked for any further comments. All in favor say Yes, all opposed say No. Motion carries 6/0.

Fred Phillips- for the Recreation Park Report we are doing a lot of great things here at the Recreation Park. This is the first full winter season that we have utilized the new facility with all the new items in the gym. We have completed the work on the new floor and installed the divider curtain so that the games can be played without a lot of whistle bleed-over. It really helps keep the focus of the games and the fans & parents seem to really like it. We also painted the entire gym and put up scoreboards to be used during the games. One of the big projects was to complete the work on the new roof. The entire roof was in disrepair and had to be complete before we could start the gym upgrades. Traffic, as you can see tonight, is up and overall participation in the youth basketball programs is up as well. We have done a great job in securing community service workers to help keep the place clean. The Recreation Park would like to continue the good work and provide membership options back to the community. Under the current condition of the bathrooms and gym, this will be difficult. We are working on Phase II of the project which is to move the current weight room to the bathrooms and switch them out. This will provide almost double the space so that we can put treadmills, more weights, equipment etc. This will help drive more residents to the Rec Park so that we can begin membership. We are looking at securing the money for the project in March, beginning the renovations in April and completing the renovations in May. We are looking at a potential Phase III project which will bring a small waterpark area outside of the existing pool (out towards the current dumpster location). So far, we have primarily used all outside funding to complete each phase of the work that has been completed thus far. We did this so that our residents can be proud of the facility and become invested in the community.

Tony Cordle- congratulated and thanked Fred for his hard work and dedication to making this place better for the community. We all agree that this work has not gone unnoticed in the community and we all are very appreciative.

Fred Phillips- One of the challenges that we have is parking. As you can see tonight we sometimes struggle with the parking of everyone for soccer and basketball. It is a good problem to have, but it is a problem that will need to be addressed. We have talked about looking into the feasibility of putting a new road along the top of the Recreation Park (above the one there now) and building stairs to come down to the building.

Ronnie Cordle- I will talk with Brannon Breeding about possible donations of equipment and other resources to see if he can help us.

Fred Phillips- For the Phase II of the project we have talked to the building inspector and we are going to start on the weight room first, then bathrooms. We currently make between \$600-\$800 for members using the gym.

Tim Taylor- The Recreation Park will never be in a position to “make” money. However, membership will help offset costs. The Town and Council want to support this group as much as possible. We have good enthusiasm right now for our programs and we want to help support continue to make the changes needed and the enthusiasm going. This Commission needs to be structured so that we have merit with the citizens. Kevin Blankenship is assigned to look at the feasibility of using solar panels to offset energy costs. That is one of our main expenses here is the power. We are also looking at if we can get fiber to the Recreation Park so that we can offer WIFI for visitors and members. George West will be looking at Phase II for the build-out.

George West- We looked at all the walls that need to be moved and the good news is that they are non-weight bearing walls. Sketches were done for the layouts of the rooms. Overall, it will not look to difficult to do. However, moving the drains will be the hardest part of the work. We think the work will take 1.5 months overall for the entire phase.

Tim Taylor- The town will be supplying the labor.

Fred Phillips- I will see if we can get the detainees or community service workers to assist as well.

Kevin Blankenship- We are looking into solar panels for the Recreation Park to help offset the energy costs. We think that we can place them on the roof, or possibly on the hill to get maximum exposure. To pay for these, we are looking into several grants.

Tim Taylor- We are part of the team and we want to help in any way we can. We are glad to see this Commission come together to and this looks like a good, energetic group.

Jeff Hurst- Thank you for inviting Mike, Misty and myself to speak to the Recreation Commission on behalf of the Clinch River Soccer Association (CRSA.) The packet you have includes our vision for what we would like the soccer field to be. When you travel to outside locations you see a lot of top-notch facilities and we would like to have that for our town as well. We are looking at beginning a fund-raising campaign to raise money to build a field that will have artificial turf to be built in the current location where soccer is played now. We want the field on town property and to be funded through CRSA. We would like to explore options for leasing the land to build on from the town. For example, \$1 per year for 30 years (or 10 years), depending on how the agreement can work. Once built, we would have interested parties use a usage request form and CRSA would handle usage to the facility. Right now we are talking to Lighthouse Engineering services to review the site for storm water and drain management, flood management, etc. CRSA is in the beginning stages of getting quotes for turn-key facilities as well as parting out different components.

Tim Taylor- We may have a difficult time getting approval for a 30 year lease. 10 years maybe easier to get.

Tony Cordle – made a motion to for the Recreation Commission to approve discussing the project with the Richlands Town Council at the next scheduled meeting. LaRhonda Lindsey seconded the motion. Mary Ann Strong asked for any further comments. All in favor say Yes, all opposed say No. Motion carries 6/0.

Jeff Hurst- One of the challenges that we have is with a light pole that is in the middle of the playing area. We would like to get this pole moved. For parking, this will also help because we will push the fields more towards where the softball field is, which will free up more parking areas. We have about 250 kids in the league, so parking can be a challenge. The good thing is that the existing lights will help offset the project costs. They can be reused for this complex. The goal is when finished to have spring/fall seasons and hold tournaments. This will bring in a lot of business to the Town.

Mary Ann Strong- What kind of timeline are we looking at with this project?

Jeff Hurst- Depends on money and how fast we can raise large amount of money we need.

Tim Taylor- We need to make sure that the little things don't come back to bite us. We need the Town Attorney to look the property and see if we will have any obstacles, etc. to be worked out as far as a lease. Also, some grant money that is previously used prevents the town from charging to events. We need to look into that as well if you plan on charging events.

Jeff Hurst- We do plan on charging for tournaments. Also, in order to secure funding a lot of foundations require that you have your location agreement in place. It is a chicken/egg situation, but that will need to be worked out, such as a lease.

Tim Taylor- What options are we looking at for the softball field?

Group- discussed and we do not want the field to hold up the project if we have the money to proceed with the project. No motion presented.

Mary Ann Strong- Ronnie Cordle and Jeff Hurst should present to the Town Council on February 14th.

Jeff Hurst- As far as the lights, we do need to get that moved anyways because that is an existing issue.

Kevin Blankenship- The pole has some maintenance and safety issues now that we need to address. We need to move and upgrade it to ensure safety.

Mary Ann Strong- Do we want night meetings? Group- Everyone concurred that night meetings work for them.

Ronnie Cordle- I will get with everyone and see when we can meet next month. We will probably need to meet around the week of the 20th.

Craig Earls- We are having an issue at the Williams Field Complex with people letting the dogs go into the field and run around without a leash. The nice fenced in area allows people to let them run lose. He suggested that we look into getting a dog area so that they can use that instead of fields.

Tim Taylor- We can look into it, but they should not have dogs off the lease anyways based on the existing rules. If you see someone with a dog not on a lease, call the police. We will also put on the information channel that you cannot let dogs go loose in the fields.

Craig Earls- On the Sr. League field at Williams Field Complex we are getting a lot of water runoff from the road into a ditch area beside the field. That ditch is full of mud and cannot shed water. Can we get that cleaned out?

Tim Taylor- Yes, we are looking at that already for another issue and we will clean that out.

Craig Earls- As many of you know, Joe Honto passed away this last year and Richlands Little League would like to honor him for is 40+ years of service to the league. Craig requested feedback on an option to name the complex at Flanary Field/Mary Ann Strong Field to be the Joe Honto Complex. We also would like to know if the fields at Williams can be named.

Group- Many on the commission felt that it may complicate the name structure of the field and be hard to communicate it.

Ronnie Cordle- Can we have a museum at the police station for Bill Ascue's items and maybe name it for Joe?

Mary Ann Strong- I think the fields at Williams field are named as part of the agreement when the town took the property from the Williams family. One option that I think would be good is to create a Hall of Fame and have each of the deserving members like Joe Honto, Lewis Bales, etc. to have a memorial bust.

No action was taken - Meeting adjourned.

Ronnie Cordle, President Rec Park Commission