

MINUTES

GRAHAM CREEK NATURE PRESERVE ADVISORY BOARD

407 E. LAUREL AVENUE

FOLEY, ALABAMA

CONFERENCE ROOM

MARCH 5, 2015

5:30 P.M.

MEETING

Call to Order/Roll Call

Chairman Zana Price called the Board meeting to order at 5:34 p.m. Board members present: Tim Closson, Greg Knight, Homer Singleton, and Chad Watkins. Absent: Tommy Patterson and Phillip Hinesley who were out of town. Others present: Leslie Gahagan, Vickey Southern, and Jacqueline Trimble.

MINUTES

Approve Minutes of January 8, 2015

Mr. Watkins made a motion to approve the Minutes and Mr. Knight seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Discuss Columbia Southern's request to host a 5K Bootlegger Race on November 13, 2015

Mrs. Gahagan reported Columbia Southern has requested the use of Graham Creek Nature Preserve to hold a 5K Bootlegger Race on November 13, 2015. They want the event to be held at night with the participants wearing headlamps or carry flashlights. They will use this race as a fund raiser. Participants will be from age 12 and up and at the end of the race alcohol will be served to those that are old enough to drink. Mrs. Gahagan pointed out that this event does not meet the criteria set out in the proposed Master Plan but since it has not yet been adopted the Board will need to determine whether or not to approve the event.

She expressed her concerns about the unimproved trails, creek crossings, wildlife and many hazards that would pose as a liability. This is the third time that they have come to Mrs. Gahagan. The first time was to hold a color run and then they came back with an inflatable event. She turned them down for both of these events.

They have held other runs at Oak Mountain and their trails are a little bit more improved. Chairman Price reported they did a night run at the Wharf using the glow sticks but they ran on concrete.

Mrs. Gahagan reported they have been working very hard at doing a Haunted Forrest in October but there are no working lights and they are undecided on if it will be a walking trail or hay ride. Mr. Singleton expressed his concerns about more than one person getting hurt at a night time event. Mr. Knight asked if they had ever been to the Preserve at night because once they see it at night they might change their minds. He understands why we would not approve the event but they might need to have the opportunity to evaluate the Preserve to make sure this venue is suitable for their event. This event also falls during the busiest months and it falls at the same time as the Graham Creek Shootout. She prefers to keep the disc golf tournament versus a night race with drinkers.

Some of the concerns that were mentioned by the Board members are as follows:

- 1) The trails are not as defined as the trails they have used at Oak Mountain;
- 2) They will have to sign a release and hold an insurance policy;
- 3) Not sure if the headlamps will be bright enough as the trails are not lighted and it is very dark;
- 4) Safety issues running on improperly lighted trails;
- 5) There are no markers that would illuminate the trails and the direction the participants should go; and
- 6) A night run does not meet the criteria set out in the proposed Master Plan that will be reviewed and possibly adopted during tonight's meeting.

Ms. Trimble reported that just logistically the way they have to mark a 5K course just for a daytime race is difficult enough and they don't have the funds to get the workers to be visible at night. She does run a lot but she won't go at dusk.

Chairman Price asked for a motion on this item.

Mr. Singleton made a motion to disapprove the concept of this race because once the proposed Master Plan is adopted it would not meet the criteria in the Plan. Mr. Knight seconded the motion and the vote passed unanimously.

Mr. Watkins asked Mrs. Gahagan to convey that the Board would love to have Columbia Southern participate at GCNP, they are a great group of people and to ask them to resubmit something that would meet the criteria.

Discuss YMCA's "Y Get Dirty" Event – March 21, 2015

Mrs. Gahagan reported this will be the third year for their race and she has not been given an update from the "Y". The races are sponsored by both the Foley and Daphne "Y" as a fundraiser but as of today there have only been 20 people registered. One race is a 5K family run and the other is a 4.5 mile competitive run. They usually put in two obstacles for the race. This year one is a balance beam and the other is a 7' tire crawl but so far that has not transpired. There are four or five obstacles in the open fields that can be used

by people who want to train. At the end of the races they have food, drinks, a band and it is over by noon or 1:00 p.m. The Council did approve them holding this event at no charge. The City will follow the race up with an Easter Egg Hunt for the children from 2:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m.

Discuss Earth Day Scramble and Earth Day Events – April 18, 2015

Mrs. Gahagan reported she and Ms. Trimble have been working on the Earth Day Scramble and the events. The Scramble will be like the “Amazing Race” where there will be three people to a team. They will have 20 challenges, 18 of which must be completed, and must be the first of three teams to cross the finish line in order to receive a team prize. Obstacles might include climbing a wall or throwing a disc.

After the race there will be environmental clubs do demonstrations, acoustic music, puppet shows and children’s activities. The most teams that can register are 50. They will have T-Shirts and Swags (cups that change colors). Lemonade will be served.

As a reminder the Dueling Doubles disc golf tournament will be held this Saturday.

OLD BUSINESS

Review and Discuss Master Plan

Mrs. Gahagan reported she presented a preview of the Master Plan to the Council at their last meeting. She further reported the Board needs to review the Master Plan prior to adopting it or making a recommendation to Council to adopt the Master Plan.

Mr. Singleton reported he still has an aversion to the paved road coming down the area where it turns and crosses the creek branch. This would be coming from Philomene Holmes Blvd. to go back up. Mrs. Gahagan reported that the Corp of Engineers said we have to have it. Mr. Singleton was concerned that it would divert some of the storm water flow and put a channel into the place where they have the biggest problem already, which is crossing the branch. Mrs. Gahagan reported that she met two weeks ago with the Corp on the road and they looked at the whole modified plan through there where the Faust’s filled it years ago and determined the pipe is undersized. The Corp wanted it opened up for more flow and not channelize it. They are looking at two box culverts 4’x8’ wide with a natural bottom so they will actually sink the box culvert into the ground and have 12” of natural ground at the bottom. They will span where the existing pipe is located and the other would be north of it. Then they will put two to three additional concrete culverts north of that to connect hydro logically the upstream and downstream so there is no longer a channelized effect. It will be more of an open system so that it will re-braid itself.

Mr. Watkins reported there is a better system than the box culverts. It is three sided. This system has been used in Orange Beach on a maritime project where they are putting a paved road through a wetland. It is sort of a buttressed arch pipe but doesn't have a bottom on it. This will give full infiltration otherwise you end up with a tray of crud that won't work. It isn't cheaper but it is better.

Mrs. Gahagan reported there won't be any ditches and to the south where the cattle gate is located the road will go down and then curve towards the cattle gate. In the curve they will intercept it in a bio-retention swale area to capture it prior to the road crossing that wetland creek area. They want to capture everything prior to it getting to the wetland area. Mr. Singleton stated he was concerned about the crossing going back to the west to Philomene Holmes Avenue. Mrs. Gahagan reported the ditches start where you get into the wooded areas. There will be a culvert cross drain where there are three spots that are currently mud holes and it is not that there is a lot of flow it just when it rains it just sits. As far as the material of the road it will be up to the Council to decide due to the costs.

There was a note regarding an additional disc golf course. Mrs. Gahagan will be coming back in April to discuss an exact location. She reported it will be changing it from "B" where the Mountain Bikers are accessing at Philomene Holmes Blvd., which would be the start of the course and go due south to the open field and then there will be plenty of room in that field for a disc golf course and it would put people on the southern side of the park. EMC is working with the Mountain Biking group to put in a crossing where the creek is located and try to do a very nice footbridge.

Mrs. Gahagan reported she asked Kathy to move the ropes course between the two creeks. There is a black dot where Graham Creek forks and use the bottom land to access it off of the curve of the road so that it could be accessed by the open field and upland area.

Mrs. Gahagan reported that she applied for an ADCNR grant for the ADA/Senior Trail. The trail on the upland area colored in tan would be a wood carpet material and once you get to the creek crossing there will have to be a small boardwalk type bridge to get across the creek and then the trail will loop back over. The boardwalks will be in the woods and the wood carpet in the upland areas. She won't hear back about the grant until approximately August and then the money won't be available until October.

Mr. Watkins asked if they could take out the black leader lines on page 8 and have the items set up like bubble lines like they are on page 7 prior to sending out the final Master Plan. Mrs. Gahagan reported she would let them know.

Review and Discuss Implementation Plan

Mrs. Gahagan reviewed the Implementation Plan and asked the Board for any comments. She reported that she would not apply for the LWCF grants (through ADECA) because they are in perpetuity. The City did one grant for the restrooms in John B. Foley Park and when a hurricane blew down the sign the City was cited for being non-compliant with the grant. The Recreational Trails Project (RTP) grants will be applied for by the City. The ADA/Senior Trail is part of the ADCNR (CZM) Coastal Zone Management grant and the City has benefitted from this type of grant in the past for the canoe/kayak launch, outdoor classroom, etc. They aren't as competitive as other grants.

Mrs. Gahagan reported the Park really needed some more pavilions as she is turning people away and she will be asking the Council for two more. The City spent approximately \$500,000 for the property and the reason was to utilize the aquifers. Water wells will be installed in the park. Riviera will not be using them but Orange Beach will be using them as we trade out their aquifers closer to Bon Secour's river watershed. They will be testing three wells. One is on the extreme northeast corner next to the CenturyLink pedestal and the footprint is approximately 50x50 and won't mess with the disc golf course and they will put some type of fencing and landscaping around it to hide it. The other one is where you come in off Philomene Holmes Blvd. just south of the parking lot. They think both wells will be prime sites. They are non-invasive, small, cinder block buildings with a generator, underground power to it and a privacy fence. The third location will probably be where the mountain bike course comes in near Russian Road near utilities and if that doesn't work then the southern field where the new disc golf course would go in one of the corners of the property. They have to have three wells and wherever they put the wells in they have to have a conduit to get it back to the Beach Express to get down to Orange Beach. There is currently a water tower nearby and there won't be any tall features. The water is really good and it is very hard to find water that isn't high in iron or radiation. They are very excited and she has been working with the Hydro-geologist has been working with her to find the actual locations.

A team from Auburn University will be coming down to look for the endangered "lavender crawfish" they believe live in the pitcher plant bogs of Graham Creek Nature Preserve. They believe it has a huge population and these are only found in pitcher plant bogs.

Mr. Watkins made a motion to approve the Master and Implementation Plans as set forth in the draft resolution understanding the Implementation Plan will change periodically. Mr. Closson seconded the motion and the vote passed unanimously.

Consider resolution approving recommendation to Council to locate a championship disc golf course

Because there are two members absent this item is being carried over until the April meeting.

REMINDERS

The next meeting will be April 2, 2015

Mrs. Gahagan reported during the April meeting the Board will be discussing: 1) the location of the championship disc golf course and will need to finalize the location; 2) discuss rental fees for the pavilions and interpretive center; and 3) Friends of the Graham Creek Nature Preserve (non-profit organization) will be in attendance to discuss their fundraising efforts for items the Preserve needs.

There will be plenty of time to adopt rental fees as these won't go into effect until October 1, 2015 for the new fiscal year.

Update on the Interpretive Center: Next week they will have a pre-bid meeting for the interpretive center; bids will go out next week and will be due March 26, and construction starts April with the Center being completed the end of November.

Chairman Price thanked Mr. Patterson for filling in for her during her absences as it was very much appreciated. She also thanked the Board for all their contributions.

VISITOR COMMENTS: There are none to report.

ADJOURN

Hearing no further comments Mr. Watkins made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Knight seconded the motion and the vote passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:34 p.m.

/s/Victoria Southern, CMC
Recording Secretary