

PARKS AND REC ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

SPECIAL MEETING CALLED BY MARK DENNISON, CARLA MANNO, JENNY TAYLOR, AND AMANDA BURNS AS ALLOWED BY THE BYLAWS

JULY 31, 2025

Present: Ned Michie, Tina LaRoche, Amanda Burns, Mark Dennison, Jenny Taylor, Jeffrey Fracher, Carla Manno, Patrick Healy

Absent: Kent Merritt, Hosea Mitchell, Adan Courville, Jessica Jackson

City: Riaan Anthony, Rachel Smith, Katie Lockhart, Ashley Reynolds Marshall

1. **Call Meeting to Order** Ned Michie
2. **Roll Call** Ned Michie
3. **Any Additions/Revisions to Agenda** Ned Michie
 - None
4. **Approval of Agenda** Ned Michie
 - Board votes to approve amended bylaw agenda
5. **Public Comments** Ned Michie

Tanisha Hudson

 - Expresses concern about the Charlottesville Parks Foundation.
 - Questions oversight of how money would be spent.
 - Concerned about equitable distribution across all parks.
 - Expressed concern of potential conflict of interest given that some Advisory Board members also serve on the Foundation.
 - Emphasized that historically underserved parks like Washington, Tonsler, and Forest Hill have seen amenities removed while other parks received improvements.
 - Urged investment in people and youth programs, not just physical amenities.

Jackie Tekken

- Echoed previous speakers concerns.
 - Questioned the relationship between the Foundation and the Board.
 - Expressed concern about public input in decision making.
 - Wondered how the Foundation would align with different community goals.
6. **Board Response to Public Comment**
 - **Amanda B.-** acknowledged similar concerns and noted this meeting was called to address concerns.

- **Carla M.** - raised concerns about potential conflicts of interest, noting that the Chair was running a meeting about a Foundation that he is involved with.
- **Mark D.** - acknowledged concerns and noted reason for meeting was to get more information about Parks Foundation.
- **Jeffrey F.** - mentioned that while he had informally referenced the Foundation in previous meetings, he acknowledges that he could have done a better job communicating about it.
- **Carla M.** motions to review bylaws to address situations where the Chair may have a potential conflict of interest when leading related agenda items.
- **Amanda B.** seconds motion
- Motion passes
- **Jenny T.** motions to have Riaan Anthony run the meeting during the Foundation presentation to ensure neutrality.
- **Patrick H.** seconds motion
- Motion passes

7. **New Business:**

A. Presentation on Park Foundation Concept and Intended Relationship with Advisory Board and Parks & Recreational Department

- **Jeffrey F.** - Parks Foundation was conceived in summer of 2023 in response to inflationary pressures affecting parks projects.
- Foundation is a private nonprofit organization with the sole purpose of raising funds to supplement the city's park budget.
- Detailed Foundation's formation process, including recruiting Board members with relevant experience.
- Emphasized Foundation is independent from the city and the Advisory Board, with a memorandum of agreement (MOA) still being finalized with the city's attorney's office.
- MOA would establish that the Foundation could express preferences but final authority on spending would rest with the Parks department.
- Foundation funding would not replace city budget allocations.
- Spoke with an attorney at Virginia ethics council who said there was no conflict of interest (despite any appearance) given the Board is only advisory and is not deciding which projects are funded.
- Foundation members have no financial interest in any project.
- Spoke with an attorney in the state's FOIA office, who stated that as long as the Foundation is discussing CPF business at our meetings and not city parks business, no public meeting requirement is implicated.

- If funding projects are discussed, then no more than 2 Advisory board members can be in the room.
- Spoke with Vaden Hunt and Sau Chan at the city attorney's office about MOA who also agreed with the prior statement.
- **Ned M.-** clarified that Advisory Board has always been advisory in nature but previously had more influence on department decisions.
- Explained that in 2020, City Council changed the board from a council-appointed committee to a departmental committee, but this didn't change its advisory role.
- Emphasized the board's purpose is to be the public voice giving feedback to the department.

B. Discussion of Opportunities/Framework for Collaboration between the Parks Foundation, Advisory Board, and Parks & Recreation Department

- **Amanda B.-** noted the Foundation website was already live with a donation button despite the MOA not being finalized.
- Questions how donor-restricted funds would be handled and expressed concern.
- Questions when Advisory Board members were approached to join the Foundation.
- **Jeffrey F.-** clarifies official launch of Foundation where they will begin officially fundraising will hopefully occur in the fall.
- **Carla M.-** notes lack of early communication to the Advisory Board.
- Potential conflicts of interest due to overlapping membership.
- Absence of shared MOA.
- Referenced 2020 decision that removed Board's governing powers, stating this limited the Board's ability to represent community voices.
- Raised questions about the decision-making timeline, documentation, and adherence to public meeting requirements.
- **Mark D.-** states the perception of conflict of interest is itself a conflict of interest.
- Expresses shock that Foundation wasn't discussed openly with the full Board earlier.
- Expresses concern that the public will think that they are speaking for the Advisory Board due to there being 4 Board members on the Foundation board.
- **Jenny T.-** feels transparency is the biggest issue with the Foundation.
- **Amanda B.-** mentions that there is a discussion about whether a School Board member needs to sit on this Board.

- **Patrick H.**- acknowledged value of input from those with expertise but emphasized that voting on matters where there could be conflicts of interest is inappropriate.
- Suggested that individuals should not serve simultaneously on both the Advisory Board and the Foundation.
- Concerned that donors could restrict funds in ways that conflict with community needs.

COMMENTS FROM ONE OR MORE BOARD MEMBERS

- Made comparisons to other boards to illustrate how community might perceive conflicts.
- Expressed concerns that the Foundation was not clearly separated from Advisory Board work, creating potential mistrust.
- Emphasized appearances are as important as actual transparency.
- Propose that members choose to either serve on the Advisory Board or the Foundation, but not both.
- Asked for clearer communication and regular updates between the Foundation and the Advisory Board.
- Wants to establish a mechanism for checks and balances through the Advisory Board and city Master Plan.
- **Jeffrey F.**- announces intent to resign from the Advisory Board to focus on the Foundation and avoid perceived conflicts.
- Will ask other Board members to make a decision of which Board they want to serve on.
- **Ned M.**- expressed discouragement about lack of trust.
- Listed a large number of non-profits and organizations that have and are working successfully with and to the benefit of the City and the Parks & Recreation department.
- Parks Foundation that is being formed sees itself as joining the group.
- **Ashley Reynolds Marshall**- provided context about the MOA process, explaining that it was still under review by city's legal department.
- Assured Board that the City Attorney and City Manager would ensure the agreement protects the city's interests.
- Explained final authority would rest with the Parks department and ultimately City Council.

- Acknowledged budget constraints that make supplemental funding valuable but emphasized Foundation would not have unlimited authority to determine projects.
- Encouraged Board members to use their advisory role effectively by providing input to the department, City Manager, and City Council.

8. Director's Report

Riaan Anthony

- None

9. Public Comments

Jackie Tekken

- Expressed concerns about the influence and access of a private foundation working with Parks and Rec.
- Noted that unlike smaller community organizations, the Foundation already holds advantages such as established relationships, representation on the Board, and greater access to time and attention.
- Emphasized that this dynamic isn't a level playing field and that staff time spent partnering with the Foundation comes at the expense of other groups.
- Cautioned that inequities in resource distribution have historically existed and must be considered in shaping future relationships.

10. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 7:45pm

