



Town of Mars Hill

MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN

MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING

Mars Hill Town Hall – Conference Room

April 1, 2019 at 6:00 p.m.

PUBLIC MEETING

The Town of Mars Hill Mayor and Board of Aldermen met in special session on Monday, April 1, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in the Mars Hill Town Hall. The purpose was to hold a public meeting to collect comments and input from the general public and those interested parties regarding the Mars Hill Smith Farm Park project and a grant application by the Town to the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund for funding to develop and make improvements to said park.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor John Chandler; Aldermen Nicholas (Nick) Honeycutt, Stuart Jolley, and Robert W. (Bob) Zink

Alderman Larry Davis was absent.

STAFF PRESENT: Nathan R. Bennett, Town Manager
Jamie Stokes, Town Attorney

OTHERS PRESENT: Ivey Pearson, Becca Heskamp, Jim Goode, Lee Hoffman, Diane VanHelden, Genevieve Burda, Larry Burda, Mark Holland, Ethan Dean Ball, Roger Howell, Fredrick Ray, Jacqueline Ray, Ryan W. Bell, Laura Boggess, Bill Elsted, Richard Molland, Bill Downey, Oliver Henry, Taylor Barnhill, Gail Kage, Robert Warner, Ronnie Cutshall, Randal Pflieger, John Smith, Bruce Anderson, other members of the general public

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor John Chandler. Mayor Chandler welcomed those in attendance and expressed his and the Board's appreciation for the good attendance for this public

meeting to receive input and comments from the public regarding the Mars Hill Smith Farm Park project and the Town's proposed application to the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

Mars Hill Smith Farm Park Project and PARTF Application Presentation

Nathan R. Bennett, Town Manager

Mayor Chandler then recognized Town Manager Nathan Bennett to provide a presentation regarding the Mars Hill Smith Farm Park Project and the grant application proposal to the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) for project development funding. Mr. Bennett advised that he has worked very closely with the Land of Sky Regional Council in developing a project supported by planning and public engagement. Mr. Bennett provided a detailed history of this park project and the long-held concept and desire of connecting the Town of Mars Hill through open-space, greenways and parks with the Bailey Mountain, the prominent, picturesque and historical mountain overlooking the Town. The Town acquired the 86.71-acre Smith Farm property located in the northwest corner of Town in early 2019 through the support of Clean Water for North Carolina. The property has creek access, historic barns, pastureland, homestead, and steep mountain terrain providing unlimited potential to promote, protect, preserve and educate the public about this valuable cultural and recreational resource.

Mr. Bennett provided the Board and the public a summary of the Town's masterplan for the Mars Hill Smith Farm Park. Copies of the masterplan document were provided to those present and advised that the plan is available on the Town's website: www.townofmarshill.org under the "Recreation" section. Key concepts have emerged as community priorities during the public engagement process and have been recognized and incorporated into this park planning initiative. Those concepts include the following: (1.) Strategic stewardship of the land; (2.) Restore and grow focuses to improve the health, biodiversity and resilience of the park ecology and waterways; (3) Educate and engage opportunities to learn from the landscape and cultural heritage of the community; (4.) Access to these resources through the expansion of trails and greenways both to the site and on the site for people of all physical abilities; and (5.) Gather people together through picnic areas, scenic overlooks, and outdoor venue for larger events. Mr. Bennett stated that public involvement in the development of the project is key to its success. The Town has engaged the public using a variety of tools including a public survey which was conducted in the fall of 2018 both by paper survey and an online survey tool. A public open house was held at Town Hall where over 30 people participated in the activities to provide input on what kinds of activities were of interest and those that were not of interest. Additionally, Town staff and consultants have conducted targeted outreach to Mars Hill University, the Richard L. Hoffman Foundation, Madison County Parks and Recreation Department, the Muddy Sneakers group, and various other community groups. Mr. Bennett advised that the recreational needs assessment revealed that the community were most supportive of additional trails and picnic areas. Significant numbers of

people were also interested in common areas, an outdoor venue, playgrounds, outdoor fitness equipment and heritage farming.

Mr. Bennett then moved to the specific development items requested in the proposed PARTF grant application. This first PARTF application is a request of \$259,780 in state funds which will be matched with a land acquisition through a donation from the Richard L. Hoffman Foundation valued at \$259,780. This phase is to develop the "Farm Center" and will include the following elements: 1,980 feet of new trails to Bailey Mountain, 400 feet of ADA trails, House renovation for Discovery Center and ADA restrooms, barn renovations for community gathering space, outdoor venue development, road improvements, 10,000 square feet parking area, picnic areas, and acquisition of the 100 acres of Bailey Mountain Park. There will be additional landscaping, interpretative signage, and infrastructure improvements to the property. Mr. Bennett thanked the Town of Mars Hill Parks and Recreation Committee members who have contributed a lot of volunteer time attending meetings, reviewing plans, and providing guidance to the staff in this process. Mr. Bennett also thanked Sara Nichols, Regional Planner with Land of Sky Regional Council, for all her hard work drafting masterplans, the PARTF grant application and all the supporting documents that allowed the Town to put forward a competitive funding application.

Discussion and Public Comments

Upon hearing the presentation from Mr. Bennett, Mayor Chandler then opened the floor for public comments and discussion from the public.

Ryan Bell was the first to speak and offer comments on the project. Mr. Bell offered his support for this project and his appreciation to the Town for pursuing this project for our community. He advised Parks and Recreation committee and others have worked very hard on this project and believes it will provide a great resource to the community.

Laura Boggess spoke and offered recognition to the Hoffman Foundation for their vision in protecting the Bailey Mountain for future generations and their partnership with the Town has allowed this project to happen for this community. She also asked if funding from PARTF was just one time or could another application be made in the future. Mr. Bennett advised her that applications can be made by entities every year, but only one grant can be active at any given time. Grantees have up to 3 years to complete their project once grant award documents are in place. Mr. Bennett advised her that the Town will be able to submit additional PARTF applications and other funders going forward now that a lot of preliminary documents and plans have been developed and in place.

Lee Hoffman spoke and recognized a number of folks present who are board members of the Richard L. Hoffman Foundation. The Hoffman Foundation has been instrumental in preservation of Bailey Mountain for the use of the community. Mr. Hoffman thanked the Board and the Town of Mars Hill

for stepping up financially to support this project which allowed other financial resources to be brought to bear in securing funding to purchase these properties. Mr. Hoffman stated he was grateful that the Board had the vision to see the long-term value of this project. Mr. Hoffman stated that the Foundation purchased the adjoining property many years ago and that through this donation process the value of the 100-acre Bailey Mountain property can be maximized and leveraged to match this grant application allowing so much more work to be done to improve this property for future generations. He also noted important to the success of the project were the 30 to 40 individuals who worked tirelessly to raise private funds to assist with the project. Mr. Hoffman stated this project will provide the community a spectacular outdoor recreation venue and that this is a project that the entire community is excited about and he wanted the Board to be sure they knew that he and the community appreciated all they have done in this effort. He had a question about people using the property now, "is it alright for it to be used in that way?" Alderman Zink advised that it would be ok for folks to use the property but remain out of the buildings and obey warning signage from a liability standpoint. There was also question about putting up trail signage to direct people around the property.

Unknown Male Speaker. He states he supports the project and is grateful for the work of the Hoffman Foundation and the Town for this vision. He advised that the presentation was very good and informative but wondered if the masterplan documents were available for public view. Mr. Bennett advised that there are several hard copies available in the meeting room now and that links to the plans are on the Town's website.

John Smith states he is a neighbor of the park property. He inquired about lighting on the property. He advised that the property is pristine, and he likes the dark nights. He is somewhat concerned about development of the property and that lighting will detract from the natural appearance of the area. Mr. Bennett advised that development of the property will be limited to trails and other passive recreation elements, and in fact the conditions of the purchase of the property are required to maintain its natural state. Mr. Bennett advised that every effort will be made to use downward angled lighting, or "Dark Sky" approved lighting, as an effort to limit light pollution in and around the park.

Unknown Female. Asked about the timeframe for this process. She asked if the application has been submitted and how fast the work can begin if awarded a grant. Mr. Bennett advised her that the timeframe for the PARTF grant process is that the completed application is due on May 1, 2019. Once submitted the state officials will review the applications that are received statewide throughout the summer and funding decisions will be announced in the August/September timeframe. Once awards are announced, grant contractual documents will be reviewed and executed and after those are in place, construction can begin. If everything comes together, construction work can begin as soon as this Fall.

Unknown Male asked if there is a projected timeline to complete all the future proposed phases of work. Mr. Bennett advised that there is not a projected timeline. Alderman Zink added that the phases of work will be dependent on the availability of funding.

Unknown Female asked if there is a formal concept or vision of what the amphitheater (entertainment venue) will look like. Mr. Bennett advised that the outdoor music venue space is conceptual at this time and that decisions about the formal design will be made later. The masterplan contains examples of outdoor venues for planning purposes.

Randal Pflieger asked questions about how this project will be presented to the public. He asked will there be some intermediate signage directing people what they can and cannot do on the property. He asked will the parking lot be paved or gravel. Mr. Bennett advised him that the parking lot will initially be a gravel lot with the desire to pave it in the future. Also Mr. Bennett advised that signage will be placed at the park in the coming weeks and had not been done so before this point due to the recent acquisition and the completion of the winter season. Mr. Pflieger asked if there was a stormwater plan. Mr. Bennett advised that there will be efforts to control and mitigate stormwater on the property. A final question from Mr. Pflieger was what impact general maintenance of this park going to have on existing resources to take care of general baseline maintenance of the park. Alderman Zink advised that town staff provide this maintenance effort and that it has not been overwhelming to the staff. Mr. Bennett advised that this park will be maintained to a high standard and that he will be working with maintenance staff to develop a maintenance schedule to address all preventive and recurring tasks needed to maintain the facility.

Taylor Barnhill with the Appalachian Barn Alliance stated he has done some research on property in the valley. He found that the Smith Farm originally belonged to Daniel Carter whose son Edward Carter donated property in the 1850's for what became Mars Hill University. Since this property has a sense of history to it, particularly the very old log structure, he would love to see any historical context maintained on the facility. Mr. Bennett advised him that the Town is very interested in capturing and providing interpretative and historical information about the property for park users. There is an interest in preserving as many of the barns and structures as possible. The barns are classic examples of what built this county which is agriculture.

Unknown Male asked if there had been any traffic studies for access to the park once it becomes the attraction that the Town wants it to be (i.e. traffic volumes, lane width, etc.). Mr. Bennett responded that no formal traffic study has been completed at this point. Mr. Bennett pointed out that the park is accessible both directions, from Forest Street and Banjo Branch Road, which provides two ways in and out of the vicinity. However, Mr. Bennett acknowledged those were very good points and would be taken under advisement as part of our continued planning efforts.

Unknown Male states he is neighboring property owner and has question/concern regarding how the property will be marked as far as how property lines go. He is concerned with liability issues and folks trespassing. He specifically asked if the existing fence will stay in place. Mr. Bennett advised that the Town would be interested in not only maintaining the existing boundary fencing, but also improving it where necessary to protect neighbors and park visitors from unknowingly going upon property they are not allowed to be on. The Town will also provide signage along the boundary to the extent possible. Lee Hoffman added that the Southern Highlands Conservancy will monitor the property to ensure that the conditions of the acquisition agreements are being met. One of those conditions is that all property lines be properly and adequately marked. Efforts will be made to go along all the boundaries to flag and mark those property boundaries.

Unknown Male asked a question about ATV and other motorized vehicles accessing the property. The property will be marked and properly identified that motorized vehicle/ATV use it is not a permitted use of the property. Unauthorized use should be reported to appropriate authorities as it will be an enforcement issue.

Mayor Chandler asked if there were any further public comments or additional discussion on this subject. There were no additional comments from the public.

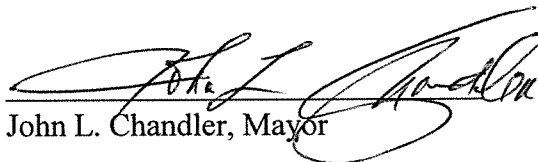
Alderman Honeycutt thanked the public for attending and providing this valuable input and comments.

Adjourn

There being no further business before the Board, Mayor Chandler called for a motion to adjourn. Alderman Zink made a motion to adjourn, Alderman Honeycutt seconded the motion. Upon a call for a vote on the motion by the Mayor, the motion to adjourn was unanimously approved.

Approved and authenticated this the 6th day of May, 2019.




John L. Chandler, Mayor

ATTEST:



Nathan R. Bennett,
Town Manager



Notice of Special Meeting of the
Town of Mars Hill
Mayor and Board of Aldermen
Scheduled for 1 April 2019

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Mars Hill Mayor and Board of Aldermen shall, pursuant to NC Gen. Stat. 160A-71 and NC Gen. Stat. 143-318.12(b)(2), hold a special meeting at the following designated place and time:


Date of Meeting: Monday, 1 April 2019

Time of Meeting: 6:00 p.m.

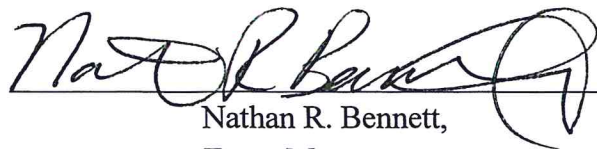
Place of Meeting: Mars Hill Town Hall
Large Conference Room
280 North Main Street
Mars Hill, North Carolina

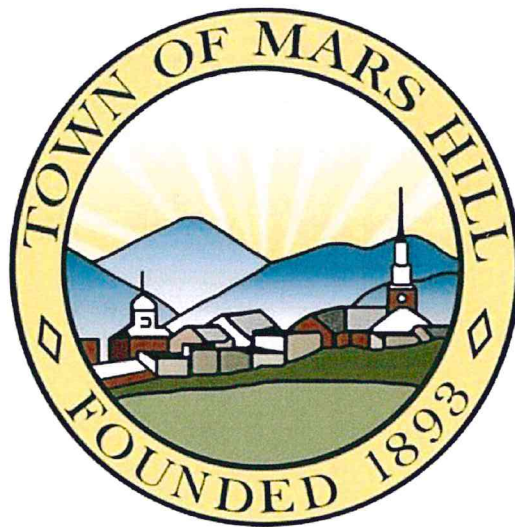
Purpose of Meeting: Public Meeting to collect public comment and input from the general public and those interested parties regarding the Mars Hill Smith Farm Park / N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Grant Application

This the 28th day of March 2019.


John L. Chandler, Mayor

Posted as required by NC Gen. Stat. 153A-40(b) and NC Gen. Stat. 143-318.12(b)(2) on this the 28th day of March 2019 at 5:00 o'clock p.m.


Nathan R. Bennett,
Town Manager



PUBLIC MEETING

MARS HILL SMITH FARM PARK

The Town of Mars Hill is seeking public input regarding the recreational development of the Smith Farm/Bailey Mountain Park Project. The public is invited and encouraged to attend this public community meeting to receive information regarding this important recreation project and to provide input on the project development. Comments can also be sent to Comments@townofmarshill.org.

WHEN: Monday, April 1, 2019

TIME: 6:00 p.m.

WHERE: Mars Hill Town Hall



Town of Mars Hill
MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN

AGENDA
SPECIAL MEETING
Mars Hill Town Hall Conference Room
April 1, 2019 at 6:00 p.m.

PUBLIC MEETING

1. Call to Order – *Mayor John L. Chandler*
2. Mars Hill Smith Farm Park Project – *Nathan Bennett, Town Manager*
 - a. **Presentation of Project**
 - b. **Summary of Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Grant Application**
 - c. **Discussion and Public Comments** – Application to the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund
3. Public Comment
4. Adjourn