

Mine Falls Park Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes - August 4, 2024, 7:00PM

Attendees: Steven Kenney, Paula Lochhead, Natlalie Iucci, Andrew Iucci, Matthew Roscoe, Lon Hohberger, Dave Silva, Dick Gillespie, Bryan Conant

7:03 - Call to Order

Approval of June Meeting Minutes: Motion to approve prior meeting's minutes as written and file by Dick Gillespie, seconded by Dave Silva, carried by unanimous vote.

7:07 - Encampment Remediation

Dave and Paula attended the City Strategy for the Unhoused meeting on June 12th. Although it was informative, it did not produce any concrete, actionable solutions. There is a critical lack of funding in many areas:

- The Chief of Police reportedly said that the campers and vehicles on the lot adjacent to the Gate City entrance would be ticketed and towed if not removed by mid-July, but this did not occur as they are still there. There wasn't money to pay tow folks, and there was nowhere clear to store the removed vehicles/trailers.
- Another lack of money was illustrated in the fact that there is not enough to have more police in the park; they tend to only have one shift in the morning.

Lack of enforcement for various infractions (ex: riding motorcycles or dirt bikes inside the park) also seems to contribute to abuse of the park. Finally, there are also reports of citizens providing unhoused folks with resources outside of the usual channels (soup kitchens, etc), which is seen as enabling.

The encampments near the Gate House are all the way up against the fence, and Dick noted that the property just outside the park where most of the unhoused encampments are is city property.

Note also that, although the majority of unhoused folks are near Gate City, there are smaller (often individual) camps throughout the park.

7:19 - Safety Discussion

- Until further notice, the Committee decided to not send volunteers to perform cleanup tasks or trail day projects in the area adjacent to the Gate City bridge.
- Out of concerns for the safety of the public and especially school teams that utilize the park, Steve, Natalie, and Andrew will compose a message to the Office of the Mayor and cc the Chief of Police.
- In order to raise awareness and solicit more input, Steve would also like to invite representatives from the Gate City Striders to a future Committee meeting to discuss their experiences and concerns, as they are weekly park visitors.
- Committee members are urged to mail caronc@nashuapd.com with any safety concerns directly.

7:30 - Wildlife

We have three Barred Owl chicks, 4 wood ducklings, and 2 fawns this year!

7:32 - Park Cleanliness by Permitted Groups

The Committee would like to investigate whether park permit holders are required to produce a credit card that could be billed if their group leaves trash in the park. A member of the committee will reach out to the Recreation department to see if this is feasible and we will discuss further.

7:36 - Canal Flow Discussion

The canal flow near the 7th Street Bridge is very low, and there is even an island forming (with plants growing in it). Dredging, if done, will need to be done extremely carefully as the canal is not lined and dredging too close to the wall could destabilize it. Dick pointed out that dredging of any kind (even hand tools) would require permits from the Conservation Commission and the State. Bryan will email the City Engineers and cc Steve for possible next steps.

7:40 - Gate House

Pamela Davies will visit the Gate House on Tuesday, September 9th to discuss the project and grant money. As the grant money requires matching funds from the City, Paula had mentioned it to the Mayor at the June 12th meeting, who seemed eager to help at the time.

7:44 - Benches

The Gate House bench needs to be replaced or repaired (new footings) due to it being leaned over too much. Bryan will determine costs for each, and believes it is likely more cost effective to do the latter. The Committee would like to also investigate a second bench in that area, as it sees a lot of traffic.

7:47 - Road from Boat Launch to Dam

The road to the dam was regraded and quickly deteriorated after a few rain storms due to the amount of traffic. Matthew proposed that we consider investigating what would be required to simply pave it, and evaluate the up-front cost vs. the cost of the upkeep of that piece of road. Bryan will email the City and cc Steve.

7:51 - Trail Day & Projects Discussion

- Bryan has a price on sandblasting and repainting the Coliseum bridge.
- Gate City boat launch ramp/stairs to be postponed per safety concerns of working in the area.
- The Whipple Street Bridge will be replaced with the same model as the one near the High School. Bryan will discuss with the City engineers on the time frame.
- Bryan will obtain a new combination lock for the tool shed.
- August Trail Day Projects
 - Prior to the trail day, Dick will estimate the amount of fill and number of 6x6s required to remediate significant erosion in 3 spots along the canal. Dave and Dick will manage shoring those up during the trail day.

- Painting projects
 - Sheds over by soccer fields. Green
 - Stone near the stairs on spine road. Grey
- One of the overlooks closest to Gate City needs a lot of trash removed, but this must be done carefully.
 - Long sleeves/protective clothing recommended; all trash should be handled with pickers whenever possible.
- Lon will lead a Parks representative to remove a large downed tree along the river and several others on one of the smaller, unnamed trails near the Everett Turnpike.

8:04 - Wood Piles

On the previous trail day, we had people gather wood into piles by the trail side. These piles were not picked up.

8:05 - Budgeting

Bryan will provide the Committee with an updated budget by next meeting, as the Park's fiscal year starts on July 1.

8:12 - Adjournment

Paula motioned to adjourn, which was seconded by Matthew. The motion passed by unanimous vote.