Town of Winterville

Recreation Advisory Board (RAB) Meeting Minutes TUESDAY, October 27, at 6:30PM
Meeting called to order: 6:37 p.m.
Members Present: John Powell, Johnny Fleming, Randy Bowers, Anthony Yocum, Katrina Jones
Members Absent: Lindsay Price, CJ Wanczyk, Rashana Carmon and Bill Richbourg

I. Approval of Minutes

There was no quorum at the previous meeting in September, so no minutes were prepared for approval.

II. Citizen Input:

A resident expressed appreciation for the paving improvements at the park, noting that the work has made walking around the park more enjoyable. The board also discussed the park fountains and pond maintenance. Members asked whether the fountains were operating properly. Staff explained that at least one fountain may need a replacement part or electrical work. The pond had also been cleaned out to address accumulated debris. Staff will follow up with Park Maintenance regarding the fountains. The board discussed how debris can clog the fountains and cause them to shut down. Although the fountains improve the park's appearance and help circulate the water, they require regular maintenance. There was also discussion about muskrats near the pond. Staff explained that traps have been used to manage the animals and that burrows may need to be filled after trapping. The animals sometimes return or new ones move into the area.

III. Old Business

Staff did a recap of what was on the agenda at the last meeting.

Girls' Flag Football Clinic

The department will host a free girls' flag football clinic on November 28 at Hillcrest Park.

The clinic will be led by Coach Miles, who coaches the South Central HS boys' and girls' flag football teams, along with Amber Clark-Robinson, a former South Central HS student who played on the U.S. Women's National Flag Football Team.

Staff have been working with Coach Miles for an extended period to increase interest and participation in girls' flag football. Scheduling challenges delayed earlier plans, but the addition of Amber Clark-Robinson will help support and run the clinic.

Approximately 24 girls have registered so far. The clinic is intended primarily for females in grades 6–8, although younger participants may also be accommodated.

Board members were encouraged to share the information with interested families.

Staff hope that continued clinics will increase participation and help establish a more consistent home field for flag football. A dedicated facility could eventually provide space for flag football and other sports that currently compete for available fields.

Design Thinking Project and Accessibility

Staff are participating in a design thinking project led by Dr. Oakes, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Recreation Sciences & Sports Management (Recreation Therapy Program) at East Carolina University. Participants include Winterville Parks and Recreation staff, individuals associated with Awaken Coffee, and members of the autism community.

The project brings participants together to identify barriers that prevent people with disabilities from accessing recreational activities and to develop practical solutions.

For example, someone may enjoy kayaking but lack access to appropriate equipment or assistance.

The project helps participants identify what resources, equipment, facilities, and programming would make activities more accessible.

The process may also help the department identify opportunities for grants and other funding.

Staff emphasized that accessibility should include adults with disabilities as well as children. Adults also want opportunities to participate in recreation, socialize, and enjoy community activities.

The project includes several additional meetings. Staff are using the experience to identify gaps in existing resources and consider future improvements to parks and recreational facilities.

Potential future accessibility improvements could include Hillcrest or Water Tower Park. Water

Staff also described a previous activity in which participants shared photographs of things they enjoyed doing. One participant discussed her love of dancing with friends and getting dressed up but noted that there were limited opportunities to participate in dance events.

These discussions help staff better understand individual interests and identify ways to make recreation more inclusive.

Paint in the Park Initiative

Staff applied for a New Initiative Program grant through the North Carolina Recreation and Park Association (NCRPA) towards the end of last fiscal year and were awarded a $1,500 grant this year.

The department held its first Paint in the Park event on Saturday at both Winterville Recreation Park and Hillcrest.

Participation was capped at 20 people to allow staff to evaluate the program and determine what staffing, and supplies would be needed before expanding it.

Participants selected their canvases and used standing or tabletop easels to create their paintings. The event was free and attracted a variety of participants, including seniors, families, children, and grandparents with their grandchildren.

Staff reported that the event went well and provided a new recreational opportunity for the community.

The department is tracking supply costs to determine whether the program can be sustained in the future. Many supplies, including canvases, were purchased in bulk, and the easels can be reused. Storage space remains a challenge.

The next Paint in the Park event is scheduled for November 14 at both locations. Staff are also planning a Christmas Paint in the Park event on December 17 at the town square.

The December event will take place in partnership with the Winterville Historical Society. Following the December 12 tree-lighting ceremony, the town square will feature Christmas lights and decorations. The Ange House will also be decorated, and the museum is expected to open for visitors with a 1940s Christmas theme.

Staff hope the event will provide an opportunity for residents to enjoy the holiday atmosphere and visit the museum.

Because the December event will take place outdoors, staff discussed arranging hot chocolate or coffee to help keep participants warm.

Two East Carolina University students volunteered at the first Paint in the Park event to earn service hours. Additional volunteers are expected in November. Board members interested in helping were encouraged to contact staff.

Family Glow Golf

The rescheduled Family Glow Golf event will take place on November 14 from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

The event was originally scheduled for October but was rescheduled due to possible inclement weather. The new start time due to daylight savings

Fright Fest

Fright Fest was held on October 25 and was reported to have a strong turnout.

Participating town departments included:

- Parks and Recreation
- Police Department
- Fire Department
- Electric Department
- Public Works
- Water and Sewer

Departments distributed candy downtown, while the Winterville Chamber of Commerce coordinated additional vendors behind the Maina Mill area and along Railroad Street between Main and Cooper.

Staff reported distributing a large amount of candy. One staff member dressed as Elsa, while two coworkers wore t-shirts with “Princess Security “on them.

Staff described the costumes as a fun way to engage with the public. A possible costume idea for next year is Mario, Luigi, and Princess Peach.

Volunteer Needs

A board member asked whether additional volunteers were needed for the department’s programs and events.

Staff explained that most programs are staffed by full-time and part-time employees. However, volunteers are helpful for large events, including the Christmas parade, tree-lighting ceremony, and baseball tournaments.

Volunteer coaches are also consistently needed.

The level of volunteer support required varies by program and event.

Concert and Movie Series

The final movie of the season was *Field of Dreams*. The final concert of the series was Cooper Greer.

The department will pause its outdoor movie and concert programming until the next season, which is expected to begin in June 2027.

IV. New Business

Grant Funding for Paint in the Park, Movies, and Concerts

The department applied for a Grassroots Arts Program grant through the Pitt County Arts Council and was awarded $3,000. The award includes a matching component. Of the total, $1,500 will be used to match the New Initiative Program grant for Paint in the Park, allowing the department to purchase additional supplies and potentially offer the program again in the spring. The remaining $1,500 will support the next series of outdoor movies and concerts. Staff noted that securing grant funding helps expand programming while reducing the burden on the department’s operating budget.

Accessibility Improvement Projects

Staff are preparing the request-for-bids documents for planned accessibility improvements at McLawhorn and Ruritan fields. The improvements include:

ADA-compliant dugouts.

ADA-compliant gate openings.

A viewing shelter near the central mulched area. The viewing shelter would provide a place for spectators to watch games from different angles or take a break from the activity.

Staff hope to issue the bid within approximately one week, with the goal of completing the improvements before the spring sports season begins. Some work may continue into the season

if necessary. Staff identified the dugouts and gate openings as the highest priorities, with the viewing shelter potentially completed later. Board members discussed the design and purpose of the gate openings. They emphasized that the improvements should primarily serve legitimate accessibility needs rather than provide unnecessary access to the playing field. Concerns were also raised about the possibility of spectators using the openings to approach players, coaches, or umpires during disputes. Staff explained that the design would prioritize accessibility and safety, including providing more direct access in an emergency. The department will evaluate the design to ensure it meets the intended purpose.

V. Recreation Programs & Maintenance Updates

Fall Sports Participation

Fall sports were nearing completion at the time of the meeting

Staff reported the following participation figures:

Program	Teams or Participants
Major baseball	6 teams
Minor baseball	5 teams
Rookie baseball	9 teams
Cheerleading	2 teams, 57 participants
Flag football, ages 5–6	3 teams
Flag football, ages 7–8	3 teams
Soccer	9 teams
Tackle football, ages 8–10	2 teams
Tackle football, ages 11–13	3 teams

The flag football and tackle football programs include games against teams from Ayden. The 11–13 tackle football division consists of three Winterville teams participating in eight-man football.

Total fall sports participation exceeds 500 children. Staff noted that soccer, cheerleading, and rookie baseball could potentially support additional teams, but available field space is limited.

The board recognized the strong participation numbers and the amount of programming the department provides with a relatively small staff.

Park Maintenance and Winter Preparation

Staff praised the parks maintenance team for its work, maintaining facilities and keeping them updated.

After tackle football concludes, expected during the second week of November, the team will begin preparing facilities for winter. This work will include checking water fountains and other park equipment.

The department will also continue general seasonal maintenance and preparation.

Department Program Brochure and QR Codes

Staff distributed the department's latest program brochure.

The brochure includes information about department offerings, established park locations, and the approximate timing of annual events. It can help residents plan activities such as the summer concert series, Fright Fest, and spring T-ball registration.

The brochure includes two QR codes: one directing users to the department's website and another directing users to the registration site.

A board member suggested placing QR codes on signs around the parks so visitors could easily

access program information while attending games or using the walking paths.

The board discussed the possibility of using durable metal signs similar to existing parking signs. Staff agreed that this could be beneficial.

It was noted that QR codes may need to be replaced if the linked website or registration system changes.

Spring Sports Registration

Spring sports registration is expected to open during the second or third week of December.

Staff provided the following anticipated registration schedule:

Spring baseball and softball: mid-December.

Cheerleading: approximately the second week of February.

Pee Wee programs: approximately the second week of February.

Junior Babe Ruth: approximately the second week of March.

Exact dates will be confirmed by the department.

New Programs

The department is developing a Mother and Son Celebration for February.

The event will be similar in spirit to the Daddy-Daughter Dance, with music and activities, but will offer a more relaxed atmosphere that does not require formal attire.

Staff have attended a similar event to gather ideas and have received interest from mothers who would like a comparable opportunity.

Registration for both the Daddy-Daughter Dance and Mother and Son Celebration is expected to open January 1. Staff noted that the first day of registration for the Daddy-Daughter Dance typically fills quickly. The Mother and Son Celebration may also generate significant interest. Both events will be held at the same venue on different days. Baseball evaluations may also occur that weekend, although the schedule has not been finalized.

IV. Future Agenda

Future Programs for Teens and Seniors

The department continues to explore additional programs for teens and seniors.

Staff believe the design thinking project may provide useful ideas for future activities, especially programs that address accessibility and the interests of underserved groups.

V. Other Agenda Items

A board member asked about a previously presented video showing a proposed outdoor workout space. Staff explained that the project remains under consideration while the department seeks funding. The goal is to secure outside funding so the project can move forward without relying on tax dollars.

Traffic Safety Course

The board discussed the small traffic course used for children's bicycle safety activities. Members noted that the painted markings need to be refreshed and that the asphalt surface is deteriorating, with cracks and areas beginning to break apart. Staff indicated that the painting may be handled by Kat, who has worked on the project and may have the necessary stencils. However, responsibility for the project following her departure remains uncertain. The board discussed the importance of maintaining the

course because the program has been well received. Approximately 20 children attended a recent session, and another session was expected to attract around 15 participants. Members expressed appreciation for the work that has gone into the program and concern about its future maintenance.

VI. Announcements

Staff reviewed the following dates and reminders:

- November 14: Family Glow Golf, 6:00–9:00 p.m.
- November 14: Paint in the Park at Recreation Park and Hillcrest.
- November 28: Girls' flag football clinic at Hillcrest.
- December 4: Christmas dinner.
- December 12: Christmas parade and tree-lighting ceremony.
- December 17: Christmas Paint in the Park at the town square.
- Mid-December: Expected opening of spring sports registration.
- January 1: Expected opening of registration for the Daddy-Daughter Dance and Mother and Son Celebration. Staff noted that invitations for the Christmas dinner were expected to be distributed. Board members interested in riding on the Christmas parade float were asked to notify staff. Float participants should plan to arrive around 1:40–1:45 p.m., as lineup is scheduled to begin at 1:00 p.m. Participants may distribute candy and wave to parade spectators.

Christmas Parade Grand Marshal

Staff proposed Rebecca Caveness as the Christmas parade grand marshal. The nomination was based on her involvement with the Winterville Chamber of Commerce and the Watermelon Festival Committee, where she serves as president, as well as her broader contributions to the community. Board members expressed support for the nomination. A motion John P was made and seconded by Johnny F to approve Rebecca Caveness as grand marshal, contingent on her acceptance. The motion carried. Staff indicated that they expected to see her the following day and would ask whether she was willing to serve.

The board also discussed arrangements for the town's parade float and opportunities for advisory board members and other volunteers to participate.

NCRPA Communications

Staff advised board members that they might receive an email from the North Carolina Recreation and Park Association requesting their contact information. The association indicated that communications would be limited to important matters, such as requests for support or participation in surveys. Board members were advised that the email was legitimate and related to the department's involvement with the association.

Next Meeting

- The meeting adjourned at 7:24PM. Next meeting November 24, 2026, at 6:30 PM