

**MINUTES**  
**Goshen Parks and Recreation**  
**June 24, 2024 at 6:00PM**  
**Goshen Community Building, 244 Clark Street**

**Call to Order:** Danielle Edwards called the meeting to order at 6:00PM.

**Roll Call:** Danielle Edwards, Caleb LeBow, Kyle McGurk and Mike Nimmo were present. Adam Walker was absent.

**Approval of Agenda:**

**Approval of Minutes:** May 20, 2024 minutes. Kyle McGurk motioned to approve minutes with edits. Seconded by Caleb LeBow. All in favor? Yay (4). Opposed? (0). The motion carried.

**Old Business:**

- A. ARDOT Grant Update:** Danielle: I don't have a whole lot on the ARDOT update. I know we were waiting on the final engineering documents from Crafton Tull. I think that's what the holdup is. Kyle: What was said last month from Russell was that they were supposed to be in the week prior to last month's meeting, and they weren't received. I haven't heard an update since then. I ran into Luke at the farmer's market. He said he's working on that. Caleb: ARDOT's comments were almost nothing. I mean, there wasn't anything wrong. It's just that they had a few little cross-looks that they needed to slightly adjust. I wouldn't think it was a major change.
- B. HUD Grant Update:** Danielle: I know that the remaining was put in. We heard back, and I now have the funds to be released to the city for the purchase of the remaining property of the park. So, I think that's just all dotting eyes type thing. We've got the account set up, and the money's going to go into the account. And, I know Ken has an update. Mary: Ken is going to be here. He can give us the update. Danielle: The HUD grant, we've got the funding for it. The account is set up to pay for all the funding. We will be buying the rest of the land by, I guess, the end of this month or next month. So, we won't be paying that lease anymore, saving money for that. And that's for the improvements to the north entrance of the parking lot.

**New Business:**

- A. FY2025 ARDOT Tap Grant:** Kyle: I don't have any updates on it. As I know, the city is applying for it. Abby's working on it. So, the grant is going to be for, it was about \$310,000. And that's an 80-20 match grant to bring the trail from where it's planned to be stopping at, Mill Branch Center, so the Chicken House pad, up around close to the location of the existing trail to the Salamander Pond area, where the road access and the pavilion eventually will be. So that will be similar with an ADA. The goal is for an ADA trail that will connect to that, eventually to what's going to be happening up front here with other funding. The indication that we got from the staff at ARDOT is that we have a high likelihood of success with the grant, just because they're not seeing a lot of smaller communities applying. And the bigger communities are getting grants every year. With that said, the staff doesn't make the determinations, so we're

hopeful that that will be successful. Once we get the grant, the terms are a lot more flexible than in the past. So, we can include engineering costs in the grant amount, which we weren't able to in the one that we're executing right now. And additional to that, my understanding is that adjustments for change of scope typically are more flexible now than what we assumed in the past. If we find out that the trail's more expensive in three years. In terms of the status of our staff with applying for the grant, we were under the impression that the city was applying for it. They haven't heard an update, right? Danielle: My information was that it was submitted, and that we should be back here in the next few months. Not like an exact time, but it was. Phase two would include additional pay for the trail from the central to the upper field, which is south of the south end of the park. Kyle: So as part of that submission process, they would have had to have updated the master plan. Did we see that at all? Danielle: That was part of what Russell was talking about at the last meeting, when he was—the budget, as far as a master plan, I'm not sure on that. Caleb: There was some mention that maybe if they did need to revise the master plan, they could just send it along, just keep us in the loop. Kyle: Yes, we did ask to see it as a courtesy. Kyle: So, we should follow up on that, just so we have that updated copy. Mary: So, is my understanding, you're saying that the master plan can just be changed at the city hall, and you'll be notified later, is that what we're saying? Kyle: That is how this went down. Is that what we're entirely comfortable with? No. We had asked, I guess as a courtesy, we had discussed it two meetings prior that it needed to be updated to meet this grant. We said that's OK for this limited scope. But we asked as a courtesy to see it before it got sent off, and we didn't. Danielle: I think it's just down at city hall. I think that's us just going down there and looking at it. Kyle: But I think as a matter of procedure, if the master plan is being updated, that should go through a commissioner review. Versus just changing it. I mean, they can redline it and put it in front of us. Max: So, it was changed then to, for this next year, ARDOT grant ADA trail. Is that what the change was from the top? Kyle: Again, I haven't seen the change, but what we had discussed was that for the projects to be included in the grant application, that trail needed to be shown as being a part service trail in the master plan. Max: And that's from the top of the hill back down to the chicken house? Kyle: Correct. Max: Well, that would have to be three or four miles long to make the grade. Kyle: It was in the minutes. It was calculated to 1,800 feet. It was about 100 vertical feet. Caleb: Yeah, it wrapped the western edge.

- B. FY2025 Arkansas Outdoor Grant:** I do not have very much information on this. I know Abby has been working on it. She has a little bit more information on the placemaker grant, but not so much on the outdoor grant. I know that was due in August. Kyle: Is that project still the same as what we discussed last meeting? Danielle: As far as I know. Kyle: So just as an update, that project is going to be, we're applying for a trailhead location on the new, or I guess bordering the new property. So that would be a trailhead bathroom pavilion. The understanding that we've gotten from those with the state that are no longer with the state, and we're still in a gray area because there's not a new statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation plan, is that projects that are centered towards placemaking with revenue opportunities and cycling take precedent over other things. We may be misled by that because it's not in writing in a state document, but that's our understanding of how decisions have been made in the last year. So, we feel that kind of taking a project that we already feel like we want at the park and advertising or pivoting it in a way that fits that narrative, but also benefits the city, is a responsible way of trying to fit our way into that framework. So, applying for the land acquisition that we did last year and the pavilion concept, or a trailhead concept, that would be a pavilion that could be added on to later at the gateway of the park on the south side, that

would be that ask. And that would be matching the land acquisition from last year. Mary: Are we talking about a gateway area here on this property behind, or a parking area going in on Fire Tower? Kyle: So, this would be, from what I understand, close to the Salamander Pond on that ridge. Caleb: It would be a trailhead pavilion that would effectively, as the 2055 ARDOT trail, if that one works out, it would wrap up to the Salamander Pond, and then this would be the trailhead for that. And it would operate as a pavilion and a trailhead with bathrooms, and would be, I guess, the first thing you would walk out into from the south car park. Kyle: And it would be accessible by the north side with gravel in the short term, with the road that's being built this year.

- C. Placemaker Grant:** Danielle: I know that Abby has started this. It's done. We are just waiting for Lacie to come back to review it on the 2nd, and then we will send it off. It's due on the 8th, and it is an \$80,000 direct-funded grant. The grantees will receive \$80,000, and that's what we were wanting. We don't have an exact idea of what we want to spend the money on. That's why we are trying to do the survey to see what the City of Goshen wants to do with, the next things to be built. We want your guys' opinion, and we will go from there on that. But all the information is answered and is going to be sent in by the 8th. Mary: Could the pavilion be part of that? Danielle: Yes. It was straightforward from what I heard. I did not fill it out personally. I just went and talked to a couple of people at City Hall, and this was sitting on Abby's desk, so I looked over it. I made some copies if anybody wants to see what it is. It's a format of what it is. It was a straightforward grant to fill out. Mike: I read the information that you sent across. The thing that they were saying was that you can't really use it for capital improvements. You were talking about the possibility of building a sidewalk over this area to Anderson's or something like that. That's not something that you can do with this grant, so I don't know. We'll have to make some decisions. Caleb: I talked to some of the lady who previously managed this last year for the Walton Family Foundation, and what they were doing last year for it is slightly different. She was saying that, yeah, that would be smaller communities like Goshen. They were trying to prioritize them. I don't think they got very many last years, but then on it, it's really anything that's associated with building a place for people, particularly the public, to be able to come together and utilize, and just interconnectivity within those smaller cities that might not have it. Now, I know she said last year the interconnectivity part was bigger, so they were more open to it. I think they wouldn't want it to be just a sidewalk. If we wanted to make a connection from here to Mill Branch Park and then down Anderson to show that this is our hub, bringing in something like adding another bike wash station. So, that was the focus last year. This year, I think they're homing in better on how we can affect Northwest Arkansas because the place-making group that does this, they're seeing their big goals. Mike: They've got some interesting case studies on there that kind of gives you an idea as to what other communities, not only here in the United States but around the world, have done to improve their communities and get more people gathered into, be like, you know, improvements to the farmer's market or something like that. You know, if we wanted to, you know, give people more access, draw more people to community events in that area. Kyle: So do I understand it correctly that this is a little unorthodox in the sense that you're applying for a space, but you don't really propose a project. They work with you to develop a project after you get the grant. Danielle: That was my understanding. Kyle: So, you really don't have to, like, say this is what we want to do at all? Mike: You don't have to plan it or anything. In fact, they prefer it if you don't because they have consultants that come in and they want to help you plan a project. Kyle: And that's been successful for the community they've worked with. Caleb: In the past, yes. Kyle: It seems like a good program.

**D. Survey and Outreach to Public:** Danielle: We had talked about doing a farmer's market booth, for doing a survey. Do you know what day that will be? We can pick a day in July. Do we want to do that right now? Let's do the 25<sup>th</sup>. Max: So, another question on this placemaker grant. So, could you do, like, a splash pad or something like that? Danielle: It's not enough money. Mike: There was some discussion at the last meeting. Somebody was saying we'll have some numbers like \$300,000 or something for it. Caleb: Yes, it's anywhere in between how far you want to take it. Danielle: That means we must get a survey done by then. It would be nice to get it out to say, hey, you can go to this website or be able to talk about the survey that's there. This is the topics. Mary: Do we have a draft on that yet? Danielle: Not a public draft, no. We're working on it, though, of ideas, but yes. But it will be done by the 25th. Kyle: Are you taking the lead on the survey, Danielle? Danielle: I will take lead on the survey. Kyle: I can take the lead on coordinating outreach. Then we've got two other outreach opportunities that we'll need to do in the next month as well. In addition to the farmers market, last year we did Rustin, Ruby's, Waterford, Knoles, and we did Homemakers last year. We were just discussing that Goshen Historical Society could be a good group as well for this year. Does anybody want to take on reaching out to one of them? Mike: I think I can do that. Danielle: The Historical meets on Tuesdays. Mike: that's going to be hard if we meet on Tuesdays. But I can do either one, I can do the Homemakers. Daneille: Does anyone live in those communities where you can go to the HOA? Kyle: No. This doesn't mean we can't reach out. Danielle: Find out when their meeting is and ask to speak. Kyle: Caleb, do you want to take on one group to reach out to? Caleb: Sure. Kyle: So, we've got Rustin Rubies, Waterford, Knolls, and I think Russell would be able to connect you with the communities to reach out to. Kyle: So, to summarize, Danielle, you're coordinating the survey. Caleb, you'll reach out to HOA or Rustin Ruby's. Mike, you're going to reach out to the Homemakers. Danielle: So, I think this year we should really get that honed in, get a survey before we go out to the community so that we are all on the same page. Kyle: Ken, correct me if I'm incorrect here, but John Beneke steered us towards doing a public input, more open-ended, versus a survey. It was more, tell us what you think about the park and use it to brainstorm project ideas versus it was asking concrete questions. Is that correct? Ken: Yes, John was to take information from the city and the Beaver Watershed Alliance's master plan, the master plan for the park, was to take all that information that we had available plus comments from city and parks commissioners and prepare a planning document showing trails and possible development points within the park. But it was not the result of a comprehensive community-wide survey, which is what I think you're asking, right? Kyle: I guess we're talking about two different things. The requirements for the Arkansas Director Recreation Grant, the Arkansas Director Recreation Grant public outreach, and then there's the survey. So, I guess they're two different things. Or they could be the same thing, potentially. But just putting out a survey, I don't think, I guess by the definition of what I read at the beginning of the meeting, it would be, right? Ken: But it was more open-ended.

**Public Input:** Ken: I sent you the official copy of the environmental review record that went to HUD, was approved by HUD. And it's the record of which we made a request for HUD funding. And it was the basis of which HUD approved funding for the park. A total of \$880,000 for the part. And It's 67 pages just in text. And it took us eight months to write this up. And then there are several hundred pages of attachments along with it as well. So let me just hit some of the high points with you. The Historic Preservation Act. We had to comply with the Historic Preservation Act and go through a review. And fortunately, some months earlier, about a year or earlier, thanks to Mary's help, we were able to have the Arkansas Archaeological Survey come in and do a field survey of the park. And then they went back

and checked all their records and had to use LIDAR technology, to see if there are any ancient or old foundations or materials or incredibly old grounds or brick foundations or whatever in the park. And we took that information, and we submitted it to the Historic Preservation Office in Little Rock. And I want to emphasize this, that their approval, Historic Preservation Officers' approval, was for the entire property. I mentioned that because that was a question that came up in the document being reviewed by HUD itself. That was one of the questions. And I had to go back to the Historic Preservation Program and get clarification to make sure that their approval, that there is no. That we've identified if there are any historic preservation objects or that we've done that, and that our park project meets their requirements. And so it wasn't just on areas that might be disturbed from construction. It affects the entire park. That's a big point. So, we met the Historic Preservation Act requirements. It's called Section 106 determination. The other big determination we had to undergo was wetlands review by the Corps of Engineers. And that took about three months to finish, which is quick. And the Corps reviewed our proposed construction projects, particularly the improvements of access from the north side coming off Highway 45, as well as the proposed trail project from the parking lot up to a proposed wildlife observation, social gathering point near the old chicken house place, plus improvement of the parking lot. As you remember, the HUD grant is to help cover the improvement to the north side, changing the entrance point into the north side of Highway 45, as well as to pay the existing parking area on the north side. That's two of the things that the HUD grant is supposed to cover. So those projects were covered through the Corps of Engineers Certified Inventory Board. They also looked at where we have the highway transportation levees where we're proposing an ADA trail that would cross the creek and the bridge and head up to, the observation station education center near the old chicken house. So, the Corps' survey determination covered those areas. And the good news for us is that they found no hydric soils. They checked two places. They found some evidence of wetland plants, and you can find those in a lot of different places. That is not a barn burner when it comes to stopping a project. But it's primarily the soil, the presence, absence of water, those sorts of things. So, we received clearance from the Corps of Engineers for those construction projects. Anything else we would do would have to have another environmental review done by or a wetlands inventory study done by the Corps of Engineers. We are covered by the Corps for those projects under the HUD grant. Through the wetlands work, I want to emphasize that the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Corps of Engineers, they have identified the Mill Branch itself and then the main ravines that come down and dissect the property as wetlands. Even though, except for Mill Branch itself, it would be extremely hard to find water flowing down those ravines. Nevertheless, they fall within the federal wetlands inventory. Those areas must be treated with care. We must get clearance before we rush into doing anything in those ravines as well as anywhere else along Mill Branch itself. So those are especially important habitats. The salamander pond and the fishing pond we talked about earlier are also marked in the national wetlands inventory maps. So those areas must be taken. We must be incredibly careful what we do around those as well. So those are areas of concern. But again, for all our construction projects related to the HUD grant, we are covered. Now, the Corps of Engineers determination letter did not cover the entire 111 acres. It just covered, again, the construction projects. That's an especially important point. I want to make sure that you're familiar with and understand. So, the third main area of review was by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and that was under the Endangered and Threatened Species Act. And we had to, as we were doing the inventory, we had to request from the Fish and Wildlife Service office their official list of endangered and threatened species that might occur, that could occur, or that does occur in northwest Arkansas. That's a lot of territory, two-plus counties. And everything endangered species that are protected by the Fish and Wildlife Service includes everything from white blind crayfish and crayfish to bats, several species of bats. And we don't have known habitat or found habitat that would provide habitat for cave dwelling species on the property. That's good news, bad news. It would be nice to have that, but we also don't have regulatory issues that would occur because of that. Most of the bats, in

fact, most of the bats are found in northwest Arkansas, like the Indiana bat, the Ozark big-eared bat, the gray bat. These are important endangered threatened species. We don't have evidence or records of them being found in our area. We do have some other bats, a few bats, which will often be found in trees, snags, dead trees, and they like preparing areas. Those are the ones we need to be concerned about. We have clearance from the Fish and Wildlife Service, but we should not be removing snags, even standing dead trees, or particularly live trees, in our construction projects. We need to leave trees alone. And I'm going to show you a red flag. I want to make sure everybody is aware of that. As we do these projects, the trail project, improving access on Highway 45 into the park, as well as repainting the parking lot, that we aren't taking down trees as part of this. Now, we're good with the Fish and Wildlife Service as well, so we have an official determination letter from them that clears us. But these are caveats. These are conditions that we need to be aware of. That's all in the report that I'm sharing with you tonight. Mike: How's that going to affect the ongoing project of eradication of invasive species in the park? Because we've felled a lot of trees there. Ken: We have identified those with Fish and Wildlife Service. Mike: So those don't fall within the parameters. Ken: Invasive species pose other problems besides just providing, you know, being invasive. But we're clear as far as those. Removing Calvary pair, removing trees in Heaven, pruning, we're okay with all those. So, we can continue that kind of work. Those three main areas. But I want to emphasize that the Beaver Watershed Alliance study, the comprehensive management plan for Mill Branch Park was foundational for this environmental review record. It provided a lot of information on geology, soils, different types of plant and animal species that we were able to incorporate into the report. So, we really got a lot of bang for the buck from Beaver Watershed Alliance for their study. John Beneke's study helped a great deal. The fact that we had not done anything other than mow and bale hay on the part of the property that would be acquired by HUD, 53 acres, which is about half the property, was a big deal. If we had done anything construction-wise or altering habitat, that could have really caused problems for us. But, you know, now with the HUD approval and this environmental review, we're covered. There's a lot of information in here on soils, on geology. I think when you look through the report, I want to ask you to pay attention to pages 32 and 33. We had to provide an analysis of what would happen if this project didn't happen. It was a discussion of alternatives. And then, if we didn't go forward with this project, what would be the consequences of it for the city of Goshen and the development of the park? And so, I think reading that, pages 32 and 33, is a good kind of snapshot of why the park is important. So, you know, Danielle, that covers the main things. If you guys, as you read it, if you have any questions, shoot me a text or whatever, and I'll be glad to get back with you. Danielle: I appreciate your time. Thank you. It gives us a lot of information. I'm the type of person that must sit down and read it over and over until I can figure out everything. Mary: The Arbor Board met this afternoon, and one of the objects that Arbor Board wanted to do for next year is in the park. And we wanted to kind of vet that decision before we, you know, proceed in a new way. I know Max, Molly, Betty several members of the Arbor Board, have worked with and hiked with Quail Unlimited about the hopes that eventually, part of the park, that it would return to, a native prairie, and that it would replace some of the non-native grasslands. The Arbor Board suggested that we look at the corral area on top of the hill and go ahead and use a chemical to kill the grass within that corral area. At some point in the fall, we would burn it and plant wildflowers in that one area as a beginning seedbed for bringing back some of the native wildflowers in there, and we would have a pollinator space for the park, and a lot of the native butterflies and bees and things that have been wiped out. And so, we're kind of, Betty, Cheryl, and I, you know, we're part the Arbor Board and we're wanting your feedback on that, whether we can go through with talking about that, planning it, and coming back to you with details. Kyle: So why was the corral chosen as your first spot? Betty: It's a smaller area. We talked to Quails Forever, and that was three to five acres originally. And they would have helped us, and they still have this program, they would have helped us with a prescribed burn to get on their list. We'd have to cut it and kill it first, do

the burn, and then supply the seeds and everything. So, I don't know if that's still an option with them, but that's a huge area, whereas this corral area isn't that big. We could do ourselves, and it's all kind of close there. Mary: It would give the public kind of a destination to see some of this stuff. Betty: And since it affects the birds. Mike: I think it would be a good use for that area. It would be better than pulling up those posts up there. Betty: We need the posts. Mary: Until it gets established, that's a down-the-road thing about taking the posts out. Danielle: I think it would give it a unique look. Betty: Maybe add signage in there, too, when things are growing. So, it would be a destination and a park. Danielle: Is this something we need to vote on? Kyle: I would say that wildlife restoration and prairie is already part of the master plan. So, in terms of identifying a volunteer project and incorporating it, it would be a matter of just facilitating it, then it would be action. Danielle: That's not something we have to get permission for? Kyle: When the time comes to do it, it would be a conversation. Betty: If you all agree, then it will be presented at the city council meeting. Kyle: Would you all like a vote of support from us to move forward? Betty: Yes, please. Kyle McGurk motioned to support, as a vote of confidence, to support moving forward with the prairie restoration within the corral area, conditional on the final plan and sequencing is coordinated with the city. Seconded by Mike Nimmo. All in favor? Yay (4). Opposed? (0). The motion carried.

**Adjournment:** Danielle Edwards motioned to adjourn at 7:14 pm. Seconded by Mike Nimmo. Adjourned at 7:14pm.

---

**Chairman Adam Walker**