MINUTES OF THE HARMON FIELD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS SPECIAL MEETING
Tuesday, September 12, 2023

Chairman Nelon called the Harmon Field Board of Supervisors special meeting to order at 5:30 PM at the Harmon Field Cabin.

Board Members Present: Chairman Stephen Nelon; Vice Chairman Warren Watson (arrived late at 5:40 pm); and Jamie Dunn

Board Members Absent: Secretary-Treasurer Miguel Santibanez; and Rick Covil;

Staff Present: Jim Fatland, Tryon Town Manager; Greg McCool, Interim Harmon Field Superintendent/Tryon Public Works Director; and Meg Rogers, Town Secretary/Cashier

Citizen Comments regarding Harmon Field Dog Park
Chairman Nelon opened the floor for citizen comments:

Cal Smith requested that grass seed be planted on the sandy areas of the dog park that once served as the baseball infield to create a more uniform grass covered area at the dog park. The sandy areas became mushy in wet weather. Chairman Nelon reported that the sand had been added to cover red mud of the infields at the request of the dog owners in the past. Smith noted that grass was gradually moving into the sandy areas anyway. Smith also asked if the lights at the dog park could be turned on for a few hours a couple of nights each week for working dog owners who could not get to the dog park with their dogs before dark. Smith did not know what the cost would be for lighting the area. As a property owner who paid Harmon Field taxes he hoped some of the tax funding could be used to provide a few hours of lighting per week.

Jeffrey Close thanked the Board for the job they were doing, their interest in the dog park and for offering this public forum at the Harmon Field cabin. Close requested that the covered areas where the picnic tables were located be paved with cement, asphalt or railroad gravel to eliminate holes being dug by dogs congregating with their owners in that area currently. Close had also heard that the Town was considering forming a dog-owners committee to oversee the dog park and he opposed that idea because it would undermine the current camaraderie of the dog park users if the committee imposed too many rules at the dog park. Close thought public comment meetings between the Harmon Field Board and dog park users, like tonight's meeting, held once or twice a year would be sufficient to address any dog park issues or needs. Tryon Town Manager Fatland responded that when he had worked in Highlands and Brevard to set up dog parks, such committees had been very effective in keeping their dog parks nice at all times and had also worked to raise funds for dog park improvements and equipment. However, Fatland noted that he had heard very few complaints about the Harmon Field Dog Park from the users he met and Harmon Field Dog Park seemed to be doing well without a dog owners committee.

Fatland had heard that a dog park user had asked for a pile of dirt and a bucket at the dog park to fill in the holes their dogs dug. Marty Kirchhof responded that she brought her own shovel to fill in her dog's holes and this suggested action would help her.

Bob Merrell had heard there were a lot of complaints about the Harmon Field Dog Park and he attended to hear the users' complaints. Merrell agreed with Close about installing pavement or concrete pads under the shade covers to discourage digging. Merrell explained that the dogs were digging to uncover cool dirt to lie upon to cool down. Concrete would offer a cool surface. Merrell suggested adding more shaded areas with scattered trees at the dog park over the next 10-15 years. Merrell stated that he and Close had brought gravel three to five times per week to the dog park to help fill in holes and Merrell was willing to help to make the dog park operate effectively, but Merrell agreed with Close that the dog park operated well without an owners committee.

Marty Kirchhof stated that the holes had been a problem and were dangerous to people and dogs and supported the request for a cement surface as the best option in the shaded areas. Kirchhof stated that the other complaint she had heard was about owners failing to clean up after their dogs and she had observed that happen.

Storme Smith asked what the policy was for enforcing the dog park rules. Chairman Nelon confirmed that the Harmon Field dog park was intended to be self-policing with users responsible for following the rules and encouraging other users to do so as well. Nelon stated that a new group of Harmon Field employees would be hired to do basic maintenance at the dog park but dog park users were expected to help. Nelon stated that the water fountains had been repaired, the Board was working on getting more shade at the dog park. Chairman Nelon stated that he had observed a major increase in Harmon Field park use since the dog park had been opened.

Interim Harmon Field Superintendent Greg McCool told the attendees that during the winter the Harmon Field water fountains would be turned off to avoid freeze damage. However McCool was looking into installing a frost-free hydrant at the Harmon Field Dog Park so users could have water for their dogs during the winter. Tryon Town Manager told the attendees that repaving of the Harmon Field roads and parking lots was tentatively scheduled for October 2023 which would improve parking and access for dog park users.

Cal Smith asked that a padlock be installed on the two gates at the back of the dog park to prevent ball players using the neighboring ball field from using these gates to retrieve fly balls because the players often left the gates open allowing dogs to escape.

Marty Kirchhof, Cal Smith and Jeff Bradley suggested that there should be a separate water fountain on the small dogs side of the dog park so there would be water fountains for both sides.

Marty Kirchhof asked to whom users might text messages for the doggie cleanup bags dispensers to be refilled. Users would text Lindy Buss when Buss was on the Harmon Field Board, but did not know who to contact now. Interim Harmon Field Park

Superintendent McCool stated that staff would be checking the bag dispensers regularly. Town Manager Fatland stated that a user had suggested adding doggie cleanup bags dispensers all over the park, especially along the walking trail for convenience.

Town Manager Fatland asked if a suggestion box should be installed at the dog park to collect comments and suggestions from users to share with the Harmon Field Board. An attendee suggested putting up a suggestion box for all of Harmon Field.

Watson noted that dogs were not allowed on the baseball fields at Harmon Field or the playground.

Jeffrey Close commended the addition of the "no wading pools" rule at the dog park. Close felt that emptying of these temporary pools had caused much of the standing water problems at the dog park. Without the wading pools, the dog park was better and drier. Watson suggested that the owner could take their dogs to the Pacolet River to get wet as needed for cooling. Close responded that many owner did so.

Tryon Daily Bulletin reporter Storme Smith asked for and received introductions to the members of the Harmon Field Board, Town Manager Fatland, and Interim Harmon Field Superintendent McCool for his news report.

Fatland stated that the Town of Tryon was committed to spending resources to get Harmon Field park back to what it used to be several years ago and public input from citizens tonight was very important in that process. Chairman Nelon stated his appreciation for the good work of the three staff members who had resigned and his regret that they decided to leave, and he wished them well. Chairman Nelon stated that the Town of Tryon administration had assured the Harmon Field Board of Supervisors that operation and maintenance at Harmon Field would continue uninterrupted regardless of the recent staff changes.

Marty Kirchhof asked it there had been any movement on the Harmon Field pickleball court project. Fatland responded that it would be part of a larger capital project that would include the community center building, community gardens and the pickleball courts in that section of Harmon Field. Combining the projects would make the larger project qualify for important grant funding. Fatland reported that Harmon Field and Tryon Arts & Crafts School had both applied for Polk County Community Foundation funding for improvements at the Harmon Field open-air gym.

Harmon Field Dog Park Discussion

Town Manager Fatland recommended that rapid implementation of some of the suggestions made by the attendees at this meeting would demonstrate Harmon Field's responsiveness to public needs. Watson offered to donate a frost-free hydrant to Harmon Field for the dog park. Potential cost for installing concrete pads in the shaded areas of the dog park under the picnic tables was discussed briefly. Fatland stated that

the Harmon Field Budget was tight and he had shared that information with Polk County and asked for help. Adjusting cash flow to cover requested improvements was suggested. Fatland had contacted Yetees regarding updating the double faced entrance signs for the east and west Harmon Field entrances to include the facilities closest each entrance. It was recommended to encourage Polk County Government and the public to feel involved in Harmon Field's maintenance.

Next Meeting Date

The next regular meeting of the Harmon Field Board of Supervisors was scheduled for Tuesday, October 3, 2023, 5:30 pm at Tryon Town Hall, McCown Council Meeting Room.

Adjourn

Chairman Nelon adjourned the meeting at 6:21 pm.

Submitted By:

Meg Rogers

Meg Rogers
substituting for
Secretary-Treasurer Santibanez

Approved:

Stephen Nelon

Stephen Nelon
Chairman