



Town of Beaufort, NC

701 Front St. - P.O. Box 390 - Beaufort, N.C. 28516
252-728-2141 - 252-728-3982 fax - www.beaufortnc.org

Town of Beaufort Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

6:00 PM Wednesday, August 5, 2026 - Train Depot, 614 Broad Street, Beaufort, NC 28516
Monthly Meeting
(Approved 10.01.26)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chair Ron Dupuis.

Roll Call

Board Members Present: Chair Ron Dupuis, Carol Beaird, Lora Fasolino, Bruce Mann, and Victoria Sullivan

Board Members Absent: Vice Chair Doug Williams and Taylor McCune

Staff Present: Community Engagement Director Jen Welborn and Town Manager Matt Zapp

Elected Officials present: Commissioner Dexter Matthews

Agenda Approval

The agenda was unanimously approved as presented.

Minutes Approval

1. PRAB Regular Meeting 06.17.26

The Board unanimously approved the PRAB Regular Meeting 06.17.26 minutes as presented.

Public Comment

Mary Phillips, representing the Beaufort Community Foundation, referenced the Eury Park bench selection agenda item, which had been tabled from the previous meeting. She also mentioned an email she had sent to Chair Ron Dupuis and Community Engagement Director Jen Welborn regarding the item. Welborn confirmed that she and Dupuis had copies of the email available for discussion during the agenda item.

Beaufort Commissioner Dexter Matthews expressed appreciation for the Parks Committee and recognized its impact on the community, referencing conversations with Board Member Bruce Mann.

Staff Report

1. Ann Street Park Update

Community Engagement Director Jen Welborn provided a brief update on the Ann Street Waterfront Park project. She explained that staff from multiple departments are coordinating the work and expect to issue a request for bids for the observation deck portion of the project the following week. A second request for bids will then be issued for the remaining work, including landscaping and hardscaping. The majority of the project is expected to be completed around Thanksgiving.

Welborn also reported that she will meet with Public Works staff and representatives from the Beaufort Garden Club to coordinate plantings. The plantings are expected to be scheduled for early 2027, when weather conditions are more suitable.

Bruce Mann inquired about the CAMA grant deadline and the anticipated project completion timeline. Welborn stated that the grant expires on April 15, 2027, and that all work is scheduled to be completed before that date.

Carol Beaird inquired about the project's funding sources. Welborn discussed the CAMA grant, the required Town match, and various donations supporting the project.

2. Rock the Docks Update

Welborn provided a brief update on the Town's Rock the Docks summer concert series, held on Thursdays from 5:00 to 8:00 PM at John Newton Park from May 21 through August 6, 2026. She stated that one concert remained and was scheduled for the following evening. A check presentation from the Beaufort Community Foundation was also planned for approximately 6:30 PM, with the mayor and several commissioners expected to attend.

Welborn also reported that a proposed Rock the Docks "First Fridays" series would be presented to the Board of Commissioners at its August 10, 2026, meeting. The proposed series would include one Friday evening concert per month in September, October, November, April, and May. She explained that the events would be similar to the summer series but would seek to involve more businesses throughout Beaufort and promote a broader distribution of economic benefits.

3. Summer Kids Feed & Art in the Park Update

Welborn provided an update on Summer Kids Feed and Art in the Park programming, held each Friday from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM at Randolph Johnson Park in coordination with Ms. Pat Wesson. She reported that approximately 30 to 40 bagged lunches were distributed at the park each week, with additional meals provided to the Boys & Girls Club and the Beaufort Housing Authority. A total of approximately 1,500 meals were being provided throughout the summer, and Welborn noted that the meals appeared to be fully utilized each week.

Welborn also reviewed the two program dates for which PRAB had coordinated the arts and crafts activities. The activities included shell painting and a nautical flag craft, with several PRAB members participating.

Two program dates remained. Welborn noted that the final event on August 14, 2026, would include a "Watch for Me NC" bicycle safety campaign hosted by the Beaufort Police and Fire Departments.

4. Arts in Beaufort Sculpture Placement Update

Welborn reviewed the status of the "Menhaden Tales" statue, which had recently been approved by the Board of Commissioners and was being donated to the Town by Arts in Beaufort. She reported that she and other Town staff were working with the Town Attorney and Arts in Beaufort to finalize the details of a memorandum of understanding. The agreement was scheduled for consideration by the Board of Commissioners at its August 10, 2026, meeting and required the statue to be installed in John Newton Park by September 1, 2026.

Welborn noted that Public Works Director Mark Eakes had begun preparing for the installation. She and Public Information Specialist Griff Barlow were also working to place the accompanying audio file on the Town's website, develop the QR code, and coordinate details for the associated signage and its placement.

Welborn also discussed plans for a tentative ribbon-cutting ceremony later that month and stated that she would provide the Board with additional details as they became available.

5. Wayfinding Signs Update

Welborn reported that she had worked with the Public Works Department to install a new wayfinding sign at the corner of Turner Street and Middle Lane directing visitors down Middle Lane. She also noted that an existing wayfinding sign at the beginning of Turner Street had been modified to direct visitors (to the right) toward Calypso Cottage and the Compass Hotel, rather than having all arrows point directly toward downtown.

6. Tree Inventory Update

Welborn stated that Town staff was exploring the completion of a tree study pursuant to a directive from the Board of Commissioners. She noted that the Town previously completed a tree study in 2014 through the North Carolina Forest Service and stated that she would provide a copy to the Board by email.

Lora Fasolino inquired whether the Town still had ordinances regulating trees. Town Manager Matt Zapp confirmed that the Town has a tree ordinance and stated that enforcement is actively managed by the Planning Department. The Board also discussed Beaufort's designation as a "Tree City" and whether the designation had expired. Welborn stated that she would investigate the status of the designation.

7. BOC Priorities Matrix

Welborn provided the Board with a copy of the Board of Commissioners-approved Priorities Matrix for Fiscal Year 2027. Bruce Mann noted that the Board of Commissioners establishes its goals on a fiscal-year basis, while PRAB's goals are currently organized by calendar year.

The Board discussed the timing of its goal-setting process and whether Parks and Recreation priorities should remain on a calendar-year schedule or be aligned with the Board of Commissioners' fiscal-year budget planning cycle. Members noted that maintaining offset schedules may provide advantages by allowing PRAB priorities to be identified in advance of the Town's budget process, which may improve opportunities for securing funding for park projects.

The discussion also addressed projects that arise unexpectedly, such as the Eury Park improvements, and the distinction between the Board's 10-Year Plan and its shorter-term priority goals. Chair Ron Dupuis stated that the 10-Year Plan should serve as a broader strategic guide, while the annual goals should focus on more immediate priorities.

Old Business

1. Bench Selection for Eury Park (tabled from last meeting)

Chair Ron Dupuis reviewed the Board of Commissioners' directive and the PRAB's previous recommendation regarding the selection of benches for Eury Park.

Carol Beaird expressed support for benches with backs and emphasized the importance of honoring the public input received during the community engagement process. Dupuis noted that backed benches were available nearby at Grayden Paul Park, although they provided a different view and park experience.

Bruce Mann recalled that public feedback preferred Pollywood benches in a light color. He contrasted that preference with the black, powder-coated steel benches proposed by the Beaufort Community Foundation and referenced comments previously made by Commissioner Gillikin.

Dupuis invited Mary Phillips, Chair of the Beaufort Community Foundation, to address the Board. Phillips read from an email previously provided to Dupuis and Community Engagement Director Jen Welborn outlining the Foundation's preferences regarding Eury Park upgrades, especially bench preferences. The email read:

"On behalf of the Beaufort Community Foundation, we would like to confirm that we have approved a grant to the Town of Beaufort, NC for no more than \$50,000. This grant money is to be used specifically to enhance Eury Park."

Our desire is to move forward with this project as previously presented to the PRAB and the Beaufort Town Commissioners.

This includes:

- *Curved brick promenade*
- *Stamped bricks with images for an interactive activity*
- *Picnic tables (2) one being ADA accessible*
- *Planters (2)*
- *Steel, Double powder coated black, backless benches by Dumor (3 or 5)*

The foundation researched benches that would enhance the historic nature of coastal Beaufort and support a classic southern aesthetic. We looked at Edenton, NC. which is similar to Beaufort and found Dumor manufactured backless benches being used along the waterfront.

Dumor Bench #92 in black is our recommendation. The number of benches will depend on the price of pavers and picnic tables to stay within budget.

<https://dumor.com/products/bench-92>

- *Durable, heavy duty steel bar construction, double powder coated in classic black*
- *Backless benches allows seating on either side facing Taylor Creek or Front Street allows a choice of position with regard to the elements (wind/sun).*
- *Landscape architect recommended backless benches with the design.*
- *If utilizing the town stage along front street, seating facing the stage would be available.*
- *Backless benches can seat four whereas benches with backs seat two*
- *The strap seat design allows for air flow for cooling and rain water to not settle on seat*
- *Backless benches would not be a focal point in the open space or detract from any water views*
- *Black benches would mimic the classic black light posts that line front street*
- *Lynn Eury's daughter "loved the classic look and design" and the family would very much like to see these used in the park.*
- *Dumor also manufactures picnic tables that would offer design continuity*

To address concerns that the benches would be too hot during the summer months:

I reached out to David Myeres in the Public Works dept with the town of Edenton. I received an email stating "Edenton does not have any issues with heat build up on the park benches. Like everything in the dog days of summer I'm sure it's warm to the touch, but not having any issues."

Wade Rogers (Restoration Specialist, Office of Archives and History, NC State Historic Preservation Office) was instrumental in Edenton with regards to selection of benches. He wrote "Speaking purely from my opinion and observations of the park benches in Edenton, I really like the benches at Edenton's waterfront. They're comfortable and their dark color does not detract from the view of the water. The narrow slats that make up the backs and the seats allow the eye to see through and past the benches making them ideal for places where a bench does not need to be the primary focus. I've not noticed our benches rusting in our brackish climate and the powder coated finish seems to hold up very well.

For those who prefer a backed bench please note there are six backed benches located steps away at Grayden Paul Park and in the shade.

We respect the process and thank the PRAB for allowing us to present to the Board of Commissioner and holding the community input session. The overall concept seemed to have been well received. We also understand that the results regarding bench selection are different from what we presented. We respectfully request that our desires are taken into consideration. We have many photos from various locations where this type of bench is being used in the sun and along coastal waterfronts. Some include historic Alexandria VA, Brookhaven park in Atlanta, Cameron Village in Raleigh, Abingdon NC, Edenton NC to name a few.

We look forward to the completion of this project and appreciate the town being willing to allow the Beaufort Community Foundation to enhance this park...the front porch to Town Hall!"

Phillips requested that the Foundation's preferences be considered and suggested installing three backless benches rather than five benches, due to budget constraints.

The Board reviewed the Board of Commissioners' previous action to clarify what had been approved and what the PRAB's recommendation needed to address. Dupuis recalled the Board of Commissioners' emphasis on PRAB's consideration of public input and reiterated the importance of the feedback previously collected, noting that Mann had data supporting PRAB's earlier recommendations. The group determined that five benches had previously been approved by the Board of Commissioners. Mann suggested considering the bench characteristics through three separate motions addressing the number of benches with and without backs, color, and material.

Victoria Sullivan stated that the Board should work through the remaining differences with the Beaufort Community Foundation. Lora Fasolino noted that the Town had previously discussed standardizing benches, trash receptacles, and bicycle racks. Sullivan also discussed the Beaufort Garden Club's perspective.

Lora Fasolino made a motion to approve three (3) benches without backs and two (2) benches with backs in Eury Park. The motion passed unanimously by a (5-0) vote.

Beaird reiterated the importance of setting aside individual preferences and honoring the results of the public input process.

Bruce Mann made a motion to maintain PRAB's previous recommendation that the benches be a light color.

Welborn suggested that the motion should include a more specific color.

Mann amended his motion to specify that the benches be light gray in color. The motion passed in a (4-1) vote, with Sullivan opposed.

Carol Beaird made a motion to recommend metal benches in light gray, if available in the Edenton-style design, rather than Pollywood benches. The motion passed in a (4-1) vote, with Sullivan opposed and Fasolino abstaining which resulted in an affirmative vote.

Following the votes, Mann raised concerns regarding the overall selection process. The Board discussed the potential standardization of benches, tables, bicycle racks, and other common amenities throughout Town parks. Fasolino suggested developing a Town catalog of approved furnishings to make future selection processes more consistent and efficient.

Beaird again noted that the Board had taken the time to gather public input and should respect the results. Dupuis thanked the members for their work and acknowledged that decisions of this nature were not always easy.

Welborn suggested that the Board continue considering the standardization process in preparation for its December workshop and potentially incorporate the issue into its future goals.

New Business

1. Greenway Executive Committee Report

Bruce Mann reviewed the history and current status of the Beaufort Greenways map which was being developed by the Executive Committee. He explained that the map depicts the full proposed Greenway network and divides it into individual sections, including the Trestle Walk, Beau Coast, Gallants Channel, and the area surrounding the airport. Mann stated that he planned to present to the full PRAB board following staff review. He also noted the level of public interest in Greenway projects and suggested sharing the map with interested parties in the future.

Mann also referenced the planned Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) discussions at the Board of Commissioners' August 24, 2026, workshop. He discussed how the UDO incorporated provisions from the Beaufort Bicycle Plan and included Greenway requirements for future developments. Mann noted that related planning items may be referred to the PRAB for recommendations in the future.

Mann then recapped North Carolina's Department of Transportation's recent public input process for their proposed projects. He recognized Welborn's efforts to publicize the opportunity through an informational flyer and noted that Beaufort-related projects had received a proportionally high number of responses and comments, particularly the proposed Lennoxville Road multiuse path.

Welborn reiterated that the Board of Commissioners' combined workshop and UDO community input session was scheduled for August 24, 2026, at 4:00 PM at the Beaufort Train Depot, and encouraged PRAB members to attend.

Lora Fasolino suggested producing a Beaufort Minute video highlighting the completed Beaufort Greenway section on Lennoxville Road to demonstrate the project's progress and celebrate the accomplishment. Welborn supported the suggestion and discussed potentially coordinating the video with a ribbon-cutting ceremony as well. The Board expressed general support for this idea.

2. Proposed Fencing at Louis Randolph Johnson Jr. Memorial Park

Welborn reviewed a Board of Commissioners directive requesting recommendations for a barrier at Louis Randolph Johnson Jr. Memorial Park to provide separation between the playground area and Carteret Avenue due to safety concerns. She presented several options and associated estimated costs provided by Public Works Director Mark Eakes.

The Board briefly discussed the options and potential funding sources.

Lora Fasolino made a motion to recommend the short concrete wall option to the Board of Commissioners. The motion passed unanimously by a (5-0) vote.

3. Bike Rack Inventory

Carol Beaird shared a map and accompanying list she had created identifying bicycle racks throughout downtown Beaufort. The Board discussed the size, location, color, and material of existing racks, as well as potential funding sources and options for fabricating additional bicycle racks.

Bruce Mann identified a need for additional racks near Stillwater Restaurant, Fishtowne Brewery, and within John Newton Park.

Lora Fasolino, Carol Beaird, and Victoria Sullivan agreed to collaborate on a bicycle rack utilization study to evaluate which existing racks are being used and the extent of their use.

The Board also discussed whether current road conditions throughout Beaufort may be discouraging bicycle use and noted that ridership could increase once road resurfacing is complete. Town Manager Matt Zapp provided an overview of the anticipated timeline for the road replacement project.

Lora Fasolino made a motion for the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board to study the utilization of existing bicycle racks and document the location and style of each rack. The motion passed unanimously by a (5-0) vote.

Board Comments

Bruce Mann mentioned the upcoming workshop to discuss the 10-Year Plan, the structure of the workshop, and whether Board members would receive any materials or assignments in advance. He emphasized the importance of members arriving prepared for the October 1, 2026, workshop. Chair Ron Dupuis stated that he was assembling materials and would distribute them to the Board before the session.

Lora Fasolino inquired about the date of the September meeting. Welborn explained that PRAB meetings would return to their regular schedule on the first Thursday of each month following the conclusion of the Rock the Docks summer concert series. The September meeting was scheduled for Thursday, September 3, 2026, at 6:00 PM at the Beaufort Train Depot.

Mann requested that Moore Street Water Access, an identified Board priority, be included regularly on future PRAB agendas for discussion and updates.

Staff Comments

Community Engagement Director Jen Welborn noted that a Beaufort Waterfront Operations and Finance Committee meeting was scheduled for the following day, Thursday, August 6, 2026, at 1:00 PM at the Beaufort Train Depot, and welcomed interested Board members to attend.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:29 PM.