

Agenda

PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD

Regular meeting

7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 17, 2026

Board Meeting Room of Town Hall Annex, 105 E. Corbin St.



1. **Call to order and confirmation of quorum**
2. **Agenda changes and approval**
3. **Minutes review and approval**
Minutes from regular meeting on Jan. 20, 2026
4. **Discussion items**
 - A. Kings Highway Park Master Plan: Review Draft Plan
5. **Parks and recreation-related reports**
 - A. Board of Commissioners: Robb English
 - B. Planning Board: Hooper Schultz
 - C. Intergovernmental Parks Work Group: Staff
6. **Park steward reports**
 - A. Gold Park: Todd Cayton
 - B. Cates Creek Park: Richard von Furstenberg
 - C. Murray Street Park: Magnolia Brown
 - D. Kings Highway Park: Robb English
 - E. Hillsborough Heights Park: Colleen Cederberg
 - F. Riverwalk: Nevin Daryani
 - G. Turnip Patch Park: Wendy Kuhn
7. **Staff updates**
Recent repairs
8. **Adjournment**

Interpreter services or special sound equipment for compliance with the American with Disabilities Act is available on request. If you are disabled and need assistance with reasonable accommodations, call the Town Clerk's Office at 919-296-9443 a minimum of one business day in advance of the meeting.

Minutes

PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD

Regular meeting

7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2026

Board Meeting Room of Town Hall Annex, 105 E. Corbin St.



Present: Commissioner Robb English, members: Richard von Furstenberg (Chair), Magnolia Brown, Todd Cayton, Colleen Cederberg, Wendy Kuhn, Hooper Schultz, David Weinberg, Paul Weinberg

Absent: Nevin Daryani

Staff: Public Space and Sustainability Manager Stephanie Trueblood

1. Call to order and confirmation of quorum

Richard von Furstenberg called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. Public Space and Sustainability Manager Stephanie Trueblood called the roll and confirmed the presence of a quorum.

2. Agenda changes and approval

There were no changes to the agenda

Motion: Member Hooper Schultz moved to approve the agenda as presented. Member Paul Weinberg seconded.

Vote: 9-0. Motion passed

3. Minutes review and approval

Minutes from regular meeting on Nov. 18, 2025

Motion: Member Richard von Furstenberg moved approval of Nov. 18, 2025. Member Magnolia Brown seconded.

Vote: 9-0. Motion passed.

4. Discussion items

A. Kings Highway Park Master Plan:

Board members reviewed past plans including the Community Connectivity Plan and the Comprehensive Sustainability Plan as well as the draft Orange County Trails Plan and discussed the feasibility of providing pedestrian connectivity to Kings Highway Park from downtown and West Hillsborough.

Board members expressed a continued desire to provide a pedestrian connection and determined the alignment shown in the Comprehensive Sustainability Plan is the most feasible. They agreed to include reference to the Comprehensive Sustainability Plan recommendation in the updated park master plan.

B. Board members reviewed and recommended proposed changes to the Town Code including prohibiting special events on greenways on Saturdays between 10 am and 3 pm, setting a speed limit of 10 mph for greenways, and prohibiting pets from playground areas as determined by the area that includes fall zone surfacing.

Motion: Member Richard von Furstenberg moved to recommend proposed changes to the Town Code of Ordinances. Member Hooper Schultz seconded.

Vote: 9-0. Motion passed.

5. Parks and recreation-related reports

A. Board of Commissioners

Commissioner Robb English shared information about a rezoning application for Oakdale Village, code enforcement items, and the upcoming budget retreat.

B. Planning Board

Hooper Schultz shared that Bryant Green, Engineering Services Manager, attended the Planning Board meeting and shared information about water and sewer capacity for future development in town. He also shared that Planning Board Chair Frank Casadonte's term is coming to an end and Hooper Schultz will now serve as Planning Board Chair.

C. Intergovernmental Parks Work Group

No update.

6. Park steward reports

Board members reported on the conditions of the parks for which they serve as stewards. Trueblood noted any small repairs that needed attention and gave brief reports on small repairs that had been made since the previous meeting.

7. Staff updates

Trueblood shared recent repairs and improvements to parks and updated the board on FY27 budget requests.

8. Adjournment

Motion: Richard von Furstenberg moved to adjourn at 8:30 p.m. Wendy Kuhn seconded.

Vote: 9-0. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,



Stephanie Trueblood
Public Space and Sustainability Manager
Staff support to the Parks and Recreation Board
Approved: February 17, 2026



TOWN OF HILLSBOROUGH

Kings Highway Park Master Plan

INSERT PHOTO HERE

Adopted March 2016

Updated March 2026

BACKGROUND

Kings Highway Park is an 18-acre natural area located at 1001 Ben Johnston Road, Hillsborough North Carolina. Ben Johnston Road runs through the center of the park. The park includes 11 acres on the north side of Ben Johnston Road and 7 acres on the south side. The property is bordered by the Eno River and Lake Ben Johnston to the south and west and by the North Carolina Railroad corridor to the north. The park is owned and maintained by the Town of Hillsborough but is not located within the town limits. The park is in Hillsborough's Extra Territorial Jurisdiction, ETJ, an unincorporated area in which the Town of Hillsborough is legally allowed to exercise authority.

Most of the park is forested but is accessible by natural surface trails. The Eno River and streams within the park are subject to the Neuse River Basin Buffer Rules. Any use or development within the buffer zones must be permitted by the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality. Development may also be prohibited in sections of the park that fall within the 100-year floodplain in accordance to the Town of Hillsborough Floodplain Ordinance.

The name Kings Highway Park is based on the presence of remnants of a river ford and historic road known as King's Highway located on the property. The historic roadbed is visible and crosses the northern portion of the park.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARK

The Town Board officially opened Kings Highway Park to the public May 2007. Kings Highway Park includes nearly one mile of natural surface walking trails and a canoe/kayak boat launch area. The park is used for fishing, boating, and walking. Unauthorized motorized vehicles are prohibited. The park trails and activity areas were built primarily through the work of volunteers. For much of the park's history volunteers have helped to maintain the natural surface trails and activity areas. Volunteer projects have brought amenities to the park such as benches, a kiosk, and a picnic area. Volunteers also regularly conduct litter removal and trail maintenance activities.

In 2014, several neighbors expressed concerns relating to the on-going dredging activities, general maintenance, and illegal activities at the park. The Parks and Recreation Board and town staff met with neighbors and discussed the issues. Staff shared concerns with the Hillsborough Town Board that in turn directed that immediate improvements for safety and appearance be made, and requested that a master plan be developed for the park. In response to neighbor concerns the Town increased patrols at the site, improved the parking area, and installed two gates at the parking area. The outer gate is locked by the Police Department when the park is closed. The inner gate is opened only for maintenance access. The town also added an accessible kayak launch and two floating wetlands. The floating wetlands help to treat stormwater runoff and remove nutrients from the river, improving water quality.

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Kings Highway Park is situated along the Eno River, which runs through the center of Hillsborough and is the source for the town's drinking water. Portions of the park occur within the Eno River floodplain. The park is designed to withstand flooding, but cleanup is required after flood events to make sure the trail is safe for visitors. In 2025, Kings Highway Park sustained its worst flooding damages from Tropical Storm Chantal. The Eno River rose more than 20 feet and spread well beyond the 500-year floodplain line. Several of the trails were impacted as trees were downed and silt and mud were deposited in all flooded areas. The kayak launch was swept away and retrieved but was damaged in the storm.

The State of North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality has established riparian buffers to protect streams. These buffers are typically 50 feet deep and are preserved, undisturbed land along streams and other surface water bodies. Recreational trails are a permitted use within stream buffers. The only permitted water access point to the Eno River is the kayak launch at Kings Highway Park, although community members often make their own paths. Unofficial access points can damage the environment, leading to compaction and erosion of stream banks and riparian areas.

The northern and southern portions of the park are mixed age forest stands that have been select harvested over time. The park transitions from a dominate bottomland hardwood stand on the southern tract to more upland mixed pine hardwood species as you progress up hill on the northern portion. The southern portion is a bottomland hard-

wood stand dominated by yellow poplar, red maple, sweetgum, sycamore, and sourwood. The northern portion is a mixed pine hardwood stand primarily dominated by shortleaf and loblolly pine as well as some large hardwood species such as yellow poplar, red and white oak, red and sugar maple, and sweetgum.

Since the park opened, the town has worked to protect and preserve trees in the park because tree canopies are essential to establishing a healthy ecosystem. Trees provide food and habitat for wildlife, produce oxygen to breathe, store carbon, clean pollutants from the air and soil, and reduce impacts of stormwater runoff and effects of urban heat islands. The Hillsborough Tree Board is responsible for planning the planting, maintenance and removal of town trees, including those within parks.

In 2016, the town commissioned a forest management plan for Kings Highway Park. The plan's recommendations include assessment and removal of hazardous trees, maintenance of the understory for safety and aesthetics, removal and control of invasive species, and planting and care of native plant species.

Native plants are essential to biodiversity and environmental resilience. Plants that have adapted to local climate, soil and other conditions provide food and habitat for wildlife and help mitigate impacts from flooding and erosion. Increasing the use of native plants and reducing invasive species help maintain biodiversity and ecological health. The town has undertaken significant efforts to promote native plants and remove invasive plant species. In 2019, the town worked with Piedmont Electric to apply a compost blanket with native grasses and wildflowers to a compacted and eroding slope in the utility easement in Kings Highway Park. The slope is revegetated now with native plants and mowed once a year to keep woody material from taking root. The Tree Board also has a volunteer invasive species removal team that meets weekly to remove invasive plants and to plant native plants in Hillsborough's public spaces.

UTILITIES

Lake Ben Johnston serves as the water intake for the Hillsborough water treatment plant. A raw water intake and pump station are situated near the weir dam on Lake Ben Johnston. Dredging behind the dam occurs approximately every 5-10 years or as needed. A dewatering basin for sediment, a byproduct of dredging, is located within the south side of the park. In between dredging operations, the area is maintained as an open vegetated meadow.

Add regulations about dam and raw water intake...

The park is bisected by Ben Johnston Road, which is state owned and maintained by the North Carolina Department of Transportation. Trails within the park cross under the state-maintained bridge on Ben Johnston Road. The park is also bisected by a 30-foot utility easement that is owned and maintained by Piedmont Electric. The easement includes restrictions for development and use. Any improvements to the easement area must be coordinated with Piedmont Electric.

North Carolina Railroad owns and maintains a 200 foot wide rail operating corridor north of the park.

AMENITIES

The town has invested in pedestrian amenities at parks. There is a picnic area and waste and recycling receptacles at Kings Highway Park. The kayak launch was damaged by recent flooding but will be reinstalled and reinforced. Provides water access to boaters. The park also includes an interpretive sign that provides educational information about the floating wetlands.

MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS

The Public Space and Sustainability Division develops and manages town facilities and grounds available to the public, including parks, greenways, cemeteries, sidewalks, streets and urban spaces. The division coordinates with other town departments and divisions — such as Police, Public Works, Stormwater and Environmental Services, and Utilities — regarding any issues and projects on town property that pertain to their operations and authority.

Parks and greenways are inspected monthly by staff. The Hillsborough Parks and Recreation Board and Hillsborough

Tree Board share responsibility for recommending improvements to parks and greenways. These appointed boards act in an advisory capacity to the Hillsborough Board of Commissioners. Parks and Recreation Board members also inspect parks and greenways as park stewards once a month, providing a second set of eyes to identify any issues.

RULES

Rules and regulations for town parks and greenways are in the Code of Ordinances: Chapter 3, Article 7. Rules are posted at park entrances. Rules and etiquette also are conveyed to the public through town news and social media.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The original Kings Highway park master plan was adopted in 2016. In 2026, the Hillsborough Parks and Recreation Board and the Hillsborough Tree Board updated recommended improvements for Kings Highway Park in coordination with the Public Space and Sustainability Division. The recommendations are detailed below and are intended to guide future spending decisions.

The following section includes recommendations for upkeep and improvements at Kings Highway Park. See the proposed site plan map on the following page for proposed trail layout and activity areas.

- Maintain the existing trails and amenities in safe and working order
- Maintain surfacing at picnic and parking areas
- Maintain kayak launch in safe and working order
- Apply Universal Design Principles to future park improvements
- Remove diseased or dead trees that pose a danger to trails, parking and activity areas
- Conduct litter removal campaigns within the park and along Ben Johnston Road
- Coordinate with utility providers on any maintenance, repair and improvements projects
- Provide safety features to prevent recreation near the raw water intake, pump station, and weir dam
- Provide a loop trail on north side of the park
- Install stable surfacing on the trail around dewatering basin
- Study feasibility of pedestrian connection to downtown as proposed in the Comprehensive Sustainability Plan
- Change name to Kings Highway Natural Area
- Install additional interpretative signage (Topic: The Kings Highway)
- Remove invasive species and plant native species
- Invest in resilient and green infrastructure
- Communicate rules and trail etiquette through signage and public information campaigns.
- Evaluate the feasibility of providing a pedestrian connection between the park and West Hillsborough as recommended in the Comprehensive Sustainability Plan

The following pages include photographs of Kings Highway Park.

INSERT PHOTOS HERE

MAPS

The following maps are included in this plan for reference.

- Kings Highway Park Site map
- Comprehensive Sustainability Plan Trails and Greenways Map

PLAN UPDATES AND AMENDMENTS

This master plan should be updated every three to five years. Amendments to the plan can be made at any time through action by the Parks and Recreation Board.



Kings Highway Park: Site Map



INSERT CSP Trails Map HERE