

Agenda

PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD

Regular meeting

7 p.m. Tuesday, Mar. 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 Feb. 17, 2026
4. **Discussion items**
 - A. Universal Design Resolution Presentation
 - B. 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, Creek Week, Climate Challenge
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, Feb. 17, 2026

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



Present: Commissioner Robb English, members: Paul Weinberg, Magnolia Brown, Todd Cayton, Nevin Daryani, Hooper Schultz, David Weinberg

Absent: Colleen Cederberg, Richard von Furstenberg, Wendy Kuhn

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

Vote: 7-0. Motion passed

3. Minutes review and approval

Minutes from regular meeting on Jan. 20, 2026

Motion: Member Hooper Schultz moved approval of Jan. 20, 2026. Member Todd Cayton seconded.

Vote: 7-0. Motion passed.

4. Discussion items

A. Kings Highway Park Master Plan:

Board members reviewed the draft master plan and created the following list of priorities to include in the final plan:

1. Providing safety features and delineating the recreational area in lake Ben Johnston.
2. Installing stable surfacing on the walking path around the detention basin
3. Removing dead trees that pose a safety risk
4. Changing the name to Kings Highway Natural Area
5. Adding an interpretive sign about the park's features
6. Reinstalling the kayak launch

Staff will integrate these priorities, add photos and submit a final draft to the board as soon as possible.

No formal action was taken

5. Parks and recreation-related reports

A. Board of Commissioners
Commissioner Robb English shared information about the town budget and staff capacity limitations for FY27.

B. Planning Board
Hooper Schultz shared that the Planning Board is discussing development plans for Corbinton Commons.

C. Intergovernmental Parks Work Group
No update.

No formal action was taken

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.

No formal action was taken

7. Staff updates

Trueblood shared recent repairs including the removal of a downed tree on Riverwalk near the Eno River Brewery.

No formal action was taken

8. Adjournment

Motion: Paul Weinberg moved to adjourn at 8:10 p.m. Magnolia Brown seconded.

Vote: 7-0. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,



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



Silver Award Project

Universal Design Resolution

By: Sophia Myers and Magnolia Brown



About Us

- We are Cadette Girl Scouts from Hillsborough Troop 1226.
- We are in middle school and are interested in making Hillsborough more accessible to all.
- Educating and creating this Universal Design Resolution is part of our Silver Award.



Why It's Important: The Problems

Some public spaces are hard for everyone to access. 17.4% of Orange County's population is over the age of 65. This means that we have a rapidly aging community who needs would be addressed by this resolution.

Right now the current park policies on accessibility and inclusivity don't do enough to advocate for people with mobility issues. Even people with walkers, strollers, or injuries all struggle to get around.



Universal Design

“The design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.”

-NC State University, College of Design, Center for Universal Design

“The biggest challenge of designing for “all people” is ensuring it’s functional for people with diverse abilities. Do it well, and the results will be usable and marketable to everyone.”

Universal design is communicated through seven distinct principles.



The Seven Principals

- Equitable Use
- Flexibility in Use
- Simple and Intuitive Use
- Perceptible Information
- Tolerance for Error
- Low Physical Use
- Size and Space for Approach and Use



Universal Design in the Wild

- Gold park implements universal design well. Gold park can be easily accessed through its flat walkways designed for easy movement around the park. In addition to this there are also things you can do regardless of your physical abilities or any other defining characteristics. Principal 1, 3, and 5.
- At Cates Creek Park there is a large ramp that connects to the sidewalk which is very handy and easy to access! This allows for low physical use and appropriate size and space. This incorporates principles 6 and 7.



The Resolution

We ask that the Parks and Rec. Board recommend that the Board of Commissioners adopt a Universal Design Resolution into the Comprehensive Sustainability Plan as a recommendation.

The resolution will state that all parks and public spaces will be used with Universal Design. This will set design standards from the minimum to the best possible.



Works Cited

NC State University, "The Principles of Universal Design", *Center for Universal Design*, May 1997, design.ncsu.edu/research/center-for-universal-design/ November 2025

Huwise, "Older Americans in North Carolina" Population by Age, NC OSBM State Demographer, January 2026, demography.osbm.nc.gov/p/population-by-age/ December 2025

The Universal Design Project, "What is Universal Design", *The UD Project*, Pruett & Co, 2012, <https://universaldesign.org/definition> December 2025

NC State University, January 2026, "Disability and Multimodality, A Framework for WPA's." <https://disabilityandmultimodality.wordpress.ncsu.edu/universal-design-ud/> . Accessed 4 January 2026.

Sarasota County Government, January "Universal Design and Visitability." 2026, <https://www.scgov.net/government/sustainability/sustainability/universal-design-and-visitability> . Accessed 4 January 2026.

WHEREAS, Universal Design is a philosophy that advocates for the creation and composition of environments that can be accessed, understood, and used by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized features; and

WHEREAS, Universal Design creates inclusive solutions and promotes accessibility and usability, allowing people with all levels of ability to live independently; and

WHEREAS, this approach seeks to proactively remove barriers that could limit participation in social, economic, and cultural life.

WHEREAS, the implementation of universal design principles—including equitable use, flexibility, simplicity, and safety—enhances accessibility for all individuals regardless of their age, size, ability or disability, and the general public; and

WHEREAS, designing for accessibility from the outset reduces the need for costly, reactive retrofitting of public spaces; and

WHEREAS, incorporating universal design principles improves the quality of life, fosters independence, and supports inclusion in community life.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town of Hillsborough hereby adopts the principles of Universal Design as a standard for all future planning, and construction of public spaces.



TOWN OF HILLSBOROUGH

Kings Highway Park

Master Plan



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. Water is suctioned from lake ben Johnston by the intake and then pumped to the water treatment plant through underground pipes. Recreation is not allowed within 500 feet of the intake. Recreation is allowed not allowed near the weir dam.

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.

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. Additionally, 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
- Restore kayak launch and floating wetlands and maintain 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

PRIORITIES

- Provide safety features to prevent recreation near the raw water intake, pump station, and weir dam
- Install stable surfacing on the trail around dewatering basin
- Remove diseased or dead trees that pose a danger to trails, parking and activity areas
- Change name to Kings Highway Natural Area
- Restore kayak launch and floating wetlands and maintain in safe and working order

The following pages include photographs of Kings Highway Park.



Parking Area



Waste and Recycling Receptacle



Lake Ben Johnston Access Area



Piedmont Electric Power Easement



Lake Ben Johnston Access Area



Lake Ben Johnston



Trail with Debris from Strom Chantal



Trail along Eno River



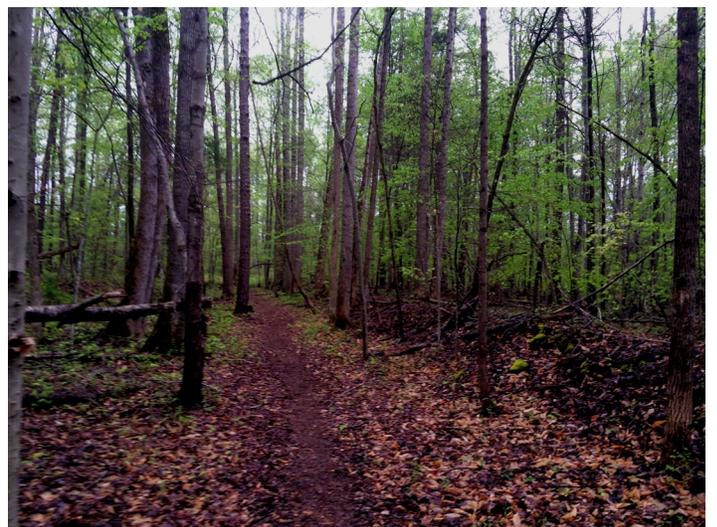
Trail under Ben Johnston Road Bridge



Trail under Ben Johnston Road Bridge



Trail Entrance on North Side of Ben Johnston Road



Trail along the "Kings Highway" on North Side of Park



Kayak Launch and Floating Wetlands



Installation of the Floating Wetlands



Planting the Floating Wetlands



Interpretive Sign



Picnic Area



Lake Ben Johnston Rules Sign



Trail around Dewatering Basin



Dewatering Basin



Weir Dam



Raw Water Pump Station

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



