



# City of Jonesboro

Municipal Center  
300 S. Church Street  
Jonesboro, AR 72401

## Meeting Minutes Public Services Council Committee

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Monday, April 29, 2024

4:00 PM

Municipal Center, 300 S. Church

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### SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER

#### 2. ROLL CALL (ELECTRONIC ATTENDANCE) CONFIRMED BY CITY CLERK APRIL LEGGETT

**Present** 6 - Joe Hafner; Ann Williams; Brian Emison; LJ Bryant; Anthony Coleman and Janice Porter

**Absent** 1 - Chris Gibson

#### 3. OTHER BUSINESS

[COM-24:014](#)

MASTER PARKS PLAN PRESENTATION

**Attachments:** [Jonesboro Summary Report Draft Pages 3.21.24](#)  
[Jonesboro SDOH Plan final](#)  
[Operational Assessment - Master Parks Plan April 2023](#)  
[Jonesboro Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2024](#)  
[Parks Conditions Assesesment](#)  
[Indoor Recreational Facility Assessment](#)  
[Recreational Programming Assessment](#)  
[Access-Based Assessment](#)

*Chairman Joe Hafner said, before Danny and his team get started, I want to recognize Mayor Copenhaver. I think he has a few words to say. Mayor Harold Copenhaver said, thank you, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate everybody being in attendance today. You know, this has been a process as it always is; but early last year we began this and hiring an outside firm to take a subjective, thorough, creative look at our current city parks, the structure of our Parks Department, and areas that were lacking in recreation in the city. So for many months, Halff & Associates' team has been working intensely on this matter. We've held public meetings, meeting with our staff and other council members. Their goal has been not only to build a plan that they think is successful, but one that was shaped around the wants and needs they gathered during the research in our community. So, please note, since the final exacts of the sports complex have not been finalized totally, those courts, swimming facilities, etc. are not represented in this plan, although Halff was directly cognizant of the assets when creating this document.*

*This process has yielded a couple of very clear results. We are blessed with an amazing park system in Jonesboro. I think we all know that. We have a great parks staff which performs well above average and is extremely efficient. That is not to*

anybody's surprise. Thank you, Danny and your entire team. We must invest in all parts of our community, and we are lacking public spaces in East and Northeast Jonesboro. It's going to take a lot of resources and partnerships to accomplish a lot of this plan similar to Junior Auxiliary and their huge financial support of a park in planning for East Jonesboro. As mayor, I am committed to following this plan should City Council approve it. I've said it before and many of you share this statement. We have to invest in the future of our city today if we want to retain our brightest young talent for tomorrow. Many of these pieces presented tonight will be represented in the upcoming capital improvement plan. I know we are all looking forward to hearing from Halff, so please feel free to ask questions. And I want us all to have a great understanding and buy in on this plan. Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is the end of my comments.

Chairman Joe Hafner said, thank you, Mayor. Danny, I'll turn the floor over to you. Parks and Recreation Director Danny Kapales approached the podium and said, alright. So thank you all so much for having us here. Thank you all for coming out on a Monday night. I know it's a special called, but this is extremely important to the city, to the Parks Department, to our community. And as you all know, we have been waiting for this plan for a while. It has been a long process, but the wait was needed. We needed to make sure that we got this right. Being as important as it is, we needed to make sure that every detail was correct and right for our community. And we also added a plan to it, which also slowed down a little bit. And that plan became very important also because when we're doing a master park plan, it encompassed a lot of what that secondary plan had; but it didn't go as in depth as the accelerated plan, as we call it. But I really want to call it the accessibility plan, because that is what it is about. It's about accessibility to all of our park system; and that is really where that secondary plan came in and it took a lot of details. So I am really excited about this blueprint. It just looked at every piece of parks, whether it was the grounds, our indoor facilities, our staffing, our programs, and every facet of Parks and Recreation. So I am really excited to just bring Christian up and let him have an opportunity to go through this whole plan, both plans and explain it to you and answer any questions that you all have. Christian, thank you.

Christian Lentz with Halff & Associates approached the podium and said, Mayor, members of Council, thanks so much for having me this afternoon. I really appreciate your time and attention. Danny said I had what, three hours to talk to you? No, well actually when you consider all of this, it's always very possible; but no, I certainly won't go on for three hours. I'll definitely give you a very general high level overview of actually, as Danny was indicating, not just the Parks and Recreation master plan but also the subsequent health accelerator plan that was prepared throughout the master planning process as well. So once again, I just want to give you a high level overview of not just one park planning initiative but ultimately two park planning initiatives which feed directly into each other and provide a significant amount of guidance to the elected officials, appointed officials and city staff and how you choose to invest in your Parks and Recreation system in the future should you adopt both those planning documents.

We started off preparing the overall Parks and Recreation master plan. It was actually the city's first Parks and Recreation master plan; which the fact that it's the first Parks and Recreation master plan, but you already have a really outstanding Parks and Recreation system. It truly is a testament to Danny and his staff that you have a working Parks and Recreation in your community. But as Danny has indicated, later on in the process, actually when we were very close to finishing the Parks and Recreation master plan draft, we were also requested by the city to assist it in preparing the city's

*health accelerator plan, which was a plan that is funded by a grant issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. So, once again, the intent this afternoon is to provide you that overview of both of the documents.*

*Now when it comes to why a community wants to plan for its Parks and Recreation system, and we have on the screen and presentation a number of key reasons why you would do so. But the two that I really want to point out are just making sure that as a community, as you grow and change in the future, that you are making sure that you are meeting a certain level of expectation for your residents and the community. You have to understand today what your community's preferences are, what their needs are when it comes to Parks and Recreation; because as your community grows and changes, so too do the preferences of the people that live in your community, the things that they want to do. When you are considering those things, you also have to consider, do we have an adequate amount of park space in our community? Do we have an adequate number of different types of recreational facilities and sufficient programming for the residents that live here and the residents that may be choosing whether or not they want to come to Jonesboro and be a part of your community?*

*We worked very closely through the planning process with an advisory committee. That advisory committee was used to vet the ideas that were generated, our understanding, the assumptions that were made through the different assessments that we did. But ultimately we utilized that advisory committee also to help us get the word out and solicit public participation in the master planning process. The plan process went through four general phases; and as Danny had indicated, we have gone a little bit longer, a few months longer than we had originally intended in the process. But a lot of that is directly attributed to bringing on the health accelerator plan and essentially doing two plan processes, trying to compress that in the time frame that we would typically prepare one plan. In addition to the Parks and Recreation master plan, the Health Accelerator plan was intended to address what is termed social determinants of health. And specifically, the city of Jonesboro made application for the Centers for Disease Control to try to determine how it could use its Parks and Recreation facilities to provide for increased accessibility for people with disabilities and in other targeted populations. The intent in preparing this specific plan was to improve the neighborhood and built environment in the city and also to provide better opportunities for social interaction for targeted populations oftentimes that it's really hard to reach those populations when you are building a Parks and Recreation system. And so this plan was intended to spend special attention to those different targeted populations. That is something here in the presentation I will talk about in a little bit more detail.*

*So I want to touch on very quickly the structure of both of the planning reports. So even though I showed you this book of documents that was generated as part of the Parks and Recreation master plan, ultimately the plan itself is much thinner and is a summary plan that really tries to take all of the information that was generated and boil it down to what is your community's vision for Parks and Recreation as you move forward? And what is your work program? What do you want to invest in? What sort of policies do you want to enact? What sort of practices or operational adjustments do you want to make in delivering Parks and Recreation services? Ultimately that master plan has four chapters. It talks about your vision. It identifies some general assumptions or summarizes the existing conditions in your Parks and Recreation system today, and then again includes that work program which is a work program that includes investments, policies, practices, proposed regulations, things of that nature. The plan is set up so that it specifically cross-references the recommendations in the Health Accelerator plan; and that was really the major reason for the delay because before we completed the work program, we wanted to make sure that any applicable*

*recommendations that were generated in your Health Accelerator plan were also incorporated into the work program that is in your Parks and Recreation master plan as well.*

*That big stack of documents that I have held a couple of times is essentially the plan and all of the different technical memoranda that were generated to come to the conclusions that are represented in your summary plan document. So in addition to that summary plan document, there are memoranda that talk about how we assessed access and proximity of parks to your population, memoranda that talk about what we heard from the general public and stakeholder groups, and then a range of different types of assessments including an assessment of the conditions of your park and your indoor recreation facilities and your practices when it comes to how you operate and provide Parks and Recreation services to your population. We worked with focus groups as I had indicated before, an advisory committee, and then we also had a number of public information booths, an interactive online community survey, an interactive map. We had over 1200 respondents to the online survey. We had about 60 participants on the park by park interactive map that was used for people to go to each individual park and say, I want these things here, these are things that you need to fix in this particular park. And then public information booths were actually held at six different locations, many of those by Danny's staff specifically, and we had over 135 participants at those public information booths.*

*When it comes to the overall vision and the guiding principles that are recommended in the Parks and Recreation master plan, rather than reading through the entire statement, I will just highlight a few things. The intent is that through this plan that you as a community want to make sure you do all you can do to increase access to your park system for as many people in your community as possible, that you obviously want to have quality amenities that are bringing people to those park spaces. The amenities are diverse, so that you are addressing a wide range of recreational interests, both active and passive recreational interests that people might have, and that also your park spaces are activated. And what we mean by that is that pretty much any time of the day that you go, from sun up to sundown, have those parks been programmed in such a way that you're always going to see somebody there, you're going to see somebody utilizing that space because of the different types of amenities that you have chosen to place within each one of your park properties.*

*In addition to the vision statement, there are four guiding principles that ultimately also serve as the goals that are included in the Parks and Recreation master plan, under which we have about, I think the original version of the plan had 56 different actions and strategies. I think that is now 58 actions and strategies as we have made some amendments to the plans since the original draft was prepared. But ultimately those guiding principles or goals talk about increasing access to your park system, investing in different types of facilities, providing a diverse range of programming for your residents, and then also a goal on how you can increase the efficiency of providing parks and recreation services to the residents of Jonesboro and visitors to your community as well.*

*So there are a couple of slides here that when I came and talked to the public services committee before that I presented at that time, but we will go ahead. I think we've all slept a little bit since then, so we will go ahead and go back through a few of those. When it comes to park land in the city of Jonesboro, actually the city of Jonesboro does very well when it comes to overall park land when you compare the city to national medians or national medians of communities of a similar size to Jonesboro. You've got 8.9 acres of regional park per 1000 residents. That is all obviously in Craighead*

Forest Park. 1.4 acres of community parks, but only 0.1 acres of neighborhood parks. Actually, the amount of neighborhood park acreage that you provide per 1000 residents is actually significantly lower than other communities. So overall, you provide more park space than the median; but then when you look at certain types of parks, neighborhood parks specifically, you provide a much smaller amount. And we will tell you that neighborhood parks, from our perspective and experience, are really kind of the backbone of your parks system, because by having neighborhood parks spread out throughout your community, you are better able to increase access to park space in your community.

This park plan recommends future targeted levels of service of eight acres per 1000 residents of regional parks, two acres per 1000 residents of community parks, and from 0.1 to one acre per 1000 residents in neighborhood parks. And ultimately when you look at that acreage target for the year 2040, now you can see at the bottom of this slide, that there is potentially work to be done to increase your park acreage over time. So those are the overall recommendations of the plan when it comes to the sheer amount of park land acreage that you should be striving toward in the city of Jonesboro, not just for your residents of today, but also for your anticipated future population. Now I've got a slide in here that I am going to go back to, but I am going to go ahead and say it now. Particularly since you are the elected officials that have to decide where the dollars go, how are we going to meet this target? One thing I want to make sure it's very clear, and I will say it a couple of times during the presentation, is when we talk about target levels of service in parks and recreation plan, we are saying it's advisory and it's aspirational. So what we mean by that is, by 2040, if you haven't made those targets, if you haven't made up those potential deficits by then, that's fine. If you as a community have made progress toward achieving those targets, that is success.

When it comes to the accessibility of your park land acreage, however, the sheer amount of acreage is not really the only measure that we are going to look at. Because, once again, if you have got a lot of park land acreage, but it is locked up in one location of your community, that doesn't mean that everybody throughout your community has the same degree of access to your park system as other people that might be directly adjacent to that large park space. So when we look at the city of Jonesboro and the location of your parks, and we compare that to residential land in your city, we find that there are 88% of your residential areas are outside of a ten minute walkshed from your park space. So there are a lot of residential areas when it comes to safe and comfortable walking routes to your parks that don't really have those direct graphs. That means there are a lot of people that if they have a car, ready access to a car, have to get into a car to get to one of your park spaces. So we identify areas where there are service gaps where over time perhaps the city should be targeting the placement of additional future parks. In addition to that walkshed, we look at other ways to prioritize where those new parks should go. So we look at different vulnerable populations. We look at areas with higher population densities; and we also project census block groups that might actually be projected to grow at a faster rate than other census block groups. When we consider all of those things, there are some specific areas, there are some specific service gap areas where this plan would recommend that you prioritize the future placement of a neighborhood or a community park. You can see that up on the slide that we are looking at areas to the Northeast and to the north, and directly to the West. Now, that is not to say that the city shouldn't consider parks in these other service area gaps, but knowing that we are not all made of money and that you can't just put all of the city dollars in budget into park spaces. If you were going to prioritize a new park in the next two years, in the next five years, this plan provides the recommended priority areas where that park should

be placed.

*Likewise, when it comes to trails, you've got a growing trail system. And we love trails not only because they provide for transportation options and they provide for recreation options; but when it comes to increasing access to your park system and other community destinations, these are the safe and comfortable routes that provide those shortcuts, if you will. Today, we've got just under 15 miles of existing or funded trails in the city of Jonesboro. That is about 26% or a quarter of your population that is within a half mile radius. But you've got a plan that was adopted a few years ago that shows 79 potential miles in the city of Jonesboro. One thing that we indicated very early on in this process was reviewing that connectivity plan you had. It is a very solid plan. We did not need to reinvent that network. We simply wanted to make sure that this Parks and Recreation master plan promoted that proposed network, and so that is something that you can continue to strive for and that we are not creating unnecessary contradictions with the plans that you've already adopted in the past. Ultimately, if the city of Jonesboro were able to build out that park system, you would go from about a quarter of your residential areas being within a half mile to three quarters of your residential areas being within a half mile of a trail in the city.*

*Likewise, the plan in addition to park land makes recommendations on target levels of service for common facility types. The plan also recommends up to over time four new community centers. It recommends an enhancement to some of your indoor recreation centers or ways some of those centers could be reprogrammed; and there are different actions throughout the plan that recommends some specialized facilities as well. So just touching on that very quickly, there are a number of very common recreational facility types where the plan does in a tabular manner provide Danny and his staff with some direction on where there may be some facility deficits that could be made up with on a park by park basis with some future investments.*

*There we go. I couldn't help myself, but remember. This target levels of service are aspirational. Their advisory success is making progress toward those goals. If you come 20 years from now, you haven't quite met those goals, if your metrics are better than they are today, that from our perspective is success for Jonesboro. In addition to those assessments, a key assessment that was conducted was a conditions assessment for every one of your park properties. Now one thing I want to point out is that conditions assessment is a one-time point in time assessment. So that is to say, oh, we've gone out today and these are facilities that we are seeing that might be in a dilapidated or a deteriorated condition that may need to be upgraded or replaced. A conditions assessment, because it is a one-time assessment, doesn't anticipate five years from now what other facilities might need to be replaced or might need to be improved. There is a recommendation to deal with that, but we did want to make sure that you understood this plan does identify a whole range of potential park by park improvement projects that are included in the overall plan that could eventually be included in the capital improvements program as well. So there are a number of facilities that are recommended. In fact, you've got a slide on the value of all those recommended improvements. But when it came to your conditions assessment, and we ranked all of the parks on a scale of one to five, with five being the best condition and three just generally being an average condition. We found that your system score was about a 3.6, which is fairly consistent with the conditions assessments that we do in a number of different park systems, a number of different communities. And we found though that based on the review that even near term, they are close to \$5 million worth of potential improvements that could be conducted within the park system to replace dilapidated equipment or fix deteriorated conditions. Now I will tell you, this is just from the initial conditions assessment. This does not include all of the other*

*recommendations from your Health Accelerator plan, the deal with walkshed improvements, or ADA accessibility improvements. So this is one of those things that is always awkward to put those dollars up there, but it's just the reality of the cost that it takes to maintain a top-notch Parks and Recreation system.*

*Your overall work program as I indicated in the plan, originally we had 56 total strategies and actions, and that is separate from the list of improvement projects that are included in the Parks and Recreation master plan. There have been a couple additional strategies and actions that have been added. I believe those are included in the version or the draft of the plan that Danny provided to you this afternoon, and I just wanted to hit on just a couple. Obviously we don't have time since you're not going to give me three hours, we don't have time to go through all 58. But we will hit on a couple. The first when it comes to access there is a recommendation on park land dedication and the city considering amendment to your municipal codes to require the dedication and improvement of park land as part of new development. When it comes to providing new park land for future population, one of the best ways you can do that is to ensure that just like you would streets and sidewalks and water and sewer, that you are requiring that park land and an open space being included as part of the land of element process to meet the future recreational needs or desires of the future residents of your community. Particularly, when we were working with growing communities, it is a very effective way to try to not only provide for the immediate park needs of your new population, but also to help make up any park land deficits that you as a community might have. It's a whole lot easier as we know to get park land as part of the development process than going back and having to find a plot of land for the city to buy and pay for to fill in your park land gaps.*

*There is a recommendation in the plan about conceptual preparing future conceptual park plans. If you're going to take a park like we've got here like Allen Park/Landsbrook Park and you're going to determine how you over time want to reimagine those parks or invest in such a way that all of the different types of amenities and facilities that you have there are working together with each other, are seamless, then preparing that conceptual park plan is very important. But not just to get the idea of what new facilities you want to put into a park, but going through the conceptual park planning process to also anticipate what it is going to cost you to operate and maintain all of those new amenities that you are putting into the park space. So that is key recommendation as well.*

*We also recommend an ongoing process for Danny and staff to review, maintain a ledger of the recreational programs that the city is offering and continue to determine over time which program should be modified, which programs perhaps based on popularity or waning interest should be discontinued, what programs should be added to the list of recreational programs that the city of Jonesboro offers or facilitates or enables to operate at the city park properties.*

*Then also the plan includes a recommendation on department restructuring. One of the things that we found with the city of Jonesboro's Parks and Recreation department, when it came to staffing, is that particularly at the administrative level for the amount of park land that the city has and maintains, the city of Jonesboro's parks staff, administrative staff is, you have much fewer administrative staff persons than park systems of a similar size. So this plan recommends potentially a restructuring of the department, looking at structuring it so that Danny actually has two assistant Parks and Recreation directors. And also it makes some recommendations on some key administrative hires that could be included with that, including a volunteer coordinator, and based on the findings of the Health Accelerator plan, an inclusive recreation*

manager as well.

Then we've got on services, strategies on an asset management plan. Now I said before, when we conducted the conditions assessment, that is a point in time assessment. That is what we are seeing today based on what is on the ground. With an asset management plan, as a community, you actually go in and you digitize every single amenity that you have in your park space and you use that digital information to anticipate the lifespan of each one of those facilities and generate costs for the replacement of each one of those facilities or amenities. And that way, what you have is an asset management plan provides you that digital library that allows you to anticipate when something is coming up for replacement before that amenity or that facility gets to the point where it is deteriorated, it has become a hazard. Actually an asset management plan allows you to be proactive when it comes to budgeting operations and maintenance rather than being reactive because Danny has been notified of something else that is broken or something else that needs to be replaced. So conducting that asset management plan moving forward is really a key recommendation in the overall plan project.

I am going to go ahead and pause here just for a minute. We've got some slides, and I certainly want to provide you an overview of the Health Accelerator plan. But I wanted to take just a minute to see if there were any questions about the overall Parks and Recreation master plan first.

Councilmember Anthony Coleman said, thank you, Christian. So I heard you mention about, and I saw briefly, some of the priority areas for this plan; but will we see specifically what you are recommending? Is that another presentation for that where you're just telling us, hey, this area is in need? But do you have specific recommendations, I guess is what I am asking? Mr. Lentz said, no, the plan itself simply has the action of indicating to fill those park land service area gaps. Whether you do so with a neighborhood park or a community park, that is left open because of the fact that we can't anticipate how much funding you as a community might want to spend on that park space. Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, sure, I know you don't know that, but I was just wondering if you had a recommendation. So that is the question. But, also, follow-up. You also mentioned about the improvements on where we are. In the plan, do you have specific recommendations for those improvements? Mr. Lentz said, yes, each park. I will give you an example. These are all of the project sheets just from the Health Accelerator plan. So we do. I did want to mention, though, in response to your first question. When it comes to recommendations, the plan saying these are the spaces that need a park, and these are the priority areas of your community that need a park. But when it comes to the type of park that might be placed there, it is simply how the community wants to fill the park land deficit based on your target levels of service that are recommended in the plan. So whether you put a neighborhood park in that location or a community park is a discussion for the city to have at that particular time based on where your metrics are as far as, are we offering enough neighborhood park land? Are we offering enough community park land?

Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, so that brings another question, because I know you mentioned earlier about the participants, and you mentioned 135 participants at this and over 1200 for this and that. You did mention focus groups, but you didn't give any specifics on that. So, can you give me some more metrics on that? Like, who are the focus groups? Did you choose them? Were they volunteers, and then kind of, what was that demographic? Mr. Lentz said, yes, so we had I believe six focus groups total. We had recommended the staff inviting 12 to 15 individuals to participate in each

*focus group. Early on in the process, we said make sure that these particular types of interest groups are represented, different recreational groups, different service providers, different non-profit agencies, things of that nature. It has been a significant amount of time. I couldn't remember off the top of my head how many participants we had at each focus group meeting, but we did have significant participation early on in the process during the focus group session. That is something that between now and when Council considers the Parks and Recreation master plan, I will make a point of ensuring that Danny is able to direct you to those specific numbers.*

*Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, do you feel that (and I'm sorry, committee), do you feel that most of the ... Well I guess compared to our city and size city, the persons who responded, participated in those surveys and focus groups, do you feel that was a good representation for the community as a whole, or do you feel we should have more? Mr. Lentz said, no, I feel like the focus groups, I mean, I do recall that Danny was very conscientious in ensuring that we had a diverse group of interests that were represented at the focus group meeting. So I feel very confident that the focus groups were appropriately representative of the different interests in the city of Jonesboro. When it comes to the survey itself, I would have to go back and look at the demographics, but overall having 1200 respondents for a community of this size is a suitable response. I mean, as long as we are getting over a thousand people with a community this size, we are very well satisfied. Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, that is all I have for now.*

*Nick Wysocki, 107 Harvester Drive, approached the podium and said, one of the things that I noticed several times throughout the presentation, or what I saw, that they mentioned that neighborhood parks are within a five minute walk from a resident's home, while larger community parks, 10 minutes, and I think the regional parks were like 15 minutes. That's great, but do you realize that probably 80% of the city of Jonesboro doesn't have sidewalks to walk on? So would this program consider adding sidewalks to existing residential neighborhoods so people can safely walk to those parks, or are they walking in the streets? So I am kind of leery of that one. In addition to that, at the end there he threw up a proposal for the city council to look at new zoning regulations where the parks are added to new subdivisions. Land was allocated for it. But the existing programs within the city do not require sidewalks in those new subdivisions. I believe you can put sidewalks on one side of the subdivision, or one side of the street; and then if you didn't want to do that, you could pay a fee to the city.*

*Chairman Joe Hafner said, you didn't have the option just to opt out. You have to meet certain conditions before you can opt out of sidewalks. Mr. Wysocki said, well, either way, what I am saying is you don't now require sidewalks within those major subdivisions that you're going to be building. And if you're going to put a park there, again, are we going to have the children in that subdivision walking in the streets to get to the park, or should we now put in a sidewalk mandate in those new subdivisions? Chairman Joe Hafner said, sidewalks are required in new subdivisions unless they meet the criteria for the exemption. Mr. Wysocki said, that is fine. I'm just pointing out that if you're going to walk to the park, you have to have a safe way to walk to the parks, and that needed to be reviewed. Another thing that caught my eye is going back to one of the things where they went to, what the residents want, the focus groups, the high priority stuff here. And out of the six high priority programs are outdoor water programs, aquatic programs, and swimming were three of the six, at least in this page 30 of the master plan that was put out. Not anywhere in the presentation of this master plan do I see anything that addresses aquatics. There is no splash pads, unless they are part of the park, which isn't mentioned. So 50% of the high priority items dealt with water and they are not addressed here anywhere in this plan. I mean,*

*unless I missed it.*

*Mr. Lentz approached the podium and said, so a couple of things. First off, there are a lot of things that are in the plan that is not possible for me to address in the presentation with the time that has been allotted. As I said, there are 58 recommendations, but the plan does include recommendations on activating the lake at Craighead Forest Lake for aquatics. The plan does also include general aquatic recommendations as well. When it comes to recreational programming, the plan just simply states diversifying recreational programming based on needs and preferences of the community acknowledging that the planning process very clearly identified what the needs and preferences are. Mr. Wysocki said, again, I just thought that maybe somewhere in the plan it would say aquatic parks or splash pads, etc. are needed within the residential neighborhoods, etc.; and I didn't see that so I thought I would bring that up since 50% of the people had that priority. Chairman Joe Hafner said, it may be in some of this stuff too that we just got. I mean, because this is the first time we are seeing this also.*

*Mr. Wysocki said, the other thing was, the reason I brought that up is because when the original proposal was put out back in April of 2023, the kickoff meeting, one of the big things in that package were 10 pages of aquatic trends that they were looking at to be presented as part of the master plan. Again, that is the only reason I bring up aquatics, because it's not mentioned anywhere; and I know for a fact that the event center or sports complex, whatever you want to call it, that is being built, the aquatic center that would have probably been used for the residents of Jonesboro has been eliminated. That was in the paper the other day, the \$2.1 million outdoor... Chairman Joe Hafner said, I don't think it has been eliminated. I think it's... Mr. Wysocki said, let me see if I have a note here somewhere. I apologize. Let's see...the cost that does not reflect the secondary paved lot, an outdoor splash pad (which is what I am calling the aquatic center) and an indoor walking track. And when I went to the focus meetings on this sports complex, those were the two high priority items for the residence, which were the aquatic center for the kids to go down the slides and play outside and have all that water and a walking track. This specifically states they are being eliminated because it would cost \$2.5 million out of the \$80 million we are spending. So that is why I keep bringing up aquatics.*

*Chairman Joe Hafner said, I can't say for sure, but my understanding is I think Mayor Copenhaver said at the last council meeting that the splash pad, as you like to call them residential aquatic facility, will be done. Mr. Wysocki said, okay. Again, this was the committee chair's statement. And one other thing that I would like to mention, then I will get out of the way. The Jonesboro park system, this is a plan from 2024 where it lists all the Jonesboro parks and what is going on and where they are located. And the only thing I want to point out is if you draw a line down Highland Avenue, which is in the center of that from the east side of the city to the west side of the city, there is a deficiency of parks south of that line. If you look at that, except for Craighead, there are no parks out there, except maybe one, the softball field out on Red Wolf Boulevard. So if there is an underserved area at all in Jonesboro, it is that area. And then my last question is the city just bought a bunch of park land I think towards Northeast Baptist Hospital. Was that considered in this survey for your acreage alignment and stuff? Did we just buy a bunch of land out there for a park? Okay, I thought we did. I'm done. Chairman Joe Hafner said, thank you, Mr. Wysocki.*

*Mr. Lentz approached the podium and said, the gentleman brings up some really good issues, so I do want to bring up two things to be able to respond to that. There on page 56 of the Parks and Recreation master plan are your park system priorities. One*

*of the top three priorities is aquatics facilities. Increase access to aquatic recreation through the phase renovation construction of competitive and recreational pools and splash pads and spray grounds are also two additional actions regarding aquatics that are in the plan. I just bring that up to allay any concerns about whether or not the plan does address that issue. Once again, ultimately we had to pick and choose what we wanted to illustrate or bring to your attention this afternoon. One other item regarding walksheds and safe walking routes. I am glad the gentleman brought that up as well. The Health Accelerator plan specifically makes recommendations on walkshed improvements within and between parks and your neighborhood areas. In fact, the plan itself makes over \$2.7 million worth of recommendations on walkshed improvements within the 10-minute walkshed around your park. So I just wanted to make sure that I brought that to your attention because it is very important. So we wanted to make sure you understood that was being addressed between both of the planning projects.*

*Councilmember LJ Bryant said, Mr. Chairman? Maybe just one thing. Christian, any particular community standout for model ordinances as it relates to the park acquisition piece as subdivisions are developed and such? Mr. Lentz said, a few communities where we wrote the ordinances. As far as all kidding aside, I wouldn't say necessarily model communities. All I would say is that there are a lot of communities that have adopted these types of provisions; and so there are a lot of precedent ordinances out there. I would just indicate that in doing so, there are key pieces that need to be considered. When you are looking at park land dedication, it's a park-led dedication, the amount of acreage based on overall dwelling units. But in addition to that, the ordinances are going to typically include standards on minimum improvements that need to be made to the park space, when a fee in lieu can be issued instead of providing the park land acreage, but also ensuring that the standards include provisions on the location of the park in relation to the residences around it, busy streets and things of that nature. So you're not just getting scrap pieces of property for a park. And then finally, whenever we prepare park land dedication ordinances and we know a community has a trail system or is trying to build a trail system, always including provisions that allow you as a community to require the dedication of the easement and/or construction of the trail segment within that particular development.*

*Chairman Joe Hafner said, I will follow up with a comment on walkability too. I mean, Mr. Wysocki is right. Jonesboro is lacking in sidewalks. That is one of the reasons a few years ago thankfully the council passed the sidewalk ordinance that has helped create more sidewalks and subdivisions in front of new businesses and things like that. I think you can look down Huntington and Highland and Flint and a lot of different streets and see improved walkability or improved sidewalks or side trails, pedestrian trails, whatever you want to call them. But another area that we definitely need more improvement in. We are making slow steps, but we say this on a lot of things. It's hard to make up for being 20 to 30 years behind on something in just a few years. So we have to start somewhere and move forward.*

*Mr. Lentz said, yes, I would like to make clear on that. I'm not disputing the points the gentleman is making. I think they are excellent points to bring up. I just want to make sure you understood that we are through the planning process attempting to address those concerns. Mr. Wysocki said, one quick question. He mentioned four community centers and that just popped into my mind for some reason. Has the location of those four new community centers been decided? And what part of the city or where? Mr. Lentz said, I would say just like the map that I showed you on service area gaps for parks, there is also one of the technical memoranda that were prepared for indoor recreation centers shows similar service area gaps for recreation centers as well. Now*

*the recreation center service area gaps are actually based on a driveway rather than a walkshed; but nonetheless, we went through a similar process when we identified potential locations that future community centers could be placed.*

*Chairman Joe Hafner said, am I correct in saying this presentation or some form of this presentation will be presented to council next Tuesday? Hopefully by then some of us will have a chance to read through. Like I said, we just got this tonight. City Clerk April Leggett said, I just want to remind everyone that if you have a comment to make, please come to the microphone because this is recorded and people online cannot hear you. Chairman Joe Hafner said, and just to clarify, Mr. Wysocki's question that he asked was about the four new community centers that this report says Jonesboro needs. He asked if the location of those had been determined yet, and the answer by Danny by shake of his head was no. Anything else from the staff or Halff & Associates? Anything from the audience? Any other questions or comments? It's just a lot of information to absorb, and I know we wouldn't walk out of this meeting with all of the answers. But I think it's a great first step. You know, we've said this before. I don't want this to be another plan that just goes on the shelf and looks pretty and we look back in ten years and we go, well, we haven't done any of that. We've got to figure out ways to take action and do action quickly.*

*Mr. Lentz said, so as we've indicated, we were fortunate, I think the timing was fortunate enough that we were already working with you on the Parks and Recreation master plan that this opportunity to work with you further on the city's Health Accelerator plan came around. And we were offered the opportunity in preparing that plan to take a deeper dive on some other important issues, namely the walkshed issue and improving or enhancing walk sheds between parks and surrounding neighborhoods. The Health Accelerator plan is basically we are saying it's an addendum to your Parks and Recreation master plan; and ultimately it's intended to look at improving access or improving increasing inclusivity and access to your Parks and Recreation system, particularly for individuals with special needs. The typical facility might not necessarily be the facility that works for them. The report components of your Health Accelerator plan included an assessment of every walkshed around your existing park properties. We also looked at an access assessment. Basically, we looked at all of the facilities amenities in your parks once again, but from the lens of, does it provide accessibility for people that may have physical disabilities? We looked at an amenities assessment and asked ourselves, do all of the different Parks and Recreation amenities in your park system beyond the wonderful amenities that you have in Miracle League park, do the amenities that you've got distributed throughout all of your other parks in Jonesboro make individuals who might have physical, mental, emotional disabilities, do they make them feel welcome in those other park spaces as well? So, by conducting all of those assessments, once again we come up with a whole list of other park system investments that could be made to improve inclusivity and access to your park system. And as part of that, the plan recommends what we call two accelerator parks. Basically, just like you have at Miracle League Park, it has taken two other parks and said these are parks you should create as hubs of inclusive recreation in your park system, in this particular case to ensure that those parks are geographically distributed around your community. We spent our time working with city staff, working with a leadership committee of different organizations and Jonesboro to conceptualize improvements to Allen and Landsbrook Park and Northside Park as well that could become additional hubs of inclusive recreation just like you have at your Miracle League Park today.*

*As I indicated before, the Accelerator Plan was funded through a grant from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention; and so the structure of it, although it looks very*

*similar to your Parks and Recreation master plan, actually the structure of it, all of the components that we have in there are very carefully included because they are required elements. There are elements that are required by the CDC when you are preparing an accelerator plan. When it comes to public outreach for the accelerator plan, we were on a much more compressed time frame, and we were really focusing on very specific targeted population. So as a result, surveys that were conducted as part of the accelerator plan were not sent out to the general public. They actually were sent to specific providers, specific individuals or providers that address or assist individuals with physical or emotional mental handicaps, and also sent to members of those different targeted groups as well. So the surveys, once again, were just distributed to a much more select group of individuals because we wanted to ask them. What do you need at parks to make sure that those parks are welcoming to everybody as the city invests in its parks system in the future?*

*The vision statement. Well, because we want to make sure that your Health Accelerator Plan and your Parks and Recreation Master Plan align, well, if you recognize this, it's the exact same vision statement by design because ultimately just like your Parks and Recreation Master Plan, your Health Accelerator Plan is about ensuring access to your park system for the most vulnerable members of your population and making sure that there are diverse recreational opportunities, not just for able-bodied persons in your community but for everybody in your community. So there was really no need to change that vision. It's one big, broad unifying vision regardless of which plan it is in; however the goals were very specific in line with the objectives of a health accelerator plan. Goal one is to increase accessibility to and within the park system and that addresses the walkshed issue; and goal number two was to strategically add adapted recreation facilities and inclusive recreation facilities in a very targeted fashion within your Parks and Recreation system. In addition to the vision statement, the health accelerator plan includes a mission statement, because ultimately the responsibility for implementing the health accelerator plan doesn't just lie on the city of Jonesboro. It lies also with the partners at the city of Jonesboro that provide services to individuals with the physical handicaps and with the mental handicaps as well. The intent is that in implementing your health accelerator plan, while the city may be providing facilities and amenities, that it is these other organizations that are helping to provide access to the park system, helping by providing additional programming that might cater to those targeted populations.*

*With the findings and recommendations of the accelerator plan, we will just go through this very quickly, we include a number of adapted projects and walkshed projects, both shovel ready and also capital projects. When it comes to walkshed improvements, the plan recommends roughly \$43,000 worth of shovel ready improvements that can be made utilizing the city of Jonesboro's existing budget and cumulatively over \$2.7 million of long-term capital investments for walkshed improvements. When it comes to additional accessibility improvements, providing suitable ADA facilities or adjustments to some of the existing amenities that are in your park system, the plan recommends another \$3.9 million worth of improvements as well. And these are all based on the assessments that were conducted by our very qualified landscape architects who went back out to every single one of your parks yet again as part of the health accelerator planning process. When it comes to providing different adaptive and inclusive recreational facilities or amenities to the park system, the health accelerator plan recommends some very common facility types whether that is improvements to aquatic amenities, different adjustments to surface treatments, sensory play options to your park system. The plan recommends some core facilities or improvements that can be added to your park system; but it doesn't necessarily say, here is how much of that you should do. It just says here, here are core elements that really should be added to*

*any park system to ensure that you've got sufficient adapted play opportunities in your park system. The plan basically says to find locations in your park system to make those improvements over time.*

*As I indicated before, the plan recommends a couple, very key, what we call accelerator parks that should be hubs of overall adapted and inclusive recreation in Jonesboro. But also the plan recommends for every single one of your parks the minimum number of walkshed and access improvement projects that should be made to those parks over time to provide better access and opportunity for adapted recreation in Jonesboro. Here is one of the spreads from the accelerator parks that are in the Health Accelerator Plan. So ultimately you'll be able to look through the plan document and see in a very conceptual way the different types of adapted play adjustments that are recommended for Northside Park and Allen and Landsbrook Park. And then ultimately the plan just like your Parks and Recreation Master Plan includes other policy recommendations as well including continuing our ongoing consultation with the leadership team that served as an advisory committee for the Health Accelerator planning process. And like I mentioned before in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the Health Accelerator Plan recommends the inclusion of an inclusive recreation manager position in your Parks and Recreation department staff.*

*So when it comes to implementing both of the park planning initiatives, ultimately should you choose to adopt your Parks and Recreation Master Plan, that plan does recommend that annual progress reports are prepared so you know the progress that you are making and meeting your targeted levels of service in implementing the work program that is included in the plan. It does recommend a five year update going back through the work program and making potential adjustments to that work program at five years. And it also does include recommendations on monitoring also the degree to which you are implementing your Health Accelerator Plan. On top of that, the Health Accelerator Plan recommends ongoing coordination with the different organizations that provide adaptive and inclusive services to different individuals in your community; but also the Health Accelerator Plan includes a series of performance metrics that you can use to determine as your conducting those annual reporting processes whether or not you as a community are being successful in implementing that particular plan.*

*As you indicated before, it's a lot to cover. It is a lot to absorb. Hopefully I've been able to give you enough of a taste of it for you to all understand what you are in for when you are reading all of this information late at night. But I am happy to answer any questions you might have. Chairman Joe Hafner said, any questions from the committee?*

*Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, I do, Mr. Chairman. So I appreciate having this added, Danny, to this plan; because we have a community that needs it. But I just want to hear specifically (and I heard you give general recommendation or general mention on persons with disabilities), was autism, I just want to hear it. Was autism considered in this as well? The autistic community? Mr. Lentz said, yes, when we talked about individuals with disabilities, we are talking about not just physical, but also mental, social, emotional disabilities as well. As part of the planning process, a number of city staff traveled with representatives of our firm to multiple different park systems in Central Texas and in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. As part of that tour of best practices, if you will, there were a wide range of facilities and amenities that were evaluated, including in one case, the city of Carrollton. They have indoor facilities that they focus on quiet rooms and calming types of amenities and facilities specifically for individuals with autism or other auditory disabilities. And I will say to that end also, one of the key core recommendations when it comes to the types of amenities that should*

*be added to the system are finding places where you can have sensory play amenities that are added that are going to cater toward that type of user group.*

*Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, thank you. Follow up and hopefully my last question and statement. I can't remember the gentleman's name, but the gentleman that came earlier. Wysocki? Thank you. So you said some things that I was thinking that I wrote down, but I did not say anything in regards to some areas that need parks. And much of what Mr. Wysocki mentioned is actually my ward, the area that I live in, northeast and below Highland, which is the Nettleton area, you know, all that. So, and this is probably more a statement, Danny, and hopefully when you present to the full council...I am not a parks expert. I know the areas that need parks too. I have a general understanding of that, but I really thought this would also have some specific recommendations on what those areas are, what we are planning to do with those specific areas. And I think, for me and the community, those are what they want to hear. What are the plans, what do you recommend specifically in those areas? And if we're going to invest that kind of time and money into those areas. So for me, that is what I need. I am not an expert, but I do know...I understand you are doing the proposal and the recommendation, but those things we know. I want to know some specific areas like you did with the Health Accelerator Plan. Because you have some specific areas and targets that we need to do to improve watershed, all of that. I think that should have been included in the other one. So, thank you. That is all I had.*

*Councilmember LJ Bryant said, I just say good job, detailed. And as Councilman Hafner said, some of the attachments we haven't yet got, so I've kind of flipped through them here, so I am sure we will have some more thoughts later. But I was really, I guess, taken aback on the disability piece. I mean, we've had some lawsuits of the city and stuff to make us more compliant and everything. I mean, it's amazing. 18.5% of people in Craighead County have a disability. I mean, that is a striking number. So I think it's tempting to kind of look at this and say we're talking about a small group of people. We are actually talking about a really large group of people. It's really striking, so I appreciate your work on this. Thank you.*

*Jay Clevenger, 2205 Shoshoni Drive, approached the podium and said, I am appreciative to have been a part of this planning committee up here that worked with Christian and Danny on this. Christian is correct. This is really the first master plan that has come before the council. A few years back, back when Mayor Brodell was mayor, he moved the park structure from a commission to a committee. That is where the citizens advisory committee to the Parks and Recreations came from. During that time, there were two plans that were worked on that never got in front of the city council. And unfortunately, those things probably ended up in the trash can somewhere along the way. I want to encourage the council and this committee specifically to make sure that this does come in front of the council. What I would like to see, you may not be in office for the next ten years, but somebody following you will have a road map of what this community has come together to do to be able to provide the information to you. Yeah, Joe, about two to three hours on a Sunday afternoon, you can through it because that is what I did when I got to see the draft. It is very, very specific in what we need in our parks and what we can do in our parks. I've been an advocate of the park system for a very long time, and I was honored to serve on that committee for 12 years where we produced those two plans as well as Joe Mack, Parker Park, Allen Park, and some of the other parks. When that was formed, we had a 1940s park system to be honest with you. Within a few years we were able to develop it and bring it up to standard and everything. So I really want to encourage you to go in and read the detail in there, because there is a lot of detail. I guess I was privy of being on the committee that assisted Danny and Christian with this to get a copy*

*and be able to read through it, and it did take me a couple, two to three hours on a Sunday afternoon to get through it. All that being said, please don't let this document die. This is something that the ones that come after you will be able to take and run with. I spent an hour and a half or so with Danny a couple of weeks ago or last week going through this basically page by page and had some great discussions. And I know Danny is committed to executing the plan. I've had a time to briefly visit with the mayor. I know that he is committed to taking the plan, and I encourage each one of you to get in there, read the details, and be committed to the plan as well. Thank you.*

*Nick Wysocki, 107 Harvester Drive, approached the podium and said, just one quick thing. Several years ago, back in 2018 or 2019, we did a quality of life tax increase, or try to pass that. We made a lot of presentations, various groups did too. A committee (I forget who was on the committee) asked how, if it did pass, how that money would be spent. I made a presentation to that committee (and that just popped back into my head back then), and one of the things I recommended from a park standpoint, a neighborhood regional park, was that the city get with the local churches throughout the community and see if the city couldn't work deals with the churches for X amount of acreage or lands to put a park in their church lot or on their church acreage. The church would be more willing to keep an eye on that property, make sure it's maintained, it doesn't get destroyed. The city would have to assume some liabilities of course and build it; but the property would already be developed. It's already got water. It's already got electricity, etc. So I don't know if that was considered in this plan or not, but again it popped in my head and I'm done. I'm going home. Thank you.*

*Councilmember Ann Williams said, one thing I mentioned recently is that, along with this, for various reasons we need to look at expanding our public transportation system JETS. And that would be helpful for many reasons, getting people to work and reliable service and expansion of routes for the purpose of people getting to employment; but also for the purpose of people being able to get to parks because there really isn't good access for people that live in North Jonesboro. There is not easy access to Craighead Forest if you don't have a car. There literally is not access that someone on foot can accomplish. So I think we need to really look at expanding the public JETS to include access to Craighead Forest and Joe Mack Campbell, for example. That is another example of a park that is not accessible easily by someone without a car. Chairman Joe Hafner said, did you want to say something, Mr. Shatley? I think he has some comments from the connectivity committee perspective.*

*Andy Shatley, 2521 Rosewood Circle, approached the podium and said, not necessarily the connectivity committee, but I do have a question. The swaths of land that were identified as being gaps, do we have a map that overlays current city properties that are within those gaps? When we talked about specifics, like I think what Dr. Coleman is talking about, what areas do we own right now that are in those gaps that could potentially be parks? Do we have a map that shows the properties that we own in those gaps? That is the only question that I have. Chairman Joe Hafner said, I thought you were going to comment on some of the trails that the connectivity committee discussed that would take care of some of the issues with people without cars too, another option for them. But I misread your mind, thank God.*

*Parks and Recreation Director Danny Kapales approached the podium and said, no, I think that is a great question. Yes, as far as a city, we have those properties throughout, and it gives us the opportunity to take the map that's within this plan and do an overlay with the properties that we currently own and be able to see where those deficits are. And if we own property within those spaces. Chairman Joe Hafner said, thank you. Mr. Richardson?*

*Chief Administrative Officer Brian Richardson approached the podium and said, I couldn't help but come up and point out an example of that which would be the new dog park that is under construction there by Jonesboro High School. It was an existing city property that was just kind of collecting grass and we were mowing it. And you know part of the plan recommends additional dog parks, and this kind of fits in with that. I think it shows that we can be both creative and effective in planning where our next park locations can be; and we do own quite a few properties, some which have more geographic challenges than others and some of them would just simply can't be developed. But I think it makes sense to review all of those properties that we have and see what can be made out of them. I think that just makes sense.*

*Councilmember Ann Williams said, I would like to press ahead and emphasize that we do need to look at expanding our JETS public transportation system for many reasons including access to parks.*

*James Elwin Hinds, 508 Ridgecrest, approached the podium and said, I just want to say and I've said this to the city council before. I do think in developing this, we do need to give extra consideration to those lesser economically developed areas of our town. A lot of these times, I can get in my car and go out to Craighead Forest. That's not a problem. In fact, I do that sometimes. I go to the Nature Center. You know, there are other places. But there are some people who because of economic circumstance, it's hard for them to get very far to some of these things. We need to give*

**Filed**

#### **4. ADJOURNMENT**

**A motion was made by LJ Bryant, seconded by Brian Emison, that this meeting be Adjourned. The motion PASSED with the following vote.**

**Aye:** 5 - Ann Williams; Brian Emison; LJ Bryant; Anthony Coleman and Janice Porter

**Absent:** 1 - Chris Gibson