

## SUMMARY OF PARK TASK FORCE

During the past couple of years, the Mayor and City Council has been requested by the citizens of Cochran to consider establishing a City Park for its children and families. This past spring the Mayor and Council were presented with a petition from the entire 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class at Bleckley Elementary requesting the City look into establishing a City Park. Based on these requests, the Mayor and City Council unanimously endorsed the formation of a Task Force to investigate the feasibility of establishing a City Park. The charge from the Mayor and Council to the Task Force was to investigate all the parameters associated with establishing a park and make a report with recommendations back to Mayor and Council for consideration. The final decision to establish a City Park will be the responsibility of the Mayor and Council.

To ensure that a broad base of the community was involved with the project, various community organizations were requested to submit a member to serve on the Task Force. The role of these members was to not only work on the project but also communicate with the members of their organization and share and collect information about the project. Organizations that submitted members to serve on the project included: Bleckley Elementary School, CB&T Bank, Rotary Club, Pilot Club, Women's Club, Masonic Lodge, Woodsmen to the World, Retired Teachers Association, NAACP, and Legion Post 107. In addition, the Mayor, two members of the City Council, and an engineer from Falcon Design were also appointed. The Mayor was appointed to serve as Chair of the Committee. Based on interest from the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class (currently 4<sup>th</sup> graders), a Sub-Task Force of Bleckley Elementary 4<sup>th</sup> graders was formed with a Bleckley County Elementary Teacher serving as a liaison between the students and the Task Force.

At the first meeting, the Chair conducted an organizational meeting and the Task Force discussed a plan for its work. The discussions that followed included:

- Why form a task force now?
  - Citizen interest
  - Council interest
  - Need a place for:
    - Children to play
    - Families to gather
    - Community events
    - Central neighbor destination
- Task force structure
  - Community leaders
  - School system engagement
- Issues to resolve
  - Feasibility of park
  - Location

- Park focus/theme
  - Components/design
- Funding
- Next step
  - Establish meeting schedule
  - Create strategic plan

At the second meeting the Task Force conducted a strategic planning session. A parallel session was also conducted with the 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Sub-Task Force. The work of both Task Forces was combined to create the final Strategic Plan.

**Goal 1.** Determine the population that will use the City Park

- Everyone
- City and County residents and visitors from surrounding counties
- All age groups
  - Create areas suitable for different age groups or abilities including handicap access and equipment
  - Provide a walking path throughout the Park that links the different areas of the Park and connects them to parking or sidewalks.

**Goal 2.** Determine the location of the City Park

- Centrally located within City limits
- Safe and easily accessible by foot/bike
- Not a busy road
- Enough land with adequate space
- Flat land
- Minimal wetlands
- Safe residential area
- Wide roads with sidewalks/bike paths
- Defined border boundaries
- Lights and signage for pedestrians

**Goal 3.** Identify sources of funding for the Park

- Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
  - Land and Water Conservation Funds
  - Recreational Trails Funds
- Taxes
- SPLOST

- CDBG for roads/sidewalks
- TIA and LMIG for bike paths
- Local civic groups
- Individual donors and private foundations (i.e. Walmart)
- Fund raisers
- County

**Goal 4.** Identify the components that will go into the Park

- Playground equipment (ages 2-5 and 5-12)
  - Fenced area for small children
  - Teeter totters, baby swings, foam pad, play wall, small mushrooms, rock wall, swings, slide, trampoline (ground level), merry-go-round, tether ball
- Picnic area with shelter that can be used for Farmer's Market and Stage Area
- Walking trail
- Physical fitness stations
- Landscaping
- Utilities
- Splash Pad
- Designated area for restrooms/port-a-potties
- Large open area
- Benches/seating
- Mini-golf
- Water Fountains
- Concessions/vending
- Trash cans

**Goal 5.** Identify the safety issues and regulations that will govern the Park

- Operating hours
  - Sunrise to sunset
- Parking
- Established speed limits
- Signage
- Dress Code
- Fencing/boundaries
- Appropriate language
- Noise regulations
- No drugs/alcohol/smoking/weapons
- Police patrols
- Security cameras

- Pet regulations
- Fenced area for young children
- Age appropriate areas
- No bullying
- Lower speed limits and speed bumps

**Goal 6.** Determine parties responsible for operations/supervision of the Park

- Still under discussion

Based on the Strategic Plan and the charge from the Mayor and Council, the Task Force moved forward with determining the components, and their priority, of the proposed City Park. Those components are identified below.

**PROPOSED PARK COMPONENTS FOR TASK FORCE ANALYSIS\***

- Playground Equipment (ADA Compliant)
  - Area for ages 2-5 and 6-12
- Picnic Area (Multi-Use Pavilion w/ utilities)
  - Area large enough for ten tables
- Perimeter Trail (ADA Compliant) with Fitness Stations
  - Primarily ages 35-70
  - 8 to 10' wide
  - Asphalt/Concrete
- Underground Utilities
  - Water/electric in selected areas\((Layout for festival type event with electric in all areas and water in small select area)
- Large Open Area(s)
- Splash Pad (Designate area for future use)
  - Tier two future item
- Restrooms
  - Tier two future item for review/consideration
- Benches and Trash Cans
  - Located around trail and playground equipment
- Parking/Security Lighting
- Kids Project Area (Designate area for development by the children)
- Preliminary Low Maintenance Landscaping

\*Cost estimates will include entry, middle and premium grade equipment w/ estimated life cycles.

The proposed park components have been taken by the Task Force member from Falcon Design to design the layout of the park and determine the costs for the various components. Falcon Design has volunteered their professional services for the design and cost estimates for the Park. To facilitate the design process, Falcon will build their design around 11.5 acres of centrally located property in the City. One area the City is investigating is currently privately owned with a proposed selling price of \$200,000. The City has not entered into any formal agreements to acquire this property at this time. Results from engineering analysis will be submitted to our City Manager to conduct a cost analysis that will include the annual operating cost for the Park and costs associated long term maintenance. The City Manager and Falcon Design will also work cooperatively to identify sources of State and Federal Funds that can assist with the development and establishment of the City Park. The results of these analyses will be submitted to the Task Force for final review. After the Task Force completes their review, the final report with recommendations will be submitted to the Mayor and City Council for review and consideration.

The Task Force for the City Park has been meeting on the first Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm at the Community House. The next scheduled meeting is tentatively planned for Tuesday, February 2 based on whether Falcon Design and the City Manager have had sufficient time to complete their analyses. In the event that the analyses have not been completed, the next scheduled meeting will be on Tuesday, March 1. All meetings are open to the public.