

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA) Horry County Parks & Open Space
COUNTY OF HORRY) Parks & Open Space Board Meeting
) Tuesday, August 5, 2025

The Horry County Parks and Open Space Board met on Tuesday, August 5, 2025 at the Government and Justice Center in Conway, SC 29526. The following Parks & Open Space Board members were present:

Robert Ziegler, Jamie Bellamy, Richard Carroll, William Bucci, and Royce “Sonny” Parrish Jr.

Staff present: Director, Ray Dunham; Deputy Director, Robert Freeman; Supervisor III, Michaela LeMay, and Deputy Director, Nicole Herrera

Board members absent: Pete Wilkes

The following visitors attended: Bill McConnell, Steven Brand, David Weissman, Bob Yodp, Jerrold Williams, Bone Beaupre, Chad Sullivan, William C Deering, Ashley Cowen, Bryan Dirks, Ed Perez, Xaziera Fogle, Saphyre Hendrickson-Foyle, John Porter, Lara McCormick, Griffin Alford, Reed McCormick, Wyatt McCormick, Ryan O’Lear, Dan Romiom, Terry Flores, Chad Heacock, Robert Lever, Keegan Wraten, Ritchie, Christopher Santos, Jasmine Pollack, William Pollock, Carole Lever, Dillan Blunier, and Matthew Robinson

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Robert Ziegler called the meeting to order at 12:00pm. Chairman Ziegler led the Pledge of Allegiance and the invocation.

INTRODUCTION OF BOARD MEMBERS AND STAFF

Robert Ziegler invited Board members to introduce themselves.

MINUTES

Approval of April 29, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Chairman Ziegler introduced the agenda item and asked the Board to take a moment to review the minutes from the previous meeting. He called for a motion to approve all meeting minutes. William Bucci motioned for approval and Richard Carroll seconded the motion. ***The motion to approve the Meeting Minutes from the April 29, 2025 Parks and Open Space Board carried unanimously.***

PUBLIC INPUT

Chairman Ziegler addressed the crowd and warmly welcomed them to the Parks and Open Space Board meeting. He kindly requested that they keep their public input to three minutes or less so that everyone who signed up could have a moment to speak, not to exceed a total of thirty minutes. He invited Bill McConnell to the podium to speak first.

Mr. McConnell introduced himself to the Board and visitors. He stated that he was a member of the Myrtle Beach Disc Golf Club, the OG Disc Golf Club, a voter, and a resident. He spoke of the Socastee Disc Golf Course and how it had length and the design that is thought out and takes a lot of work. Mr. McConnell stated that he knows the course is a lot of work, and that there are other things pulling on the department but that to destroy half the course would create a larger problem. This course encourages uniqueness and he would hate to see anything happen to it. He moved on to pay a

compliment to the Parks and Recreation staff on the current Recreation and Community Centers and how clean they were and how welcoming the staff was.

Chairman Ziegler thanked him for his input and invited Bone up to speak. Bone stated that he was a volunteer with Parks and Recreation since 2007, teaching youth with special needs about disc golf. He stated that the Socastee Disc Golf Course is a special place for him because it saved him from a mental breakdown. Bone stated that he understands the process of growth and increasing fields but if Parks and Recreation could save a small piece of the course it would mean a lot. Chairman Ziegler thanked him for his input and invited Chad Sullivan to speak.

Mr. Sullivan introduced himself and spoke of the impacts that disc golf has had to his family. He stated that it is an important sport for his family and he first began playing at Socastee Disc Golf Course with his brother and from there, it just flourished into a love for the sport. He stated that the course was a corner stone in the community and it is such an organic sport that the Socastee course takes to the next level and he invites staff and Board members to come play a round. Mr. Sullivan stated that he understands how huge soccer is, as his own children play the sport and he thinks that growth for the community is amazing but that the 18-hole course at Socastee cannot be replaced. He stated that the community needs more courses, not less, and not some that are years away. He mentioned that Splinter City Disc Golf Course is the number one played course in South Carolina. Mr. Sullivan asked for a compromise to try and have both. Chairman Ziegler thanked him for his input and invited Ed Perez up to speak.

Mr. Perez introduced himself as a Coastal Carolina University (CCU) professor and the faculty advisor for the CCU Disc Golf Club. He stated that the County should be proud of the impacts Socastee has had. That the CCU Disc Golf Club welcomes new and advanced players and want to apply for collegiate level. He stated that he is left handed and the Socastee Disc Golf Course presents challenges with that but he first moved to the area in 2016 and currently has a piece of one of the trees hung up in his home. He stated that it is hard to explain and put into words the impact the Course has on the lives of those who use it. Mr. Ziegler thanked him for his input and invited John Porter up to speak.

Mr. Porter stated that he lives in Brunswick County in North Carolina where there are no disc golf courses. He stated that the retirement community in the area is the fastest growing population and that they are a great target audience because they need exercise, and things to do. Mr. Porter stated that he started a senior's doubles on Tuesdays and loves it because it is one sport you can do as a senior that is also economically friendly. He asked of the course could just be amended and that it is needed to keep the senior population engaged. Mr. Porter stated that the Socastee Disc Golf Course may be the best in South Carolina and that he travels down two to three times a week to play a round. Chairman Ziegler thanked him for his input and invited Bone back up to speak about the Aynor Recreation Center.

Bone stated that the baseball and soccer in Aynor were huge and he was so excited to see the expansion of the area with a recreation center because it is desperately needed. He stated that he works with the current sports with Operations Manager, Jeff Bailey, and that he is excited to hear that the expansion will also include a small disc golf course. He would like to be kept informed and notified if any help is needed. Chairman Ziegler thanked him again for his input.

Miss LeMay spoke to Chairman Ziegler because they were under the thirty-minute public input mark and a late community member wanted and opportunity to speak. Chairman Ziegler then invited Matthew Robinson up to speak.

Mr. Robinson wanted to thank everyone that had shown up and Parks and Recreation. He wanted to state that Parks and Recreation started young and was meant for everyone. He ended with it was great to see so many out and thanked everyone again.

Mr. Ziegler thanked him for his input and then closed public input and invited anyone to leave if they did not want to stay for the duration of the meeting.

STAFF UPDATES

Director Dunham introduced himself and thanked everyone for coming. He addressed the visitors directly and stated that the meeting would move forward but that he would move the two items on the agenda, Disc Golf and the Socastee Recreation Center, up to the beginning so that the community members did not need to stay for the duration of the meeting for the updates.

He began with disc golf and stated that they are looking into other areas. That Parks and Recreation has been having conversations with Chad and Keegan for different sites that could be used to develop new courses. He stated that Aynor's masterplan has a nine-hole course included and there is a full 18-hole course in Loris, SC at the Loris Nature Park.

Director Dunham stated that the Socastee Recreation Center masterplan is out for bid but that he will share the information from the meeting to contractors when they do start to meet. He then invited anyone to leave, that did not wish to stay for the duration of the meeting.

Miss LeMay moved back to the original agenda and updated the Board that their By-Law's passed at Council and that the new ones were included in their packets for future reference. She then moved on the Litter Summit in September that Keep Horry County Beautiful members might attend. Miss LeMay asked for two member sign-ups to be approved so that at the next Keep Horry County Beautiful meeting it could be presented. Jamie motioned for approval of two sign ups of \$390 to the Litter Summit and Bill Bucci seconded the motion. ***The Committee put it to vote and a unanimous approval for the approval of Keep Horry County Beautiful Committee members to attend the conference.***

Director Dunham moved to the Michael Morris Graham/Aynor recreation center update and stated that it would be out of permitting any day but had some delays from outfalls. He moved to Huger Park and stated that it was out for bid but that they had met with the Sons of America for input on verbiage to ensure it was done properly.

Director Dunham moved to the Bike and Run Park on the agenda. He updated that the previously used name of the Hulk would not be used anymore due to Trademark issues and that furthermore it would be called the Horry County Bike and Run Park. He stated that in 2019 an agreement was signed with Myrtle Beach area Mountain Bike Association to maintain the trails and such but since his arrival with the department they had gone through many leadership changes and the agreement was not working out so they decided not to renew. As of July 1, 2025 Parks and Recreation has resumed full maintenance of the trails. This will prove to have its challenges because there is no additional staff being added on but that the hope is to start to have volunteer workdays once a month to keep up with maintaining. Chairman Ziegler asked for those volunteer dates because he would love to help. Director Dunham stated that he would email him the dates when they were decided on. Director Dunham then moved into the White Oak Park and invited Deputy Director Freeman to speak on it. Deputy Director Freeman stated that community members requested more parking at the park and an additional entrance and exit. He stated that the goal was to add sixty parking spaces. Director Dunham elaborated and stated there were issues with people utilizing the park that were driving on others property and not using proper access points.

Deputy Director Freeman moved to the Socastee Yacht Basin Park and stated that through a PARD grant and lifecycle funds they would be adding a playground at the foot of the bridge, hopefully this year. Additionally, the North Strand Recreation Center will be getting a replacement playground and that Parks and Recreation was just awaiting the purchase order to move forward.

Deputy Director Freeman moved to Dog Bluff Park and stated that with last year's impact, the current site was in demolition but that the plan moving forward was to add new pickleball courts, basketball courts, and a new playground.

Director Dunham moved to camping and park ordinances. He stated that there had been some issues at boat landings they were looking to amend and are working with legal to adjust the verbiage. He

stated that time will tell on how this rolls out because we currently have posted rules but they are not enforceable because the ordinances do not back them up so it is a work to fix the issue so that future needs and current problems are all addressed.

Director Dunham moved to the Burgess property and property acquisitions. He stated that Chairman Ziegler and himself had been meeting with a land developer in Burgess for a potential park opportunity. He stated that as they have run into issues looking for Loris property he wants to start keeping eyes open for properties for future use before the majority of it is bought up or built on.

Director Dunham then moved to Fiscal Year 2026 new projects. He stated that there are three boat landings that will be seeing improvements and updates. Chairman Ziegler asked about the financials and Director Dunham explained there was 350K total for all three improvements.

He then spoke of the Stalvey Creek and creating a linear park for use and then moved on to the Multipurpose Sports Complex and Trails (the rural recreation center) which will be 500 acres for future trails for bikes, horses, and people. The issue is that it has been leased for the next three years from the County for farming so it may pose challenges.

Director Dunham then invited Deputy Director Herrera to speak on summer camp. She explained that it was almost over, and back to school was around the corner. Deputy Director Herrera spoke of the number of participants and what they had been doing all summer, field trips, talent shows, etc. She then turned it over to Miss LeMay to give future program updates. Miss LeMay spoke of the upcoming Fishing Rodeo with Horry County Police Department and how it was one of her favorite events. She then updated the Board that the Back to School Bash, to give away free school supplies was this Saturday. She then moved to update on the Loris "Chicken Run" 5K that Parks and Recreation had a meeting about Thursday for course changes.

Director Dunham then spoke of Parks and Recreation Month and thanked Deputy Director Herrera and Miss LeMay for the planning and efforts that went into creating a memorable and successful Parks and Recreation Month.

BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

Chairman Ziegler welcomed Board members to provide any updates they may have. Jamie Bellamy updated that she has been volunteering with her daughter's summer softball and has been in multiple Horry County Parks this summer. She stated she has really loved the exposure and the program as it is free, the parents provide food, and it is getting youth outside.

Bill Bucci stated that he understood we were over many boat landings but asked who was over the Waterway. Deputy Director Freeman stated that the Army Core of Engineers oversaw the Waterway.

With no more Board updates, Chairman Ziegler moved to the next item on the agenda, elections. Sonny Parish motioned for Robert Ziegler to serve again as Chairman and Bob Bucci seconded the motion. ***The Committee put it to vote and a unanimous approval for Robert Ziegler to be Chairman.***

For vice-chair, Richard Carroll made a motion for Jamie Bellamy to serve as vice-chair for the Parks and Open Space Board and Sonny Parrish seconded the motion. ***The Committee put it to vote and a unanimous approval for Jamie Bellamy to be Vice Chairwoman.***

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next Keep Horry County Beautiful Meeting – August 19, 2025 at 11:30 am in Multipurpose Room B of the Government and Justice Building in Conway

Next Vereen Memorial Historical Gardens Meeting – September 18, 2025 at 9 am in the Conference Room at CB Berry Community Center in Little River

Next Parks and Open Space Board Meeting- November 12, 2025 at 12 pm in Multipurpose Room B of the Government and Justice Building in Conway

ADJOURN

With no further input, Chairman Robert Ziegler called for a motion to end the meeting, Bill Bucci motioned for the end of the meeting and Jamie Bellamy seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 1:02pm.

Notes:

Unable to attend the meeting for public input, Sheena Johnson from Virginia called to express her concern for the demolition of the Socastee Disc Golf Course. She stated that she is a park of the New River Valley Disc Golf Club and half of the club comes to the area every year bringing tourism impacts to play at Socastee. She also stated that the Disc Golf Course at Socastee brings in a different type of tourism for the area. She finished her call with she would hate to see it gone.

An email was sent after the meeting from Terry Flores, who was unable to speak, the email is attached to the meeting minutes.

SAVE SOCASTEE DISC GOLF COURSE

From Terry Flores <tf7249@gmail.com>
Date Tue 8/5/2025 11:24 PM
To robertziegler@aol.com <robertziegler@aol.com>; Mccray_Jamie@aol.com <Mccray_Jamie@aol.com>; Lemay, Michaela <Lemay.Michaela@horrycountysc.gov>; richardc@abbank.com <richardc@abbank.com>; sparrish0719@yahoo.com <sparrish0719@yahoo.com>; Web HCG - Parks And Recreation <hcg.ParksAndRecreation@horrycountysc.gov>

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To the Open Space Board and deputy directors of Horry County Parks,

Thank you for allowing the public to be heard on this matter. I am a lifetime local resident and was present in the Parks Open Space board meeting August 5 and have a few things I would like to comment on. It is not an exaggeration when it is said SOCASTEE DISC GOLF COURSE is one of the best in the state. There are qualitative factors and quantitative numbers on this.

1. Myrtle Beach is now a disc golf destination since the HCPR collaboration with the city of Myrtle Beach to install Splinter City disc golf course. This acclaim is not possible without TWO Championship level courses, Socastee being a pivotal part of that equation. Every November since the inception of Splinter City in 2021, Myrtle Beach is the host of a premier championship event that brings disc golf professionals from all over the country and internationally with 300 competitors and many more spectators, and professional video broadcast, and the only way those logistics work is with two courses of professional level. The proximity of these two makes this possible; lodging, accommodations, and other metrics could not be conceivably met if we had to spread the distance or use a park of lesser quality, size or skill level. Not to mention this influx is being brought in during our tourism off-season. This growth shown in Myrtle Beach is on the radar nationwide, and our area could very much be in contention to host a global level tournament in future years. We have some of the best and seasoned tournament directors in the nation here local to us, and we have close community ties with professional worldwide leagues such as the Disc Golf Pro Tour, PDGA, USDGC, and US Collegiate Disc Golf entities. So we would be taking a major step backwards after such a great step forward with the introduction of Splinter City. The two courses are inviting yet challenging, while also different and complimenting to each other in their play style. (Splinter being more open-park, Socastee being more of a wooded, natural-trail.) To have that unison has taken years, and honestly generations- generations of trees, and generations of local advocacy. To curate this level of championship, professional quality here in our home is something a lot of disc golf tournaments are looking for, and is a special unique combination that other disc golf communities yearn for, and we would be foolish to let it slip away.
2. Just in the last few years with our local disc golf boom as seen with the popularity of the Splinter City course, 2022 the city of MB opened Wither's Swash course, plus the city of Conway's multitude of efforts, we now have multiple disc golf BUSINESSES in our area, one specifically is an industry-leading disc golf store/taproom concept that serves as tournament central, and the official hub for players, known as *Another Round Myrtle Beach*, located less than 1 mile from Splinter. This is a national brand just unveiled here in Myrtle that is in about 20 major disc golf cities and carries notoriety equating to a premier disc golf destination. If you couple that with our area's tourism, Myrtle Beach is officially on the map for disc golf travelers. We lose a lot of that momentum if we lose Socastee.
3. The Loris Nature Park is 18 targets, yes, but that course is years away, needing possibly thousands of dollars to be invested, and hundreds of hours of manpower and natural grooming from being anywhere close to the caliber of these two courses. People travel to Myrtle Beach; they don't travel to Loris, I'm sorry. This is as much for locals as it is for tourism, but there is no replacement for the decades plus of grooming of Socastee; Loris has not had that level of thorough group input. I invite you to go out and take in that property and see this firsthand. It's visible the love and care the community has poured into it.
4. We love the smaller "pitch and putt" courses. We want as many of those as we can get. They are great use of park space as introduction for newcomers to the sport but yet they are not quite the true essence of what disc golf encompasses; visualizing the flight of a disc through the woods is incomparable, many people actively chase that feeling for the entirety of their lives after discovering disc golf. And because these small setups are often just in a field with a few bushes, they are very close proximity setups and throws (which can sometimes be a hazard). With only 9 targets squeezed in a lot the size of a football field, they don't embody what disc golf travelers are looking for. That said, they are well-loved and a great use of small plots of land. They are perfect for kids and the outreach programs. But we have hundreds of community members involved each week at specifically two courses - Splinter and Socastee. In addition to the usual park patrons and visitors playing casual rounds throughout every day, our weekly league gatherings hosts groups of 40-100 players on average. Smaller groups will also often have little events on the smaller courses, so they are very much being used as well and we thank Parks and Rec for those installations, but it takes away everything this community has built here if we remove Socastee. Splinter City is the number one played course in the state which makes it extremely high traffic. If we eliminate the other largely used course, that will cause an overflow at Splinter City. A course being too crowded causes backups- longer, slower play- and can even be dangerous if the amount of volume gets extreme. Simply put, it lowers the quality of the experience and deters people from getting out and having fun.
5. Largely thanks to our local club's efforts, we have a well established system of improving the courses with elected course superintendents, specific calendar of events, organized work days, unified action for tournament readiness, cleanups after storms, cohesive volunteer maintenance, and specific thoughtful improvements; such as bridges, signage, benches, mulching, drainage to help with water accumulation, multiple set ups for teeing off and basket locations. We have implemented creative aesthetics and a highly manicured approach while preserving its natural beauty, and that has made Socastee what is, with strong community backing over a decade now. This level of grassroots movement is not seen in any other hobby or sport. As mentioned in the meeting, the mountain bike club couldn't quite keep up with their land and volunteerism. You never have that issue with Myrtle Beach Disc Golf Club or the Horry County Disc Golf Club, which is mostly active in Conway. These groups are crucial to the landscape of what we're building here and they are stronger than ever.
6. Lastly I will say Disc Golf nationwide is on a historic rise. Since 2020, PDGA memberships have quadrupled to nearly 300,000 active community members. Disc makers are manufacturing and selling exponentially more plastic than ever before. The production level of professional tournaments grows every year with increasing live spectators and broadcast viewership, top-tier videography and live streaming coverage, international recognition, Sportscenter highlights, and brand sponsorships, such as Nike and Porsche are being given to elite players. The world championship was this past weekend, sponsored by many corporations such Ford and Haribo, and hosted internationally for the first time ever. It took place in Finland with over 25,000 spectators present on ground and over 300,000 watched the live broadcast on Finnish national television. Not to mention the American coverage viewership and other media such as podcasts, interviews, and talk shows that we consume religiously in the disc golf community here stateside. This is not far-fetched for us here in South Carolina to achieve. We have the United States Championship hosted in Rock Hill, SC that brings about 15,000 spectators to the grounds of Winthrop every October and then we host our Myrtle Beach Open the following weekend to make those logistics work for the professionals to be in route to come to Myrtle Beach. This is an A tier event, and in disc golf terms that means we are just a few improvements away from being elevated to a Silver Series/Elite Series event or even a PDGA major, which would be the sport's equivalent of hosting the Augusta Masters. Our community organizers put in bids for hosting these caliber events, and we are right on the cusp, so please take all that into consideration, and keep this movement growing with us by preserving the disc golf course at Socastee Rec Park. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Terry Flores
Conway, South Carolina