



AGENDA
BREVARD ECUSTA TRAIL ADVISORY BOARD - REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday, August 27, 2025 - 3:30 PM
City Council Chambers

- A. Welcome and Call to Order**
- B. Certification of Quorum**
- C. Approval of Agenda**
- D. Approval of Minutes**
 - 1. Draft Minutes 05.28.2025
- E. Public Comments**
- F. New Business**
 - 1. Funding Update
 - 2. Friends of the Ecusta Trail Director Update
- G. Unfinished Business**
- H. Remarks / Future Agenda Considerations**
- I. Adjourn**

Agenda Posted, Website, Sunshine List 08.26.2025
M. Baker, Board Clerk

To review Agenda materials, go to the City's website www.cityofbrevard.com. Select "Your Government" tab followed by "Council Agenda Packet" tab. Agenda packet materials are posted on Thursday afternoon prior to Council's Monday meeting.

MINUTES
ECUSTA TRAIL ADVISORY BOARD 2.0

Wednesday, May 28, 2025 – 3:30 pm
City Hall Council Chambers

Members Present: Aaron Baker, Chair, Council Member
Larry Chapman, Transylvania County Commissioner
Dee Dee Perkins, Transylvania Development Authority
Doug Miller, Heart of Brevard
Rebekah Robinson, Conserving Carolina
Sheila Carland, Transylvania Economic Alliance
Meredith Carli, At-Large Appointment

Absent: Mac Morrow, Vice Chair, Council Member
John Ditillo, Friends of Ecusta Trail
Madeline Hanley, At-Large Appointment

Staff Present: Maureen Copelof, Mayor, Ex-Officio
Madalin Baker, Board Secretary
Wilson Hooper, City Manager
Aaron Bland, Assistant Planning Director

Guests: Mark Tooley, Friends of the Ecusta Trail
Lonnie Watkins, NCDOT
Hunter Marks, Watermark Landscape Architecture

A. Welcome and Call to Order

Committee Chair Aaron Baker welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:33 PM.

B. Certification of Quorum

Quorum was certified by Board Secretary Madalin Baker.

C. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda as written by L. Chapman, seconded by D. Perkins. The motion carried unanimously.

D. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the April draft minutes as written was made by D. Perkins, seconded by L. Chapman, carried unanimously.

E. Public Comment

Craig Wilson, Guest, expressed concern over the state of the portion of the Davidson River Trail nearest to Wild Hog BBQ, saying the grass was very tall and could pose a hazard.

W. Hooper responded, saying a long-term upgrade plan for that part of the trail has already been submitted to the state for review. In the interim, A. Baker asked W. Hooper if the City's Public Works staff could go cut some of the grass/brush in question, and W. Hooper said yes.

F. New Business

1. Presentation: Henderson Co. Trail Amenity Designs
Hunter Marks, of Watermark Landscape Architecture, provided a recap of the presentation they gave at the December meeting. Then, he provided a new presentation with details for the Board to consider regarding preferences for trail amenities, specifically signs.

Following the presentations, A. Baker asked L. Watkins about the timeline for finishing the roundabout project—L. Watkins said October 2028. W. Hooper asked H. Marks for details regarding the privacy fence shown on page 14 of the Ecusta Trail Amenities Details sheets, and H. Marks provided additional details. A. Bland asked if the split rail fence would feature two or three rail, and H. Marks said it would be two.

H. Marks asked the Board to consider what exactly they wanted to go on Brevard's signs, particularly what the appropriate emergency phone number would be, how they would like to promote trail sponsors, and how/if the City logo should be incorporated. A. Baker asked H. Marks how soon he would want feedback from the Board, and he said Watermark is hoping to have a template completed within four to six weeks.

The Board discussed further specifics. Generally, members looked favorably with collaboration and consistency with Henderson County, RTAC, and FOET guidance/designs and the already up and running FOET phone number.

M. Tooley told Board members to look out for email communication with more specific sign options in the upcoming days for consideration.

G. Unfinished Business

As an update from the last meeting, W. Hooper shared that Pisgah Labs has confirmed their interest in moving forward with creating a trail parking area on the portion of their lot discussed previously. Final plans are TBD.

H. Remarks/Future Agenda Considerations

The next regularly scheduled ETAB meeting is set for June 25th, 2025 at 3:30 PM.

I. Adjourn

There being no further business, D. Miller motioned to adjourn, M. Carli seconded, the motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:17 PM.

Minutes Approved- _____

X _____
Aaron Baker, Chair

X _____
Madalin Baker, Board Secretary

Attachments: Watermark Landscape Architecture Presentations

DRAFT

STAFF REPORT

Ecusta Trail Advisory Board, Wednesday, August 27, 2025

Title: Funding Update

Speaker:

Prepared by:

Approved by:

Attachments:

STAFF REPORT

Ecusta Trail Advisory Board, Wednesday, August 27, 2025

Title: Friends of the Ecusta Trail Director Update

Speaker:

Prepared by:

Approved by:

Friends of Ecusta Trail hires first full-time director

Friends of Ecusta Trail has hired WNC native and long-time Henderson County resident Laura Rice as its first executive director.

“The board of directors is thrilled that Laura will be our first executive director,” FOET President Mark Tooley said. “For 16 years the Friends of Ecusta Trail has been operated on a totally volunteer basis and the hiring of Laura is the next step in the growth and maturation of our organization. She brings a set of skills and energy that will allow FOET to provide continued support to the development and operation of the entire Ecusta Trail.”

“The board has worked so hard for so many years to bring this to life,” Rice said. “It’s a fantastic group of people and I’m excited I get to work with them.”

Rice’s first official day as executive director of FOET is Tuesday, Sept. 2. Being named FOET executive director is the result of a life centered around community and recreation.

Born in Transylvania County, Rice moved with her family to Henderson County at age 4. After being homeschooled, Rice attended Blue Ridge Community College and then transferred to Mars Hill College, graduating in 2013 with a major in recreation and sports management and a minor in business. She continued her higher education online and received a master’s degree in parks and recreation management from N.C. State University in 2015.

Led large expansion of youth soccer

While attending college, Rice worked part-time as a program assistant for Henderson County Parks and Recreation and then ran the youth soccer program for five years. Under her leadership, the soccer program averaged about 600 participants while Rice worked with the school system to incorporate soccer in phys-ed classes. In addition, the program had several coaches receive state and national recognition. For her efforts, Rice herself was named State Director of the Year by the N.C. Youth Soccer Association in 2016.

"I've had great mentors and support from my family. It was a team. It wasn't just me," she said.

In 2018, Rice went to work for the Blue Ridge Humane Society, where she was instrumental in developing communications and event management, such as fundraising events and animal adoptions. Working for the nonprofit, she said, allowed her to learn about a different sector of the community.

USA Cycling race director

Roughly four years later, she took a remote position with USA Cycling, the national governing body for cycling in the U.S. that is also connected to the U.S. Olympic team. During her time at Mars Hill, Rice rode on the college's mountain biking team and continued racing after that.

"It tied in well with what my interests were," she said.

While she still resided in Hendersonville, she worked with teams and races all across the U.S. As a race director, she worked with volunteers, tourism development authorities and numerous other organizations.

"It was a lot of fun," she said. "You get to meet a lot of great people."

Due to structural changes in USA Cycling, Rice left the organization in December 2023 and joined Ventures Endurance. The latter is maybe best known for running the annual RAGBRAI (Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa), the oldest, largest and longest recreational bike ride in the world. The seven-day rides, which were first held in 1973, begin at the state's western border and end at the Mississippi River.

"This year it was a little over 400 miles long," said Rice. "There were more than 18,000 registered participants."

RAGBRAI participants average riding approximately 45-50 miles a day, stopping in towns and cities of all sizes.

"Each town basically rolls out the welcome mat," said Rice. "It's a huge economic boost to the state of Iowa and their rural communities."

She noted that Des Moines, Iowa, has such an extensive network of biking and walking paths that residents and visitors can get nearly anywhere and "never have to touch a road."

While Rice thoroughly enjoyed her work with Ventures Endurance, she prefers being at home and working with the local communities. Her desire to create positive impacts, as well as the job skills she has learned, drew her to the FOET executive director position.

“It all goes back to Parks and Rec, enhancing quality of life and being involved in the community,” she said. “How can we build community? How can we bring people together?”

Ready to strengthen FOET’s structure

Since Rice will be FOET’s first executive director, she realizes that will bring additional challenges and opportunities. She said the board has built a solid foundation for the organization and a framework for her position, but original executive directors have an opportunity to build upon those structures.

“It’s not cookie cutter,” she said. “What works in one place may not work here.”

Besides completing the next two sections of the trail – the first six miles in Henderson County opened this July – she perceives the executive director serving multiple roles: supporting FOET, making sure the trail is safe and has ample amenities, raising awareness of the trail, building relationships within the communities and showcasing the economic, health and social benefits of the trail.

“It’s such a great opportunity. All these different pieces are all coming together,” she said. “I’m just really excited about it.”

Attachments: