

EXPLORE PARK  
WRT # 7639.01

## PARKS, RECREATION AND ADVISORY COMMISSION AND LEISURE LAGACY

**Date of Meeting:** September 29, 2015, 6:00pm

**Location:** Visitor Conference Center, Explore Park

**Prepared by:** Charlie Neer  
Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC

**Distribution:** Doug Blount, Lon Williams, Eric Tamulonis, Leon Younger, Jim McAden, Sean Horne

**Present:** **Advisory Commissioners:**

Bill Tanger  
Fred Corbett  
Jay Glenn  
Larry Peterson  
Ranny Grubb

**Leisure Legacy Board Members:**

John White  
Jackie Rearick

**Roanoke County Parks, Recreation and Tourism:**

Doug Blount, Director  
Members from Parks, Recreation and Tourism Staff

**Master Plan Design Team:**

Eric Tamulonis  
Charlie Neer  
James McAden

### Notes from discussion following Master Plan Community Input presentation:

- Infrastructure development must lead future park development
- Need overnight camping
- High / Low Ropes Courses that move through the landscape
- Diversity of camping experiences
- Variety of kayaking experiences
- Extend the stay for users – what programs / activities are needed to do this?
- Whitewater activities
- +55 age group – need for RV Camping
- Give Blue Ridge Parkway users a reason to enter Explore Park
- Need for public / private partnerships
- Costs for water / sewer infrastructure – approximately \$1.5 million
- Grant opportunities are possible for infrastructural upgrades
- RV Partners are a possibility
- Do Not Want to see Explore Park on the local crime log – keep it safe
- Gas Station + Country Store for Blue Ridge Park Users
- Park Trends

- Multi-purpose adventure experience
- Beautiful park w/ strong infrastructure in place
- Keep locals coming back
- Attract –out-of towners
- The park needs new front entries (besides the entry off Blue Ridge Parkway)
- Adventure sports events opportunities – expose more people to the park
- Needs to be a destination location along the Blue Ridge Parkway
- What are the impacts of land use adjacent to Explore Park?
- We need a regional approach for Explore Park – broader economic development
- Overnight accommodations should be considered
- Need for unique lodging opportunities

## Virginia Recreation Facilities Authority

**Date of Meeting:** September 30, 2015, 9:00am

**Location:** Vinton War Memorial

**Prepared by:** Charlie Neer  
Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC

**Distribution:** Doug Blount, Lon Williams, Eric Tamulonis, Leon Younger, Jim McAden, Sean Horne

**Present:** **Virginia Recreation Facilities Authority Board Members:**

Fred Anderson  
Trixie Averill  
KC Bratton  
Dennis Cronk  
Carolyn Fidler  
David Hurt  
Tucker Lemon  
Debbie Pitts  
Bill Tanger  
Shawn Utt

**Roanoke County Parks, Recreation and Tourism:**

Doug Blount, Director  
Members from Parks, Recreation and Tourism Staff

**Master Plan Design Team:**

Eric Tamulonis  
Charlie Neer  
Sean Horne

### **Notes from discussion following Master Plan Community Input presentation:**

- What to do with historic artifacts that are currently in the process of being moved / sold? How can or how should the artifacts be incorporated into the Master Plan?
- What is the reuse potential of the artifacts?
- There is a different timeline for the buildings that are in storage vs the artifacts that are in the process of being moved or sold.
- Can historic structures be reused for overnight lodging?
- Have the park provide a range of lodging experiences
- It is Roanoke County's choice to determine if the buildings should stay or go.
- Should the VRFA halt the process of moving / selling buildings / artifacts?
- Roanoke Co wants to go through the master planning process to determine what to do with the structures
- Roanoke County recommends a continuation of the process of moving artifacts
- Ropes course could be a draw
- Zipline / swinging bridge over Roanoke gorge – combine with overnight camping
- "Glamping" – refined experience

- RV camping – compatible with other park programming
- Finding the right vendor partnerships
- Encourage adaptive re-use
- Amphitheater opportunity (co-programming with other activities)
- Heritage trees and cultural / natural education / interpretation
- River & gorge as central development – core of park
- Additional river access with camping – possibly Back Creek
- All camping needs to be properly maintained
- Pedestrian bridge – iconic, but a vehicular bridge may not be welcome along the river
- Balance cultural interpretation w/ outdoor adventure programming
- All buildings (new & old) require maintenance
- Maintain heritage “aura”
- Protect river corridor
- Variety of users – scalable user experience for multiple durations of time in the park (.5 hour, 2, 3, 4...8 hour visits)
- Entice users to come back or stay longer
- Cater to university students
- 4 season recreation
- Find programming for all age segments – part of a larger community
- Festivals – Scottish games + Oktoberfest
- Music in the park
- Programming – establish a pattern of use
- Possibility for Niagra Dam to be part of a whitewater / river experience
- No ATV use in core part of park - maybe on outlying parcels
- Mill Mountain programming partnerships
- Zoo and past ideas of zoo are not compatible with current ideas of what Explore Park can be
- Bedford County access is important
- Distinct use in Bedford County
- Create a reason to cross the river – attractions on both sides
- Innovative playgrounds – nature play – proximity to visitor center
- Events facility down by or overlooking the river – not a huge eyesore
- NPS is a stakeholder in the master planning process
- Echo Chamber – Gospel music venue potential

## General Community Meeting

**Date of Meeting:** September 30, 2015, 7:00pm

**Location:** Vinton War Memorial

**Prepared by:** Charlie Neer  
Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC

**Distribution:** Doug Blount, Lon Williams, Eric Tamulonis, Leon Younger, Jim McAden, Sean Horne

**Present:** **General Public:**  
See attached Attendance Sheet

**Roanoke County Parks, Recreation and Tourism:**  
Doug Blount, Director  
Members from Parks, Recreation and Tourism Staff

**Master Plan Design Team:**  
Eric Tamulonis  
Charlie Neer  
Andrew Dawson  
Jim McAden  
Sean Horne  
Chris Burns

**Notes from each of the four breakout stations following Master Plan Community Input presentation:**

### Natural Resources

- Eagles nest
- Amphitheater – Acting & drama classes
- Hunting – Deer population is super high
- Dolleywood style park
- Campgrounds close to the river
- Fish petty zoo
- Zipline into river
- Gift shop / scenery
- Maintain species population (not adding new animal species)
- Educational sensory trail
- Introduction ride / entertainment
- Creative activity center – children's activities

### Recreational Amenities

- Tent camping with showers and toilets and cabins to rent for church camps
- 18 hole disc golf
- Hike-In primitive campsites

- Ultra-running races & mountain bike races
- Cabin rental, tent camping spaces w/ toilets and showers
- Boat ramp
- White water park / park and play
- Animal habitat
- RV sites
- Go Test Roanoke
- Once a month – something to come back to
- RV Camping / Dog Park
- RV – need water dump, electricity & TV
- Uses in the park for children to adults
- Tourists and locals
- Boat launch
- Kids fishing instruction
- Land & water conservation fund DCR & NPS – expiration? 1965
- Need for an event space
- Creative Arts Activity Center
- Pool to attract campers and sell memberships to local residents
- Dancing / Bandstand
- Shooting – skeet / trap/ sporting clay pigeons
- Dog park
- New greenway alignment under high bridge
- Greenway along river
- RVRA = Landfill
- BB gun range
- Eagle
- Saw mill
- Mr. Bo Adams (ag lease)
- Rock House – Patsels Family
- Dogpark
- Rafts & Tubing
- Railroad tunnel area easement
- Disc golf – ROCO Disc Golf
- Tree houses for lodging
- Greenway
- Locals!!
- Bike shop
- Wasena Park – Greenway Scene
- An access to Mill Mountain Loop and accessible parking for horse trailer, and a trail in the park. At least six riding clubs in the area. We already help maintain riding trails at Day Creek etc... A pay program for horse rides to park and ride would bring income in. Day Creek is in Jefferson National Forest.

### **Infrastructural Amenities**

- Bridge across midpoint in the park – mostly pedestrian access – multi-phase
- Improvements to Rutrough Road and connect to Hardy Road
- Hotel (rustic) Restaurants – overlooking river
- Creative Activity Center – children young / older families; boy and Girl Scouts
- Hierarchy of trails
- Keep it natural looking
- Use less cement

- Water access / trail access pts
- Star gazing area
- Primitive camping
- Overnight lodging – RV Sites
- Observation tower
- Train ride (electric?) – perimeter? Existing track?; some sort of transportation system that is environmentally friendly
- Repurpose buildings
- Bakery / Coffee shop
- Roanoke Shuttle – trolley train
- Internal transportation system
- Prioritize roads / water /sewer improvements
- Civic groups / interest groups / colleges / universities – labs education research
- Bush Gardens
- Trout Fishing
- Launch point – lake access
- Fish pond
- Private sector
- No Disney, No Kings Dominion, Bush Gardens – need a big company
- General maintenance of roads and parking
- Stage music venue
- Outdoor restaurant dining
- Greenway connection

## **Cultural Resources**

- If bridge connects Roanoke & Bedford County sides...Have railway heritage station at point of bridge that crosses railroad
- A cave like a mine
- Geocaching trail – virtual caches that explore cultural backgrounds
- Swimming?
- River rafting
- Trout Fishing
- Deer Skinner – smoking meat
- Bring back the Tavern!
- VA vineyard / Wineries – sell / showcase at Brugh
- Re-open Brugh Tavern
- Carpenter shop
- Pioneering
- Indian village
- Interest in story telling potential
- Preserve buildings
- Bush Gardens as a partner
- Seasonal events – Haunted House
- Mote / Hotel – cabins to blend into the scenery
- Smart phone Apps for interpretation
- Train connections – environmentally friendly within the park – cultural connection to Roanoke 611 & Transportation Museum
- Outdoor theater
- Amphitheater
- Artisan Vendors
- Film making backlot

- Railway Heritage Station
- Interpret Norfolk Southern

See attached document for more information sent by Spanky Macher



SEPT. 17<sup>TH</sup> 2015

REACTION AND INPUT SUGGESTIONS O EXPLORE PARK, RE ARTICLE IN PAPER SEPT. 11T 2015  
TO ROANOKE COUNTY,. DOUG BLOUNT

So a few years ago I made this suggestion let me try again. I am sure you won't listen but it is a great idea.

I would move the Mill Mountain Zoo to the explorer park land, expand it make the habitats larger, add many more that were from the time of lewis and clark. Make it a real zoo

Use the existing space where the zoo is now and make it some sort of sanctuary for the folks in Roanoke with the Star.

Have a rail spur from downtown Roanoke and Lynchburg take you to the explorer park,

Use the train at MMZ for traveling around explorer park

Use the river travel through the exhibits

USE THE RIVER.

You have a river walk, big deal. Take spurs off the river and use the water for log flumes, tub rides, kayaking, white water, you can take one of the rides and see parks of the park, possibly canoes and boats that they used during the time, right, give it some excitement, rides, amusement type stuff that is cheap affordable and able to use the existing terrain that is there, yea right. You are not using the river at all and it is a fantastic river.

Maybe even some type of fishing hole. That is stocked by the state.

You could contact the Great Wolf people,,,that would be a good tie in for explorer.

You are not using what is there and trying to get people to see a log cabin. Expand it make it fun exciting, turn it into a destination place for many people for different things.

Spanky macher

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NAME

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[illegible]



[illegible]





Date: 9/30 7pm

[illegible]

## General Community Meeting

**Date of Meeting:** October 1, 2015, 10:00am

**Location:** Green Ridge Recreation Center

**Prepared by:** Charlie Neer  
Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC

**Distribution:** Doug Blount, Lon Williams, Eric Tamulonis, Leon Younger, Jim McAden, Sean Horne

**Present:** **General Public:**  
See attached Attendance Sheet

**Roanoke County Parks, Recreation and Tourism:**  
Doug Blount, Director  
Members from Parks, Recreation and Tourism Staff

**Master Plan Design Team:**  
Eric Tamulonis  
Charlie Neer  
Leon Younger  
Sean Horne

### Notes from each of the four breakout stations following Master Plan Community Input presentation:

#### Natural Resources

- Dark sky responsive sensitive lighting
- Nocturnal wildlife – avoid disruption (light disturbance)
- Light spectrum – less than 3500 degrees – LED lights
- Chesapeake Bay Agreement
- Project based learning
- Combine recreation and education
- Keep the river natural – limit access points to allow wildlife to thrive
- Save old trees
- Maintain trees along the river
- Would the Bedford County portion be a good place for more wild hiking trails, accessible by a pedestrian hiking only bridge?
- Bird watching is big economic attractor in other states. Promote bird trail tourism.
- Star gazing – promote a place for dark sky
- Maintain views at Resource Authority property
- Utilize old car dumps, junkyards for “developed” use – RVs ATV park
- Back Country Horsemen – volunteers to create & maintain horse trails
- Delayed harvest trout stocking – 3 times a year – state program, possible private sector support to implement given the fact that the stat is maxed out (Mark Taylor – Trout Unlimited)

### Recreational Amenities

- Weddings – capitalize on the venue
- Have mountain bike skills park
- Cabins – need cabins. Use for conferences / workshops during week, creation on weekend
- Roanoke River Greenway through whole park along river
- Trout fishing (stocked) in river.
- Delayed harvest (3 stockings from Oct – May; catch and release until June) makes the most sense. Local trout unlimited chapter willing to help with stocking, signage, etc...
- Hiking trails – recruit the experts to build them (Bill Gordges's group)
- Critical! Extend the Roanoke River Greenway to Explore Park. Provide bicycle parking facility. This allows access that doesn't require parking.
- Equestrian Trails & Horse Campground needed at Explore Park (Douthat State Park, White Cedars)
- Carefully managed deer hunting (December & January) to manage deer population to protect habitat
- Camping access
- Permit camping along Back Creek with canoeing down creek from Rt 116
- Improve access at Niagara Dam
- Camping should be tents only – no RV
- Horse trails with access to overnight camping – need at least 6 miles of trails – can store with bike riders
- Overnight camping access – Boy Scouts & Girl Scouts
- Dedicated horse trailer parking
- RV camping – survey on type of RVs that use the Blue Ridge Parkway class B – C? Better access to RKE from campgrounds
- Recreational programming for local schools – hiking, biking, paddling, with environmental & cultural connections
- Mountain bike rentals
- Buy Hooland Heirs property – river access, canoe portage
- Get Niagara for white water park
- Parking at Niagara – either side canoe take out – fishing Tinker – Niagara
- Road bikes – pull off parkway to overnight
- ATVs – if you had smallish dirt bike park, people would swarm in – put on landfill site
- RVs – put them on old auto dump
- Control release from Spring Hollow
- Horses – the trails to NPS horse trails
- Birding
- Keep views on old landfill
- Mountain bike trails wither side of RR parkway
- Telescopes at overlooks
- Filming / photography
- Canoeists need access
- NOLS school
- Zipline to Bedford
- Cabins us for training, workshops, Klondike
- Swinging bridge to Bedford
- Where is Greenway along river through park?
- Blue Ridge historical sustainability center – blending past with modern sustainability and concentric living
- Brew Festival at Brugh Tavern
- Key activities – Biking (road / mountain), kayak, fly fishing
- SUP shuttles to run river
- Some bike trails are eroded

- Need to do a formal study of RVs coming off Parkway based on unmet needs (this can be done at the Visitor's Center.
- Camping is a high priority
- Consider a private fish hatchery on the property for stocking and selling fish
- Develop individual fish clubs along the river
- Create rock climbing opportunities in the park
- Set up classes for beginners & intermediate paddlers
- Establish world class design
- Put survey link in Blue Ridge Outdoors (magazine or blog)
- Allowed controlled hunting
- Allow for public access below the dam
- Set up run / paddle / biking event the County owns
- Set up a national outdoor learning school on site with Bradford & VA Tech.

#### **Cultural Resources**

- Get colleges & universities involved in cultural resources
- History is still important
- Do not forget historic structures
- Music, music, music culture
- Revolutionary War reenactments
- Partnerships with other regional cultural institutions
- Add campsites to historic heritage
- Preserve Frontier Village
- Increase cultural programming – guest speakers
- Bring people off the BRP?
- Outdoor concert venue
- Open blacksmith shop for demos
- Camping for Scouts
- Amphitheater
- Bluegrass
- Floyd Fest style events
- 2<sup>nd</sup> parkway entrance
- Wine festivals for local wineries
- RV camping
- Attraction food facility
- Open the tavern
- Micro-brewery
- Keep any RVs in already – unnatural areas
- Cabin camping
- Blacksmith Artisans / Artisan Center
- RV Class – 50 amp service, dumping station
- Blue Ridge Historical Sustainability Center – workshops on sustainable living

#### **Infrastructural Amenities**

- Sediment accumulations
- Erosion at the point
- Boating access
- Keep river natural, don't build pavement along it. Floating should allow wildlife, etc....minimize impacts along river
- River access points
- Greenway along River
- Camping for Scouts
- Trees along River



- Sustainable trail system needed (DuPont State Forest)
- More Access from river
- Brugh tavern becomes a micro-brewery
- RV Parking – camping
- Access to Roanoke – trolley to Star / City / for food / entertainment
- Cabins / buildings designed for business and tourist use – weekday use
- Private Investment is critical – Feasible and profitable – challenge of private investment in public owned land
- No RVs – tent camping only – cabins for rent would be OK
- RVs – A, B, C – what are you designing for?
- WVWA for Water & sewer connections
- Bridge to Bedford
- Bridge access to Bedford acreage
- Share resources long term
- Amphitheater
- Attract young and old
- Rock climbing
- Pedestrian access to Bedford
- Campground use for equestrian use – with access to trails – Fairystone & Douthat
- Both trout fishing & rapids
- Horse trails on RVRA property
- Rock Climbing Routes
- Dumping Station for RV (sites, water, electricity)
- Horse trailer parking with trail access – continue success of first event - 66 riders
- Trail bridge under Bridge
- Connect trail system to Mill Mountain



## Arts, Culture, Heritage and Education Stakeholder Group

**Date of Meeting:** September 30, 2015, 1:00pm

**Location:** Vinton War Memorial

**Prepared by:** Charlie Neer  
Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC

**Distribution:** Doug Blount, Lon Williams, Eric Tamulonis, Leon Younger, Jim McAden, Sean Horne

**Present:** **Arts, Culture, Heritage and Education Stakeholder Group:**  
See attached Attendance Sheet

**Roanoke County Parks, Recreation and Tourism:**  
Doug Blount, Director  
Members from Parks, Recreation and Tourism Staff

**Master Plan Design Team:**  
Eric Tamulonis  
Charlie Neer  
Jim McAden

### Notes from discussion following Master Plan Community Input presentation:

- Have we thought about keeping Roanoke County and Bedford Counties separate for park programming?
- Bedford County is part of the stakeholder group. They are currently actively working on park programming
- Possibility to partner with local museums / organizations
- Outdoor theater
- Train connection – regional connectivity
- Excursion train on Norfolk Southern line
- Frontier Culture Museum as a partner for Explore Park
- Bring the schools into the park – school field trips
- Events – preserve tradition of early settlers
- Develop educational materials for heritage education
- Affordable food venues
- Overnight lodging
- Ecosystem programming / education tied to schools and universities
- Explore Park as outdoor classroom
- High quality programming
- Equipment rental (canoe/kayak) and have a guide (either Roanoke County or private vendor)
- Challenge course / wilderness adventure
- Need the ability to rent a room – meeting center – opportunity for historic structure adaptive reuse
- Conference Center – Quality & Affordable
- Alternative adventure competitions – “EXPLORATHON”
- Environmental education center
- Get tourists into the park to keep it going

- How to pull / attract Parkway users?
- More things for families / children to do
- Keep users in the park
- Range of activities for multiple users
- Children = lifelong clients (also bring rest of family to the park)
- Public transportation / bus line
- Can Explore Park have a new name?
- Food as a destination element to the park
- Organic community garden
- Is there a Blue Ridge Parkway app that we could include Explore Park? Increase visibility along the Parkway
- Retreat Center
- Natural / cultural education has to be dynamic – create reasons to keep coming back to the park
- Synch food, culture, nature education together
- Outdoor adventure center
- Make Explore Park a hub of orientation activities
- Artist resident program
- Opportunities for in-situ art
- Art – combine cotemporary / heritage art processes
- Provide a variety of transportation modes in the park
- Look at Roanoke County tourism report for possible partners for the park
- Variety of trails for a variety of users – paved / natural trails
- Need for a trail hierarchy
- Adaptive reuse for the historic structures – are they in the right place?
- Family biking
- Middle / High School activities (not just for elementary or university students)
- Ropes courses for all skill ranges

See attached documents for more information sent by Janet Wimmer and Frank Baratta

Explore Park recommendations from Janet Wimmer:

Fundraising calendar

Fall educational re-enactments of Indian village, schoolhouse and mill for local school field trips, write curriculum to match SOLs and send to area schools

Homeschool classes similar to The Learning Barn, Willow Creek Farm in Fincastle

Survivor games, father, son, 1 day requirements to complete, first one back to gift shop wins

Survivor classes, edible plants, medicinal plants, building a fire, building a shelter etc...

Treasure hunts for children (ie. Jamestown)

Leaf/tree identification/hike for children

Reopen restaurant, start small, maybe as a sandwich shop at first then expand. Have specialty food, baked goods from Mennonite community, local orchards, farm produce. Make it a destination not just a stop off for bathrooms....

*organic gardens*

Find retired school teachers to volunteer in educational capacity

Picnic pavilions

Clear more area around river, have more areas for canoeing and kyaking

Schedule more music events, flat footing demos, Virginia reel line dance for visitors, square dances - great caller Katherine Lawson, Rachel's sister

Plein air workshops

Farm animal, petting zoo or just pens to observe chickens, goats, sheep etc....

Horse backing riding on trails



# Roanoke Valley Astronomical Society

## Roanoke, Virginia

Explore Park Master Plan Meetings  
Vinton War Memorial  
September 30, 2015

### Planning for Astronomy

Considering astronomy in the future development planning for Explore Park offers significant potential benefits to the residents of Roanoke County and beyond. The Society conducts numerous public activities and knows from experience that there is a broad interest across age groups in viewing the night sky from areas away from light pollution. The ability of Explore Park to offer a nearby, reasonably dark site provides an attraction for local residents that also contributes to the County's tourism development.

#### Explore Park Stargazing Areas:

- A stargazing area within Explore Park is crucial. (The Society has conducted activities at the first and second parking areas on the Roanoke River Parkway. These areas suffer from extensive skyglow from Roanoke and are not recommended for stargazing.)
- A sufficiently open area for viewing (a 100-foot radius, if possible) is recommended.
- Vehicle access to the area for unloading and setting up large telescopes within a few paces is important. (See image below for the range of telescope sizes often used.)
- The designated area needs to be away from the headlights of passing vehicle traffic.

#### Explore Park Lighting Conducive to Stargazing:

- Lighting bordering and near a stargazing area should be of a full cut-off design. In addition to benefiting stargazing activities, installation of full cut-off lighting allows for lower wattage lamps, reducing both energy and maintenance costs.
- Lighting in and around a stargazing area should include shut-off means to ensure night sky visibility.

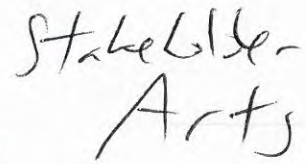
The Society would be pleased to offer additional information regarding the above and to discuss opportunities for collaborating with the County regarding astronomy programs for area residents.



Contact Information:  
Frank Baratta, Past President, RVAS







Date: 9/30/11pm

[illegible]

## Environmental, Natural Resources, and Outdoor Recreation Stakeholder Group

**Date of Meeting:** September 30, 2015, 4:00pm

**Location:** Vinton War Memorial

**Prepared by:** Charlie Neer  
Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC

**Distribution:** Doug Blount, Lon Williams, Eric Tamulonis, Leon Younger, Jim McAden, Sean Horne

**Present:** **Environmental, Natural Resources, and Outdoor Recreation Stakeholder Group:**  
See attached Attendance Sheet

**Roanoke County Parks, Recreation and Tourism:**  
Doug Blount, Director  
Members from Parks, Recreation and Tourism Staff

**Master Plan Design Team:**  
Eric Tamulonis  
Charlie Neer  
Jim McAden

### Notes from discussion following Master Plan Community Input presentation:

- Upstream access points near the dam – 3.5 miles from dam to The Point – you can make this canoe/kayak ride several times a day
- Scheduled releases can attract regional users – need trailhead facilities – will need coordination with NPS
- Norfolk Southern R.O.W. challenges for river access
- Linear trail needed from Mill Mountain to Explore Park
- Blueway connection to Smith Lake
- Guided hiking by expert naturalists
- Meeting facility tied to trail system
- Guest speaker events in the park
- Event facility for 250 / 300 people
- Docents for cultural heritage
- Simple concessions in the park
- Variety camping experiences
- Improve road cycling access to Explore Park. Bikeway along Rutrough Rd. Expand bikeway connections
- RV Camping – possibly on the out-parcels
- Camping will help increase people presence – helps with safety
- Controlled river access – protect resources
- Accessible access points
- Tent camping needs showerhouse
- Nighttime park activities – Astronomy (need open space and controlled light – close to parking)
- Natural resource education
- Birding activities (Rupert Cutler)



- Youth Education (Claytor Education Center) – Encourage nature learning
- Roanoke River watershed education
- Cabin rentals – attract tourists (tie in with events like weddings)
- Tree Tours
- Preserve Indian area
- Destination attractions
- IMAX
- Friendly paved paths for cyclists & families
- Parking at The Point is limited
- Trash along the River – Flooding debris – need for more clean-up events
- Leave No Trace – set the rules in the Master Plan
- Sewage / water quality concerns



# Master Plan Meeting Attendance

Date: 9/30 4pm

NAME ADDRESS PHONE EMAIL

Natasha Lee  
Emilee Tenneles  
Kaine Culligan  
Joe Hanning  
Renée Powers  
Dan Wilson  
Dan Basham  
JAMES REVERCOMB  
GREGG ZODY

EXPLORE PARK  
WRT # 7639.01

## Economic Development Stakeholder Group

**Date of Meeting:** October 1, 2015, 1:00pm

**Location:** Green Ridge Recreation Center

**Prepared by:** Charlie Neer  
Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC

**Distribution:** Doug Blount, Lon Williams, Eric Tamulonis, Leon Younger, Jim McAden, Sean Horne

**Present:** **Economic Development Stakeholder Group:**  
See attached Attendance Sheet

**Roanoke County Parks, Recreation and Tourism:**  
Doug Blount, Director  
Members from Parks, Recreation and Tourism Staff

**Master Plan Design Team:**  
Charlie Neer  
Leon Younger  
Jim McAden

**Notes from each of the discussion following Master Plan Community Input presentation:**

### Cost Recovery Goals

- Basic (free) services for community
- Cover operating costs (100%) + 40% = 140% (direct & overhead)

**Enterprise Fund** (covers operating)

### Private Development Partnerships

- Camping
- RV's
- Equestrians
- Food services
- Lodging
- Recreation outfitters

### Partnerships to Consider

- Twin Rivers Outfitters
- Roanoke Mtn Adventures
- Local Retailers (eg bike shops)
- National level?

**Entrance Fee** (open for consideration possibly based on certain days / events)

**Region** = 100+ miles (may vary with attraction – 200/300 miles)

- Whitewater Center (NC) attracts visitors from hours away (not a 90% use)
- Wilderness Medical Institute (national attraction)
- Camping
- Internet access
- River access
- Swimming
- Weekend getaways
- Cabins
- Market “metro-mountain” mix (Asheville = competitor)
- Destination Attractions
- “Fish with a net, not a line”
- World Class
- Regional wine tasting
- Food trucks
- Design Standards: establish a world class facility
- Public transportation opportunities (eg tours)
- Types of free programs
  - Programs aren’t free (more specialized – flyfishing 101)
  - Free trail access (passive recreation)
- Corporate retreats / conference center (meeting space)
- Family friendly activities (intergenerational play)
- Bike campground
- Horse campground





Date: 10/1/15 pm  
Economic

[illegible]

## Rutrough Rd Community Meeting

**Date of Meeting:** October 1, 2015, 7:00pm

**Location:** Mount Pleasant Elementary School

**Prepared by:** Charlie Neer  
Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC

**Distribution:** Doug Blount, Lon Williams, Eric Tamulonis, Leon Younger, Jim McAden, Sean Horne

**Present:** **General Public:**  
See attached Attendance Sheet

**Roanoke County Parks, Recreation and Tourism:**  
Doug Blount, Director  
Members from Parks, Recreation and Tourism Staff

**Master Plan Design Team:**  
Eric Tamulonous  
Charlie Neer  
Leon Younger  
Jim McAden  
Sean Horne  
Chris Burns

### Notes from each of the four breakout stations following Master Plan Community Input presentation:

#### Natural Resources

- Clean up tires, trash, etc...
- Turkey – life cycle
- Eddie Honts (has drawings on Roanoke River Parkway) – Grandmother is part of “Brugh” family
- Old building clean-up
- Hunting shack with antique cook stove
- Dumping on logging road
- Bait for fishing
- No high power hunting, no shot – bow only
- Lottery permits for deer hunting – too many deer
- Open exit off of Blue Ridge Parkway
- Boat access

#### Recreational Amenities

- Boat launch
- Distillery
- Road to launch sites (kayak)
- Possibility of trails through Resource Authority land
- ATV trails – Bedford

- Youth Hunt / Hunting safety classes
- Archery
- Fishing
- Hunt lottery
- Camping – all types
- Bike campground
- Horse overnight camping
- Community ants improved roads to the river
- What is the set back requirements for the landfill to the river
- Find a place for ATV's in the park
- Allow for bow hunting
- Sell bait in the park
- Allow for fishing on the river after 7pm in the summer
- Allow controlled youth hunting in the park
- Consider selling the property north of the Blue Ridge Parkway
- Set up horse campground
- Set up bike campground

#### **Cultural Resources**

- Restaurant – affordable but good food
- Wineries & micro-breweries
- Brugh Tavern – use as a seed for phased developed of the park
- Need activities that will keep people coming back
- Interpreters in historic areas for special events
- There is a grist mill foundation along the banks of the Back Creek
- Mayberry Mill (BRP b/w Roanoke & Floyd)
- Restore the Dickenson House
- Blueridge Folklife Festival at Ferrum College
- Paved ADA trail with fishing access along the river
- Music – Country / Bluegrass
- Fishing & Hunting
- Historic Structures as a destination for the Greenway
- Celebrate local heritage
- Youth Hunt
- Archery & Lottery hunting
- Dolleywood
- Family programming
- Get people into the park
- Accessibility is important
- Get kids in the park
- Bring greenway into the park along the river
- Re-zoning properties around Explore Park

#### **Infrastructural Amenities**

- AEP R.O.W. at Eastland is possible connection point (road)
- Better roadway maintenance Eastland
- Highland / Eastland Rd need to be looked at
- Greenway connection
- Consider another entry – to keep traffic off of Rutrough
- Restaurant
- Traffic on Rutrough Rd – shortcut to parkway
- Bike lane on Rutrough Rd
- City portion of Rutrough improvements

- Questions about what would be required when water & sewer are installed. Cost??
- Doggy Day Care for park users
- Folklife Festival
- Harness methane for power
- Boat launch? Upper portion of property
- Swinging Bridge Across Railroad
- Bridge to Bedford
- Maintain access through the park
- Zipline
- No tax increase as a result of this!!!!
- Swanky Hotel – chic boutique
- Restaurant
- Chair Lift
- Improve pavement “moonscape”
- Cabins
- Bed and breakfast + camping
- Equestrian trails / camping
- Save the House (Dickenson House)
- Bait N’ Tackle shop at The Point
- Point to Lake is beautiful
- Canoe / kayak to Bayroc / shuttle back from Lake
- Improve the Point
- More lake access





Kutrough - 7pm

[illegible]





Date: 10/1/15

Rutrough - 7pm

[illegible]

## Roanoke County Employees

**Date of Meeting:** September 29, 2015, 2:30pm

**Location:** Visitor Conference Center, Explore Park

**Prepared by:** Charlie Neer  
Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC

**Distribution:** Doug Blount, Lon Williams, Eric Tamulonis, Leon Younger, Jim McAden, Sean Horne

**Present:** **Roanoke County Employees:**  
See Attached Attendance Sheet

**Roanoke County Parks, Recreation and Tourism:**  
Doug Blount, Director  
Members from Parks, Recreation and Tourism Staff

**Master Plan Design Team:**  
Eric Tamulonis  
Charlie Neer  
James McAden

### Notes from discussion following Master Plan Community Input presentation:

- Great Trails – Variety of users
- Water Amenity rentals – need / opportunity to experience the water
- Potential / full opportunity for Explore Park – whatever it wants to be, it can be
- Don't be Timid!
- Bring neighbors in as "Parknerships"
- Tie-In Horse trails – Equestrian Use / Activity – possible connection to Mill Mtn.
- Accessible trails and camping are important
- Variety of trail types for ALL user types – Paved & Natural trails.
- Need for back country campsites
- Possibility of biking in and camping
- Interest in RV camping – needs electricity and necessary facilities
- Camping activities at river
- Blue Ridge Parkway Users want to camp
- Marketing coordination opportunities with NPS
- Users 1) Locals 2) Tourists
- Pricing Structures / levels for locals vs tourists
- Donations boxes for trails
- Challenge of repeat business for historical structures – varies as per users
- Historic Authenticity – regionally accurate
- Cultural Education Opportunities tie programming to Standards of Learning
- Natural Resources – are we covering the basics
- Trails & Accessibility
- Need clear signage
- Safety patrols

- Trash maintenance
- Bear proof maintenance
- Need picnic pavilions & indoor classrooms
- Opportunities for viewsheds + interpretive signage
- Delineate meadows
- Connecting users with nature – from buildings – windows and decks
- Obvious pedestrian trails + picnic tables at core of park
- Tie Gift Shop + Park Users together with experiences (eg. Sell compasses)
- Potential for water access in the park is huge
- Bedford is “on the wrong side of the tracks”
- Gondolas and Ziplines – new ways of experiencing the park
- What don’t you want to see in the park?
- Too much concrete
- No rec fields
- Don’t change spoil the character
- Balance carrying capacity
- Landfill is not part of Explore Park – may be a partner with trails
- Events / Festivals could happen in Explore Park
- Small amphitheater is a possibility
- Adventure races are big and could happen in the park (biking / trail running)
- What activities are / could be available for kids:
- Need a paved trail for strollers
- Nature Playgrounds – variety of play experiences for all age groups
  - Tie-in with picnic locations
  - Co-programming – keep people in the park
- Public / Private partnerships provide revenue opportunities
- Rental camping – yurts
- Leave no trace – carry in / carry out
- Need adequate trash facilities

See attached document for more information sent by Tara Poelzing

## Notes for County Staff Master Plan Community Meeting

What is the **mission** of this site?

We have a **commitment to the stewardship** of the park

Method for continuing evaluation?

### **Safety**

Trail maintenance

General park maintenance - cleanliness

Well-marked trails

Safety patrols

### **Public land management / Natural resource management**

Invasive weed control

-Without continued and intensive weed removal, we stand to lose great trees, diverse wildflowers, and a natural setting people expect when visiting a park like EP.

- Volunteer program

- Regular park maintenance

- Education piece

- Nonpersonal and personal interpretation

BioBlitz or natural resources inventory

### **Serving Visitors**

Group experiences, solitude, and special access

Get data straight from current users

### ***Accessibility- Who we serve***

Accessibility in every aspect

- 38% of population in Roanoke is over the age of 45

- 13% is 65 or older (WRT's data is probably more current.)

- Majority of visitors from the BRP are not young with families

Length and difficulty of trails

- Paved trail for accessibility and strollers

If you are thinking of planning for families, consider barriers:

- Cost

- Time available

- Planning ahead is difficult

- Time is already filled with regularly scheduled "typical" activities

Casual ways for families to take part

- Playground that is safe and not garish with benches and shade

- Picnic area nearby

- Not right next to a busy road or parking lot but easily accessible via sidewalk

- Please investigate usability and safety

# Notes for County Staff Master Plan Community Meeting

## Facilities

### LEED

Nature Center with wildlife viewing areas

- Bird feeding

- Pond

- Forest view

- Meadow view

Better connect the VC with the outdoors

- More nearby picnic tables – with shade

- Sidewalks

- Obvious pedestrian areas

Gift shop as educator – tie in materials sold in gift shop to programming

Training included for VC staff to better know the park.

### Parking Lot

- Incorporate bioswales and shade

- Sidewalks / crosswalks / Bear trash cans

### Picnicking

- Pavilion

- Bear trash cans

- More tables

  - Esp. closer to VC and major parking areas – more at Journeys End

## Interpretation

History of this actual place

- Who farmed here

- What was farmed/raised/logged

- How old is this forest

### Meadows

- One designated, mowed trail

- Overlook

Interpret the river

Wetland viewing

Bear interpretation

What is Explore Park's story? What is the story of this particular place—over a long course of history, including geologic history.





Date: 7/29

[illegible]

## Economic Development Stakeholder Group

**Date of Meeting:** October 20, 2015, 1:00pm

**Location:** Salem Civic Center Community Room

**Prepared by:** Charlie Neer  
Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC

**Distribution:** Doug Blount, Lon Williams, Eric Tamulonis, Leon Younger, Jim McAden, Sean Horne

**Present:** **Economic Development Stakeholder Group:**  
See attached Attendance Sheet

**Roanoke County Parks, Recreation and Tourism:**  
Doug Blount, Director  
Members from Parks, Recreation and Tourism Staff

**Master Plan Design Team:**  
Eric Tamulonis  
Charlie Neer  
Jim McAden  
Sean Horne

### Notes from each of the discussion following Master Plan Community Input presentation:

- Is there a possibility to examine a name change for Explore Park?
- Potential for re-enactments festivals/events – potential to generate income
- Develop a plan for all users – balance park programming
- Business owners want to know what is going on now I the park and how they can plug in
- Possibilities for regional blueway/greenway connections
- High end RV parking and gas station
- Outdoor university
- Infrastructure / facilities needed for diverse range of events
- Need and RV market study
- University / historic structures partnership possibilities
- Tell the authentic heritage of the site
- Movie /film opportunities
- Landfill – potential for trail system, habitat and parking overflow
- Concentrate on focusing on a few activities done well instead of all at once
- Feasibility study needed for lodging
- Craft beers / winery
- Increase access points into the park
- Need reasons to go to / stay in the park
- Get the “Gold Medal” rated trail system from IMBA
- Need to improve the marketing of the park and perception that the park is too far from downtown
- Who will control the public / private partnerships?
- What will be the governance structure?



- Integrate wayfinding / signage and new perception of the park
- “Connecting the dots” throughout the region



Date: 10/20/15  
dcps

[illegible]

## Environmental, Natural Resources, and Outdoor Recreation Stakeholder Group

**Date of Meeting:** October 20, 2015, 9:00am

**Location:** Salem Civic Center Community Room

**Prepared by:** Charlie Neer  
Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC

**Distribution:** Doug Blount, Lon Williams, Eric Tamulonis, Leon Younger, Jim McAden, Sean Horne

**Present:** **Environmental, Natural Resources, and Outdoor Recreation Stakeholder Group:**  
See attached Attendance Sheet

**Roanoke County Parks, Recreation and Tourism:**  
Doug Blount, Director  
Members from Parks, Recreation and Tourism Staff

**Master Plan Design Team:**  
Eric Tamulonis  
Charlie Neer  
Jim McAden

### Notes from discussion following Master Plan Community Input presentation:

- Explore Park is only 15 minutes from downtown
- NPS signage to the park is a challenge
- Directions from downtown to the parks are a challenge
- Park has a long history of cultural/ historical education. Take care & protect historic structures.
- Opportunity to interpret local history
- Opportunity for "Friends of Explore Park" or a 501c3
- Protect Natural Resources
- Sons of American Revolution – opportunity for camps / colonial historical education
- Claytor Lake / Smith MTN / Explore Park connection
- Opportunity to connect regional greenways
- Celebrate / interpret Wagon Trail / Grist Mill on Back Creek + other local historical educational opportunities that exist on site
- Maintain high water quality – make it safe to get in the water
- What will be the purpose / utilization of the historic structures
- Positive economic impact from the park
- Outdoor recreation – regional balance between recreation /education/natural resource to drive revenue
- Need for a mix of quality camping / lodging
- Finish Greenway to Explore Park
- Repeat use – get people out there every day
- Adventure recreation changes fast – have to keep up with trends – need to balance with park experience
- Explore Park as destination to improve quality of life for all Roanoke

- Need implementation plan for next generation – about Roanoke Co being a better place to live
- Increase blueway connections
- Explore Park can be hub of water activity
- We need a regional discussion to make sure that we can raise the bar for all in the area.
- Rock climbing opportunities along the river / gorge
- Currently Explore Park trails are third, fourth or fifth on list – possibility exists to improve visibility and connect to Mill Mountain
- Create a Roanoke County regional Loop Trail
- Explore Park needs a range of trail experiences for all users
- Equestrian use on trails – balance multiple use trails – need parking for horse trails
- Horse livery for those with no trailers
- Foster community ownership of the park – integral to success of park – year round interest – not just for tourists
- Blue Ridge Parkway as a hindrance to Explore Connections with Downtown & regional connectors – accessibility / seasonal closures
- Year round need for Explore Park
- Opportunities for other gateways into the park
- Partner with Mill Mountain Zoo (flora/fauna)
- Partner with Resource Authority for sewer/gas
- Be careful with multi-use trails
- Niagra Dam – potential for white water park
- Business Plan is needed to go along with the Master Plan
- Need facilities for large events (parking/water/sewer)
- Need for private vendors / partnerships – private sector involvement





Outdoor, Envir Stakeholder Group Date: 10/20/15

[illegible]

## General Community Meeting

**Date of Meeting:** October 20, 2015, 7:00pm

**Location:** Salem Convention Center Community Room

**Prepared by:** Charlie Neer  
Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC

**Distribution:** Doug Blount, Lon Williams, Eric Tamulonis, Leon Younger, Jim McAden, Sean Horne

**Present:** **General Public:**  
See attached Attendance Sheet

**Roanoke County Parks, Recreation and Tourism:**  
Doug Blount, Director  
Members from Parks, Recreation and Tourism Staff

**Master Plan Design Team:**  
Eric Tamulonis  
Charlie Neer  
Jim McAden  
Sean Horne

### Notes from each of the four breakout stations following Master Plan Community Input presentation:

#### Natural Resources

- Wilderness of Explore Park is its major asset & must be protected and preserved
- Restore Indian Village & pioneer homes and historic mill and barns
- Explore Park forests are all second or third growth forests with significant history of harvest and other human impacts. That story should not be lost.
- Fishing near Journey's End
- Managed working forests vs. preserved forests
- Forest management
- More forest interpretation
- Society of American Foresters wants to work in conjunction with other naturalists to collaborate on interpretive efforts.

#### Recreational Amenities

- 18 hole disc golf course (partners for labor and volunteers)
- The trail network is Explore Park's most important feature and must be protected, expanded and preserved
- Health & Wellness Center (lodging, couples, young adults, early retirees, yoga, taichi, acupuncture, local gourmet foods, cooking lessons, wine tastings, adult education)
- Rock climbing wall and circular slide

- Footbridge across river
- Activity center / music venue
- Food – picnic boxes, snacks and drinks
- Go Fest
- Event Space
- Event Space connected to Educational Center
- Brown's Island
- Lewis Gainter Botanical
- Ropes Course – Va Beach Example – Night Use
- Accessibility
- Connection to Bedford is Vital – multiple types and locations
- Improved river access
- Tennis courts for tournaments & camps
- Disc Golf Course
- Camping – Separation of Tents RVs
- Mountain Biking Expand / Improve
- Hobby Park – Winston Salem / Rocky Knob, Boone, NC)
- Wooden Features
- Technical Features
- Bedford Skills Park
- Gear Rental

#### **Infrastructural Amenities**

- Any new construction must not endanger the natural environment
- The old house at Rutrough Point needs to be preserved and reused
- Keep Explore Wild. Let Al Hammond worry about event space and facilities.
- River access improvements
- Snack shops in remote areas (services in multiple areas)
- Night time bike races
- Mountain bike trails – include cyclocross – downhill racing
- Bike skills course
- Swinging foot bridge to connect both sides
- Showers and bathroom facilities for the bike / running trails
- Brugh Tavern café style and take out side
- Bridges to connect two sides = Access off Hardy Rd & Bedford side
- Music amphitheater & venue (Elmwood built in seating)
- Save Our Streams programs
- Access to Parkways from Hardy Rd
- 

#### **Cultural Resources**

- Wolf Trap Style Concert venue – covered amphitheater, wedding venue
- More 'Organized' than Floyds Fest
- Interpretive Trails -/ Bird Watching identification signs
- Eagle cam
- Activity Calendar
- Activity Trail event

- Park within a park / themed areas
- Steam Engine Connection with Downtown
- Plein Air Painting
- Preserve House at Rutrough Point
- Return batteau rides on river
- Use mill to grind and sell meal
- Have beer and wine festivals to draw people in
- Promote history of Niagra Dam with a better trail and boat launch site
- Talk to Bev Fitzpatrick at VMT about train excursion link
- Norfolk Southern Foundation – Partnership for Interpretation of historic railroad
- High end RV Parking
- Lodges are financially challenged – seasonal difficulties
- Save the History
- Continue Living History
- Interpret Wagon Trail along water
- University Partners (Frontier Museum)





Date: 10/20/15  
7pm

Community Meeting

[illegible]



Community meeting	
	ADDRESS

7pm

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