**Neighborhood Park Project: Community Input Session Summary 11/10/22**

Summarized by Reagan Walsh, Planner/Zoning Administrator

*-13 present for the meeting (including three council members and myself)*

*Attendees were a variety of ages and included residents and business owners*

Ideas:

* Well lighted walking trails in town
* Walking path from Big Glades through Huguenin property on out towards JJ Kelly
* A park similar to the one in Ramsey
* We need a community center building for indoor recreation activities and events
* A dog park
* Animal friendly recreational spaces
* Dog agility course
* Community garden
* Map with highlighted walking paths noting mileage, difficulty, and points of interest

Topics Discussed:

* When the idea of walking trails was initially brought up, I asked Greg Widener – engineer at Thompson & Litton, to give a brief description of the two trail projects currently in the works. He explained that the Town of Wise, Wise County, and UVA Wise are working on a joint trail project that will connect the Town of Wise Sports Complex to the trails at UVA Wise. He also elaborated on a separate project by the town to create a walking trail around Bear Creek Reservoir.
* I brought up that I am working on obtaining funds to construct new and/or improved sidewalks with lighting to be constructed on Park Avenue through Darden Drive and on out towards the entrance to the Convocation Center. I explained that this would help link these trail projects to the sidewalk system in town and provide a physical link between the town and UVA Wise.
* Dennis Sturdavant was present at the meeting and gave us an update on the Buchanan Park project. He stated he is on a sub-committee of the Wise County IDA that focuses on Buchanan Park and that they will be soon be working on the next phase of improvements to the trails.
* We need to reach out and/or survey high school students on what they would like to see
* Many asked what the plans are for the old JJ Kelly property. I explained that the property is owned by Wise County and that plans are in the works for a housing development. Some suggested that the town try to work with the county to make sure recreational spaces are included and if for some reason the housing development project falls through, that the space be used for recreation.

Ideas Submitted via E-mail/Social Media:

* Sunflower farm/pumpkin patch
* Camps for children educating them and promoting the natural beauty of the town
* Tricycle/Bicycle tracks – somewhere safe for kids to learn how to ride
* Bankshot basketball court or a basketball court with lower hoops for smaller kids
* Rope climbing net structure shaped like a dragon paired with a castle playhouse
* Standalone and fenced in area (within a larger park) for smaller children to play without parents worrying about them running off
* Outdoor ping pong/chess and checkers/foosball tables

Discussion on Topics Unrelated to Parks and Recreation:

*The conversation took a slight turn from parks and recreation. We realized that the ideas and discussions are critical to the success of the Town of Wise so we decided to continue instead of diverting back to recreation. The items listed below are brief in writing, but the meaning is far deeper.*

* Re-branding/freshening up the town’s logos
* Finding our niche
* Town needs to become more technologically advanced which includes using a variety of media to share and disseminate information, making forms/permits/applications available to fill out and submit online, and find new and innovative ways to engage with our community and business owners.
* Town needs a more robust social media presence on various platforms as well as use them as a marketing tool for our events and potential projects.
* Town needs to share information with the public on events, ongoing projects, plans, goals, etc… and not just in the newspaper but other means of communication as well
* The general public is unfamiliar with how Town Council, Planning Commission, and Board of Zoning Appeals function. They would like to learn the proper process for presenting ideas and also how to become involved
* Main Street America/Virginia Main Street: we need committees formed by volunteers to help with projects/events/planning/economic development that either form as a result of participating in these programs or we develop our own following their model
* Easily accessible information through the town’s website (part of becoming more technologically advanced)
* Even though progress is being made, there still exists a negative perception towards the town as many residents and business owners feel that the town is hard to work with, has no desire to grow, and is not accepting of new ideas. Town staff must demonstrate that this is not the case by continuing to embrace new ideas, welcoming citizen interaction, and promoting a strong sense of community.
* Discussion on various events that people would like to see held in town ranging from pet expos, to storytelling events, to quilting/arts and crafts
* Discussion on the importance of documenting history and stories of Wise for future generations
* Everyone present at the meeting would like to see future meetings with hopes of growing and establishing the above-mentioned committees. The overall goal would be to make the Town of Wise a great place to live and visit because of a strong sense of community, pride in our town, a sense of belonging, and a high quality of life.