

TO: Mayor and Town Council

FROM: Renuka Soll and Marcella Twamley

SUBJECT: Petition to the Town Council for a Parks Bond

DATE: April 22, 2024

We are petitioning the Town Council for a \$7.75 million bond for Parks and Recreation Department projects.

We are the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Parks, Greenways, and Recreation Commission. For most of our terms, the Commission has been discussing a bond as the most effective way to cover all the deferred maintenance and move forward with new facilities (such as pickleball courts, splash pad, etc.). Because the Parks Commission recently discovered that the Council is thinking of potentially doing a bond in 2024 and that the Commission will only have a chance to meet after the Council discusses the bond, we are submitting this petition on our own.

The "penny-for-parks" fund benefits smaller projects, especially deferred maintenance. However, it will take over eight years to get through the existing list of these projects. The list of projects suggested in this petition has been prioritized based on health and safety-related repairs, demand and utilization, and outreach to reach underserved community members. Bond money could give us a chance to catch up. Most of the proposed projects have been needed for years.

The much-needed projects that would benefit from bond money are the following:

Splash pad (including restrooms and parking at the site)	\$1,200,000
Pickleball Complex (match bond funds with donation from pickleball community members)	\$ 800,000
Morgan Creek Greenway East Extension	\$4,700,000
Cedar Falls Park OWASA Connection	\$ 500,000
Cedar Falls Park Parking Lot Repairs and Pavement	\$ 200,000
Hargraves Park Repairs and Improvements to make parking lot & sidewalks ADA compliant	\$ 150,000
Homestead Park Install New PVC Pool Liner to stop water leakage	\$ 200,000
TOTAL	\$7,750,000

The splash pad has not only been on the 2013 Master Plan and wanted for over 10 years, but Chapel Hill residents submitted a petition with over 1,000 signatures asking for it. The demand is there. At the site of the splash pad, we will also need to include restrooms and more parking spaces.

Pickleball is growing. Many towns are creating pickleball complexes to meet the demand. Chapel Hill's pickleball community feel that they can raise some money toward creating more courts. They should be able to raise half the funds needed, and the town can match with the other half of the funds.

The planning for Morgan Creek East Greenway has been completed. Now we need the money to build it. Constructing this greenway will help meet the TOCH goal of creating Everywhere to Everywhere (E2E) Greenways that connect schools, shopping, parks, healthcare opportunities, and UNC.

The restrooms at Cedar Falls Park are on a septic system, and we need to connect them to the Orange Water and Sewer Authority (OWASA). The current on-site sewage system facility was designed for a park built in the 1970s and a restroom constructed in 2012. We have wanted to make this connection for years, but it seems even more urgent since there have been discussions about converting some older fields into pickleball courts. Usage at the park has increased, partially due to the synthetic turf field replacement project, and that number is expected to grow significantly after the reconstruction of the tennis courts. The parking lot must also be expanded and paved to make the site more accessible.

The parking lot and sidewalks at Hargraves need to be made ADA-compliant. This project is especially important since the tennis court repairs will be completed this summer, and the demand at that site will increase.

Once the Parks and Recreation Department catches up on deferred projects, the "pennies for parks" tax can be used to make our parks system something of which we can be proud. In 2022, many neighboring towns passed Parks bonds. Raleigh passed a \$275M bond, Greensboro passed a \$70M bond, Matthews passed a \$14M bond, and Concord passed a \$60M bond.

Many Chapel Hill residents noticed what our neighbors are doing with their parks and have wondered why we can't do the same thing. A \$7.75M bond will help catch us up and fix our parks system.