

RAG Meeting Minutes

Date: September 8, 2025

Location: Community Room

Time: 8:00 AM

Committee members present: Erin McDowell, Rohit Nanda, Michael Polacek, Stacey Clarke, and Tommy Johnson. Mike Pappas was absent. Recreation and Special Events Director Harold Layton, Assistant Recreation and Special Events Director Michelle Johnson, and Assistant City Manager Chris Hobby were also in attendance. Scott George (Design Consultant) joined as well.

1. Opening

- **Pledge of Allegiance**
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2. Meeting Procedure Update

- **Harold Layton** proposed moving **Public Comments** to occur **after presentations** but **before voting** to ensure informed decision-making.
 - Motion was made and **approved unanimously**.
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3. Approval of Previous Minutes

- **August 2025 Meeting Minutes** were reviewed and **approved**.
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4. Agenda Item A: Battery Way Conceptual Drawings

Presenter: Harold Layton

- Presented conceptual designs for upgrades to **Battery Way Park**, including:
 - Bathroom installation
 - Parking redesign with added island
 - Shift of amenities toward playground
 - ADA compliance
- Discussion points:

- **Tommy Johns:** Asked about boat ramp turning radius and if swings would be removed.
- **Stacey Clarke:** Questioned truck access.
- Harold clarified the plans are **conceptual**, not final.

Public Comments:

- **Resident (unidentified):**
 - Concerned about bathrooms attracting lingering visitors.
 - Noted increased police calls due to people staying after dark and parking in yards.
 - Requested **resident survey** before moving forward.
- **David Kettlehut:**
 - Opposed to bathrooms; believes it's a **neighborhood park**.
 - Concerned about loss of cart path increasing traffic.
 - Reported public safety incidents and lack of playground upgrades.
 - Concerned about use by out-of-county visitors.
- Additional discussion on:
 - Pinecrest Boat Ramp
 - Portable toilets vs permanent facilities
 - Golf cart-only parking
 - Proposal to distribute a **community survey**

Motion:

- Committee **motioned and approved** to move forward with **concept approval, pending further community input**.

5. Agenda Item B: Meade Pickleball Design Discussion

Presenter: Scott George, Tarkett Sports

- Introduced **design plans** for 18 pickleball courts with:
 - Championship courts
 - Shade structures, lights, walkways
 - ADA parking and stormwater management
 - Budget:
 - Base: \$1.3 million
 - Approved Budget: \$1.6 million
 - Optional Upgrades:
 - Canopies: \$59,000
 - 4ft fencing: \$130,000
 - Lighting: \$94,212
 - Alternates: \$57,500
 - 10% contingency included

Discussion:

- **Stacey Clarke:** Asked about potential rental costs.
- **Tommy Johns:** Suggested reducing costs via **private sponsorships**.
- **Chris Hobby:** Noted difficulty in securing private funding in the past.
- **Blue Cole:** Emphasized engaging local businesses for support.

Public Comments (summarized due to audio issues/transcription quality):

- **Commenter 1:**
 - Emphasized outdoor pickleball popularity despite weather challenges.
 - Noted empty courts are usually due to extreme heat; otherwise well-used.
 - Urged support for outdoor courts with **shade options**.
- **Commenter 2 (Marketing & Architectural Background):**
 - Advocated for **functional and family-friendly design**, not extravagant.
 - Suggested use of **flexible, attractive shade structures** instead of costly or prison-like fencing.
 - Highlighted importance of creating a **welcoming environment** for youth and families.
 - Offered help in the **collaborative design process**.
- **John Riley:**
 - Asked questions regarding **foliage and landscaping**.
 - Encouraged thoughtful visual appeal and community-centric design.

Public Comments (continued):

- A resident with a background in **marketing and architecture** stressed the need for:
 - A **family-friendly, community-focused** facility.
 - Avoiding an overly industrial or prison-like appearance.
 - Emphasized using **simple design solutions** such as:
 - Partial shade canopies using fabric and arch structures.
 - Incorporating fences with aesthetic and functional purposes.
 - Suggested rethinking space use to prioritize **function over flashiness**.
 - Requested **collaboration** between city and residents, offering to assist voluntarily.
 - Expressed concern about visual clutter like **zip-tied banners** and harsh fencing.
- **John Riley**, identified as a librarian, asked questions about:
 - **Foliage** and the need for shading and barrier landscaping.
 - Grading concerns and the impact of terrain on design feasibility.
 - Encouraged **re-examination of layout** with possible westward shift of courts and parking.
 - Asked if alternate configurations could reduce cost and better serve the community.

Committee and Staff Discussion

- **Scott George (Tarkett Sports)** responded to feedback:
 - Acknowledged **grade challenges** in the current layout, particularly with moving courts westward.
 - Noted that changes could require **significant additional grading**, impacting cost.
 - Existing flat outfield space is limited; moving courts or parking may conflict with **natural slope and drainage areas**.
 - If **parking is shifted or reduced**, it could open up **space for championship courts** or gathering areas, but at a trade-off.
 - Committee members debated:
 - Whether to **keep the current layout** or adjust based on community feedback.
 - The impact of possibly removing or relocating the **championship court**.
 - Whether costs could be better managed by **phasing construction**, delaying upgrades, or reducing fencing/canopy features.
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Key Considerations Raised

- **Community concerns** centered on:
 - Heat and shade: importance of shade for usability in hot months.
 - Accessibility: ensuring ADA parking and nearby access points.
 - Flexibility: desire for **multi-purpose community space** beyond just pickleball.
 - Aesthetics: avoiding a harsh, overbuilt feel—seeking **welcoming, community-integrated design**.
 - Youth engagement: creating a safe, social, outdoor space for teenagers.
 - Parking efficiency and event accommodation.
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Design Revision Plans & Next Steps

- The committee agreed not to vote on the current design due to:
 - **Outstanding concerns** about layout, grading, and costs.
 - Lack of clarity on **alternative configurations**.
- **Action Items:**
 1. **Scott George** to:
 - Explore **alternate design options**, including westward shift of championship court.
 - Reassess parking layouts and shade structure placements.
 - Consider **reduction of fencing costs**.
 - Prepare updated visuals or proposals by **Thursday**, in time for potential inclusion on the **next council agenda**.
 2. **Committee members** to:
 - **Visit the site** within the next week to re-evaluate layout feasibility.
 - **Email feedback** to staff or Scott George before final revisions.

3. **Public input** remains open via email to incorporate additional community feedback.
- No formal vote was taken; item tabled pending revised proposal.

Continued Discussion: Agenda Item B – Meade Pickleball Design (Part 2)

Community & Committee Feedback Summary (Continued)

- An **email thread** is actively circulating among committee members and the public to consolidate suggestions and concerns. Committee members encouraged participants to **finalize comments by Monday** to allow design updates to move forward.
 - Clarification sought on whether the **championship court** will be included in the next version. The **design team confirmed yes**, pending feedback and cost analysis.
 - Some community members **expressed skepticism about the need** for a championship court, noting that:
 - Many casual players wouldn't benefit directly.
 - Funds might be better allocated toward **shade structures, gathering areas, or basic improvements**.
 - The project should prioritize everyday use over tournament aesthetics.
 - Several alternatives and construction issues discussed:
 - Use of **10x10 shade structures**, fencing materials, and their impact on cost and liability.
 - It was clarified that **attaching shade fabric directly to fences is not standard practice** due to safety and windload issues. Any such addition would need engineered supports, increasing costs.
 - Committee requested **pricing estimates for multiple layout options**, including:
 - Removing or relocating the championship court.
 - Reducing or eliminating some fencing.
 - Shifting courts westward and relocating parking.
 - Final notes emphasized:
 - The importance of maintaining a **welcoming and functional community space**.
 - Need for **quick turnaround** on design updates to remain aligned with the **next City Council meeting schedule**.
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New Discussion: City Policy on Field Use & Sports Associations

Topic Raised: Fayette Hockey Club Request

- The **Fayette Hockey Club (FHC)** has expressed interest in **practicing on city fields**.
 - They are **not currently an official city-affiliated association**.

- The city maintains a **longstanding policy**: if a sport is already served by an existing association, **no competing group is allowed to run programs** using city facilities.
 - Discussion Summary:
 - The city's **existing hockey program**, managed by the **Peachtree City Hockey Association**, offers:
 - Recreational programs
 - Travel programs
 - All-Star teams
 - Allowing another organization (like FHC) to operate concurrently would:
 - Create **conflict and competition** for limited field time and space.
 - Potentially **dilute volunteer resources** and **undermine program quality**.
 - Open the door for multiple conflicting requests from **outside travel organizations**.
 - Clarified that:
 - **One-off or occasional rentals** may be considered.
 - However, **recurring rentals** or practice schedules are **not permitted** for unaffiliated groups.
 - The city already receives **numerous weekly requests** from outside travel teams wanting to rent fields, which are routinely denied.
 - Several committee members strongly **advocated for maintaining current policy**, noting:
 - The city's **youth sports model relies heavily on volunteers** and consistent structure.
 - Opening access to outside organizations could create an **unsustainable model**.
 - Volunteers and citizens have **built successful, respected programs** that should not be jeopardized by conflicting interests.
 - Additional points:
 - Concern over FHC possibly **leveraging the existing city-rec association as a proxy** for field access.
 - Emphasis placed on **preserving long-term relationships and community-centered values** over short-term gains.
 - Noted that **new sports** like cricket and lacrosse are growing, but space remains limited.
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Next Steps & Recommendations

- **Pickleball Design:**
 - **Revised design concepts** and **updated pricing** to be shared with the committee by Thursday.
 - Committee members and community are encouraged to **visit the site and review current layout** before making final decisions.
 - Feedback via **email welcomed through Monday** to finalize preferred options.
- **Sports Association Policy:**

- Staff will **review FHC request** in context of existing policy.
- No policy changes recommended at this time.
- Committee consensus leans toward **preserving the current single-association model** to protect existing programs and infrastructure.

Continued Discussion: Association Policy & Fayette Hockey Club Request

Community Comments & Testimonies

- Multiple **current and former association members, volunteers, and citizens** voiced strong concerns about allowing **Fayette Hockey Club (FHC)** to become an official city-associated group.
- Key concerns and perspectives included:
 - The city's **current hockey association (PHC)** was not informed or consulted prior to FHC approaching City Council.
 - Allegations that FHC originated as a response to **disciplinary action** against a coach previously involved in PHC.
 - Historical evidence was provided showing that **travel hockey has long existed under PHC**, contradicting FHC's claim that no travel hockey was available.
 - The claim that FHC represents a **splinter group** of the existing organization rather than a completely new initiative.
 - Emphasis placed on preserving the **developmental pathway** for youth athletes: from recreational to travel within **a unified structure**, not fractured by multiple competing groups.
 - Allowing competing associations would damage the city's existing, well-functioning **youth sports ecosystem**, which relies heavily on volunteers, shared scheduling, and long-standing relationships.

Broader Context from Other Sports

- Comments from members of the **soccer** and **softball** communities echoed the same sentiment:
 - **Development-focused** programs with a clear path to competitive play exist and are working well.

- Introducing outside groups, especially travel-focused ones, would **commercialize youth sports**, reduce access, and **erode community-based development**.
 - The model followed by **Peachtree City Athletics** has successfully served generations, and there's a strong desire to **preserve it**.
 - One community member also highlighted the **financial strain** associated with travel sports and the risk of **excluding lower-income families** if priorities shift away from city-backed recreational programs.
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Motion & Outcome: Fayette Hockey Club Request

Motion Made:

To **deny Fayette Hockey Club's request** to become a recognized city sports association, in alignment with the city's **longstanding policy** of supporting one association per sport, and to continue working through existing partnerships.

- The motion included a **recommendation to Council** that:
 - The policy of **one official association per sport** remains in effect.
 - City staff do **not facilitate recurring rentals or field time** for outside or competing organizations.
 - Disputes among volunteers or internal members should be **handled within the associations**, not by city intervention.

Discussion & Clarification:

- The committee noted that:
 - The City Council will ultimately make the final decision.
 - A **formal written policy** on association exclusivity and recurring field rentals should be developed for future clarity.
 - A **RAG representative** will attend the next Council meeting to present the committee's stance.

Vote:

 **Motion passed.**

Final Business Items

Facility Change for Future Meetings

- Due to upcoming **renovations at City Hall**, the committee will begin meeting at the **Recreation Administration Building** (Tennis Center).
 - Adequate seating and accessibility are available (ramp access; no elevator).
 - The next **immediate meeting will still be at City Hall**, with future meetings transitioning to the new location.

Other Updates:

- Staff will be attending the **National Recreation and Parks Association Conference** in Orlando next week to explore new ideas, especially for **playgrounds and golf facilities**.

Closing & Public Comment

- Community members were encouraged to:
 - Send additional feedback via email to **City Council**, which is then shared with the committee.
 - Stay engaged in the upcoming Council discussions about field use and association policies.

Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn passed.
- Meeting concluded with thanks to all attendees for their time, input, and continued support of community recreation.