



Mills River Town Council

**Town of Mills River
Staff Report**

May 2, 2008

TO: Mills River Town Council

FROM: Jaime Adrignola, Town Manager

SUBJECT: Parks Public Input Summary

The Town of Mills River held a Parks Public Input Session and sent out mailers to property owners in order to begin the process of park planning on the Hooper Property. The following information compiles information from the input session as well as input that Council requested from the public on their receptiveness to a tax increase to fund parks. The following information is intended to show what types of facilities are desired in a park so that Master Planning may proceed. Accurate financial estimates on development and maintenance can then be made. Comments and information from citizens regarding a potential tax increase is also included.

Parks Public Input Facilities Responses

The Parks Public Input Session was held April 22 from 9 AM to 7 PM at Town Hall. Two exercises were offered to allow citizens to provide feedback in addition to receiving background information on the parks concept and work that has been completed thus far. One exercise was to provide comments on post it notes and to post them on a board. The full set of those comments are included in the last section of this report. The other exercise was to take three sticky dots and place them on the facilities they would most like to see. The Hendersonville YMCA provided cost estimates for some of the facilities on the chart; however, not all cost estimates were available. The following table summarizes the responses.

Parks Public Input Session Result Summary

Facility	Estimated Cost		Facility	Estimated Cost	
Badmitten Courts	<i>unavailable</i>	0	Picnic Shelters, 100 person capacity	<i>unavailable</i>	17
Baseball Fields	\$100,000 incl fencing	9	Playground, 1 acre	<i>unavailable</i>	19
Basketball Court	\$40,000 outdoor, tartan surface	4	Pool, Indoor Olympic	\$1.5-\$2 Million	10
Bocce Ball Court	<i>unavailable</i>	1	Pool, Outdoor Olympic	\$1.2-1.6 Million	1
Dog Park, 1 acre	<i>unavailable</i>	9	Shuffleboard	<i>unavailable</i>	0
Frisbee Golf	<i>unavailable</i>	0	Skate Park, ¼ acre	<i>unavailable</i>	0
Horseshoes	<i>unavailable</i>	2	Soccer Field	\$150,000	23
Launch ramp for canoe/kayak	<i>unavailable</i>	15	Softball Fields	\$100,000 incl fencing	4
Miniature Golf	<i>unavailable</i>	6	Tennis Courts	\$60,000	10
Other, not listed	<i>unavailable</i>	1	Volleyball	\$30,000, outdoor	1
Pickleball Courts	<i>unavailable</i>	0	Walking/Bicycle Trail, ½ mile total length	<i>unavailable</i>	40

Post Card Count

Council requested that staff mail post cards to property tax payers with information regarding the Parks Public Input Session as well as a question asking, “Due to recent changes in how Mills River receives sales tax funding, would you be in favor of an increase in town property taxes to fund a Mills River Park?” Staff removed exact duplicates on the mailing list resulting in 2,967 post cards being mailed April 8. Property owners were asked to tear the question off the post card and to either mail it in or bring it to Town Hall by 5 PM on April 25. Some who came in requested to put in a response even though they may have lost or forgotten their post card. Staff provided paper versions in those cases and they were counted out separately as shown in the summary table. The following numbers reflect the response received.

Post Card Tax Question Summary

	Postcard	Paper	Sub-total	%
Yes	32	8	40	13.7
No	228	24	252	86.3
Total			2,967	

Public Comments

-----*Comments from forum*-----

Put majority of parking in floodplain. Keep all ball fields high and dry.

We would not mind tax to get park if it is reasonable and can expire when park is built. Also incorporate sponsors or grants should be tried also.

When Mills River was trying to incorporate people told taxes wouldn't increase but 1 to 2 cents. This should be honored. All ideas should be payed for other property taxes. Have volunteers or people volunteers these services.

What about future maintenance?

Mills River incorporated to stay rural and avoid being taken in by Fletcher. We need no additional taxes nor do we need a park. We have a park already; its called North Mills River Recreation Area.

Reserve Hooper Property for recreation only. Keep Town Hall and Library on Wright Property.

Tax increases are a must, if we want to progress as a town. All changes are not bad.

No parks if it takes a tax increase.

No park. No tax increase. Gov't bldg first ie: post office

Rooms available for nominal fee for groups to use. Birthday parties, scrapbook classes, neighborhood meetings.

No tax increase. No negative cash flow infrastructure. Any park should only be undertaken if it will never raise taxes otherwise no park.

Soccer fields! 700-800 kids currently enrolled in Hend. Co. Rec. soccer program.

Let folks use the Patton and Jackson Parks or Fletcher Park. We have 15,000 AC of Nat'l Forest. Use it! With higher costs over all- no more taxes!

Par Course. Trail/path with individual outdoor exercises stations along ½ of the path. Nature area undisturbed area for wildlife.

Wonderful! Our kids need a place to play and play sports!

Playground with baby/toddler swings too

More facilities for people over 14, especially toss skate park, basketball court, pool, etc.

Trash pick-up. Small tax increase.

The Town should focus more on infrastructure needs instead of a park- improve zoning/plan regulations, sanitation, SUVS, police- these are more critical needs to Mills River.

Buy a brick area- place for kids to put their handprints in paint or concrete.

Whatever you do do not raise taxes. You do not have to build expensive facilities to entertain out children. No more taxes.

First- Town Hall Library Post Office! Then Park.

Be sure not to commit the same mistakes City of Asheville has made (ie Higher taxes for stuff not necessarily used by all)

How about a gazebo center for music, etc, concerts?

Create walking trails for people, dogs. Need place for dogs!!

With a park the town has a lot of concerns regarding staffing, upkeep of a facility- especially a pool and some of these listed on your board. Please realize fully the staffing, upkeep and facility costs for these big projects.

Limit number of ball fields, two of each should suffice. Leave some natural area to extend walking trails, etc.

Yes! Yes! Yes! I want to pay more taxes for quality of life- let us be a healthy community- it is priceless.

No parks!

This park seems to be out of order with what a town needs. It's a nice idea, but a real town hall, library and post office should come first. Mills River needs these things before a park.

Park will be used by the entire county. At a minimum county should be responsible for maintenance and security. Tax increase should be small, if at all.

Please put in park for kids to come to.

Hooper property should be rec only- it's the best fit- soccer is growing fast need fields!

Picnic shelters for private use and reserve for parties of meetings.

Please understand that some may have put a "dot" as a wishlist but still think we don't need to raise taxes for the park project.

No park at this time. See to the basics of life first. My immediate neighbors need septic lines, trash pick up, ext. Library hours, ect.

Trash pick up for everyone.

Keep it for Mills River people only (tax payers).

We need a rec building for the kids. This will give them something to do and also put money back into Mills River.

2 Soccer fields is sufficient. Inc walking trails and biking trails. Try to get money by funding and donations vs higher taxes. As long as the tax increase will be minimal per household.

Please ask for grants to help pay for parks.

A park is a great thing after these things are in place. Library. Post Office. Sewer lines. Trash pick-up.

Great idea! This should help our house value's stay up as well. Can't wait.

Not interest in a park till we get post office, library, town hall all paid for. No tax increase. Senerol (?) park near by now!

I do not want to pay more taxes for a park. Once you open that door you can not close it.

We are a rural setting and do not need a park.

Design needs at least 1 more restroom. Only need 3 soccer fields if dog park needs to be a segregated (noise). Baseball/softball can be same fields. Volleyball (1) and horseshoe pits (2) don't take much room- easy maintenance- needs a little parking.

Potential opportunity for a community garden/landscape.

Build park as we have income. Concentration first on facilities with least cost. This is because maintenance is so expensive.

Highly concerned with a park in the area and no Mills River Police enforcement and security. One officer supplied by the county during the day is not enough to insure safety for patrons and keep persons out of the park that shouldn't be there. i.e. reg sex offenders.

Overall, the park project really concerns me and my family. We are very family and park friendly but believe that Mills River has other needs and larger concerns to deal with.

Wait on revenue like for the property. Economy is slow now.

Parks- initially simple expand later.

How about an indoor/outdoor pool that you can open the sides for fresh air? To help maintain is charge a fee for resident card for a picture fee \$3.00 single \$10 for family of 4 more for a larger family and \$5 for guests?

Look for local corporate sponsorship for parks.

Have many non-Mills River residents, ie Etowah residents asking that we provide them a park. Is it the responsibilities of Mills River citizens to provide services to all of the community when the county already does this.

-----*Comments with post cards*-----

Please do not approve an increase in our property taxes to fund a Mills River Park. All of our residents are in a spiral of price increases for everything we have to purchase right now. Gasoline is at an all time high in prices. Our grocery prices increase each time we make a purchase. The national politicians will surely increase our Federal Taxes next year. Please postpone if not cancel your consideration of a Mills River Park at this time.

I am in favor of a park, but would like to know amount of increase.

My answer is no. It would only be a place for illegal drugs and alcohol a place for gangs and dealers to hang out and ruin our teenagers.

I would love to see tennis courts as part of this project.

While I would eventually like to see a park built in Mills River, I believe we should save the money up before we build it. Once you start raising taxes- they never come back down even after the reason you raised them has been paid for. There is always somewhere that money ends up going.

Now is a poor time to increase taxes even if it is for a good cause. Try again after the election.

No new taxes for park. All the park will be is a place for Mexican groups and gangs.

Do not want a tax increase for a park- Do not get any benefits for the taxes I pay now. Did not receive a card for comment in the mail.

Owner of property on Hwy 280 voting against a tax increase in Mills River.

No- we did not vote to become a town either! We already paid enough taxes! And no benefits!

I am not in favor of an increase in town property taxes to fund a Mills River Park.

There are many many older people in MR who are on a fixed income and some of them, if not most, do not have a medical policy with decent coverage. If the Democrats take over the White House next you, you can bet your bottom dollar- that sooner or later we'll be burdened with a higher Fed Tax. I know what they all say, but who can truly and totally trust any politician.

When this comes to fruition within the next two years we can ill afford a higher local (MR or County or State) tax increase. Think about who you represent, the implants, who are growing like reproducing rabbits, or the elderly and local people!

No! Because... 1) There's a county park near the airport that's hardly used yet requires expensive maintenance. It is easily accessible to Mills River residents who pay Henderson County taxes already. Improve and use that park. 2) Park construction requires plenty of money and a commitment to expensive maintenance. All of which equals higher taxes! No! 3) The Blue Ridge and Pisgah are nearby and sufficient.

Mills River Fire Department should reduce their tax rate and fund park with these funds.

What for? More corruption like drugs and alcohol and nothing but trouble.

Need Town Hall first.

Not unless post office is built first.

Drive five more minutes to North Mills River.

I am in favor of park, but would like to know amount of increase.

Not enough information to decide. What rate? How long? But think park is OK.

Use donation!

Fletcher park is close enough. Taxes are too high already.

Don't like the idea of Town Park at this point in time.

Don't like the idea of Town Park.

Are you serious? How about water, sewer and garbage!! We get what? For our taxes now!

I would rather have a post office.

Reduce fire department rate- fund park.

Rather have a post office!

Where is our post office?

Depends- with limitations. Who will be responsible for main. and security? Will not just a town park- entire county will use- county should help.

We are taxes to death no in NC.

Tough economic times on everybody right now... delay to later time.

Not at this time!

Unincorporate- we don't need you! I am opposed to the Town of Mills River. I voted against incorporating all I get out of it is to pay taxes.

Maybe? How much?

.25 or .50 of a cent.

Native plants in new Town Hall.

To whom- You do not raise taxes for a park. Donations, and volunteers build parks. Jobs bring in people, taxes run them out. Raising taxes is a very serious thing because it affects everyones home. They never go away and they never go down. It must be for something that everyone will benefit.

I agree to a small property tax increase.

Yes- would certainly support tax increase within reason.

Only if it is a .5 cent raise.

Yes, okay to increase property tax.

I suggest you take the taxes we pay now and apply it to the Mills River Park. I know of no other benefits we receive from our taxes.

We need utilities: city water/sewer, public gas, etc. No park. No tax increase!

Remember: keep it rural! We do not need a park.

We don't need a farm either. We need a post office, garbage pick up clean up lots others park? Ha.

Taxes stay on forever. Plenty of playground at the schools. Plus only the black and mec would use it.

Save the money for town bldg, library and PO!!

There are already enough parks nearby.

Please no more taxes. Times rough at present.

Infrastene, police protection, staff supp

Gas prices! Food prices! The country in a recession- or near one. People worried about all of the above. No wonder people cringe at the idea of an increase in tax. A park would be a good thing someday. Now or anytime soon would be the wrong time, I believe. I urge you not to increase town property taxes.