

**Item Title:** Public Hearing on Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Grant Application for Robertson Millpond Preserve

**Specific Action Requested:**

**That the Board of Commissioners:**

- 1. Holds a public hearing regarding the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grant application for the Robertson Millpond Preserve project; and**
- 2. Authorizes the Chair to sign the completed Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grant application.**

**Item Summary:**

The North Carolina General Assembly established the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) in 1994 to fund improvements in the state's park system, to fund grants for local governments, and to increase the public's access to the state's beaches. The local government grants are dollar-for-dollar matching grants that can be used to acquire land and/or to develop parks and recreational projects that serve the general public. The Parks and Recreation Authority, a nine-member appointed board, reviews grant applications and allocates PARTF funds to grant recipients.

Staff has prepared a PARTF grant application for the Robertson Millpond Preserve project. Robertson Millpond is an 84.6-acre open space tract along Buffalo Creek, near the towns of Wendell, Knightdale, and Zebulon. The site includes a black water swamp, which is unusual this far from the coast and the County's only known bald cypress habitat. The North Carolina Heritage Program recognizes Robertson Millpond as a significant natural area.

Wake County purchased the property with open space bond funds in 2013 and this property is one of three being developed as a nature preserve for the public to enjoy. The first phase of Robertson Millpond Preserve focused on water access to allow visitors to canoe and kayak on the 61-acre pond. Facilities include a parking lot, a dock, and a shoreline put-in area. This phase of the project was completed in the summer of 2015 and was paid for with County open space funds.

The second phase of Robertson Millpond Preserve is the focus of the PARTF grant. If approved, this phase will provide amenities for non-paddling visitors, including a raised walkway over the pond, interpretive signage describing the unique cypress habitat, a walkway to the historic mill foundation, and educational signage explaining the history of the mill.

The estimated cost for Phase II of Robertson Millpond Preserve is \$536,032. Based on the PARTF funding rules, staff proposes the following match:

<b>Source of Funds</b>	<b>Amount</b>
PARTF Grant Award	\$251,097
County Match – Robertson Millpond Preserve	\$284,935
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$536,032</b>

If the PARTF grant is not approved, Phase II will not be built until additional funding is identified at some point in the future.

In order to complete the application process, the Board of Commissioners needs to take two formal actions:

1. **Hold a public hearing.** Staff and the project designers held two open houses to get public input on the designs for all three nature preserves. Both open houses were well attended but, because we had not decided whether to apply for a PARTF grant at that time, those public meetings do not meet the grant requirements. Holding a public hearing at today's meeting to supplement the previous open houses will ensure that the County meets the grant requirements.
2. **Sign the application.** The PARTF grant requires that the Chief Elected Official in the applicant's jurisdiction sign the grant application. When finalized, staff will forward the application for the Chair's signature.

The PARTF grant is due on May 2, 2016. The Parks and Recreation Authority meet in early fall of 2016 to select grant recipients and will notify all applicants of their status shortly thereafter.

**Attachments:**

1. PowerPoint Presentation
2. Robertson Millpond Area Map
3. Phase II Site Plan