

**MINUTES  
CARBONDALE PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION  
SPECIAL MEETING  
May 11, 2022**

Hollis Sutherland called the in-person/virtual Special Meeting of the Carbondale Parks & Recreation Commission to order at 7:06 p.m. at Carbondale Town Hall on May 11, 2022.

**ROLL CALL**

The following members were present for roll call:

Members: Hollis Sutherland, Chair  
Rose Rossello, Vice Chair  
Ashley Hejtmanek, Member  
John Williams, Member  
Brian Soby, Alternate

Town Staff Present: Eric Brendlinger, Parks and Recreation Director  
Jessi Rochel, Recreation Center & Recreation Programs Manager  
Luis Yllanes, Board of Trustees Liaison  
Kae McDonald, Boards & Commission Clerk

Guests: Jacob Baker, Parks & Recreation Commission Candidate  
Drew Sorenson, Parks & Recreation Commission Candidate

**PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS**

Hollis called a Parks & Recreation Commission Special Meeting to order to interview two candidates for the vacancy created when Kathleen Wanatowisz resigned her position. She welcomed Jacob Baker and Drew Sorenson and thanked them for their interest. She noted that the Parks & Recreation Commission is an advisory commission that recommends policy decisions to the Board of Trustees for the final decision and explained that the candidate chosen at this meeting will therefore be referred to the Board of Trustees for a final decision, as well.

**Jacob Baker**

Jacob Baker introduced himself by explaining that while he was applying for membership on the Parks & Recreation Commission in a personal capacity, he has gained insight into the Commission through his professional capacity with Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers and has learned what strategies work best while working with Town of Carbondale staff and community members. He noted his interest in recreation and sees the opportunity to plan for the short, medium, and long-term as a member of the Commission.

Hollis asked if he had any experience working with budgets?

Jacob explained that his job centers on community relations and brainstorming and his budgeting experience is limited to small projects.

Rose asked what his expectations for personal or professional benefit would be by serving on the Commission.

Jacob replied that his personal expectations would be clearly written and actionable goals and serving on a Commission that can think critically to meet iterative needs – use and enjoy parks and open space for recreation.

Ashley asked Jacob about his impression of Town of Carbondale parks. She explained that the Commission is nearing the point in time to begin updating the Master Plan and the aquatics facility project is coming up.

Jacob explained that as a user, he enjoys the Nature Park and Red Hill. He added that he would like to see the Master Plan address the climate crisis, as well as focus on both the physical and mental health of community

residents.

John Williams asked Jacob if he had to choose other organizations to liaise with, which ones would he prefer.

Jacob replied that he would like to work with Ascendigo or another organization that furthers disability rights and opportunities.

Luis asked if he saw any conflicts between his professional position and being a Commission member.

Jacob explained that he does work directly with Town of Carbondale staff, so he would have to recuse himself on any decisions that might benefit RFOV.

Rose asked Jacob how long he had lived in the Roaring Fork Valley and if he planned to stay.

Jacob replied that he had lived in the valley for five years and would like to stay as long as possible. He noted that he had previously lived on both coasts and loves the small-town atmosphere of Carbondale.

Rose asked if he would be able to commit the time necessary to prepare for and attend the monthly meetings.

Jacob answered in the affirmative.

John Williams asked for confirmation that Jacob lived in Basalt.

Jacob answered in the affirmative but pointed out that he works and recreates in Carbondale.

Hollis reminded the commission members that up to three members can live outside the town limits.

Brian asked how Jacob's professional position might have conflicts of interest with the Parks & Recreation Commission.

Jacob explained that his direct responsibilities as it relates to Town of Carbondale is in a development role that wouldn't conflict with the Commission, and he works with Town of Carbondale staff to implement selected projects. He noted that any fundraising involves large donors that are unlikely to be sponsoring projects with the TOC. Jacob explained that he works for an organization focused on stewardship and it doesn't choose or advocate for projects – the Parks & Recreation Department Director would be responsible for choosing projects and gave the example of the current C-Line Trail build. He added that there is a detailed protocol that is followed in deciding on community projects.

Brian asked if private lands are involved.

Jacob replied that only federal, state, or municipal lands are involved.

Hollis added that she wasn't sure residents realize the scope of the Parks & Recreation Department in the community which includes not only parks and fitness programming at the Rec Center, but special events, as well. She noted how the department enriches community members lives and how much the staff contributes.

Rose agreed that the department sets the tone for the town.

Ashley pointed out that it is hard to compare Carbondale to other communities because of the number of parks – both small and large – as well as Gateway RV Park which distinguishes it from other communities.

John asked if RFOV will be involved with Coffman Ranch.

Jacob replied that RFOV will work with Aspen Valley Land Trust on selected days and on specific projects. Jacob noted that the Commission is six years through the Master Plan and asked how the Commission is involved in the Master Plan and how the Master Plan will evolve in the future.

Ashley replied that the current Master Plan targeted the lower hanging fruit and now need to address more ambitious plans. She thought the next iteration should consider the mental health of the community, especially as it played out during Covid.

Eric added that the current Master Plan had no way to anticipate Covid and agreed that the next will need to address the mental health of the community.

**Drew Sorenson**

Drew introduced himself by noting that he has lived in Carbondale since moving to the community to teach at the Little Blue Schoolhouse. He related that he has since been promoted to administration and oversaw the expansion of the preschool into a building on 7<sup>th</sup> Street. He commented that the many parks in Carbondale have provided many opportunities to learn and meet community members. He added that he is a huge advocate for the parks – especially the pool – and the vitality of the parks is very important. Drew pointed out that the reason for his application to be on the Parks & Recreation Commission is that he views Carbondale in a pivotal stage with new people moving to the community, the Comprehensive Plan being updated and the many adaptations that have been made because of Covid.

Rose asked if there would be any issues for meeting attendance.

Drew didn't think there would be and asked about the expected workload.

Ashley replied that the expectation is an hour or two to read through the packet attachments prior to the meeting. She added that there may be subcommittee assignments for some projects.

Rose commented that one could invest as much time as they wanted, and everyone brings a unique viewpoint.

Ashley asked how Drew got his personal growth and what he brought to the community.

Drew replied that he expected to learn a lot and the big part for him was learning about the number of pocket parks are in town. He added that he brings his professional experience as a teacher and administrator and hopes to bring critical thinking to the Commission. He noted that it was easy to see how special Carbondale is and that is largely due to the number of open spaces in town.

Hollis asked if he saw any potential conflicts of interest.

Drew didn't think there would be from a professional standpoint and despite using the parks, he didn't see that as influential in decision making but rather as a unique opportunity to provide feedback about the parks.

Rose asked if Drew was planning to stay in Carbondale.

Drew replied that he was planning to stay as long as possible.

Rose asked if Drew had any groups he was interested in being a liaison to or that he was already involved in.

Drew replied that he was interested in a cross-section of youth and teens and older adults using the parks and the use of parks during Covid.

Hollis asked if he had any questions for the Parks & Recreation Commission.

Drew asked why there was a current vacancy and if there are any challenges anticipated for a new member.

Hollis replied that the previous commission member resigned due to demands from both work and family. Hollis noted that while a learning curve should be anticipated, new commission members are provided with an onboarding packet.

Commission Discussion

Hollis commented that Jacob and Drew are both outstanding candidates.

Ashley noted that the Commission lacks a fundraising advocate, especially with the Aquatics Facility coming up. She added that either candidate would add balance to the current pool of commission member experience.

Hollis added that they are both educators and in a desirable age demographic.

Luis pointed out that one candidate is a resident of Carbondale, and the other isn't. He noted that there has been a recent effort to reach out to community residents to advocate on Town of Carbondale committees.

Ashley agreed and noted that Drew is a resident of Carbondale. She added that with Jacob representing Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers, it is unlikely to lose contact with Jacob.

Hollis countered that Jacob might provide a broader level of experience.

Rose questioned whether Jacob might have greater conflicts of interest, especially considering fundraising.

Eric replied that there may be times that Jacob would need to recuse himself during specific line-item discussions but didn't think it would affect any Parks & Recreation Department programming. He thought it more likely that RFOV would partner on grant requests.

Based on a verbal poll, Drew received four votes (Ashley, Rose, John, and Brian) and Jacob one vote (Hollis).

**Motion Passed:** Rose *moved* to recommend Drew Sorenson to the Board of Trustees for approval as a member of the Parks & Recreation Commission. John *seconded* the motion, and it was *unanimously approved*.

ADJOURNMENT

The May 11, 2022, Special Meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kae McDonald