Board Meeting
Agenda Abstract

Monday, November 2, 2026
Location:

Agenda Item

Hilltop Needmore Town Park - 2026 Amended Master Plan and Authorization to Design and Construct - (Mitchell) - Item 10.D

Item Explanation

The purpose of this agenda item is for the Town Board to consider amending the 2022 Hilltop Needmore Town Park Master Plan and direct management to advance design and construction for the revised scope for parcels identified as PIN 0678852120 and 0678942571.

Staff Comments

In 2019, the Town of Fuquay-Varina accepted the Hilltop Needmore Town Park property from Wake County with the explicit intent to develop active and passive recreational amenities. That intent was documented in official meeting minutes at both the Town and County levels, as well as in the property conveyance agreement. Following extensive public engagement, the Town Board adopted the Hilltop Needmore Town Park Master Plan in December 2022 to guide future recreational development. Although the November 2023 Parks and Recreation Bond referendum failed, it sought voter authorization for a financing instrument--not a mandate to halt planned projects. The Town has continued advancing its highest-priority capital improvements using a variety of other funding sources, including the South Park Community Center (SPCC) renovation and planned improvements at Hilltop Needmore Town Park, even though most of the proposed bond was earmarked for a future regional park. In 2026, the Town moved forward with Hilltop Needmore improvements by incorporating them into the FY 27 Budget.

These plans faced significant opposition from park advocates. In July 2026, the Crooked Creek Homeowners Association requested a meeting to discuss the Town's park plans. In August, Town leadership--including the Mayor, Mayor Pro-Tem, a Town Commissioner, and the Town Manager--met with Crooked Creek HOA leaders and invited representatives of the Hilltop Needmore Town Park Advocacy group. Town officials listened to residents' concerns about environmental disruption, wildlife impacts, and effects on neighboring property owners. They also corrected online misinformation and reiterated the Town's documented original intent to provide active recreation when it acquired the property. In late August, the Town Manager recommended exploring an alternative project scope. The Town Board approved exploring the option without committing to a formal change in direction. An alternative scope was developed with input from Town Board members and was presented back to community groups. Follow-up meetings with HNTP Advocacy representatives on September 15, 2026,

and Crooked Creek HOA leadership on October 22, 2026, both generated positive stakeholder feedback on the concept.

At the November 2, 2026 Town Board meeting, the Town Board is being asked to consider either proceeding with the current plan included in the FY 27 budget--which features athletic fields and an Armed Services Memorial--or amending the 2022 Master Plan to adopt an alternative scope developed through this community dialogue.

The current plan offers several distinct advantages: the property is already Town-owned and aligns with the original 2022 Master Plan and property conveyance intentions. It already has public utility access and benefits from completed roadway infrastructure built in conjunction with Hilltop Needmore Road Elementary School and the Community Center. The plan is more cost-effective to construct, addresses pressing youth sports demand much sooner, and fulfills the Town's goal of establishing an Armed Services Memorial. Its primary disadvantage is sustained community opposition.

Conversely, the amended plan better reflects the community's expressed vision, maintains open space along the Red and Blue trails, adds unique passive and low-impact amenities not currently available elsewhere in the Town's park system, and retains many elements of the original 2022 plan. However, its disadvantages are substantial: the Town would need to acquire an alternate site for athletic fields, with estimated development and infrastructure costs of $25 million to $30 million for land development, utility extensions, and roadway improvements. In addition, delivering the fields would be delayed by approximately 4 to 7 years, depending on funding availability and affordability. During that time, the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department would have to cap youth sports registration, denying local children the opportunity to participate.

After considering all factors, management recommends that the Town Board amend the 2022 Hilltop Needmore Town Park Master Plan and replace it with the 2026 plan. The revised plan reflects an amended programming scope for the parcels along the Red and Blue Trails (PINs 0678852120 and 0678942571). Although this recommendation presents significant fiscal challenges and delays completion of critical athletic fields, it honors community feedback and gives the Town an opportunity to accommodate long-term growth in sports participation through future acquisitions of dedicated parkland.

Fiscal Note

Yes
The Town of Fuquay-Varina has numerous capital projects scheduled for FY 27 and included in its 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan. Escalating construction costs and an adverse economic climate have led to bid estimates for several priority municipal projects that significantly exceed original budget projections and placeholders. After reviewing project priorities, needs, and property ownership, staff recommends deferring development of Kennebec Road Town Park. To optimize municipal funding without requesting additional appropriations, staff proposes reallocating existing FY 27 capital funds: redirecting the $10,000,000 budgeted for Hilltop Needmore Town Park (HNTP) to acquire property for a future active recreation/athletics park, and using the $5,000,000 budgeted for Kennebec Road Town Park to fund HNTP's amended master plan improvements.

Project Bid & Budget Analysis

- Public Service Center Phase II Expansion: Construction bid exceeds initial project budget by $8,000,000 after value engineering.
- South Park Community Center Renovation & Expansion: Bid estimates exceed project budget by $1,000,000 to $2,000,000.
- Fleming Loop Park Turf Conversion & Pickleball: Construction bid is within project budget.
- Kennebec Road Town Park Improvements: Bid estimates exceed placeholder budget by $7,500,000.
- Police Department Expansion: Bid estimates exceed placeholder budget by $10,000,000 to $20,000,000 depending on plan advanced.
- Fire Station No. 5 Land Acquisition & Construction: Bid estimates relative to budget remain undetermined at this time.

FY 27 Reallocation Breakdown

- Kennebec Road Town Park Project ($5,000,000): Defer active development; transfer full $5,000,000 allocation to fund the amended master plan improvements at Hilltop Needmore Town Park.
- Hilltop Needmore Town Park Original Allocation ($10,000,000): Reassign full $10,000,000 allocation toward land acquisition and planning for a future athletics and active recreation park.
- Net Fiscal Impact to FY 27 Budget: $0 (revenue-neutral budget reallocation).

Recommendation

MOTION TO: Amend the 2022 Hilltop Needmore Town Park Master Plan as presented and recommended by management, and direct management to advance design and construction for the revised scope outlined in the amended master plan for parcels identified as PIN 0678852120 and 0678942571.

The 2026 Amended Hilltop Needmore Town Park Master Plan shall specify that, except for the areas designated for programmed amenities (PIN 0678852120 and PIN 0678942571), all other undeveloped areas shown on the plan shall remain open green space with hard-surface pedestrian trails. The 2026 Amended Hilltop Needmore Town Park Master Plan shall also specify that, as town funding allows, the Town reserves the right to add the following amenities to the open green space areas:
- pollinator gardens/landscaping
- benches
- playgrounds
- pond piers
- boardwalks
- natural trails

The 2026 Amended Hilltop Needmore Town Park Master Plan shall further specify that no additional parking lots are included beyond those that currently exist in the park. It shall also specify that pedestrian connections from Lake Wheeler Road and Johnson Pond Road, linking nearby Town residential subdivisions, may be constructed as feasible and funding permits.

The 2026 Amended Hilltop Needmore Town Park Master Plan shall replace the previous 2022 Hilltop Needmore Town Park Master Plan, which shall no longer be in effect.

ATTACHMENTS