

I am here as a representative for Friends of Mildred Kanipe Memorial Park. We have prepared and provided a summary letter. We would appreciate that these comments be included as part of the public record.

Only TWO years ago the Friends of Mildred Kanipe Park met with Commissioner Doug Robertson and negotiated an agreement, on behalf Stakeholders, in which we agreed to raise \$65,000 within 6 months to help fund the construction of a campground at the Park. The County provided budget numbers which projected that the receipts from the campground along with grazing fees would support the Park.

The community, business owners, civic groups, elected officials, Grantors, and individuals raised the \$65,000 in only 10 weeks.

I do not know how many of you have ever entered into such an agreement but I can tell you first hand that it is a frightening endeavor. But the tradeoff, it turns out, was worth the effort. We now have a written agreement with the County that gives the assurance that they will both “consider and pursue” other funding options for the park before logging will occur. If the County proceeds with logging the Park, as planned, we believe that they would be in violation of this agreement.

The agreement also says that the County will “give due consideration to the intent and spirit set forth in Mildred Kanipe’s Last Will and Testament”. Attached to our comments letter you will find a legal analysis of the Will prepared by the Attorneys who wrote her will.

Those documents state that according to the according to her Will, logging to cover operations and maintenance expenses would not be allowable.

But most importantly, in my mind, because it is critical to the long term prosperity of this Park, The County agreed with Stakeholders to seek grant funds and to develop a Master Plan for the Park. A master plan that would be “prepared by a consultant and would address both short and long term issues of the Park The Plan would include cost estimates and options for funding. “

This Master Plan needs to be completed before the County can move forward toward any kind of long term funding plan for this Park, or consider logging it.

When we were meeting with Commissioner Robertson to work out the details of this agreement one of the pressing questions that we had for him was “how to we assure that the County will not escalate costs to the point that their proposed budget will not support it. “

His answer was that we would “hold their feet to the fire” with regard to the budget and keeping the expenses down.

Hold their feet we have done. We have gone to the Budget hearings, we have provided multiple written comments challenging the rapidly increasing expenses, we have continued to acquire grant funds and to fund raise for the Park, we have repeatedly offered to fund a Master Plan for the Park. Since learning of the current Park Budget mismanagement we have repeatedly asked for itemized budget numbers, which we have not yet seen.

But even in the face of our constant work and exhaustive efforts, the Operations and Maintenance budget for Kanipe Park has doubled in 3 years (this in the times of belt tightening in other parts of the County Budget)

The ONLY way to prevent the County from continuing to set the expenses for Kanipe Park higher than the revenue is to combine the Kanipe Park budget with the rest of the County Parks budgets and STOP singling out Mildred Kanipe Park.

The only difference in Mildred Kanipe Park and other County Parks is that, , **it has trees.**

Contrary to what the County continues to erroneously report. There is NO legal requirement to maintain a separate Kanipe Budget. The only revenue that is required to be kept separate is revenue from logging.

We will provide a legal opinion if you really require it.

This Park has tremendous support. These supporters think that the trees in this Park have more value standing, as an attraction to this Park, than they do as money to support budgetary mismanagement.

These active and vocal supporters of the Park have generated over \$100,000 of monetary support for the County over the past few years. If you log this Park you are blatantly disrespecting this support.

We live in the timber capital of the nation. We all have family members who make their livings in the timber industry. Many of us own and operate small woodlands and log our own trees. We know that our County Commissioners are working tirelessly to solve the problems related to decreased jobs and timber revenues.

Logging Parks is NOT the answer. We need a diversified economy. We need beautiful places to recreate. We need economic stimulus to our local economy that comes with tourism. WE need Trees in our Parks.

Please vote to table any action on agenda items related to Mildred Kanipe Park, until a Master Plan can be completed. The Friends will pay for the Master Plan. This will provide a public process where a funding plan can be developed that has community support.

Please demand that the County include Mildred Kanipe Park in the General Parks Budget.

Please support the many volunteers and contributors by valuing their input.