



The Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met at the Oaklawn Recreation Center, Charlotte, NC at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, March 11, 2008.

ATTENDANCE

Present:

- Scott McClure, Chair**
- Brad Pearce, Vice Chair**
- John Barry**
- James Brown**
- Owen Furuseth**
- Larry Huelsman**
- Joe Pata**
- Kirk Otey**
- Michael Noble**
- Jeff Tarte**
- Beverly Lawston (Left at 7:15)**

Absent:

- Brenda McMoore**
- Mary Wilson, Executive Secretary**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Scott McClure, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

(1) Introductions

Each Commissioner introduced themselves to those present at the meeting and the park district they represented.

Lola Massad, Division Director of Community and Recreation Center Services, shared background on the Oaklawn Recreation Center and introduced staff. Oaklawn is a joint project with the City of Charlotte Housing Authority and CMS. All were invited to tour the center after the meeting.

Greg Jackson, Division Director of Park Operations and Athletic Services, introduced Lindsey Taylor, Intern for the Department. Lindsey is a student of Johnson and Wales.

(2) Proclamations and Awards

Greg Jackson, recognized Neil Carroll and Robert Anderson for their efforts in the improvement of **Hornet's Nest** ball fields and the subsequent award from the National Softball Association as the 2007 Outstanding Park.

(3) Public Appearance

(Skip to Agenda Item 13)

With members of the public present in support of and against Agenda Item 13 regarding the proposed **Sailing Center at Blythe Landing**, Chair Scott McClure skipped to this item. Greg Jackson gave a presentation on the background and process leading up to the Blythe Landing Sailing Center proposal. This presentation is included in the PRC minutes binder housed in the Director's office.

Chair McClure confirmed with Commissioner Tarte that the NPD Advisory Council endorsed the Sailing Center proposal, which was followed by the following **public comments**:

- Bill Ross: For: Member of the executive committee of the US Sailing Association as well as various other sailing organizations. Has been sailing since youth and has extensive experience. Feels that people in this area should have to opportunity to learn sailing.
- Lindsey Taff: For: Coach and founder of Charlotte Youth Rowing, a competitive youth rowing program. They are not able to accommodate the large number of interested youth due to space limitations. The Sailing Center would open up additional opportunities.
- Ted Mellnik: For: Representative for high school sailing in the Charlotte area and coach of the North Mecklenburg High School team. Lack of a public facility on Lake Norman is a deterrent to the many high school youth who have shown an interest in the sport of sailing since the current practice location is 45 minutes from North Mecklenburg. (**NOTE**: Mr. Mellnik provided a printed transcript of his comments, which are included in the PRC minutes binder housed in the Director's office.)
- Chip Richardson: For: 30 plus year resident of Mecklenburg County and sailor of Lake Norman. Many people do not have the resources for sailing and a public facility will give people the opportunity to enjoy the sport of rowing and sailing.
- Bob Ellis: For: He and his family are avid sailors. Sailing is a difficult sport to be exposed to without a program like the Sailing Center.
- Jim Houser: For: Many programs such as the one being proposed exist across the country. US Sailing has formats of how to develop and run a sailing center as well as certification programs and schools for instructors.
- John Probst: Against: Member of the North Park District Advisory Council. In support of a sailing center but not at the Blythe Landing location. His concern is for safety as a result of increased traffic on Highway 73 and until the traffic concerns are resolved feels no additional

building should be allowed. Request that a traffic light be put in if the Center is approved.

- Bruce Anderson: Against: Mr. Anderson felt the need was already being met through the Y and the Lake Norman Yacht Club and feels the location of Blythe Landing is incompatible with a sailing center as noted by a Master Instructor with US Sailing. (**NOTE:** Mr. Anderson provided a transcript and supporting documentation which are included in the PRC minutes binder housed in the Director's office.)

Questions and discussion regarding safety, lines of demarcation, approval by the Marine Commission, wake zone, boat ramp control, and insurance issues indicated unanimous support for the Sailing Center proposal by the PRC.

Motion was made by Commissioner Huelsman to approve the proposal pending approval by the Lake Norman Marine Commission, which was seconded by Commissioner Barry and approved unanimously.

(4) Program Presentation – Challenger Football Program

Karla Gray, Sr. Therapeutic Recreation Manager introduced Kerri Good, Therapeutic Recreation Manager for a program presentation on the Challenger Football Program. Kerri reported that this unique league provides an opportunity for youth, teens and young adults with disabilities to participate in a team sport. The kickoff of the second season included 40 participants and the support of representatives from the Carolina Panthers, Top Cats and Sir Purr, Pop Warner and the Therapeutic Division.

Staff Reports and Requests

(5) Appointments – Advisory Councils – Applicants

CPDII: In the absence of Commissioner McMoore, appointment consideration of Jennifer Coble was deferred to the April PRC meeting.

CPDIII: Commissioner Otey deferred appointment consideration of Mark Gustafson to the April PRC meeting.

GOLF: Motion was made by Commissioner Barry approved the appointment of Victor Brown to an Unexpired Vacancy on the consolidated GOLF Advisory Council, expiring 6/2008 which was approved unanimously.

NEPD: Motion was made by Commissioner Furuseth to appoint William L. Woodard to an unexpired vacancy on the NEPD Advisory Council, expiring 6/2009, which was approved unanimously.

(7) Advisory Council – Committee Reports

Commissioner Otey reported that he had attended his first meeting with the Cooperative Extension. They are looking forward to reaching out to deliver more programming.

(8) Director's Report

Eminent Domain: Director Garges reported that he had met with the BOCC regarding eminent domain and the recent issues that had arisen in Huntersville and how we were going to make changes in the process going forward. As a result of that meeting we now have an eminent domain item back on the BOCC agenda on March 18 (a copy of the RFBA associated with this agenda item was given to each Commissioner and a copy is included in the PRC minutes binder housed in the Director's office). Commissioner Karen Bentley is recommending that Mecklenburg County should not use eminent domain for any private property for any greenway in the county. Director Garges noted that even though we have not used eminent domain in this manner, it's an important tool to have available during negotiations with land owners. However, many steps are required by the county to put this process into play and can be overturned by the county or the courts. Huntersville passed a similar motion to not use eminent domain. Our recommendation to the county has been to keep eminent domain as a tool. Without this negotiating tool it is highly possible that we will not be able to build many of the greenways planned. Director Garges asked for a presence of support at the March 18 BOCC meeting.

It was agreed that a motion should be made in support of eminent domain and against the proposed policy indicated in RFBA #16 slated for the March 18 BOCC agenda. Discussion followed regarding the verbiage and exact message to be conveyed by the motion and it was agreed that the details of the motion would be completed by Commissioner Pearce and shared electronically for final approval by the Park and Recreation Commission.

Motion was made by Commissioner Furuseth to support the use of eminent domain and to allow Commissioner Pearce to draft the details and message intended by the Commission and to share the completed motion electronically on March 12, 2008 for approval by the Commission, which was seconded by Commissioner Huelsman and was approved 9 to 1 with Commissioner Tarte excusing himself from the vote and Commissioners Barry, Brown, Huelsman, McClure, Pearce, Furuseth, Otey, Noble and Pata voting yes.

That approved detailed motion is as follows:

March 11, 2008

Motion by the PRC Regarding Proposed Eminent Domain Policy

The Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Commission requests that the Mecklenburg County Board of County Commissioners reject the proposed eminent domain policy.

In 1999, the Board of County Commissioners approved a Greenway Master Plan Update recommended by the Park and Recreation Commission. After a thorough community workshop and public input process, the current Greenway Master Plan Update outlines an action plan and focuses on trail development where it is feasible and practical, with emphasis to construct trails on land held in public ownership or available through willing partners. The Greenway Master Plan Update also recognizes the need for a more inclusive planning approach and

recommends the development of a stakeholder approach to greenway planning – ensuring residents are more directly involved in greenway planning.

The Greenway Master Plan Update executed with appropriate concern for homeowners and property owners will provide many benefits to Mecklenburg County citizens including:

- ***Preservation and restoration of streams and creeks;***
- ***Access to natural areas that are accessible to persons of all abilities;***
- ***Access to active recreation including walking, running and bicycling;***
- ***Opportunities for alternative transportation as trails connect to desired destinations and;***
- ***Connectivity between parks and different neighborhoods and communities.***

Eliminating the right to use the power of eminent domain as a last resort will prevent Mecklenburg County from fully realizing the benefits of the Greenway Master Plan.

As a result, the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Commission request that the Mecklenburg County Board of County Commissioners vote against the proposed eminent domain policy.

Budget: Director Garges shared that the Department planned to give an update on the current budget and the proposals for additional funds for the upcoming budget at the next PRC meeting. Indications from Harry Jones are that things are going to be tight in the next fiscal budget making enhancements over and above what is required will be tough this year.

US National Whitewater Center: The Whitewater center was able to cover its normal operating expenses and make a small amount of revenue over and above but did not include a \$4 million dollar mortgage payment. As a part of the forbearance agreement and required by the lender, a turnaround agent has been hired to review the books and look at the operation. A presentation was made by the agent to the BOCC and included the parking fee recommendation

(9) PRC Chair Report

(10-12) Consent Items

Motion was made by Commissioner Otey to approve the PRC minutes of February, 2008 and all other consent items, which was seconded by Commissioner Brown and approved unanimously.

Staff Reports and Requests

- (14) Lee Jones, Division Director of Capital Planning and Alliance Development gave an update presentation on bond funded public/private partnerships. The \$69,000,000 2004 Greenway and Park Bond Referendum included \$25 million for Greenways, \$25 million for Sportsplexes, \$10 million for Revolution Park and \$9 million for Third Ward/West Park. (**NOTE:** A copy of the presentation is included in the PRC minutes binder housed in the Director's office.)

Chair McClure asked for assurance that the Department was not building a neighborhood park out of what the voters passed as a Sportsplex. (Friendship Baptist Church Sportsplex Proposal) It was noted that if the recommendation has significantly changed, then it is our responsibility to go through a process to clear up any changes and inform the BOCC. Lee Jones assured the board that according to the county attorney we have met with the letter of intent with regards to meeting the Sportsplex requirements. Director Garges said that if there were County Commissioners that think we have made a fundamental change in what was approved; we need to get that resolved, however, according to Marvin Bethune; legally we are doing what was in the spirit of the proposal.

Commissioner Otey expressed that the 2004 bond was not about specific developments but about developments of this nature (Sportsplexes) and as long as that is what we execute, we are meeting the expectations of the voters according to the program presented to the public.

Chair McClure asked for clarification from Marvin Bethune and to have that on record in writing.

Commissioner Brown felt there was a guideline for acreage in a Sportsplex, how many field were required when going through this process and asked if staff could provide that information.

Adjournment

Having no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.