



The Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met at the Tom Sykes Recreation Center located at 1501 Euclid Avenue, Charlotte, NC at 6 p.m. on January 13, 2009.

**PRC Minutes
January 13, 2009**

ATTENDANCE

Present: Brad Pearce – Chair
Owen Furueth – Vice Chair
John Barry – Exec. Secretary
Scott McClure
Brenda McMoore
Jeff Tarte
Kirk Otey
Tim Morgan
Michael Noble
Jim Garges
Dot Law

Absent: Rob Brisley
Beverly Lawston
Joe Pata

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Vice-Chair Owen Furueth, which was followed by the pledge of allegiance.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

(1) Introductions

Each Commissioner introduced themselves and the district they represent.

Travis Landrum, Facility Manager I, Tom Sykes Recreation Center, welcomed the Commission and introduced the center's staff. Travis shared that the center is a partnership with Park and Recreation and CMS providing a greater opportunity to serve youth and surrounding neighborhoods. Everyone was invited to tour the facility at the conclusion of the meeting. Commissioner Otey encouraged everyone to tour the center's gym, which is also the front end of an operating theater.

Director Garges introduced Renea Barber, the new Park and Recreation Human Resource Manager and Julie Crapster (not present) Park and Recreation Human Resource Consultant.

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(2) **Proclamations and Awards**
None

(3) **Public Appearance**
None

(4) **Program Presentations:**
Michael Kirschman, Division Director of Nature Preserves and Natural Resources, presented his presentation “What are they Worth: The True Value of Nature Preserves. This report researched the value of Nature Preserves as it relates to the environmental benefits in air quality, water quality and wildlife/habitat; economic benefits from taxes, tourism and direct revenue and social benefits for health, education and quality of life. (Note: The entire PowerPoint presentation is included in the PRC minute’s binder housed in the Director’s office.)

(5) **Appointments –Advisory Councils – Applicants**

- a. *Motion was made by Chair Pearce to appoint **Sandra Calhoun** to an unexpired term on the **Aquatic Advisory Council**, expiring 6/2010, which was seconded and approved unanimously.*
- b. *Motion was made by Commissioner McMoore to appoint **Betsy Hooker** to an unexpired term on the **Central Park District II Advisory Council**, expiring 6/2011, which was seconded and approved unanimously.*
- c. *Motion was made by Chair Pearce to appoint **Crystal Gray** to an unexpired term on the **East Park District Advisory Council**, expiring 6/2009, which was seconded and approved unanimously.*
- d. *Motion was made by Commissioner Furuseth to appoint **Kendel Bryant** to and unexpired term on the **Northeast Park District**, expiring 6/2009, which was seconded and approved unanimously.*
- e. Appointments to the **Therapeutic Advisory Council** were deferred to the February 10, 2009 PRC meeting.

(6) **Public Hearings**
None

(7) **Advisory Council – Committee Reports**
None

(8) **Director’s Report**
Reorganization: Director Garges explained the recent reorganization of the current 9 park districts into 5 park regions. After pulling athletics out and into

an athletics division and pulling recreation programming out and placing under Lola Massad, the 9 park districts will now be able to focus on park maintenance, park development and communication to surrounding neighborhoods regarding park planning. The 9 districts were then reduced to 5 regions and a set of park standards were developed so that a uniform level of quality can be delivered across the park system. Each of the 5 regions will have a regional park manager, who will have two park district supervisors and a maintenance staff, all of whom will report to a park superintendent (Neil Carroll). Of the 9 current general managers, 3 will be covering new positions consistent with the Master Plan; cultural arts and senior programming, management of the Revolution Sports Academy and after school site programming and management. The current 9 district advisory councils will remain as is with the exception that the regional park managers in some cases will cover more than one council.

Greg Jackson, Division Director of Park Operations and Athletic Services, covered the facility inventory by region, detailed in a handout. (**Note:** this inventory is included in the PRC minute's binder housed in the Director's office.) Greg said the new boundaries were placed in such a way that it balanced the current staffing levels and parks according to the number of hours required to maintain them.

Chair Brad Pearce noted that Memorial Stadium was not included on the inventory list. Greg explained that the specialty facilities would continue to fall under their current Division Directors.

Ready to Go Projects: Jim explained that as the stimulus package began to be promoted, the County Manager's office asked departments to provide a list of shovel ready projects that could be viewed as part of the stimulus package. Park and Recreation had a good number of projects for consideration. The stimulus package will probably focus on projects they know they can get going, many of which are transportation related projects. Fortunately over the last 20 years, transportation has come to include bike transportation and greenways, so we may get lucky and be able to get money for greenways.

Cash Flow Analysis for 2008 Bond Projects: Jim shared that the Finance Department has asked Park and Recreation to determine how they would like to spend the 2008 bond money. This was asked so that they could get a handle on what the current debt load picture would look like as well as over the next 10 years in order to begin to making decisions about indebtedness. The department submitted an aggressive cash flow analysis based on the fact that we have a \$250 million bond package that passed and we would like to spend the money as quickly as possible to complete our projects and we have \$36 million of unsold debt from the 04 bond projects which the department would like to see sold in the next few weeks. It is highly unlikely that either will occur. Jim suggested that the Strategic Planning and Long Range Finance Committee work on putting together a project priority list based on speculated amounts of money we could receive from the remainder of the 04 bonds and the 08 bonds. In the meantime, Jim said that the department could proceed with planning and neighborhood meetings but will

need to emphasize to the citizens that the money may not be available as soon as we would like.

Jim said that the Finance Department is doing a good job, however there is a prediction that we will be off in terms of revenue growth which means less park projects. Chair Pearce asked if the department had received any instructions from the County Managers office regarding next year's budget. Jim responded that each department had been instructed to reduce cost by 5% for this year and next or offset with revenue growth. The department will be looking for ways to save money as well as looking for different opportunities for new partnerships.

Chair Pearce reminded everyone that the last budget reduction resulted in cutting park service personnel causing services to suffer. Deputy Dot Law responded that we have not been directed to cut positions. It is possible that we may lose some vacant positions or freeze others but we are not looking to cut any field positions.

(9) **PRC Chair Report**
None

(10-12) **Consent Items**

Motion was made by Commissioner Morgan to approve all consent items, including the November 11, 2008 PRC minutes, which was seconded by Commissioner McClure and approved unanimously

Staff Reports and Requests

(13) **Quarterly Capital Project Updates:** Lee Jones, Division Director of Planning and Development, and Julie Clark, Division Director of Greenway Planning and Development, gave an update on 2004 park and greenway bond projects. Information was shared on incomplete projects regarding the location, scope and project timeline. (**Note:** Details are outlined in the PowerPoint presentation included in the PRC minute's binder housed in the Director's office.)

(14) **Quarterly Operating Budget Update:** Mario Chang, Sr. Fiscal Administrator gave an update on the current operating budget. Mario pointed out that the department is doing well in the current budget in terms of where we are for spending and revenue; 48% expenses and higher in revenue at 57%. Mario also shared that in October, the County Managers office asked each department to complete an exercise of identifying cost in our FY09 budget that we knew we would not be spending either by choice or happenstance. Park and Recreation identified \$809,000. This exercise has turned into the reality of budget cuts effective immediately which will reduce our budget by \$809,000. In November we were asked to reduce by another 5% which would be the starting point for 2010. This amount was \$825,000.

Director Garges stressed the importance of the PRC members developing a strong advocacy among the new BOCC board for support and understanding of why we do what we do so that we can continue to get the money we need.

Each of the new BOCC members have been invited to come out and meet the senior staff and learn what it is the Department does.

Commissioner McClure said that in an effort to begin sharing information with new BOCC members about what Park and Recreation does and educate about the value and importance, Greenway Advisory Council members had been tasked with reaching out to the County Commissioners in their areas to take them out on a greenway. Scott also expressed the importance of beginning now to reach out to the Commissioners in preparation for FY2010 budget recommendation in May.

- (15) **Brad Davis Memorial Footplates:** Julie Clark, Division Director of Greenway Planning and Development welcomed and introduced Bill Brawley, former Park and Recreation Commissioner, and Richard Petersheim, of LandDesign to present the proposed memorial footplates planned for the Little Sugar Creek Greenway pedestrian bridge. (**Note:** A copy of the bridge design and plate verbiage is included in the PRC minute's binder housed in the Director's office.)

Richard Petersheim of LandDesign shared information about the late Bradley W. Davis; describing him as a friend, co-worker and partner at LandDesign; active in the community and with Park and Recreation Projects and Co-founder of Partners for Parks. He shared that Mr. Davis was intimately involved in the planning and strategy of the LSC Greenway footbridge connecting the Cherry Community with the Dilworth Community. He felt that it would be a significant amenity to its residents and would act as a unifying element to neighboring communities. Mr. Petersheim said the memorial 2' X 4' footplates would be placed at either end of bridge and would be inscribed with appropriate quotes by Mr. Davis as follows:

- "I find that attaining good design is a real struggle between the idea of creating great spaces and meeting the regulations for public health, safety, and welfare. When in doubt, do great design."
- "I find that having an almost naïve belief that most everything is possible fuels a mindset that can accelerate the movement from the impossible to possible.

In addition, Mr. Petersheim announced that LandDesign would be donating \$35,000 to the LSC Greenway project.

Bill Brawley, former Park and Recreation Commissioner, spoke in support of placing the Bradley W. Davis memorial footplates on the pedestrian bridge. Mr. Brawley shared Mr. Davis' strong history of park advocacy and the ultimate formation of Partners for Parks, which led to the formation of the nine park districts as we know them today.

Motion was made by Commissioner McClure for the Park and Recreation Commission to endorse the placement of the Bradley W. Davis memorial footplates on the Little Sugar Creek Greenway pedestrian bridge, which was seconded by Commissioner Tarte and approved unanimously.

Park Commissioners Reports and Requests

None

Adjournment

Having no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.