



The Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met at the Mallard Creek Recreation Center located at 2530 Johnston-Oehler Road, Charlotte, NC 28269 on May 12, 2009 at 6:00 p.m.

**PRC MINUTES**  
**May 12, 2009**

**ATTENDANCE**

**Present:** Brad Pearce – Chair  
Owen Furueth – Vice Chair  
John Barry – Exec. Secretary  
Rob Brisley  
Jeff Tarte  
Tim Morgan  
David Morgan  
Beverly Lawston  
Jim Garges  
Dot Law

**Absent:** Scott McClure (Funeral)  
Brenda McMoore (Sick)  
Paul Bailey (Out of Town Conference)  
Norman Mitchell (Out of Town)

**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 led by Commissioner Lawston.

**CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

**(1) Welcome and Introductions**

Tom Lawing, Facility Manager at Mallard Creek, welcomed everyone and introduced staff. Erica Espinoza, Caroline Carver, Pam McClough and Damien Williams shared information on their positions and the programs they managed. Director Garges pointed out that Mallard Creek was one of the Departments biggest and most active recreation centers and praised the wonderful job done by staff.

**(2) Public Hearings – Phillip O. Berry Renaming**

Terri Stowers, Facility Manager II, presented the third reading to the Park and Recreation Commission for their endorsement to rename the Phillip O. Berry Recreation Center to the Wallace Pruitt Recreation Center. The audience was reminded that a request went before the Board of County Commissioners in March to request a waiver of the 20 year policy on renaming, which was granted. This request is being made due to the confusion created by the High School and the Recreation Center sharing the same name, which especially came to light in the recent election. The petition came from the Seversville Community Organization and the first and second reading of this request was made at the March and April Central Park District I Advisory Council meetings. Mr. Pruitt was in attendance and available to answer questions. No questions were asked. Director Garges said that Mr. Pruitt was a legend in his neighborhood and felt that everyone was excited about the opportunity to honor him for all the work he has done.

*Motion was made by Commissioner Lawston to endorse the renaming of the Phillip O. Berry Recreation Center to the Wallace Pruitt Recreation Center, which was seconded by Commissioner Brisley and approved unanimously.*

**(3) Proclamations and Awards**

- a. Karla Gray, Sr. Therapeutic Recreation Manager recognized Peggy Walker, Therapeutic Recreation Specialist, for receiving the Individual TR Service Award from the NC Recreation and Park Association. NCRPA applauded Peggy for her commitment, dedication and love for the Therapeutic profession. Peggy expressed her appreciation for the privilege of working for the Mecklenburg County TR Section doing what she loves.
- b. Jim Garges recognized Kirk Otey and presented him with an award in recognition of his service on the Park and Recreation Commission, Central Park District III, and especially for all the work he did during the Master Plan. Kirk was presented with gold cards, a park and recreation department ball cap and an award after which he expressed how much he enjoyed working with the Commission; seeing it as a great opportunity to give back. Kirk shared that he is currently serving on the Board of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, an advocacy organization of hunting, fishing and conservation groups, angling and hunting industries advocating for habitat and for opportunity for hunting and fishing for kids and parents.

**(4) Public Appearance – Gary Dunn – Ping Pong Table Donation**

Greg Jackson, Division Director of Park Operations and Athletic Services, introduced Gary Dunn of the Liang Dynasty Group USA. Mr. Dunn contacted Greg about a year and a half ago about placing outdoor ping pong tables in parks. Since that initial conversation, two tables have been placed at Independence Park. Greg indicated that it has been successful and plans are to look for other opportunities in the park system.

Mr. Dunn gave a presentation on his mission of putting ping pong programs in local parks, many of which are installed free of charge, such as the one at Independence Park. Mr. Dunn shared information on how to sponsor a table and the process of selecting a site and getting approval for placement. Director Garges thanked Mr. Dunn for getting with Greg and staff to place the ping pong tables and bring this new activity to the citizens of Mecklenburg County.

Commissioner Lawston asked about how long it took to build the tables and the longevity of the tables. Mr. Dunn replied that the tables were pre-built and in storage so placement required a fairly short time frame. He has been placing tables for 15 years and has not had to replace one yet, so they are very durable.

**(Note:** The PowerPoint presentation is included in the PRC Minute's Binder housed in the Director's office.)

**(5) Program Presentations: Athletic Services**

**Developmental, Specialty and Youth Sports Programs**

Karl Thornhill, Developmental, Specialty and Youth Sports Programs, shared that this section of Park and Recreation essentially offers joint programming with various athletic organizations such as Charlotte Flights, the Police Athletic League and the Charlotte Boxing Academy, as well as in-house programs. This section of the Department will be housed at the Revolution Sports and Learning Academy.

Derichard McCoy, introduced himself as the youth football coordinator for the Department stating that his goal was to bridge relationship between football organizations and Mecklenburg County. A new program, in partnership with Carolina Speed, is indoor youth football for ages 9 to 12. Another program in the fall will be with the Piedmont Youth Football League for contact football. This team called the Elon Browns, for ages 7 to 9, will be based out of the 521 Recreation Center.

Ken Koonce introduced himself as the youth sports coordinator and offered the following information on youth sports programs:

- Baseball and T-Ball: 74 teams (900 players) for ages 5 – 12 playing on Saturdays at 9 different sites in Mecklenburg County
- Track and Field: Anthony James works with a Park and Recreation Center sponsored track and field program call "Be a Champion". Ten centers participate in this program for ages 4 – 17 and meets are held every Tuesday at Johnson C.

Smith University. Ken said that Anthony wanted to invite members of the PRC to come out to some of these meets and hand out the awards. Chair Pearce asked Karla Thornhill to take responsibility for getting PRC scheduled for some of these meets.

- Flag Football: 26 teams, 214 youth ages 5-6 and 7-8, involved 18 recreation centers and 5 parks.
- Soccer: 34 teams, 420 youth ages 2-4
- Basketball: The Department's biggest youth program, 32 leagues, 227 teams ages 4 – 18, playing every Saturday November to March
- Quick Start Tennis: 60 youth ages 5-8, playing every Saturday at Sugaw Creek Recreation Center
- Non Traditional Sports: Working on programs for kickball, lacrosse and dodge ball.
- Blue Cross Blue Shield: Partnered with BCBS two years ago as part of their community outreach initiative. \$24,000 in scholarships

### **Athletic Operations, Events and Partnerships**

Phil Fleishmann, Athletic Manager introduced the other half of Athletic Services: Operations, Events and Partnerships. This area of the Department is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the use of all public athletic facilities (fields, tournament complexes, tennis courts and trails), managing all first right of reservation agreements and in-house adult programs for adult and seniors.

Aaron Cheeks, covered the in-house adult programs offered by the Department.

- Softball: 24 teams, 360 players, planning a summer league
- Volleyball: Year round play, 30 teams, coed and women's teams, play 4 days a week at 4 different locations
- Flag Football: 3 season league, 13 teams, 285 players
- Men's Basketball: 400 players
- Women's Basketball: Women's league on Sundays, 10 teams, will be running an NCAA sanctioned women's league this summer with Division I and Division II college players
- Senior Softball: In partnership with Charlotte Senior Sports Association, playing at Park Road Park, 16 teams, 230 players on Tuesday nights and a more competitive 4 team league on Thursday night.
- Partnerships: The Department has partnerships with organizations such as Interlink, Sports Connection and ASA Charlotte.

Atuya Cornwell explained the reservation process for athletic facilities.

State Games: Phil Fleishmann shared that close to 4 million visitors came to the park system last year for over 100 athletic events and programs. One showcase event for this year and again in 2010 will be the State Games. This multi sport amateur festival will be held in June and is a month long of over 35 sporting competitions. Everyone was invited to come out to Hornets Nest Park the weekend of June 19 for Disc Golf, Tennis, BMX and Softball. Over 15 thousand people are expected to be in the Charlotte area for this event.

### **(6) Appointments –Advisory Councils – Applicants**

Appointments for the NEPD were deferred to the June 9 PRC meeting.

### **(7) Advisory Council – Committee Reports**

### **(8) Director's Report – Jim Garges**

Director Garges covered the following topics:

Land Acquisition: Steve Law and Nancy Brunnemer from Real Estate Services are getting ready to send out letters to property owners to alert them that if they are interested in selling their property or preserving it in cooperation with the County, they should let us know. These properties were identified through the Master Plan and greenprinting process for active parks and preserves.

Budget: County Manger, Harry Jones, will be making his budget recommendation at the May 18 BOCC meeting. Park and Recreation took a 7.5% reduction; approximately 10% when you add in the \$700,000 we did not get for operating new facilities. A \$38 million dollar gap still remains and the Manger will be looking to close that gap with reductions to CMS, CPCC and other outside agencies. The Department has also sent letters requesting our outside agencies to reduce their budgets by approximately 7.5% as well.

The PRC, as the voice for Park and Recreation activities to the BOCC, were encouraged to stay informed and let the Manager's office hear what they are doing and what they think.

The Department will finish up this year's budget on a high note, spending less, and hitting or exceeding revenue targets.

Commissioner Lawston expressed concern for children who may not have the funds for summer programs and the effect budget reductions might have on scholarship money. Director Garges responded that that the Department never turns anyone away if there is room in a program. He also offered discussion on the need for more low impact, no fee programming such as the old play ground programs which are no longer used due to safety concerns with letting a child walk to a neighborhood park. The Department will continue to work on activities for small children that can be provided safely and close to home. Along the same lines, Director Garges said that Commissioner Leake is very concerned about how to offer after school programs in all schools. This concern will be getting more attention from the Department since Andre Eaves was reassigned to take over the after school program and to grow it.

First Ward Park: First Ward Park was a topic of discussion at the BOCC Economic Development Committee meeting. This project is part of the Master Plan and is being planned in cooperation with Daniel Levine and UNCC, however, there is currently no funding for it, nor is it included in the \$250 million dollar bond package. The point of the discussion was to make sure that no project listed in the \$250 million is substituted for First Ward Park. Moving forward on the First Ward Park project will mean finding another funding source. Once an agreement is reached and plans are set for this park, it will be brought before the PRC again.

Commissioner Lawston expressed concern over funding for these projects in the uptown area while some neighborhoods have been waiting for a park for 10 years (Lincoln Heights). Chair Pearce supported her concern stating that we needed to make sure we are transparent and that we make it clear that no funds will be diverted from the \$250 million to fund projects not listed in the bond.

Latta Plantation: There have been complaints about the condition of the buildings at Latta Plantation. Staff has made the repairs but Director Garges, Michael Kirschman and Jeff Robinson will be making a site visit.

Advisory Council Applications: Director Garges ask that applicants not be automatically turned away if they have applied to serve in a district in which they do not reside. On several occasions citizens have lived very close to the boundaries and wanted to serve outside of the district in which they lived.

### **PRC Reports and Requests**

Chair Pearce encouraged communication and support, especially for contentious meetings such as the recent meetings addressing the lighting of Flat Branch soccer fields.

Commissioner Tim Morgan, thanked Chair Pearce and Director Garges for their attendance and support at the Flat Branch meetings. He shared that the lights have been adjusted and now meets not only the city's lighting Ordinance but also the Park and Recreation standards. As a note, the home owners association for the neighborhood that backs up to Flat Branch Park has not taken a position on these lights, the complaints are coming from the homeowners that border the park.

Chair Pearce said he was working on getting Partners for Parks to a PRC meeting to give a presentation on what they do and to talk about what can be done to help each other.

**PRC Nominating Committee:** Commissioner John Barry advised the board that the nominating committee (Brad Pearce, Owen Furusetth and John Barry) met to vote on a slate of officers for FY2010 to present to the Commission. The recommendation was as follows:

Brad Pearce – Chair

Tim Morgan – Vice Chair

John Barry – Secretary

The vote will take place at the June 9, 2009 PRC meeting.

**(10-12) Consent Items**

**Motion was made** by Chair Pearce to approve all consent items, including the PRC minutes of April 14, 2009, which was seconded by Commissioner Brisley and approved unanimously.

**Staff Reports and Requests**

**(13) Approve Flat Branch Nature Preserve and Evergreen Nature Preserve Master Plans**

Michael Kirschman, Division Director of Nature Preserves and Natural Resources, brought before the Commission two draft master plans for two nature preserves for endorsement. Both have gone through three community workshops and after PRC endorsement will go to the Board of County Commissioners for final approval.

**Flat Branch:** Michael Campbell, Park and Recreation Manager, gave an overview of the proposed master plan for Flat Nature Preserve. The amenities proposed for this 44 acre site at the intersection of Ardrey Kell and Tom Short Roads include a 20 space parking lot, restroom, picnic shelter, natural playground, upper and lower loop trail, boardwalks and outdoor classrooms.

Chair Pearce asked if there was any concern of the loop trail having an adverse impact on the natural areas. Michael Campbell responded that the Natural Resource Management Team did an initial biodiversity assessment on the property in 2006 and other than the 6 acres of wetland which will be crossed with boardwalks, determined that there would be no adverse impact.

Commissioner Tarte asked if there was any relation to the soccer complex and if it was perceived as non intrusive to the neighbors. Michael Campbell responded that they were not and that the response for the preserve has been very positive.

Commissioner Tim Morgan noted that one of the major issues that still must be resolved is the access back and forth across the street between the park and the school. A lot of concern has been expressed over the amount of traffic.

Chair Pearce added that he understood the neighbors were also concerned with the possibility of people parking on the side of the road and blocking the view lines coming in and out of the school, park and nature preserve.

Commissioner Tarte asked if the property met the size requirement to qualify it as an official nature preserve.

Michael Campbell said that size was not a requirement, but was based on the quality of the natural area, in particular for Flat Branch, the upland maphic depression portion considered to be one of the most significant upland maphic depressions in all of North Carolina. The property is designated as an official nature preserve as approved by the BOCC.

Commissioner Tim Morgan inquired about plans to have access to the preserve on the South end. Michael Campbell indicated that staff would go back to the community for the detail design and other access points would be possible. Currently no sidewalks exist along Ardrey Kell Road, but staff would be mindful of future sidewalks in detail design for access points.

Kathy and Steve Jackson from the flat branch community were present and expressed their approval of the preserve and asked general questions regarding amenities in the park.

Director Garges asked Michael Campbell to talk about the time frame for the preserve. Michael explained that the time frame is undetermined because money for this project will come from the 2008 bonds which are currently not be encumbered due to the “debt diet” that the county is on. The Department may be 16 to 18 months from knowing the exact time frame. However, the Department owns this property and has been designated as a Nature Preserve.

***Motion was made by Commissioner Tarte to endorse the Flat Branch Nature Preserve master plan for approval by the BOCC, which was seconded by Commissioner Furuseth and approved unanimously.***

**Evergreen:** Bridgett Strong, Park and Recreation Manager presented the Evergreen Nature Preserve Master Plan for endorsement by the PRC. Evergreen Preserve is an existing 77 acre nature preserve located in the heart of the East Charlotte Community. In addition to input from the workshops, staff has worked closely with Winterfield Elementary School to come up with a plan that will satisfy both the school and the community. As a result, the following information on the Evergreen Nature Preserve Master Plan was presented:

- At the request of the community for better parking; a 12 space parking lot off Normandy Road.
- Approximately a mile to a mile and a half of trail including an ADA loop trail
- Picnic areas
- Gathering points, outdoor classroom and viewing decks
- Interpretive signs in English and Spanish throughout the preserve, some designed by students
- Excavation of old dump site to enhance the bird viewing field and make a better habitat for migratory birds
- New entrance
- Bridge over remnants of historic Old Potters Road, one of the first two roads ever leading into Charlotte

Director Garges ask about the estimated cost and time frame for the project.

Michael Kirschman said that \$600,000 was earmarked in the 2008 bond package to fund the development of Evergreen; not enough to cover the presented Master Plan. Depending on when 2008 bonds are sold, this project could be in the next 2 to 7 years. Once the Master Plan is approved, some aspects of the project can move ahead with partnerships and in house work. As an added point of interest, Michael Kirschman said that both the Evergreen and Flat Branch Master Plans were both designed in house by David Nelson.

Commissioner David Morgan asked about the cost of the dump clean-up. Bridgett responded that, not counting the work done by CPCC students, an estimated cost for above grade would be about \$50,000.

***Motion was made by Commissioner Barry to endorse the Evergreen Master Plan, which was seconded by Commissioner David Morgan and approved unanimously.***

### **Adjournment**

Having no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Note: The PRC meeting agenda packet is archived on disk in the Director's Office.