



The Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met at the Administrative Office Building, 5641 Brookshire Blvd., Charlotte, NC at 6 p.m.

PRC MINUTES
September 11, 2012

ATTENDANCE

PRC Present:

Rob Brisley, Chair
Kendel Bryant, Vice-Chair
Elaine Powell, Executive Secretary
Jim Garges, Park and Recreation Director
Ed Barnhart
Doug Burnett
Brenda McMoore
Norman Mitchell
Charlie McRee

PRC Absent:

Joe Pata
Kristen Shaben
Sheryl Smith
(Resigned seat: Tarte)

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Rob Brisley, which was followed by the pledge of allegiance and introductions of each commissioner.

Welcome and Introductions:

Special Note: the September 11, 2012 Park and Recreation Commission is a non-business meeting and will be utilized for updates by key community partners and stakeholders, which in attendance were: 1) Catawba Lands Conservancy and 2) Partners for Parks.

Also in attendance and introduced by Commissioner Ed Barnhart, were the South Region Advisory Council and members of the South Region – Park Operations, introduced by Patricia Poteat, Park Region Manager (South).

Proclamations and Awards: None

Public Appearance - None

Program Presentation -: **Catawba Lands Conservancy**

Chair Rob Brisley **recognized** Director Jim Garges, who introduced Tom Okel, Executive Director for the Catawba Lands Conservancy a key Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation stewardship partner.

Catawba Lands Conservancy (CLC) is a land trust – a nonprofit, community-based conservation organization that permanently conserves and manages land for public benefit in the Southern Piedmont of North Carolina. Their six-county land protection area includes Catawba, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg and Union counties.

CLC is also the lead agency for the **Carolina Thread Trail** (The Thread). The Thread is a 15-county, two-state initiative designed to inspire and facilitate the creation and development of a regional network of trails, blueways and conservation corridors that will link more than 2.3 million citizens. Today, 92 miles of The Thread are open to the public.

In Mecklenburg County, the Carolina Thread Trail incorporates

- Clark's Creek and Mallard Creek – Saxonbury to Countryside School
- Clark's Creek and Mallard Creek – Saxonbury to Fairlea
- Clark's Creek and Mallard Creek – University Research Park to Kirk Farm
- Irwin Creek and Stewart Creek
- Little Sugar Creek – Cordelia to Alexander
- Little Sugar Creek – Freedom Park
- Little Sugar Creek – Morehead to Brandywine
- Little Sugar Creek – Huntingtowne Park
- McDowell Creek
- Southeast Creek
- Torrence Creek

Questions and answers followed from the Commissioners.

Partners for Parks

Chair Rob Brisley **recognized** Director Jim Garges, who introduced Ed Schweitzer, President of Partners for Parks a key Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation partner.

Partners for Parks is a nonprofit, nonpartisan support group that seeks to promote and enhance parks, greenways, open space and recreation in neighborhoods throughout Mecklenburg County and the surrounding region.

By protecting, maintaining and expanding park resources, our community can continue to enjoy an excellent quality of life while experiencing unprecedented population and economic growth.

Partners for Parks works collaboratively with all aspects of the community to ensure a bright future for our region.

Questions and answers followed from the Commissioners.

Appointments – Advisory Councils – Applicants

Stewardship: *Motion was made* by *Commissioner Powell* to appoint **Alan White** to an unexpired term on the Stewardship Advisory Council, expiring 6/2015, which was seconded and approved unanimously.

Stewardship: *Motion was made* by *Commissioner Powell* to appoint **Holly Emerson** to an unexpired term on the Stewardship Advisory Council, expiring 6/2015, which was seconded and approved unanimously.

Director's Report

(a) Whittington Field Public Hearing, August 20, 2012 – Update and Outcomes

Director Jim Garges reported to the Park and Recreation Commission, that with the approval of the County Manager, Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation – Park Operations, and the Central Advisory Council, the request of the Dilworth Little League for modification of the Whittington Field has been approved.

Commissioner Charlie McRee (Central Region – C3) provided a summation of the events leading up to the Public Hearing:

Roughly a year or so ago Dilworth Little League approached Park and Recreation about expanding the **Jim Whittington Little Field** on Princeton Ave. to comply with new **Little League** field required dimensions. Little League players, like all youth today, are bigger and stronger than years ago and from a safety standpoint it was felt that the pitcher was too close to the batter and a line drive could be on him before he can react. The same could be said about the infielders. It was decided to enlarge the field and move everyone back a few feet. (To be sanctioned by Little League and qualify for tournaments your field has to be the new dimensions, which will be required of all Little League fields in the USA) This would not be a big deal where there is room for expansion, except with Whittington field, it would require removing 21 trees and bumping up next to the sidewalk on Princeton.

Whittington Field was built in 1953 which makes it the oldest or certainly one of the oldest Little League fields in Mecklenburg County. The bleachers and concession stand with restrooms are built of brick which cannot be said about any other field. There is a lot of feeling (emotions) as generations have played and coached there and it is considered to be a special place to play for the older players.

Their first proposal was rejected by Park and Recreation, but after some back and forth discussion Dilworth submitted a plan that is acceptable. Dilworth LL will pay all cost and any trees removed will be replaced with new trees and everything will be under the supervision of Park & Rec.

We had a public forum which was attended by about 25 people and there were no objections. I personally met with several neighbors and also spoke with several coaches and everyone was OK with the expansion. There is always a little heartburn when trees are cut down but of the 21 trees only 2 were hardwoods and one of those has to be pretty radically trimmed as the limbs come on to the current field. The county arborist will be involved in the planting of the replacement trees which will probably make it more attractive in the long run.

The right field will not be expanded to the full distance of 205 feet required because of the sidewalk next to Princeton, but Dilworth has been given an exemption and there will be room to plant a tree and there should not be any safety concerns for pedestrians walking on the sidewalk. (new distance will be 195ft.)

[Cordialities omitted]

PRC Chair Report/Commissioner Updates

Consent Items:

(10) ***Motion was made*** by Chair Brisley to approve the August 14, 2012 PRC Minutes. This motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Staff Reports and Requests

None

PRC Reports and Requests

Commissioner Barnhart ***on behalf of the Park and Recreation Commission submitted the following resolution:***

The PRC would like to recognize the outstanding work of the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department staff and volunteers as Charlotte hosted the 2012 Democratic National Convention. Through hard work and dedication the department prepared our beautiful park system for the spotlight of the world. Their long hours of service during this event ensured our visitors enjoyed our fine facilities and natural park settings in the same fashion that our citizens enjoy every day. Charlotte has one of the finest Park and Recreation Departments in the country and that was exemplified last week. We are extremely proud of Director Garges and his staff and we salute their dedication to the citizens of this great city

The above resolution to be submitted to and acknowledged by the Mecklenburg County Board of County Commissioners.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.