



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  
October 9, 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  
Charlie McRee  
Norman Mitchell  
Joe Pata  
Sheryl Smith

**PRC Absent:**

Resigned seats:  
Northern Towns (Carey)  
North Region – N2 (Tarte)  
Southern Towns (Shaben)

**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 6:08 p.m. by Chair Rob Brisley, which was followed by the pledge of allegiance and introductions of each commissioner.

**Welcome and Introductions:**

Lola Massad, Community and Recreation Center Services Division Director introduced and welcomed the **Sr. Citizens Advisory Council**. Introductions were provided for the Sr. Citizens in attendance which included **citizen/partner members** Peggy McDonald, Bill Marchant, Rosalind Taylor, Pearl Stitt, Chuck Bennett, Sylvia Paro; **staff members** Ariel Henderson, Katie Robinson, Terri Stowers, Heidi Kitterman, Lola Massad; and **Park and Recreation Commission member** Norman Mitchell, Sr.

Director Jim Garges **commended** department staff Lola Massad, Katy Robinson, Terri Stowers and Ariel Henderson as well as all those who work closely with the Senior Advisor Council regarding it has been outstanding to see citizens step up to the plate with their experience and help with advisory councils such as this one for seniors.

Commissioner Barnhart, **requests** information regarding outreach to retirement or assisted living facilities to inform them on the opportunities available through Park and Recreation for recreation activities and citizen engagement via the advisory council. By reply from Ms. Peggy McDonald, advisory council member, the Mecklenburg County Senior Games staff (of which MCPRD is a partner) does reach out to seniors through various community facets.

Chair Rob Brisley additionally offered his regards and concluded Welcome and Introductions for the Senior Advisory Council.

Lola Massad, Community and Recreation Center Services Division Director also introduced and welcomed the **Cultural Arts Advisory Council**. Introductions were provided for the members in attendance which included **partner members** April Berry (NC Dance Theatre), Ryan Deal (Arts and Science Council); **staff members** Lola Massad and Heidi Kitterman; and **Park and Recreation Commission member** Norman Mitchell, Sr.

April Berry applauded the collaborative relationship shared by Park and Recreation and the NC Dance Theatre (NCDT). Through the **NCDT Reach Program**, recreation center programming is able to enhance cultural arts awareness within Recreation Centers. Programming is presently funded through a 3 year grant with programs now funded to continue through a 4<sup>th</sup> year.

Ryan Deal emphasized that Park and Recreation continues to be a key partner with the Arts and Science Council as recreation centers play a critical part in bridging the intersection of arts and the communities. Further thought was requested on what the PRC envisions are meaningful ways to provide services to citizens.

Commissioner Powell **requested** information on the **Bio-Medical Program**, highlighted by Ryan Deal. As indicated by Katie Robinson, Park and Recreation Facility Manager, the target age group is “elementary age” (9-12 years old).

Chair Rob Brisley **inquired** whether there is a **designated amount of funding** that should be set aside from the Park and Recreation Department budget to assist with reaching the goals of the Cultural Arts Advisory Council. Per Director Jim Garges, the Park and Recreation Budget Team decides the direction and amount of funding. That amount is currently 1%. This is not inclusive of cultural programming opportunities at Romare Bearden Park. Lori Saylor is working with the Arts and Science Council separately on that aspect.

**Proclamations and Awards: None**

**Public Appearance - None**

## **Program Presentation -:**

### **Capital Planning Division**

Chair Rob Brisley **recognized** MCPRD **Capital Planning** Division Director Lee Jones, who updated the Park and Recreation Commission on various Capital projects which included

- (a) ***Romare Bearden Park***
- (b) ***Wesley Heights Greenway***
- (c) ***First Ward Park and Second Ward Park***
- (d) ***Barton Creek Greenway***
- (e) ***Ballantyne Park (Phase III) and***
- (f) ***Matthews Regional Sportsplex.***

Questions and answers followed from the Commissioners.

Chair Rob Brisley **inquired** whether First Ward Park designs and programming have changed much from the first rendition. According to Lee Jones, it did evolve some.

Director Jim Garges **requested** Lee Jones briefly explain the underlying need for Barton Creek Greenway. Jones informed the PRC that, in order to maintain the pedestrian connections between Mallard and the university area, this project, from our 2008 master plan, is being undertaken. Citizens will not be able to use the Clarks Creek Greenway and Mallard Creek Greenway without this connection. The project is made more urgent by planned construction on North Tryon Street by NCDOT and CATS which will require closing a portion of Mallard Creek Greenway for about a year.

Additionally Jones provided an update that the ***Robert Haywood Morrison Gardens*** should finish work (most of it) by FY13, dependent upon when the sculptures are ready.

In regards to both citizen and acknowledged concerns regarding runoff at ***Matthews Sportsplex*** as a result of land clearing and construction, the department is presently working with **LUESA** and **Stewardship Advisory Council** to take additional measures into consideration regarding flooding and discoloration affecting 4Mile Creek. Work has entered the second phase of clearing, to which Jones noted doing the work in phases is in accordance with environmental sustainability policies. Department plans are to begin discussions and work with the stewardship division (Nature Preserves and Natural Resources Division) to see what trees can be sold for lumber.

Commissioner Pata **requested** Lee Jones provide the seating capacity, which Jones indicated was 2,500.

Commissioner Powell **expressed (citizen) concern** with Long-Term Use Agreements, as it relates to Matthew Sportsplex. Per Division Directors Lee Jones and James Alsop there will be no long term use agreements outside of seasonal agreements.

Lee Jones, James Alsop and Director Jim Garges **briefly discussed** some of the nuances involved when fields and facilities are paid for by private citizen funds, which in turn get prime use of the fields.

Commissioner Pata **concurs** with Director Garges and the position of the Department in regards to private citizen funding of fields.

Commissioner Mitchell **reemphasized** Commissioner Powell's question, which he (Mitchell) indicated is not a concern for private invested fields, but a problem with county funded/built fields.

Commissioner Burnett **requested** information regarding who strikes the balance between financiers and county use agreements (MCPRD & who owns them).

Commissioner McCree **requested** information on whether there is a defined agreement for facility use. Per Department policies all "contracts" and "agreements" are defined.

Chair Rob Brisley **requested** that the PRC use this discussion as an opportunity for education and **requested** James Alsop provide the PRC a FAQ on Long-Term Use Agreements.

Lee Jones provided a brief update on **Ballantyne Park Phase III** and its shared funding as well as opportunities for upcoming community and stakeholder presentations. Jones praised the collaborations resulting in Toby Creek Greenway, which is all grant funded.

Commissioner Barnhart **requests** information regarding Four Mile Creek, specifically, now that it is finished have we received reimbursements.

Commissioner Powell **commended** the department on its vision as it relates to **Long Creek Park**.

Director Jim Garges reminded all in attendance that upcoming project and community meetings are an excellent time to touch base with the citizenry.

Reference Documents:

4a.1 Capital Planning Division – Capital Projects Presentation

**Appointments – Advisory Councils – Applicants**

None

**Director's Report**

- (a) Director Jim Garges provided the Park and Recreation Commission with a brief context and invitation to the public gardens and horticulture team training/symposium facilitated by **Lynden B. Miller**, world-renowned garden designer on October 25, 2012.
- (b) Director Jim Garges provided the Park and Recreation Commission with the most recent updates from the **UNC-Charlotte Urban Institute** for review.
- (c) Director Jim Garges provided the Park and Recreation Commission with the current draft version of the **Smoking Policy**, along with context, for review. Further discussion will occur. Board action will be required at the end of the review and discussion process.

**It is the position of Mecklenburg Park and Recreation and Director Jim Garges that Park and Recreation facilities should be viewed as health facilities (public health facilities).**

Questions and answers followed from the Commissioners.

Reference Documents:

- 8.b Updates from the UNC-Charlotte Urban Institute
- 8.c Draft version of the Park and Recreation Smoking Policy

Commissioner Barnhart **requested** to know whether the **County Managers Office** supported this position. Director Garges affirmed discussions were in progress.

Chairman Rob Brisley **requested** to know whether the **County Attorney** supported this position. Director Garges affirmed the County Attorney supported the department position and drafted the language in the policy.

Commissioner Pata **acknowledged** his support of the policy and inquired whether the policy extended to **golf courses**. Director Garges affirmed the policy would extend to cover all Park and Recreation facilities, employees, patrons/guests/visitors, et all.

Commissioner McCree **requested** whether insight had been given into how this policy would **impact/affect fishermen**. Deputy Director Kirschman indicated that cigarette filters were a large contributor to land and water litter at Nature Preserves and that was the foremost concern as it related to fishing recreation.

Commissioner Powell **acknowledged** the priority of **reducing litter** (all types, but specifically related to cigarettes) in natural areas and promoting stewardship efforts.

Commissioner Powell **requested** an update on the situation at **Carolinas Medical Center** (re: smoking on the Greenway, under the bridge). Director Jim Garges noted that both Jeff Robinson and Greg Clemmer of Park Operations had visited the CHS site and were working with the CHS team to reduce complaints and litter.

Commissioner Mitchell **requested** feedback on whether **community discussions** will take place in regards to the smoking policy. Per Director Garges community discussions on the smoking policy will currently not take place. The policy is currently being vetted only to Park and Recreation Management, Park and Recreation Commission and key department partners/stakeholders.

Commissioner Barnhart **requested** to know where the “push” for this policy is originating. It is his perspective that parks have allowed smoking for years and it has not been viewed as an issue; provides support the approach of a policy as opposed to an ordinance. Director Garges noted we are in a different time and place in regards to the consciousness of and promoting a positive public health image for parks and park facilities and promoting health is imperative and necessitates it. This position supports national trends, including those of smokeless parks and beaches.

Commissioner Barnhart **strongly encouraged** the Park and Recreation Commission and park leadership to develop a strong **purpose statement** to avoid the “rules for the sake of rules” perception in the community.

Commissioner Mitchell **requested** insight on what the **enforcement** piece of the policy; strongly discourages and does not agree with the development of policies with “no teeth.” Director Garges noted the department would like to try a “soft” approach and communication with those affected first. Alternatives would be stronger enforcement which would resemble an ordinance with a fine.

Commissioner McCree **supported** the positive impact such a policy would have on the environment.

Commissioner McMoore **requested** information on the **timeframe** for such an implementation. Director Garges indicated that after the policy was appropriately reviewed, discussed and vetted, it would return to the Park and Recreation Commission for action and presentation to County Manager Harry Jones and Dr. Wynn Mabry (Public Health Director). Each step would involve thorough communication of the policy and purpose and ultimately changes to rental and use agreements.

Director Jim Garges **requested** that each PRC Member and Advisory Council Liaison begin to **discuss the policy** in meetings. Director Garges also offered to come out and help with the discussion among advisory councils, if needed.

## **PRC Chair Report/Commissioner Updates**

### **Consent Items:**

(10) ***Motion was made*** by Commissioner McCree to delay the approval of the September 11, 2012 PRC Minutes until the November 14, 2012 meeting date. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Pata and approved unanimously.

### **Staff Reports and Requests**

None

### **PRC Reports and Requests**

Commissioner Burnett **requested** the commission look into teleconference line options to perhaps address some of the advisory council member absence issues, however did not want to occur a cost in suggested the PRC and department do so. Sandy Goodwin indicated she will look into this capability/possible option relating to teleconference capabilities.

Commissioner Bryant **expressed (citizen) concern**, along the lines of the previous conversation in regards to Long-Term Use Agreements for Youth Athletics, on behalf of a member of the North Advisory Council who is very concerned and has made complaint. After discussion, Director Jim Garges, advised Commissioner Bryant to refer the citizen to Jeff Robinson and James Alsop.

Commissioner Pata, **expressed (residual) concern**, with Long-Term Use Agreements, in agreement with Commissioner Bryant’s citizens concerns and **requested a report or update be provided at the next meeting.**

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.