



The Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met at the Administrative Office Building, 5841 Brookshire Blvd., Charlotte, NC at 6 p.m.

**PRC MINUTES  
February 12, 2013**

**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:**

Travis Dancy

Resigned/Vacant seats: North Region – N2  
Southern Towns

**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Chair Rob Brisley, which was followed by the pledge of allegiance and introductions of each commissioner.

**Welcome and Introductions:**

Capital Planning Division Director Lee Jones introduced new employee Kevin Brickman, Park Planner. Kevin Graduated for Ohio State University with a BS in Landscape Architecture in 1985 and began working part time at Park and Recreation in July 2012. Recently, Kevin has joined the department as a full-time, regular employee. Kevin's work experience included LS3P Architects in Charleston, SC, Odell Associates, Cole Jenest and Stone and John R. McAdams Company. His work history also included an emphasis on healthcare site design. Kevin proudly serves as a member of the Board of Directors for the Girls Scouts Hornets Nest Council for 18 years; Chair of Property Committee, as a Part Time instructor at CPCA for Residential Landscape Design, and a member of

the Zoning Board of Adjustment for Stanly County. Kevin provided a few remarks expressing his appreciation to be part of the Park and Recreation team.

Park and Recreation Manager Genni Reel introduced the Aquatics Advisory Council members present which included Jerry Clark, Chuck Sitter and Ginny Woolard, as well as PRC Liaison Commissioner Pata.

#### **Proclamations and Awards:**

None

#### **Public Appearance**

None

#### **Appointments – Advisory Councils – Applicants**

None

#### **Program Presentation –:**

##### **Enterprise Services Division – Aquatics**

Genni Reel, Park and Recreation Manager, provided an overview of the **Aquatics Program**. Included in the facilities accolades report were the Mecklenburg County Aquatic Center, the Marion Diehl Therapeutic Warm Water Pool, and Ray’s Splash Planet – were voted once again **Charlotte Magazine “Best Pool/Sprayground”** and also received accolades as a top site pick for children’s birthday parties.

An overview of the leadership and strategic long-term goals of the Aquatics program were presented in the PowerPoint presentation: **“Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Aquatics Division”** which provided updates on the Mecklenburg County Aquatic Center, Ray’s Splash Planet, Marion Diehl Center and Double Oaks & Cordelia Outdoor Pools. Emphasized was the impact the Aquatics Program has made in the community, citing over 3,300 free swim lessons provided, over 260,000 patrons for at the Aquatic Center (FY2012), over 45,000 Senior Citizens benefiting from the warm water therapeutic pool and 11,800 swim lesson participants – both at Marion Diehl; and over 130,000 patrons at Ray’s Splash Planet.

Emphasis was placed on the Aquatics program being **safety oriented** and strategically posed to continue to be a **leader in the field of aquatics**, to the benefit of citizens and patrons. Program highlights included focus on the **“I can Swim Campaign”**. The **campaign goal** is to provide more free or low cost swim lessons to children who cannot afford such lessons. Enhancing key partnerships will help to provide these free or lost-cost swim lessons to those who need them most, based upon statistics.

Genni Reel introduced Stephanie Whittington who gave a program overview of **Starfish Aquatics**. Starfish Aquatics was adopted to foster the Aquatics program goal to continuously evaluate and ensure Aquatics is adopting the best practices. Aquatics Leadership was for moving their current practices toward Starfish Aquatic Institute (SAI) training curriculum with Facility & Lifeguard standards, having previously been under the American Red Cross programming. While aquatics is inherently a risky business, adopting these best practices is a must to reduce our known risk to our users and to Mecklenburg County.

Discussed were the core relationship between instructor, child and their success in learning safe swimming. Highlights were also provided on multiple methods of progression through the program and effective instruction methods (in-service training as well). Focus was also given to the Starfish Risk Management model and the individual five (5) components of the model. Briefly discussed were the implementation of **StarReviews** – Lifeguard and Facility Audits.

Reference Documents:

4.a Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Aquatics Division.ppt

## Questions & Answers

Commissioner Powell **shared** she recently viewed an Olympics oriented television special with a young man from Charlotte who offers adult lessons and requested to know who the person was in relation to our program? She also asked specifically “Do we have enough money to offer (more) or free lessons?”

Per Genni Reel, the athlete in the television special was likely Cullen Jones, who a U.S. competitive swimmer and Olympic gold medalist. Cullen participates in the **Make a Splash** program. **Starfish** is a **Make a Splash Local Partner Program**, and the USA Swimming Foundation partners with learn-to-swim providers nationwide to offset the cost of swimming lessons and educate communities about the importance of learning how to swim.

Director Garges **noted** Park and Recreation needs to have enough pool time, guard time and staff time to accommodate lesson requests. Budget requests have been placed to meet these needs with a year-round model. Requests are also being submitted for the resources to help step the program up. Once the budget package is together, MCPRD will give the PRC an advocate package to speak to Advisory Councils and local officials on the matter.

Commissioner Barnhart **inquired** does Park and Recreation have a program to teach children how to survive an incident when fully clothed.

Per Genni Reel, yes, it is part of the safety components training. Stephanie Whittington added that there is a designated day in the program where children are supposed to come to lessons fully dressed to have this type of experience.

Commissioner Smith **inquired** is there any consideration to give new mothers an information package to market the Aquatics program, safety and swimming lessons for infants and children, in an attempt to reach the children at a young age and increase participation.

Per Genni Reel, it can be considered. The starting age for programs is 6 months.

Commissioner Burnette **inquired** “What is the **outdoor pool season** in Mecklenburg County?” As it relates to outdoor swim facilities, how do we rank with having enough facilities – is there enough water to meet the needs?

Per Genni Reel, the outdoor season is Memorial Day to Labor Day (May to August); in her opinion there is not enough water space, and this need is being addressed.

Director Garges indicated that in the Park and Recreation Masterplan they’ve identified the need for more of all types of water. Historically, In Mecklenburg, it has not been a

high priority on the budget and planning level. Presently, there are not enough public pools.

Guest Jerry Clark (Aquatics Advisory Council) inquired specifically “Is there a fee that we have to pay Starfish to use their program. Are the audits unannounced?”

Per Genni Reel, Park and Recreation only pays for program materials, and when we schedule audits. They (StarFish) provide training, curriculum and audits at a cost. The audits are in-fact unannounced.

Commissioner Pata **shared** that **Greensboro** (Guilford County) just developed a high profile swimming facility. He indicated we would like to keep those (high) level competitions here in Charlotte, however it may come down to a matter of there being not enough competitive water.

Commissioner Barnhart **inquired** what the long-term plan for the Aquatic Center consisted of.

Director Garges indicated some of this long term planning is tied-up in the 2008 Park Bonds referendum that was passed. There exists a lot of additional work that needs to be done at the facility. Expansion wise, the Department is somewhat challenged at that site land wise. There have been past talks regarding relocating or removing the aquatic center from its present location for this reason.

Deputy Director Michael Kirschman also noted we are also working on public swimming on the lakes (public beach swimming).

Chairman Rob Brisley **inquired** with summer ahead, are we maxed lessons and services we can provide.

Per Genni Reel, yes. Lessons, programming, and staff are maxed out based upon the water available for the above.

Chairman Rob Brisley **inquired** if there is a briefing available that would indicate how many pools there are in CMS, and the relationship we have with those schools. Are we working with them?

Per Genni Reel there are two, **West Charlotte** and **Providence**. There are fees associated with security and staff. If we could get into that water as soon as the summer, that would be great.

Division Director JamesAlsop also responded that expense is a consideration. CMS has funding requirements for the use of their staff.

Chairman Rob Brisley **inquired** regarding Incident Reporting and after-accident reports. How are those compiled and reviewed?

Per Genni Reel, the Department follows standard County procedure and utilizes the Risk Management processes and files any and all incidents. Stephanie Whittington additionally sees all reports and can address any recurring or underlying safety issues.

## **Director's Report**

- a) Director Jim Garges reported to the Park and Recreation Commission that a meeting has been scheduled to meet with County Executive Team to discuss the Proposed Smoking Policy. Director Garges noted if Park and Recreation Commissioners would like to draft something to represent their advisory councils, they can. Also shared was the development that South Carolina Beaches have proposed to ban tobacco, supporting the previously mentioned nationwide trend towards tobacco bans and promoting clean air.

Director Garges acknowledged the feedback of the PRC as well as its Advisory Councils, however disagreed that the general public sentiment is the same as the cross-sections represented by the Advisory Councils.

Chairman Brisley **inquired** if this was the right time to take it to the Executive Team.

Commissioner Barnhart **noted** that he appreciates the position of the Park and Recreation Senior Leadership Team and the Mecklenburg County Executive Team, but believes the Advisory Councils are a good cross-section of the general public.

Commissioner Mitchell **restated** his concerns regarding impact to Golf courses and golf employees.

Commissioner Pata **restated** his position against such a ban and reiterated that he concurs with Commissioner Barnhart, and believes support is very low. Negative support was strong from each Advisory Council.

Commissioner Bryant **inquired** specifically, "What will be the response of the Advisory Council given to the Executive Team?"

Per Director Garges the responses will not be white-washed; minutes from the Park and Recreation Commission meeting roundtable discussion will be presented, as well as the facts regarding how Advisory Councils responded.

Chairman Brisley **inquired** has the Park and Recreation team taken any other PRC discussed items to the Executive Team for support, when support was low from the PRC or Advisory Councils.

Per Director Garges, no we have not. However, this is a matter that must be presented to the Executive Team because it represents a change in policy that must be passed at the Board of County Commissioners level.

- b) Director Jim Garges shared the **FY14 Resource Planning Template** as a tool the Department will be using in the upcoming budget cycle. With a rise in expenses and relatively flat revenue, it prompts discussion on what do we do. Some considerations are:
- Continue same level of services, maintain regular expenses, discretionary spending small and spending for new programs; this comes in to play when you look at new facilities with an operational expense and new programs without the revenue to cover it and how you think about those things.
  - Coping with reduced budgets; Generally what you will see in this budget and budgets in the next few years will be a small or smaller budget

- Leveraging advocacy and identifying what needs to be done; Park and Recreation's SLT had a great meeting with Pat Cotham Chair of the Board of County Commissioners and she is very interested in what we do.

Chairman Brisley **inquired** budget wise, what percentage of budget is salary.

Per Director Garges, two-thirds. 70% is salary, discretionary is about 15%.

- c) Director Garges briefly touched on work being done at the benefits level for **"PT – Regular"** Park and Recreation employees.

Commissioner Burnette **noted** his understanding some of the health care law changes that are coming have to do with weekly work hours. Mentioned in parallel with County government – is County government signing off on completely smoke-free facilities.

Per Director Garges, things are moving in a good direction to cover employees who work regularly less than 40 hours a week with benefits commensurate to their level of employment with Park and Recreation. As it relates to completely smoke-free facilities, we are unaware of any that are presently "completely" smoke free.

Chairman Rob Brisley **noted** the imminent future reality of several **year round schools** and inquired can we ensure we are part of the dialogue of said future impacts.

Director Garges agrees. Will reach out to ensure we are kept in the loop.

- d) Cultural Arts Advisory Council Dissolution

Director Garges informed the Park and Recreation Commission he has received a request to dissolve the Cultural Arts Advisory Council. Reasons contained were submitted in memo form and provided to the PRC. A future action item will follow.

Reference Documents:

- [8.b](#) FY14 Resource Planning Template
- [8.c](#) Cultural Arts Advisory Council – Request to Dissolve (Memo)

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

Chairman Rob Brisley requested the following updates for the February 12, 2013 PRC Meeting:

- 1) Roberts Rules of Order for Meetings – to be distributed to the Park and Recreation Commission
- 2) Updated PRC/BOCC Assignments Map
- 3) Updated PRC Advisory Council Assignments
- 4) Updated PRC Directory
- 5) PRC New Members Package

### **Consent Items:**

(10) **Motion was made** by Commissioner Smith to approve of the November 14, 2012 PRC Minutes and the January 8, 2013. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Mitchell and approved unanimously – with the following conditions:

- Amend the November 14, 2012 meeting minutes to include Athletic Advisory Council appointments

(11) **Motion was made** by Commissioner Barnhart to accept/acknowledge the Correspondence for the Park and Recreation Commission for January 8, 2013. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Pata and approved unanimously.

### **Staff Reports and Requests**

None

### **PRC Reports and Requests**

Commissioner Braynt **provided** an update on joint meeting with the Northern Towns, which is scheduled for February 7, 2013 and provided her regards to Director Jim Garges and Deputy Director Michael Kirschman for their support.

Commissioner Pata **noted** he spent some time on the greenway surveying patrons. Spent time with CABA (Charlotte Area Bicycling Alliance and will report back on feedback and suggestions from that group.

Director Garges **noted** that the **McAlpine Greenway Community Workshop** went well and provided kudos to Chris Matthews and Greg Clemmer of Park and Recreation.

Commissioner Powell **requests** that Park and Recreation be more aggressive in what the Department asks for (“as much as we need”) this budget cycle, especially with statistics indicating population growth.

Commissioner Pata **requested** the packet to advocate to the County Commissioners and indicated it should include a copy of the Masterplan.

Commissioner Pata **inquired** regarding the **Masterplan revisions** and to best participate as well as the expectations.

Per Director Garges, the process will be similar to last time. Michael Kirschman will send the schedule and coordinate time and involvement with the PRC members.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.