



The Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met at the Park and Recreation Administrative Offices Building at 5841 Brookshire Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28216 at 6 p.m. on April 8, 2014.

PRC MINUTES
April 8, 2014

ATTENDANCE

PRC Present:

Rob Brisley, Chair
Kendel Bryant, Vice-Chair
Elaine Powell, Executive Secretary
Ed Barnhart
Doug Burnett
Tristan McMannis
Joe Pata
Travis Dancy
Charlie McRee
Jim Garges, Park and Recreation Director

PRC Absent:

Jude Harding
Brenda McMoore
Norman Mitchell
Vacant – Central Region C1

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:

a. Athletic Advisory Council – James Alsop, Division Director

James Alsop, Division Director of Enterprise Services recognized the Athletics Advisory Council which includes representation from all areas of sports, including; lacrosse, rugby, cross country, baseball, soccer and cricket. This council evolved out of the Soccer Advisory Council in order to include and represent a wide variety of sports arenas. The Athletic Advisory Council will be assisting the Department with multi-purpose field challenges in the near future.

Commissioner Pata reminded everyone of the upcoming NC State games. Opening Ceremonies will be at Charlotte Motor Speedway on June 20 and is free and open to the public.

Commissioner Pata said the Athletic Advisory Council had met with Greg Clemmer, Park Superintendent to discuss field maintenance and a decision was made to rotate through the fields, closing them down for maintenance. All were in agreement.

Proclamations, Awards and Recognition:

None

Public Appearance

None

Program Presentations

a. Capital Project Update – Lee Jones, Division Director of Capital Planning Services

Lee Jones, Division Director of Capital Planning, began his Capital Project update by asking the board members if they had any question regarding FY14 projects before discussing upcoming projects.

Commissioner McRee inquired about the Little Sugar Creek Greenway section, Tyvola Road to Huntingtown Farms. Lee Jones responded that the Department has an NCDOT Grant and are waiting to work out the conditions of the grant. Commissioner McRee inquired about the greenway section, Brandywine to Tyvola. Lee Jones responded the City of Charlotte will be completing this section as part of the Cross Charlotte Trail.

Commissioner Powell asked for an update on the Ramsey Creek Swim Beach. Lee Jones responded that the Department is in continuous coordination with Duke Energy regarding the FERC permit, which should be complete in about a year. With regard to the facility currently located at Ramsey Creek, the Department is looking upgrades, being careful not to change the occupancy level. Commissioner Powell asked if there was a projected date for completion. Lee Jones responded, summer of 2016, adding that the Department is also coordinating with the Town of Cornelius and the Mayor with regard to traffic issues.

Commissioner Powell asked if there were plans for citizen input. Lee Jones responded that in addition to the recent meeting with the Cornelius Town Board, more public meetings will be scheduled as we move forward after receiving the FERC guidelines.

Commissioner Powell asked for projects by BOCC district. Lee Jones responded that is available and list the projects by BOCC district for 2014-2018 with the associated Park and Recreation Commissioner.

Director Garges noted that the Department has 30 projects which are going on now, another 7 in July and another 11 the following July. Over the next 4 years we will be working down through the 08 bond projects.

Lee Jones shared the FY15 projects:

- **First Ward Park** – Partnership with Daniel Levine. Meetings continue and Levine has hired a contractor who will be tasked with a lot of the work between 7th and 10th Streets. When cost first came in, they were 1.8 million over budget. This has been brought down to within \$40,000 to \$60,000. A contract should be in place by the end of the month.
- **Latta Nature Center and Preserve** – Working closely with Chris Matthews, Division Director of Nature Preserves and Natural Resources for upgrades to that facility.
- **Alexander Street Park Improvements** – Minor improvements; grading work and some parking lot improvements.
- **Cross Ridge Neighborhood Park** – \$600,000 set aside for this new neighborhood park
- **West Branch Rocky River Greenway** – Working closely with the Town of Davidson for mostly passive recreation amenities as outlined in the agreement to get Abersham, which is continuous to Fisher Farm and Allison Farm Regional Park.
- **Gateway Nature Preserve** – RFQ's have been narrowed down to 14 service providers, being careful to select organizations that meet qualifications with regard to natural areas, wetlands, NC Department of Environment, constructions controls, storm water management, etc.

Commissioner Barnhart asked if the projects were construction projects or design. Lee Jones responded that most were construction.

Commissioner Dancy asked if Abersham Fisher Farm was in the Master Plan. Lee Jones responded that we have the land and the Department is looking at the existing infrastructure to determine how we can utilize those areas to achieve the recreational requirements.

Commissioner Barnhart asked if that property was open for accessibility by trails. Lee Jones responded that it will be and some are availability now.

Commissioner Pata inquired about money for land acquisition. Lee Jones responded that the Department is allotted approximately 6 ½ million dollars annual for land acquisition. As an on-going process a team in conjunction with Real Estate Services meet monthly to discuss land acquisition possibilities that meet our needs and priorities. Director Garges added that there are more opportunities in the hopper than money. 4000 acres have been identified; some for regional parks, nature preserves, neighborhood parks and greenways. The Trust for Public Land takes care of acquiring land for regional parks, the internal team handles neighborhood park land acquisition and a broker for greenways. The Department has not spent last year's land acquisition allotment, so if the projects in the hopper come through, the Department will have a fairly large list of land acquisitions coming up in the next six months. Commissioner Pata asked if there was a short list. Deputy Directory, Michael Kirschman, advised that land purchases are not discussed at public meetings before they go to BOCC closed session and approved in public session. Public knowledge could change an opportunity. Commissioner Pata asked if a future bond package was in consideration. Director Garges responded that the County Manger's approach to funding park projects will be through pay as you go or cash. Bonds will be used for schools and possibly other large County projects. Current park bonds will be used through 2017. Most importantly the Department must keep an active project list ready to go. Lee Jones said there was 29 projects on

the FY15 – 18 list and an additional 19 projects that are currently unfunded and will seek funding in FY19.

Commissioner Barnhart asked for explanation on the FY16 Pineville Community Park. Director Garges responded that we put 6.3 million dollars in the budget for Pineville an unidentified park project. The Department has approached them to transfer that money to the last 5 miles of Little Sugar Creek Greenway that goes through and boarder Pineville, which will be a great project for them and help to close the construction gap. Commissioner Barnhart asked if it would look like a park or a greenway. Director Garges responded that he did not know for sure, but would know more when the design process begins. Commissioner McMannis asked if it would run on the east side of Polk Street. Lee Jones responded it has not been determined yet, but the Department will work closely with the Town of Pineville.

Commissioner Dancy inquired about the Huntersville Recreation Center. Director Garges responded that like Pineville, money was put in to do a project and the Department works with the Towns to determine how they want to use the money, we do the construction and then the Department turns the facility over to them, or we will run if that is what they want. Currently each town has been asked to provide us with a short list of projects to include in the updated Master Plan.

(NOTE: A list of all Capital Projects is included in the April PRC Minute's Binder, **Section 4a**, housed in the Director's office.)

b. Budget Update – Director Jim Garges

Director Garges gave an update on the proposed FY15 budget, which covered one-time appropriations, must fund requests, and enhancement-service expansion requests:

One-Time Appropriations

- Mecklenburg County Aquatic Center – Increased funding for major renovations. While the pool is closed for renovations, there will be no revenue but expenses will continue, resulting in a net increase of \$295,000.
- Deferred Repair and Replacement Plan – First Year - \$1,000,000 to begin catch up on deferred maintenance as a result of the reduction in force.
- Pineville Elementary School Fields - \$100,000 to combine with their \$300,000 to assist Pineville with rebuilding ball fields. The new school cost more than expected and did not have enough funds to build the balls fields. Jeff Robinson, Division Director of Park Operations, and his team are going to be the construction managers for the project.
- NRPA Conference and Exposition – Cost of \$24,000 associated with host agency functions.

Must Fund Requests

- ONA – New Facilities/Annual Costs – Cost associated with running a new facility
- Lifeguard Training and Certification – Cost of \$51,540 associated with training staff on the Star Guard Certification. This program includes teaching children to swim, audits, and 2 hours of annual training each year for all certified staff. As a result of the audits by Star

Guard, a blind spot at Ray's Splash Planet was found, which resulted in the need for an additional part-time employee.

- Cell Phone Services – Money to cover cell phone charges and equipment for employees that have been recovered since the reduction in force.
- Internal Control and Revenue Collection – Two positions for contract monitoring and the increased need due to ActiveNet for more accounting staff.
- NC Forest Service Increase – The NC Forest Service program is moving over from LUESA into Park and Recreation. The additional 36,000 is to properly fund the program.

Enhancement – Service Expansion Requests

- Senior Citizens Services Merger - \$165,000 is to cover the net difference in revenue and expenses as a result of merging the Charlotte Mecklenburg Senior Centers into Park and Recreation.
- Park Maintenance Strategic Plan – First Year – Funds of 1.4 million are to improve day to day maintenance in the parks which includes 24 park operations positions and equipment. This will make it possible to get the parks to the level that they need to be.
- Marketing and Promotions – Programs and Events – Cost for a marketing and promotion position specifically for Park and Recreation. Hopefully the first of three over the next three years.
- Recreation Center Operations – Temp to Regular Part-time – Cost to re-class 18 temporary positions in our recreation centers to regular part-time position. This is a new classification and allows for up to 30 hours per week. The purpose is to help with coverage at our recreation centers based on the policy of having 1 full-time position in the building at all times.
- Park Planner/Consulting Fees – 35 Projects – Cost to hire an additional registered landscape architect for Capital Planning. This position will alleviate excess work load associated with the large number of upcoming park projects.
- Free Swim Lessons – Year Round – Ages 5-12 – Cost associated with implementing and running a year-round free swim lesson program. The goal is for all children to be a swimmer by 5th grade. **Commissioner Barnhart** added that in addition to swim lessons it would be good to also teach drown proofing. **Director Garges** responded that aspect is part of the lessons. Director Garges also noted that this program is something that will be done regardless of whether or not we are given the funds in the budget. The Department is committed to this program.
- Therapeutic Programming – Northern Towns – The Northern Towns have asked the Department to fund half the cost of a full time position to increase the availability of staff to handle therapeutic programs in Karla Gray's area.
- Youth Sports Programs – Officiating Fees – Funds to recover part-time sports officials.
- Special Events and Programs – Romare and Little Sugar Creek – Additional funding for programming of Romare Bearden Park and Little Sugar Creek Greenway.
- County Regional Sportsplex – Rec Specialist – Funding for a recreation specialist to assist with programming and activities at the Regional Sportsplex.

Grand Total All Requests

The grand total rolls up to about 5 million. Director Garges shared that one good thing about this year's budget process was that the County Manager had all the proposed Department budgets presented at one meeting. This process made it possible to ask and answer questions and to see what budget requests were being made by other Departments. The County Manager will present her recommended budget to the BOCC on May 29, 2014. On June 11, 2014 there will be a public hearing on the Managers Recommended Budget for citizen input. Director Garges encourage the PRC Board to plan on attending the Public Hearing and to speak as advocates for the Park and Recreation budget. The PRC will be notified when and how they will be able to sign up to speak at this meeting.

Commissioner Powell inquired with regard to the NC Forest Service if Eddie Reece had gotten the fire truck he needed. Chris Matthews responded that he had. The additional funding requested in the budget will help with future equipment needs, tools, resources and supplies. Director Garges added that the Foresters presented at a recent BOCC meeting; a great opportunity for the BOCC to get to understand who they are and what they do.

Commissioner Bryant inquired about ActiveNet. Director Garges also responded that ActiveNet is a computer program for reservations and program registration. This program will replace Class, the program currently used by the Department, and will go live on July 1.

Commissioner McMannis asked if Pineville will be able to get all their ball fields back with the additional funding from Park and Recreation. Jeff Robinson responded they would have one regulation ball field and two 5-ball fields, Phase I will also blend the infrastructure for lights, water and sewer and Phase II or III will light the fields. Commissioner Brisley asked who would be responsible for the upkeep. Jeff Robinson responded that the Town of Pineville would be responsible for the upkeep.

Commissioner Brisley inquired about how we compared to other Departments for new position request. Director Garges responded that we requested around 30 full-time positions as compared to equal or greater request by other Departments. Commissioner Brisley also inquired about the temp to regular part-time. Director Garges responded that it was part of a philosophy change to work with a combination of full-time and regular part-time staff. Commissioner Brisley expressed his agreement on the request for a marketing position and asked if other Departments were seeking similar positions. Director Garges explained that Park and Recreation marketing needs are unique and unlike any other Department. The current Marketing works well for most other Departments. No other request similar to ours were made.

Commissioner Dancy asked if there were any significant or big ticket items in the maintenance and repair budget. Jeff Robinson responded there were really no big items; a couple in the \$40,000 range for tennis court repair and renovation, \$100,000 in paving (which covers multiple paving projects) and \$40 – 50,000 for the Rozzelle Ferry Family demolition were some of the bigger projects.

Appointments – Advisory Councils – Applicants

Motion was made by Commissioner Pata to appoint **Jeff King** to an unexpired vacancy on the Aquatics Advisory Council expiring 6/2016 which was seconded and approved unanimously.

Director Garges shared that the Charlotte Mecklenburg Senior Center Board has been invited to move over to the Senior Citizen Advisory Council after the merger. Jeff Robinson will work with the other park districts to find applicants to fill other vacancies.

Public Hearings

None

Advisory Council – Committee Reports

None

Director's Report

Director Garges reported on the following:

Accreditation – The accreditation team was in the Department 2 weeks ago and everything went well. Two standards were not met, but additional information was put together and it may still be met. Re-accreditation will occur as part of the NRPA Conference in October. Commissioner Brisley asked how often accreditation came up. Director Garges responded that reaccreditation comes up every five years. 120 organizations are accredited across the country; 65 are in the pipeline to be accredited for the first time and 35 agencies are up for reaccreditation.

NRPA Conference – Encouraged PRC to plan and participate in a much of the conference as possible. The conference will draw 7 – 8 thousand delegates, exhibitors and speakers. BOCC will also be encouraged to attend and will be a great opportunity to share the value of Park and Recreation. Commissioner Brisley suggested reaching out to past PRC about the conference. Director Garges agreed and suggested having a reunion at the conference Best of the Best awards ceremony on Tuesday evening.

PRC Attendance – Reminded the board that BOCC policy requires attendance at 75% of all meetings. The PRC typically has 10 board meetings a year. A report of attendance is required by the Clerk to the Board each year. The 2013 report went in to the Clerk without prior review. As a result, Jim was informed by the Clerk that Sheryl Smith had been removed due to attendance. Jim urged the PRC to make every effort to attend the PRC meetings.

Center City Vision Awards – Jim shared that the Department will receive a special achievement award for Romare Bearden Park at the Charlotte Center City Vision Awards Dinner.

PRC Chair Report/Commissioner Updates

None

Consent Items:

Motion was made by Commissioner Barnhart to approve all consent correspondence, which was seconded by *Commissioner Dancy* and approved unanimously.

Staff Reports and Requests

PRC Reports and Requests

Park and Recreation Commissioners shared the following information:

Commissioner Barnhart – Invited everyone to attend the Little Sugar Creek Greenway public workshop on April 21, 2014 at 6 p.m. at Queens College regarding the design phase of LSC GW between Tyvola Road and Huntingtowne Farms Park.

Commissioner Bryant – Reminded everyone of the Northern Towns Joint Meeting on April 9 at 6:30 p.m. at Cornelius Town Hall. Reminded PRC of the May PRC Meeting which will be a picnic with team building activities and Segway tours at Latta Plantation Park. Suggested a start time of 5:30. Reminded of the Hats off to Parks event at Romare Bearden Park on May 2nd at 5 p.m.

Commissioner Powell – Reported feedback from the Healthy Living Community Plan of a demand for more pools and swim lessons for all ages and various class times to accommodate a wider range of the community and making paper programs available for those in the community not connected to the internet. Reminded of the Scottish Highland Festival at Rural Hill on April 11 – 13.

Commissioner Brisley – Expressed the importance of reaching out to the BOCC with regard to the budget. Expressed appreciation for the NC Forest Service for assistance with two successful prescribed burns and applauded the use of the Charlotte Alert System to notify citizens. Expressed support of the free swim lessons as something to build on.

Adjournment

Motion was made by to adjourn at 7:40 p.m. which was seconded and approved unanimously.