

APRIL 22, 2008

MINUTES OF MECKLENBURG COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

NORTH CAROLINA
MECKLENBURG COUNTY

The Board of Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met in Special Budget/Public Policy Session in Conference Center Room 267 of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 22, 2008.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Chairman Jennifer Roberts and Commissioners
Karen Bentley, J. Daniel Bishop, Dumont Clarke
H. Parks Helms, Bill James, Norman A. Mitchell, Sr.
Dan Ramirez, and Valerie C. Woodard
General Manager Bobbie Shields
County Attorney Marvin A. Bethune
Clerk to the Board Janice S. Paige

Absent: None

Commissioners Bishop, Bentley, Clarke, Mitchell, and Woodard were absent when the meeting was called to order and until noted in the minutes.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Roberts.

Budget/Management Director Hyong Yi noted the agenda items scheduled for discussion, which were: Fee Adjustments, Park and Recreation Ten Year Master Plan, and Volunteer Fire Departments.

Commissioners Bentley, Clarke, and Mitchell entered the meeting, prior to the start of the presentations.

(1) FEE ADJUSTMENTS

Director Yi addressed proposed FY09 fee changes for LUESA-Solid Waste in the following areas:

- Municipal Tipping Fees
- Residential Solid Waste Fees
- Foxhole Tipping Fees
- Groundwater Services (Septic Tank Permit Application)
- Groundwater Services a new fee for Additional Site Visit Fee-Well Sampling
- A new fee Traffic Impact Study
- Code Enforcement (Revise Plan Review Fee Structure for Large or “Mega” Projects, and for 3rd or later plan reviews)

It was noted that these proposed fee changes would be incorporated in the County Manager’s recommended budget.

Noted also, was that staff is working on proposed fee increases in the Storm Water Services Division to be proposed in FY10 – Additional Residential Storm Water Billing Tiers.

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A copy of the proposed fee changes is on file with the Clerk to the Board.

Director Yi addressed proposed FY09 fee changes for Park and Recreation in the following areas:

- Clanton Park Shelter
- Recreation Center Rentals
- Skate Park
- Ramblewood Soccer Complex
- Credit Card transaction fees
- Nature Preserves
- Golf Course Rates

A copy of the proposed fee changes is on file with the Clerk to the Board.

Comments

LUESA FEES

Commissioner Clarke commented on the fact that the Residential Solid Waste Fee has not been increased since 2002, which results in a 25% increase for FY09. Commissioner Clarke said he would recommend fee increases be considered annually or every two years to avoid a large increase at one time.

Bruce Gledhill with LUESA addressed the proposed increases for Solid Waste.

Commissioner Clarke asked who receives the new \$2 per ton State disposal tax that was imposed by the General Assembly. *The response was that it goes to the State Department of Environment and Natural Resources for a variety of uses.*

Commissioner James asked for clarification regarding who pays the speedway tipping fee. *The response was the municipalities or the private collectors that collect on behalf of the municipality; the municipality then pays the collector.*

Commissioner Bishop entered the meeting.

Chairman Roberts asked when would the \$5 million single stream modification be put out for bid. *The response was that it will probably take about a year to construct it once staff has the final approvals and the funds to do it. The plan is to have single stream recycling available on July 1, 2010, beginning with FY 2011.*

There were no other questions regarding LUESA Fees.

PARK AND RECREATION

Comments

Commissioner James asked about golf course fees. *The response was that staff will e-mail that information to the Board.*

Commissioner Mitchell expressed concern for the affordability of the proposed rental fees for the new Clanton Park Shelter. Commissioner Mitchell said he could not support this request. *The response by James Alsop with Park and Recreation was that Park and Recreation is trying to have price consistency when it comes to facility rental fees; based on size and amenities. It was noted also that a portion of the fee would go into a capital reserve fund to help maintain that facility.*

There were no other questions regarding Park and Recreation fees.

(2) PARK AND RECREATION TEN YEAR MASTER PLAN

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Director of Park and Recreation James Garges presented the Park and Recreation Ten Year Master Plan. He was assisted by Leon Younger and Ron Vine with Pros Consulting, Brenda Faber with the Trust for Public Land, Michael Kirschman with Park and Recreation, Chuck Flink with Greenway, Inc. and Barbara Heller with Pros Consulting.

Prior to the start of the presentation, Scott McClure, chairman of the Park and Recreation Commission, addressed the Master Plan and the process. Mr. McClure said the Plan was citizen driven. Also, the Park and Recreation voted unanimous in support of the Plan.

Mr. McClure noted also for information purposes that former County Commissioner and Board Chairman, Tom Cox agreed to chair the committee on future park land acquisition.

Commissioner Woodard entered the meeting.

The presentation covered the following and in this order:

- Themes: Conservation and Stewardship, Parks and Greenways, and Recreation Programs and Facilities
- Purpose of the Study: Goals and Objectives
- Methodology in Development of the Master Plan
- Citizen Survey Results
- Summary of Overall Findings
- Park and Facility Standards Matrix
- Park and Facilities Standards
- Greenprinting Process and Maps
- Rate of Development
- Land Banked Properties
- Nature Center Methodology
- Greenway Action Plan
- Primary Greenway Corridors
- Greenway Trail Development Methodology
- 5 Year Results
- 10 Year Results
- Review of Weighted Maps
- Park Facilities Gaps and Needs Analysis
- Park Facilities Methodology
- Neighborhood Parks
- Community Parks
- Regional Parks
- Community and Regional Parks Combined
- Aquatic Facility Methodology
- Aquatic Facilities
- Athletic Field Capacity-Demand Methodology
- Athletic Field Capacity-Demand Findings
- Athletic Field Capacity-Demand Recommendations
- Athletic Fields Coming Online From 2004 Bonds
- Athletic Fields Planned But Not Funded
- Recreation Center Methodology
- Recreation Centers
- Program Plan Methodology
- Program Development Recommendations
- Program Development Strategies

- Capital Improvement Needs and Methodology

- Total Maintenance and Repair Costs

- Total Preliminary Capital Costs

Handouts were also provided on the following topics:

2008 Parks Master Plan Land Acquisition Projections – CIP/CAN
2008-2018 Capital Needs Assessment

A copy of the presentation and handouts is on file with the Clerk to the Board.

Comments

Commissioner Bentley asked were survey participates asked if they use multiple park services. *The response was yes.*

Commissioner Bentley asked were survey participants asked to prioritize, generally, where they would want their tax dollars spent, such as on Park and Recreation services, schools, jails, etc. *The response was no. They were only asked questions about Park and Recreation services.*

Commissioner Ramirez asked were survey participants asked to comment on a specific bond amount. *The response was no.*

Commissioner Woodard asked if any of the survey participants complained about fees. *The response was no.*

Commissioner Bishop asked how do you guard against sampling bias in the results, especially if you assume that if someone returns a survey they're an advocate for parks. *The response was that only 19% of the respondents said they were users of the park system. It was noted that another protection against this was due to the way the sampling was done; the fact that follow-up phone calls were made; and finally looking at it from the standpoint of the results and things of this nature and having a high return rate. It was noted that all of these things indicate the results are very valid.*

Commissioner Ramirez asked would more surveys be conducted. *The response was that Director Garges is working with the Charlotte Chamber on a survey they're conducting with respect to a bond referendum amount.*

Commissioner Helms asked about total acreage needed by 2012, which was addressed.

Commissioner Helms said there should be a goal to acquire a certain amount of land for park purposes annually, in order to meet what's needed by 2012.

Commissioner Bishop asked about Nature Preserves and the availability of national standards. *The response was there are no national standards because basically it's all natural areas and you can't dictate a standard for a natural area.*

Commissioner Mitchell asked about partnering with schools and the criteria to be used to determine which school you'd partner with for a park or recreation facility. *The response was that Park and Recreation would look to see where the gaps are in making that decision.*

Commissioner Bishop asked had any numerical analysis been done on what it would cost to stay at the current level of services in comparison to the cost of moving towards the revised standards. *The response was that staff could and would do that type of analysis for the overall categories.*

Commissioner Bishop asked about recreation facilities and whether the data provided includes all recreation facilities in the County, public and private or does it reflect County owned facilities

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only. *The response was that it includes YMCA's and the towns but not private. It was noted that the private suppliers were not included since most are membership driven. Further, that typically if it's membership driven, 30% of the people drop out of the membership program annually and when they drop out they expect county or city facilities to be available. It was noted, however, they have good recreation value, which is noted in the Plan. YMCA's were included, even though they're considered membership driven, because they have a long history of being a recreation provider.*

Commissioner Bishop asked about the inclusion of churches. *The response was that churches were not included because there are restrictions associated with the use of the facility, which impacts accessibility.*

Director Garges said private facilities, including church facilities, are not discounted and are taken into consideration when determining where the gaps in services are.

Commissioner Bishop said he feels all of non-County facilities should be taken into consideration in the development of the standards, even though it may be difficult to quantify because otherwise for him, it undermines the usefulness of the numbers.

Director Garges noted that what the Plan reflects is what the public has told the department they want.

Commissioner Ramirez asked about the involvement of Carolina Thread Trail. *The response was that they're working very closely with them.*

There were no further questions or comments.

Director Garges invited Board members to contact him if they have any further questions.

It was noted that this matter will be placed on the Board's May 7, 2008 agenda for approval consideration.

This concluded the presentation.

Commissioner James left the meeting during the discussion of Capital Improvement Needs and Methodology and was absent for the remainder of the meeting.

Chairman Roberts thanked the presenters.

No action was taken or required at this time.

The above is not inclusive of every comment but is a summary.

3) VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT UPDATE

The Board received a report on Volunteer Fire Service Districts.

Michael Fox, Fire Marshall gave the report.

Chief Larry Irvin (Huntersville), Chairman of the Fire Commission, spoke in support of the recommendations.

The report addressed the following:

- History of the Mecklenburg County Fire Commission
- Composition of the Fire Commission
- Duties of the Fire Commission

- Research conducted by the Fire Commission

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- Findings
 - The cost of providing fire protection service has increased substantially.
 - Local funding to Volunteer Fire Departments is not equitable.
 - Volunteer Fire Departments cannot raise enough additional operational revenues through traditional fund raising efforts.
 - Increasing volunteer efforts must be supported by paid firefighters.
- County Funding Source By Jurisdiction
- Service Areas and Funding
- Recommendations – Short Term
 - Increase funding by \$50,000 for each of the 8 departments in the unincorporated area of Mecklenburg County which does not receive supplemental funding from a town.
 - Total County fire service contract funding would increase from \$1,400,000 to \$1,800,000.
 - Departments should then be able to meet the minimum State certification requirements for next fiscal year.
 - Proposed FY09 Funding Allocation
- Recommendations – Long Term
 - The Fire Commission recommends that at the beginning of FY09, the Board of County Commissioners engage a qualified consultant to work with the Fire Commission and the Towns to evaluate existing fire service districts and recommend long term solutions.

A copy of the report is on file with the Clerk to the Board.

Comments

Commissioner Mitchell, Board liaison to the Fire Commission, spoke in support of the recommendations. Commissioner Mitchell said volunteer firemen provide a very valuable service. He asked about the liability risk to the County if this service was not provided. *The response by Attorney Bethune was that the County has no statutory requirement to fund volunteer fire departments. Thus, there's no legal obligation, but it's the right thing to do, and it's done to protect citizens.*

Commissioner Helms said he supports the recommendations presented, but ultimately the Board will have to redefine how these services are delivered long term; whether it can continue to be done with volunteers.

Commissioner Helms, with respect to the current funding of Volunteer Fire Departments, questioned the accuracy of the statement that the funding amount has not changed in the past five years. Commissioner Helms said he thought the Board had approved a \$200,000 increase recently, perhaps in the current budget. He said he thought it had to do with increased fuel cost. *The response was that staff would check.*

Commissioner Woodard asked were residents in the unincorporated area assessed for this service and/or could they be. *The response was no, only if there was a fire tax service district, which currently doesn't exist.*

Commissioner Clarke noted that an attempt was made several years ago to establish fire tax service districts but failed.

Commissioner Ramirez asked would all of the unincorporated area eventually be annexed. *The response was yes, but while there's still some unincorporated area remaining, those citizens need protection by some method.*

Commissioner Ramirez asked how many dwellings are served by the Volunteer Fire Departments. *The response was that it was unknown.*

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This concluded the discussion. No action was taken or required with respect to this topic.

The above is not inclusive of every comment but is a summary.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Commissioner Helms, seconded by Commissioner Ramirez, and carried 8-0 with Commissioners Bentley, Bishop, Clarke, Helms, Mitchell, Ramirez, Roberts, and Woodard voting yes, that there being no further business to come before the Board that the meeting be adjourned at 5:34 p.m.

Janice S. Paige, Clerk

Jennifer Roberts, Chairman