



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.

**PRC MINUTES**  
**March 11, 2014**

**ATTENDANCE**

**PRC Present:**

Kendel Bryant, Vice-Chair  
Elaine Powell, Executive Secretary  
Ed Barnhart  
Doug Burnett  
Jude Harding  
Tristan McMannis  
Norman Mitchell  
Joe Pata  
Travis Dancy  
Brenda McMoore  
Charlie McRee  
Jim Garges, Park and Recreation Director

**PRC Absent:**

Rob Brisley – Chair  
Vacant – Central Region C1

**Call to Order:**

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

**Welcome and Introductions:**

None

**Proclamations, Awards and Recognition:**

None

## **Public Appearance**

### **Mr. James Lockhart Re: Cherry Neighborhood Park Ball Field**

Mr. James Lockhart was in attendance to address his concerns regarding lack of maintenance of the ball field at Cherry Park. Mr. Lockhart said he has been organizing Sunday pick-up games with parents and children in the Cherry neighborhood over the past 5 years and currently, as a board member of the Community Charter School, has been asked by the school to integrate what he is currently doing into something that would also work for the school by including information in their newsletter about the opportunity to play ball on Sundays. Greg Clemmer, Park Superintendent and Jim Garges, Director, explained that an organized event would require a reservation of which a fee is associated. In that case the field would be maintained in advance of the event, otherwise, the field would be maintained in accordance with the maintenance schedule for a neighborhood park. Mr. Lockhart was advised that if he planned to use the field on a first come first serve basis, he could call in advance to check availability, but that did not guarantee the field would be available as the field would still be open for a reservation. Director Garges said the department could work with him on the fee if the program was associated with the Charter School and assured him the field would be in good condition. Greg Clemmer will work with Mr. Lockhart.

## **Program Presentations**

### **a. Carol Morris – Charlotte Mecklenburg Senior Center Merger Presentation**

Carol Morris, Vice President Community Programs and Civic Leadership with the Foundation for the Carolinas was in attendance to present an analysis of proposal to merge Charlotte-Mecklenburg Senior Centers (CMSC) into Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation. Director Garges introduced Carol and shared with the PRC that following the original discussion with Trena Palmer, Executive Director of CMSC, regarding a possible merger, the department approached The Foundation for the Carolina's to seek their support of the proposal by conducting a study. They were able to let us have the services of Carol, and the first draft of that study was presented to the PRC. A similar presentation will be made to the CMSC Board, the County Executive Team and to the BOCC at a public policy meeting. Highlights of the presentation included: The foundation for the Carolinas has identified making Charlotte a more age friendly community as one of their emerging issues. This merger proposal/study provides a way to get involved and shine a light on the need in the community.

- National statistics indicated that by 2030 one in five people will be 65 or older.
- The Foundation for the Carolinas supports mergers of nonprofits so that organizations who are doing similar work can combine their efforts and create greater efficiencies and better serve the community.
- The merger of CMSC and Park and Recreation would include 4 current CMSC operations and continue a collaboration that already exists with Park and Recreation.
- The merger would bring CMSC into the Community and Recreation Center Services Division of Park and Recreation and make possible the expansion of services into all recreation centers and future regional centers.
- The merger will provide greater opportunities for intergenerational and multi-cultural programming. It will make collaboration easier with other County Departments such as the Department of Social Services and the County Health Department.
- The merger will make Federal and State grants more accessible.
- Create a greater voice for the older community.

**(Note:** The PowerPoint presentation is included in the March 2014 PRC Minutes Binder, **Agenda Item 4a**, and housed in the Director's office.)

Questions followed from the PRC:

**Commissioner Barnhart** inquired if the current Senior Centers would become recreation centers. (Provide greater opportunity for multi-generational integration). Carol responded they would remain Senior Centers in the beginning but would eventually. Director Garges indicated that overtime, all recreation centers at Park and Recreation would include senior programming.

**Commissioner Mitchell** inquired what role the Foundation would play once the merger took place. Carol responded that they have not identified specifically where they may fit it, but they are keeping an eye on a good place to land.

**Commissioner Mitchell** expressed his support of the proposed merger as a win-win situation for the seniors of Mecklenburg County and asked about a date. Director Garges responded that the presentation would go to the BOCC on March 25, 2014 and it will be put in as part of the FY15 budget proposal. Ultimately it will be up to the County Manager to include this merger in her budget. Should that happen, next steps would be to create a transition plan. Hopefully September 2014.

**Commissioner Bryant** asked how the Senior Center staff felt about the merger since some positions will be eliminated with the merger. Carol responded that only two staff are slated for elimination and they are ok. They will remain through the merger.

**Commissioner Pata** suggested this merger proposal be presented to the towns for possible opportunities to piggy back. Carol responded that the Levine Senior Center has expressed interest.

**Commissioner Dancy** asked if there were any plans to expand existing senior center facilities to accommodate the demand. Director Garges responded no, most of the current CMSC facilities are leased and do not belong to them.

**Commissioner McMoore** inquired about when senior programming may be pushed out to other recreation centers. Director Garges answered that senior programming is going on now at all of the 18 recreation centers but space continues to be a challenge. Some centers are going to be expanded and part of that space needs to be programmed for seniors. The regional centers will be built with dedicated space for senior programming. Lola Massad, Division Director of Community and Recreation Center Services, added that Senior Nutrition is currently available Mallard Creek Recreation Center, Southview Recreation Center and Bette Rae Thomas Recreation Center along with programming. As recreation centers are expanded, so will the senior services.

**Commissioner Barnhart** inquired about the funding. Director Garges responded that there would be a one-time expense of around \$600,000 to upgrade the facility, however, when looking at expenses against revenue (Senior Center resources, current county funding, grant and United Way revenue) it would be about \$165,000 net cost to the County in FY15. In addition, United Way has agreed to transition funding over 3 years after the merger.

**Commissioner Powell** shared input from seniors from a recent meeting at which the seniors expressed their desire to see a more age friendly community, transit oriented affordable housing

near senior centers and intergenerational opportunities (i.e. reading to and helping children who are struggling with reading).

**Motion was made by Commissioner McMoore** for the board to give their official support for the merger of Charlotte Mecklenburg Senior Centers with Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation which was seconded and approved unanimously.

Director Garges expressed his appreciation for the boards support, noting that it would be very helpful when the proposal went to the Senior Center's Board, the County Executive Team and the BOCC.

#### **b. Greg Clemmer – Park Operations Update**

Greg Clemmer, Park Superintendent, gave an update on Park Operations. The presentation covered the following:

Training – 31 Athletic Assistants were trained on field maintenance which was videoed and can be used on MeckEDU to train future staff. This is an online county training program, which makes it possible for staff to individually train at their computers, eliminating the need for large training sessions. Park Rangers have been trained on customer service and self-defense.

Concession Process – Concession has moved into Park Operations and several processes have been put in place to improve and streamline vendor approval including:

- Creation of a vendor packet to include all pertinent permits, licenses, insurance, number of employees and cart/truck picture.
- On-site inspection and approval by the Park Superintendent
- Contracts completed for either special events with a daily fee or multi-contracts with monthly fee
- Create a master list of vendors to include the contract, contact person, phone numbers, concession information, permits, licenses, insurance and contract expiration.

Star Safety Program – In 2008, Park and Recreation was the first in the state of NC to receive the Star Safety certification. In 2011 the regions were added to the certification process and on April 8 the department will be going up for the 5 year certification. The department is also a 2 time Silver Star recipient. This is awarded by having less than 50% of the state average of staff missing work due to work injuries. Park Operations is also preparing for the annual safety program.

New Technology – The North Region is experimenting with using QR codes for surveys. It's working well and will be looking to expand this technology. The department is also implementing online 360 tours of indoor facilities. This will provide customers the opportunity to narrow down their choices and reduce the number of facility tours required by park rangers.

Community Programs – Park Operations works with all communities, but one recent project has been the Hoskins Community where the department is working with neighborhood leaders for a \$25,000 matching grant. Improvements include walking trails, volley ball court and expansion to the community garden. Cordelia Park wanted a community garden. They raised \$17,000 and the department will help them establish that garden.

Project Updates – Greg provided updates on the following projects

- Jetton Park – working on shoreline stabilization and trying to complete before peak season
- Freedom Park - Using capital reserve dollars, all the paths on the inside of the park have been shaved down to eliminate trip hazards.

- Dirtways – Dirtways have been installed at Walkers Branch and McDowell Greenway. Dirtways are trails that have not been developed but provides opportunity to use the greenway until further development.
- Dog Parks – Rehab is taking place at all dog parks. WR Davie is complete. Currently using recycled concrete to correct drainage issues.
- Special Events Operations – The demand on the department to use our venues for special events (over 500 people) has grown to 150 – 170 special events each year. To better serve the community, the department will be hiring a special events coordinator to handle these large events.

**Commissioner Pata** expressed his appreciate to Jeff Robinson and Christa Rogers for their help on dirtway plans in Matthews.

**Director Garges** acknowledged the great job that the regional managers, Greg and staff have done as a team to keep up the parks in the wake of the reduction in force. This was a budget concern that was brought up at the budget retreat to try and get back some of the resources that were lost in the parks in order to get the parks back to the level of maintenance and care that the citizens really need. Jim said if felt that the County Manger and the BOCC are very receptive.

**Commissioner Burnett** shared that the Greenway Advisory Council spoke highly of the Play 60 playground. The only problem, too many children are enjoying it!

**Commissioner Burnett** asked if the money for the Hoskins Neighborhood grant came from Park and Recreation. Greg Clemmer responded that the Neighborhood Matching Grants program is a city program and requires the grant recipients to match the grant funds with money, volunteer labor, or in-kind donations.

**Commissioner McMannis** asked if the QR codes were for the park shelters to identify maintenance issues. Greg Clemmer responded that the QR takes them to the standard survey that is used by all the park regions and covers maintenance, customer service, and security but is not specific to the structure.

### c. **Mario Chang – Fees and Charges**

Mario Chang, Sr. Fiscal Administrator presented the proposed fees and charges for FY15 as submitted by the Division Directors and supported by the Director. These fees and charges were provided to the PRC in advance of the meeting and have also been reviewed and approved by the Fees and Charges Sub-committee made up of **Commissioners Mitchell, McMoore, Bryant and McRee**. Mario covered the fees and charges proposed for the golf courses, Grady Cole and Memorial Stadium, St. Mary’s Chapel and the Sportsplex. (**Note:** The fees and charges are included in the March, 2014 PRC Minute’s Binder, **Agenda Item 10a**, and housed in the Director’s office.) Questions and discussion followed:

**Commissioner Pata** expressed concern over the percentage of increase for golf and the difference between the increases for non-members versus members. Director Garges, James Alsop, and Mario offered in summary the following explanation: Golf prices were lowered at Tradition, under new management, in order to bring back prior customers but even with lower prices are still self-sustaining. Other courses have increased fees in order to remain competitive with other golf courses. It was pointed out that the fees presented are maximum fees and can be adjusted for peak season, competition, weather and economics. In part, the increased fee proposal is affected

by the late request for increases last year which, therefore, could not be approved and resulting in some increase “catch-up” for FY15. Director Garges will get further clarification from Del Ratcliffe on the increase differences between members and non-members. It was noted that 100% of the rent received from the golf courses goes into a Capital Reserve account.

**Commissioner Barnhart** suggested all the golf courses consider a military/veteran discount. James Alsoop added that several of the golf courses do offer early reservation discounts.

**Grady Cole and St. Mary’s Historic Chapel** – The fees and charges have been in existence for a while but failed to make it to the official Board approved fees and charges. This will formalize the current charges.

**Memorial Stadium** – Memorial Stadium currently has a single rental fee. Proposed changes include a scale of fees for various organizations such as non-profits and civic groups.

**Sportsplex** - The proposed fees and charges includes a new combined rate for Phase I of \$2,750.00 for a one day tournament and \$5,500.00 for a two day tournament.

**Commissioner Pata** asked that the number of fields in Phase I of the Sportsplex be identified in the fees and charges.

**Fitness Centers** – Propose to drop the rates in half to encourage citizens to use the fitness facilities.

***Motion was made by Commissioner Pata to support the fees and charges as presented which was seconded by Commissioner Barnhart and approved unanimously.***

**Commissioner Pata** asked that the Board be provided with how Capital Reserve funds are used. Director Garges said a Capital Reserve Report would be provided at the next PRC meeting.

Mario Chang advised that the fees and charges would be discussed at the BOCC public meeting. In addition, the Department will be asking the County Manager to approve placing the revenue from Romare Bearden, Little Sugar Creek Greenway-Midtown and 17 of our athletic fields into a Capital Reserve account for maintenance, repairs and capital improvements of those facilities.

**Commissioner Pata** asked if the Department was suggesting one Capital Reserve account. Mario responded that the Department would still have other Capital Reserve accounts such as for golf and synthetic turf.

**Commissioner Barnhart** asked for further clarification regarding the ability to determine exactly where the funds were coming from within the proposed new Capital Reserve account. Mario responded that the revenue system in Class and in the future ActiveNet is set up to know the actual source of revenue.

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

***Motion was made by Commissioner Barnhart to appoint Neal Burke to an unexpired term expiring 6/2016 on the Greenway Advisory Council, which was seconded and approved unanimously.***

***Motion was made by Commissioner Pata to appoint Kevin Sephton to a 1st full term expiring 6/2017 on the Athletic Advisory Council, which was seconded and approved unanimously.***

**Note:** Luis Hernandez withdrew his application to the Athletic Advisory Council prior to the PRC meeting.

### **Public Hearings**

None

### **Advisory Council – Committee Reports**

#### **Director’s Report**

**Master Plan Presentation:** The draft Master Plan will be presented on March 20<sup>th</sup> at the Bette Rae Thomas Recreation Center with Leon Younger, lead consultant, in attendance. Everyone was encouraged to attend. The plan will also be presented to the Northern Towns and eventually to all of the Town Boards, the City of Charlotte and to the BOCC.

**Accreditation:** The accreditation visit will be March 24 through March 27. There will be a meet/greet on Sunday evening at the Mahlon Adams Pavilion.

**ActiveNet:** The Department will be switching to ActiveNet, a software program for registration, on July 1, 2014. This program is used by many sports organizations.

**NRPA Conference:** In conjunction with the conference in October, we will be doing a community build of the second phase of Lincoln Heights Park.

**Kier Harrison:** Director Garges express is appreciation to Kier Harrison for the help she has given him in the absence of an Administrative Assistant.

**Brooklyn Village/2<sup>nd</sup> Ward Gym:** With the assistance of **Commissioner Mitchell**, a meeting was held to discuss a proposal to CMS to tie in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward Gym to the Aquatic Center, making it an active space for the Aquatic Center and community gatherings. In addition, we would be able to provide the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward Alumni Association a place to meet and with space to store and display their historic memorabilia. A meeting is planned with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward Alumni Association to tour the gym and talk with them in more detail about displaying their memorabilia.

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

#### **Consent Items:**

***Motion was made by Commissioner Pata to approve all correspondence consent items as provided, which was seconded and approved unanimously.***

#### **Staff Reports and Requests**

None

## **PRC Reports and Requests**

**Commissioner Bryant** recommended that the April or May PRC meeting be a team building event at Latta Plantation Park including Segway Tours and Team Challenges. Chris Matthews, Division Director of Nature Preserves and Natural Resources will check to determine when staff will be best available.

**Commissioner Pata** asked for a McAlpine Park update at the next PRC meeting. He also gave a shout-out to Preston Buckman for the excellent job of shuttling folks at the Sportsplex

**Commissioner Dancy** expressed appreciation to Christy for putting together the town's first inaugural health and wellness fair coming up March 29.

**Commissioner Powell** thanked Natural Resources for alerting the Fire Departments in advance of the prescribed burns. Commissioner Powell also inquired about the Stadium lights burning with no event. Greg Clemmer responded that sometimes happens with cancellations and no shows, but he is able to turn the lights on and off anywhere in the County with his phone, so just let him know and he'll take care of it.

## **Adjournment**

***Motion was made*** to adjourn at 8:15 p.m. which was seconded and approved unanimously.