



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 June 10, 2014.

**PRC MINUTES
June 10, 2014**

ATTENDANCE

PRC Present:

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

PRC Absent:

- Vacant – Central Region C1
- Vacant – Northern Towns

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.

(1) Welcome and Introductions:

None

Proclamations, Awards and Recognition:

a. Arts and Science Council Grant – Teen Videos

Joey Grahl, Recreation Manager, introduced staff from Naomi Drenan, West Charlotte and Tuckaseegee Recreation Centers to present the videos produced through a \$5,000 Arts and Science Council Grant. This program ran during spring break camps and introduced participants to storyboarding and scripting, filming and camera equipment and video editing. The program

was in partnership with the Cooperative Extension Department – 4H, who provided the curriculum for the program. The Park and Recreation Commissioners congratulated and recognized the youth for their efforts and accomplishments.

Public Appearance

a. Tobacco Free Parks – Dr. Marcus Plescia, Mecklenburg County Health Director

Dr. Marcus Plescia, Mecklenburg County Health Director, made a presentation in support of banning tobacco use in Mecklenburg County Parks, Greenways and Parklands. His presentation covered the health risk of tobacco use and proven strategies for reducing tobacco use rate. (NOTE: This PowerPoint presentation is included in the June 10, 2014 PRC Minutes Binder housed in the Director’s office.)

Dr. Derek Raghavan, President of the Levine Cancer Institute at Carolina’s Healthcare also made a presentation on why smoking is bad for you. (NOTE: This PowerPoint presentation is included in the June 10, 2014 PRC Minutes Binder housed in the Director’s office.)

Others in attendance for support of the smoking ban included: Ann Staples and Pam Diggs from the State Public Health Department in Raleigh, Kim Bayha, the tobacco expert for the County Health Department, Stephen Keener, Medical Director and Troy Fitzsimmons, Cornelius Park and Recreation Director.

The following is a **summarization** of concerns and opinions expressed by members of the Commission and responses and is not inclusive of all comments.

Commissioner McRee: Commissioner McRee expressed support of the tobacco ban but had the following concerns:

- Based on his personal park visits, he did not see a lot of smoking, but pointed out that most of the smoking he did see was from family members of patients at Carolinas Medical Center (CMC) and staff coming to the Greenways to smoke since the CMC campus is smoke free.
- Concern for the cost and manpower to implement the ban.
- Concern for the additional burden on police for enforcement.
- In support of healthy lifestyles would suggest also banning alcohol use.
- Concern that an “ordinance” is too strong of a policy with regard to personal freedoms.

Responses:

- Dr. Plescia: There is evidence to support smoking bans will reduce the tobacco use rate. There is no evidence to support that alcohol bans will reduce the alcohol use rate.
- Dr. Plescia, Jim Garges and Troy Fitzsimmons all indicated that signage was the main cost. In addition to signage, a one on one reminder to park patrons has been effective to enforce the ban on tobacco at Romare Bearden Park.
- Police are used for enforcement of all county ordinances if necessary. This should not be an increased burden should their assistance be needed.
- Staff training and public education will also be used to aid in the enforcement and compliance.
- The BOCC sets policy regarding regulations. Tonight we are asking that the PRC recommend that the BOCC approve a regulation that bans tobacco use. How they will approach that, we don’t know, but the department is in support of an ordinance.

Commissioner Pata:

- Expressed concern that a year ago when the tobacco ban was first addressed at his Advisory Council meetings, the vote was no. This creates a conflict for support of the smoking ban.
- Asked how many were surveyed.

Responses:

- Jim Garges noted that the original smoking ban proposal was ahead of the process, but since that time we have taken a much more purposeful approach including adding the smoking ban question in the Master Plan survey of 400 – 500 citizens of which 72% were in support.
- Dr. Plescia added that the Mecklenburg County Survey parallels the State survey.

Commissioner Harding:

- Asked if the proposed ban would be smoke free or tobacco free?
- Noted that the information presented indicated that tobacco use was trending downward. Could it be that it would be a non-issue over time?
- Would be in support of including alcohol ban in the motion as well.

Responses:

- Jim Garges said they would be asking for tobacco free, including e-cigarettes
- Dr. Plescia said that the smoking rate had been trending downward but has plateaued.

Commissioner McMannis

- Asked about Helena, Montana
- Noted that surveys clearly show that 81.2% of people supported banning smoking indoors, 76.6% in and around playground and 46.1% outdoors. Expressed that the Commission consider putting more emphasis on children not learning a behavior that will put them at risk later.
- Suggested another survey with more questions to help confirm the data.

Responses:

- Dr. Plescia said Helena Montana was a natural experiment. When a law was passed that all work sites were to be smoke free, they immediately saw a decrease in emergency room visits for heart attacks and flare ups of cardio vascular disease. When the law was reversed, this downward trend went back up.

Commissioner Mitchell

- Noted that no Advisory Councils were in support of a tobacco ban when it was originally presented approximately one year ago.
- Asked where the family members of CMC patients and CMC staff go to smoke when/if they can no longer smoke on our Greenways?
- Asked what we are doing with regard to education in our elementary schools.
- Supported adding alcohol to the motion since it is the #3 cause of death.

Responses:

- Dr. Raghavan said that tonight was not to figure out where people would smoke, but ways to discourage smoking and mechanisms to help people stop smoking. The first step is to make it even more unacceptable in public places and create healthy patterning for children.

- Dr. Plescia reminded that there is nicotine replacement therapy that would help patient family members and staff with their addiction while at the hospital.
- Dr. Plescia responded that education campaigns have not been as effective as making smoking “not normal” so that kids will not think smoking is cool.
- Dr. Raghavan shared that they are working on an initiative with Union and Mecklenburg Counties to put a school nurse in every school. Part of their time will be spend educating about bad risk behaviors. Curriculum is also being developed to include in the science curriculum to educate.

Commissioner McMoore

- Has not seen smoking as a problem in the parks she has visited.
- Does have a problem with regulating smoking outside. Would prefer a policy rather than an ordinance that carries a fine.
- Would not include alcohol in the motion until more information is provided regarding the revenue from alcohol permits.

Responses:

- Dr. Plescia said that in order for the ban to have “teeth”, it would need to be an ordinance.
- Jim Garges shared that other cities are enacting smoking bans. It is important that the Park and Recreation Commission make a statement on this chronic issue. While the PRC is not able to set policy, as an advisory group, they can represent and support Park and Recreation issues.
- It was noted by staff that Mecklenburg County parks are alcohol free except by special use permit only.

Commissioner Barnhart

- Concern is a philosophical civil liberties issue. His research included an article from Forbes Magazine 2013 which suggested that smoking bans are primarily the result of local environmentalist and anti-smoking activist and is not supported by the American Lung Association, the American Heart Association or the American Cancer Society.
- Felt that the survey needed to be more than one question stated in more than one way such as:
 - Do you believe that Park and Recreation should determine proper conduct in parks even within the scope of existing laws?
 - Do you believe that the government should have the ability to fine tax payers for conduct or actions within parks even if those actions were legal?
 - Do you believe that Park and Recreation has the ability to impose rules, restrictions and fines within parks that are more restrictive than existing laws?
- Not a supporter of smoking, but of civil liberties. Disagrees with the method and suggested that education be the avenue for change rather than an ordinance.

Responses:

- Dr. Plescia said that the purpose is to lower the smoking rates in Mecklenburg County and that smoking bans work. Public education campaigns are not as effective and are more costly.
- Dr. Raghavan said that we cannot afford what is happening in the USA. It is much cheaper to stop cancer than to address it once it is established. Warned not to become misguided by representing the most vocal against the wishes of the majority. Felt it was not about civil rights, but about the rights of people to breathe clean air and about imprinting healthy behavior on children.

Commissioner Burnette

- Concern that there is not enough going on in the schools to address tobacco use. If smoking is the number one cause of death, why is there so much traction and so much of our resources on the obesity side in our school system?

Responses:

- Dr. Plescia: We do educate, but it is not our most potent tool for reducing the tobacco use rate.
- Dr. Raghavan: Education is not as effective with established smokers. Since obesity is the campaign of the President's wife, it gets a lot of coverage and attention.

Commissioner Brisley

- Asked where the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department stands on this initiative.
- Are we asking for an ordinance, policy or regulation?

Responses:

- Dr. Plescia responded that they would be meeting next week with CMPD to talk about enforcement since a companion piece might be to ban smoking on government grounds.
- Jim Garges said that it would be up to the BOCC as to how the smoking ban will be enacted, but the Department would suggest an ordinance. As the language is developed, the PRC will be made aware so they can weigh in on it.

Commissioner Powell

- Stated that she was most concerned about long term health and livability. Having done significant research in preparation for tonight's meeting, she found that 63 to 85 percent of the population across the nation support these types of bans. She also found in her research that it was not about second hand smoke but about the statistics that back up "de-normalizing" smoking in order to discourage smoking in young people, get people to decrease smoking and keep kids from thinking it is cool.

Commissioner Bryant

- Her involvement on the Commission and in the community is for the youth and is on board to do anything that supports healthy living, eating and being active.
- How would including alcohol affect special events?

Responses:

- Jim Garges stated that weddings, receptions and special events would have to be alcohol free. Suggested alcohol not be included in the motion until the PRC was able to have a full discussion regarding the implications.

Motion was made by Commissioner McRee that the Park and Recreation Commission recommends the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners approve a regulation that bans tobacco use in Mecklenburg County parks, greenways and parklands, which was seconded by Commissioner Pata.

Substitute Motion was made by Commissioner Mitchell that the Park and Recreation Commission recommends the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners approve a regulation that bans tobacco and alcohol use in Mecklenburg County parks, greenways and parklands, which was seconded by Commissioner Pata and failed 6-5 with Commissioners McMannis, McMoore,

Bryant, Brisley, Powell and Barnhart voting no and Commissioners Harding, Pata, Mitchell, Burnett and McRee voting yes.

The vote was then taken on the original motion and carried 7-3 with Commissioners McMannis, Pata, McMoore, Bryant, Brisley, Powell and McRee voting yes and Commissioners Barnhart, Mitchell and Burnett voting no. Commissioner Harding abstained from the vote.

Program Presentations

a. FY15 Budget Update

Mario Chang, Sr. Fiscal Administrator, presented and FY15 budget update PowerPoint. The PowerPoint covered:

- New Funding
- Park Operations and Repairs
- Charlotte Mecklenburg Senior Center Merger
- Inter-agency Transfer and Other Funding
- Deferred Maintenance

The following information is in response to questions and concerns:

ActiveNet: 311 will no longer make financial transactions for the Department but will be able to provide information.

Mowing Contracts: The budget line item for mowing contracts will cover mowing for all parks and athletic fields including those fields previously maintained by athletic associations.

Additional Administrative Support Positions: The two administrative positions are to support the South and North Regional managers and to be the point person for reservations in their respective regions. This is the direct result of our current "Class" reservation system being replaced by "ActiveNet" at which time 311 will no longer be making financial transactions for the Department.

Greenway Planner Position: The Greenway Planner Position is a permanent full-time and will be paid from the Capital Budget instead of the Operating Budget. As long as the economy stays good, this will not be an issue.

Marketing Position: This position was not approved, however, the County did move a staff person from Public Service and Information into the Park and Recreation Department as a Resource Development Coordinator. Ultimately the Department would like to have a marketing position, resource development position and a social media position.

BOCC Concerns Regarding the Sr. Center Merger: Commissioner Leake was concerned about how the merger might affect other county services for seniors. Director Garges felt the merger would create more opportunities for collaboration and additional service opportunities. The Foundation for the Carolinas will be conducting a County wide study on senior needs to identify where the gaps are in the private, public and non-profit sector and an action plan will be developed.

Public Hearings

Advisory Councils – Appointments, Reappointments, Vacancies, Applications, and/or Directories

a. Athletics Advisory Council

Motion was made by Commissioner Pata to reappoint the following to a 2nd full term, expiring 6/2017 which was seconded and approved unanimously.

- Jeffrey Hood
- Michael Desmond
- Mike Anderson
- Christian Crute
- Larry McAfee
- Steward Mallard
- Frank Jonas
- Robert Taylor
- Jeff Greene

Motion was made by Commissioner Pata to appoint **Steve Miller** to a 1st full term, expiring 6/2017, which was seconded and approved unanimously.

b. Aquatics

No appointments or reappointments for the Aquatics Advisory Council

c. Central

Motion was made by Commissioner McRae to reappoint **Walter Turnbull** to a 2nd full term expiring 6/2017 which was seconded and approved unanimously.

d. Cooperative Extension

Motion was made by Commissioner McRae to reappoint **Elizabeth Mitchell** to a 2nd full term expiring 6/2017 which was seconded and approved unanimously.

e. Golf

Motion was made by Commissioner Mitchell to reappoint the following to a 2nd full term, expiring 6/2017, which was seconded and approved unanimously.

- Duwanda Dorsey
- Carol Clarke
- Hong Liang
- Samuel Lomas
- Everett Taylor, Jr.
- Robert Mobley

Motion was made by Commissioner Mitchell to make a **special reappoint** for the following to a 3rd full term, expiring 6/2017, which was seconded and approved unanimously.

- Dennis Dixon
- Dennis Shanahan
- Richard Van Dyke
- Raymond Cantey, Jr.
- Marvin Ponds
- John Love, Sr.

f. Greenway

Motion was made by Commissioner Barnhardt to reappoint **Brian Malec** to a 2nd full term expiring 6/2017, which was seconded and approved unanimously.

g. North

Motion was made by Commissioner Bryant to appoint **Shawn Meachem** to a 1st full term, expiring 6/2017, which was seconded and approved unanimously.

Motion was made by Commissioner Bryant to make a **special reappointment** of **Walter Young** to a 3rd full term, expiring 6/2017, which was seconded and approved unanimously.

h. Sr. Citizen

Motion was made by Commissioner Mitchell to defer reappointments pending the Sr. Center and MCPR Merger, which was seconded and approved unanimously.

i. South

Motion was made by Commissioner Burnette to appoint **Gretchen Carson and Paula Fricke** to a 2nd full term expiring 6/2017, which was seconded and approved unanimously.

Motion was made by Commissioner Burnette to make a **special reappointment** of **Henk-Jan Van Etteken and Classie Worthy** to a 3rd full term, expiring 6/2017, which was seconded and approved unanimously.

j. Stewardship

Motion was made by Commissioner Powell to reappoint **Tracy Allen and Diane Willis** to a 2nd full term expiring 6/2017, which was seconded and approved unanimously.

Director's Report

Budget: Director Garges expressed appreciation to the Commission for making arrangements to speak as a group on behalf of the Park and Recreation budget at the budget public hearing scheduled for June 11, 2014.

Sr. Center Merger: The County Manager and BOCC are supportive of the merger. As a County wide initiative, it will show the importance of seniors, our fastest and largest growing population, and bring together the efforts of Park and Recreation, the Health Department, DSS, Mental Health and the private sector to develop a plan and address the needs of our seniors.

Smoking Debate: Jim expressed appreciation for tonight's debate, the opinions and positions each Commissioner expressed and the decision that was made. As the language is developed the Commissioners will be informed so they have the opportunity to review and address as they feel necessary.

PRC Chair Report/Commissioner Updates

Budget Public Hearing: Chair Brisley reminded the Board of tomorrow night's Budget Public Hearing. The Commission is scheduled to speak early and are requested to arrive at 5:30 p.m.

May PRC Team Building Meeting: Chair Brisley applauded the May meeting and encouraged future meetings of this type.

Smoking Ban Presentation: Chair Brisley expressed his wish that CMC had a better plan for where smokers will go to smoke and his concern that the City of Charlotte and the Police Department had not been presented with the potential ban on smoking before it came to the PRC and felt that the PRC should have been the last presentation before making a recommendation.

Education/Smoking Ban Enforcement: Commissioner Powell expressed her concern that the park rangers will really need the support of staff and possibly some training on how to handle enforcing this possible smoking ban. Director Garges responded that this will not only be a training opportunity for the park rangers but for all staff as it is everyone's responsibility to do their part to help with the enforcement.

State Games: Commissioner Powell reminded the Board that the State Games are in town, bringing in 4 – 5 thousand athletes.

Consent Items:

Motion was made by Commissioner Harding to approve all consent items which included the March 11, 2014 PRC Minutes, the April 8, 2014 PRC Minutes, the May 13, 2014 PRC Minutes and all other correspondence as submitted in the agenda packet, which was seconded by Commissioner McMoore and approved unanimously.

Staff Reports and Requests

PRC Reports and Requests

Adjournment

Motion was made to adjourn at 8:45 p.m. which was seconded and approved unanimously.