



The Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met at the Administrative Office Building located at 5841 Brookshire Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28216 on March 10, 2015 at 6 p.m.

**PRC MINUTES**  
**March 10, 2015**

**ATTENDANCE**

**PRC Present:** Elaine Powell, Chair  
 Tristan McMannis, Executive Secretary  
 Sheryl Smith  
 Jude Harding  
 Doug Burnett  
 Brenda McMoore  
 Charlie McRee  
 Ed Barnhart  
 Norman Mitchell  
 Aubin Guinness  
 Vacant – At Large  
 Vacant – South (S3)  
 Jim Garges  
 Michael Kirschman

**PRC Absent:** Kendel Bryant

**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. by Chair Elaine Powell, which was followed by the pledge of allegiance.

**Welcome and Introductions:**

Chair Powell invited each of the Commissioners to introduce themselves and their areas of representation.

**Presentations:**

**Park Operations Program Presentation – Operations Overview – Greg Clemmer**

Greg Clemmer, Park Operations Superintendent, shared a presentation showing how Park Operations connects with the guiding principles of the Mecklenburg Livable Communities Plan of:

- Welcoming
- Innovative

- Connected
- Inclusive
- Prepared
- Healthy
- Resilient

Following the presentation, Peter Cook, Park Superintendent, conducted a fun quiz with the Park and Recreation Commissioners testing their knowledge of how the Department ranked in certain areas from the 2014 Employee Survey and the Community Survey which included:

- Communication with Staff
- Employee Development
- Motivation and Satisfaction of Employees
- Park Conditions
- Overall Park Experience
- Overall Cleanliness of Parks
- Park and Recreation Activities Improve the Quality of Life in Mecklenburg County

Commissioner Smith asked how the Department was doing in terms of safety and accidents in the Park. Peter responded that the Community Survey rated us at 85.2%, however, the Department's liability risk has been trending downward, in large part due to the Department's STAR Certification and the associated training, from a \$200,000 liability risk in 2010 to \$7,000 in the first quarter of the current year.

Commissioner McMoore asked if crimes in the park counted against us even if they were not directly park related. Greg Clemmer responded that they do, however, less are counting against us since we were able to change the crime location from a 1,000 foot radius to the crime having to be directly tied to the actual physical address of the park.

Chair Powell inquired about the inclement weather process with regard to greenways. Chris Hunter said that most greenways are not cleared of snow unless the high priority areas are cleared and the appropriate equipment is available. Greg Clemmer explained that the department meets in advance to prioritize areas that will be cleared, starting with senior nutrition sites, recreation centers and then parks, based on scheduled events. Little Sugar Creek gets a little more attention than other greenways because of its use as an urban thoroughfare and transportation corridor.

(NOTE: A copy of the Park Operations Program Presentation is included in the March, 2015 PRC Minutes Binder, [Section 4a](#), housed in the Director's office.)

### **Fees and Charges Update – Mario Chang**

Mario Chang, Sr. Fiscal Administrator, met with the Park and Recreation Commission Fees and Charges Committee in advance of the evening's meeting regarding current fees and charges and proposed fees and charges that need to go to the BOCC for approval. Mario provided the full board with a copy of the fees and charges and asked for their endorsement to move forward to the BOCC for approval. Discussion and questions followed resulting in the following information being provided:

Golf: The proposed rates for golf are the maximum rates and can be lowered by the golf course operators depending on seasonal or promotional circumstances.

### Non-County Fees:

- **Golf:** There are currently no “non-county rates” for golf, mainly because the golf courses are run by independent operators and no tax payer dollars go into the golf courses.
- **Swim Facilities:** All swim facilities have non-county rates because the County operates those facilities.
- **Indoor and Outdoor Facilities and Shelters:** These have non-county rates and incur the most non-county usage.
- **ActiveNet** can be utilized to run a report to show our non-county memberships and facility usage.

Market Rates: The Department does a good job at researching market rates to make sure we are keeping with comparable charges. We do utilize scholarships, negotiate pricing for tournaments in conjunction with the Regional Visitor’s Authority and adjust or waive fees on rare occasions with the Director’s approval and with proper documentation.

Pools: The proposed Fees and Charges includes a modified Aquatics Pass. Due to the upcoming shutdown of the Mecklenburg County Aquatic Center, a reduced fee option for the Aquatic Passes will be temporarily offered until the Mecklenburg Aquatic Center reopens. It includes use of Ray’s Splash Planet, Marion Diehl Pool and Outdoor Pools.

**Motion was made** by Commissioner McMoore to endorse the Fees and Charges as presented and to move them forward to the BOCC for approval, which was seconded by Commissioner Mitchell and approved unanimously.

### **Advisory Council Appointments:**

**South:** **Motion was made** by Commissioner Barnhart to appoint **Rob Brisley** to an unexpired term on the South Advisory Council, expiring 6/2016, which was seconded by Commissioner Burnett and approved unanimously.

**Golf:** **Motion was made** by Commissioner Mitchell to appoint **Eric Alston** to an unexpired term on the Golf Advisory Council, expiring 6/2017, which was seconded by Commissioner McMoore and approved unanimously.

### **Director’s Report**

Director Garges provided the following information:

### **BUDGET:**

- **Deferred Maintenance:** Jim will be making a presentation to the BOCC at one of the public policy meetings on deferred maintenance for Park and Recreation. The Department has an \$18.5 million deferred maintenance ask in the FY16 budget. How much of that ask will make it onto the County Manger’s proposed budget is yet to be determined. However, quite a few of the deferred maintenance projects are at the same location of approved capital projects scheduled to start during FY16 and it may be that the County Manger will add \$4.3 million to those capital projects in order to address the deferred maintenance while at those project sites.

- Park Budget – 3 Year Plan: Second year ask for \$7 million to go into the operating budget for staff equipment and materials.
- Achieve 225: The Department will be asking for the BOCC to support and fund a \$1.4 million initiative of 225 minutes of exercise per week for every child at every elementary school. Park and Recreation would provide the instructors and CMS would fund a stipend of approximately \$800,000 for a teacher to supervise and promote the program. This initiative would support the already NC mandated exercise requirement and the Health Department’s Chronic Disease Prevention Program to lower the obesity rates among children.
- Land Acquisition: The Department will be asking for an increase in the percentage allotted to Park and Recreation for land acquisition. As land opportunities become more and more scarce and at higher and higher prices, the Department feels it is critical that we move forward on these land purchase opportunities before they are no longer available. The idea would be to get more money for land acquisition over the next several years until we can no longer spend the allocation down. Currently, the Department has \$25 million worth of contract opportunities if the money were available.

Commissioner Burnett: With regard to park acres per thousand, at what point do we begin to fall short on land acquisition as developers build out? Jim responded that this is built into the formula and reminded the board that the prediction is for Mecklenburg County to be totally built out by 2030 making it even more important to purchase land now rather than later. Needs for park land exist all over the county making all land acquisition opportunities, big and small, very important. Any contract for land that we can get will become the priority and go to the BOCC for approval.

Hagler Property: The County just bought the Hagler Property, a 144 acres in Mint Hill, one of the largest tracts left in Mecklenburg County, for a future Regional Park.

Rezoning: Commissioner Barnhart asked if the County would use rezoning for park land acquisition. Jim responded that the County has the ability but it is not something they have used.

Park Land Guarantee: Commissioner McRee asked if once a piece of park property is purchased, such as the Hagler property, were there any guarantees that the land will be used for a park and not another use, such as a school. Jim responded that, yes, the Board could redirect its use if they chose to; up to selling the property. Jim expressed that he had no problem with other public uses on park land, but always works better if this discussion and plans are made up front and included in the Master Plans.

- Greenways: Like land acquisition, the Department is going to ask for an allotment for greenways so that those projects are always moving forward and active, getting more miles on the ground faster to provide the number one park amenity asked for by citizens. Many of the greenways become Dirtways until they can be completed out as planned. The PRC were encouraged to express support of these budget needs to the BOCC.

### **Capital Projects:**

- Between Spring and early 2017, look for a tremendous amount of Park and Recreation projects and activities including: ground breakings, openings, neighborhood parks, regional parks, greenways, pools, new builds, renovations, nature preserves and more.

### **Hiring:**

- The Department has made numerous hires both internal and external, including a new Recreation Superintendent, a new Division Director of Community and Recreation Center Services, a Recreation Manager and a new South Regional Manager, to name a few.
- New positions for the Department are part of the budget process. First approved by the County Manger and put into her proposed budget for BOCC approval.

**Abersham Property:** An internal Department meeting has been set to review planning for the Abersham, Fisher Farm, West Branch, and Rocky River Master Plan. Director Garges along with the stakeholders will review the plans to make sure they reflect the required passive recreation component before taking it back to the public.

### **Tobacco Free Kick-off Event:**

Director Garges brought the PRC's attention to the flyer in their agenda packet regarding the tobacco free kick off event scheduled for Wednesday, March 18 at Marshall Park from 11 am to 1:00 p.m. This is Mecklenburg County's celebration to kick off the smoke-free government grounds and tobacco-free parks wellness initiative. Commissioner McMoore expressed her concern that this event was not scheduled during a time that the general public would be able to participate. Deputy Director Michael Kirschman explained that this function was being hosted by the Health Department and mainly for city/county government employees, elected officials and the media. For the public, banners were hung from the parking garages, a billboard on I77, press releases and several thousand signs are to be placed over the next couple of weeks.

### **PRC Chair Report**

**BOCC Budget Support:** Chair Powell clarified that the main talking points when the PRC meet with their assigned BOCC is: deferred maintenance, land acquisition and a percentage solely for greenways. Director Garges said he would make sure the PRC know what the County Manger has approved in her proposed budget, but that deferred maintenance, land acquisition, money for greenways, funding for the Master Plan and Capital Projects are all areas that already has the support of the County Manger.

**PRC Annual Report to the BOCC:** Chair Powell reminded the board that she would be presenting the PRC Annual Report at the BOCC meeting on May 5, 2015. Vice Chair, Kendel Bryant and Executive Secretary, Tristan McMannis, will be in attendance with her but she would like for all of the PRC to stand with her if available. Deputy Director, Michael Kirschman, will be assisting Chair Powell with the presentation. Each of the PRC were asked to share 3 main points they would like to get across to the BOCC and the public with Michael and Elaine to assist with the presentation.

Commissioner Smith suggested an update on the Lincoln Heights Park in the PRC annual report. Deputy Director Kirschman asked to be directed to a couple of the Lincoln Heights residents for a short video clip regarding the park.

Chair Powell discussed her thoughts on the importance of social equity with regard to parks and the importance of purchasing land for parks in underserved areas. Director Garges shared that as public recreation, the main point to get across is the importance of access to all programs and activities regardless of income because what we do is important to all people.

**Introductions:** Chair Powell asked that all of the Department staff present, introduce themselves and share their areas of responsibility, which included Chris Hunter, Jeff Robinson, James Alsop, Chris Matthews, Lee Jones and Michael Kirschman.

### **Consent Items**

**Motion was made** by Commissioner McRee to approve all consent items, including the February 10, 2015 PRC minutes, which was seconded by Commissioner Smith and approved unanimously.

### **PRC Reports and Requests**

Commissioner Barnhart advised that the Greenway Advisory Council was looking for member to fill a vacancy and would welcome recommendations for applicants.

### **Adjournment**

**Motion was made** by Commissioner Smith to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 p.m., which was seconded by Commissioner Harding and approved unanimously.