

GREENSBORO PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
Wednesday, January 9, 2008 – 6:00pm
Leonard Recreation Center – 6324 Ballinger Road

PRESENT: John Beaman, Jr., Paul Brown, Marc Bush, Ken Free, Lori Galbreath, David Hoggard (excused 6:34), Rose Marie Ponton, Randy Scott (arrived 6:10pm)

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Steve Branson, Candice Bruton, John Hughes, Bonnie Kuester, Kathy Mabe, Dan Maxson, Mike Moye, Lane Newsome, Darius Oliver, Marcie Richardson, Mike Simpson, Tim Thilo, Laurie Thore, Chris Wilson, Jonathan Woodburn

OTHERS: Mary Vigue (Budget and Evaluation), Trudy Wade (City Council)

The regular meeting of the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Commission was held at Leonard Recreation Center. David Hoggard, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the December 12, 2007 Commission Meeting were approved as submitted.

Recognition

This item was postponed and will be presented at the next meeting.

Leonard Recreation Center Presentation

Jonathan Woodburn, Leonard Recreation Center Director, presented the Commission with historical information about Leonard Recreation Center and programs currently held at the center.

OLD BUSINESS

2008 Fee Schedule

Dan Maxson, Administrative Services Manager, stated that last month the Commission was presented with a proposed 2008 fee schedule. The Commission was given the opportunity to review the proposed fees and time was allowed for citizens to review and give comment. The fees were posted on the Parks and Recreation website and throughout Parks and Recreation facilities. The Department has not received any comments.. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommends that there is a cost recovery rate in our fee schedule matching expenses against our revenue of 18%. The budget revenue expenses cost recovery this year is approximately 20-21%. Revenues are growing in the department and expenditures have decreased. A portion of the decrease is due to expenses leaving the department for the Field Operations Department. Fees this current year are coming in at a pace above last year's level. Parks and Recreation staff believes that the proposed fees will not have any significant impact with our citizens. It will maintain the objective to be market driven but balanced with being affordable. Scholarships are available for any participant who does not have funds to pay.

Marc Bush, Commissioner, inquired if there has been feedback from field users and are they aware of the proposed fees. Bush stated that these are competitive rates and he does not hear complaints from users.

John Hughes, Youth and Community Programs Manager, replied stating that there they are aware of the fees and there has been no feedback.

Action Taken

A motion was made by Paul Brown and seconded by Lori Galbreath to approve the proposed Parks and Recreation 2008 fee schedule. A vote in favor was unanimous.

Project Updates

Candice Bruton, Planning and Development Manager, gave updates on the following projects:

Barber Park

Conversations are ongoing relative to the remobilization of the project. A project team meeting was held on January 8, 2008 and construction should resume within the next 30 days.

Keeley Park

Construction drawings are near completion. Bids should go out this spring and should break ground this summer.

Small Neighborhood Project Program (Grant program coordinated through Housing and Community Development)

- Lake Daniel Restroom: bid date is set for February 2008
- Springdale Park: currently in the designing phase; playground equipment will be relocated; will improve landscaping for visibility; was approved by the historic approval process

Southwest Recreation Center

Anticipated construction start date is November 2009 based on bond sales anticipated by the city.

Gateway Garden

Construction drawings are in process. Greensboro Beautiful fundraising efforts are underway. Elements of the Gateway Garden Master Plan include a children's garden, heritage garden, rose garden, white oak garden and more. Bruton asked approval from the Commission to submit a Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) grant application for the amount of \$500,000. PARTF is a state program that allocates money every year to Parks and Recreation agencies across the state. This grant would help fund Phase I of the Gateway Garden Project. The application is due the end of January 2008.

Rose Marie Ponton, Commissioner, inquired if other areas within Parks and Recreation have a need to apply for this grant. Ponton also asked about who is responsible for the maintenance of this garden.

Bruton replied stating that staff looked very closely at other areas and based on scheduled bond sales and where the department is with projects that this is the best time for Greensboro Beautiful to partner in the PARTF grant application. The timing of Keeley Park getting underway this year and Southwest Recreation Center in 2009 this seemed like a good opportunity for the Gateway Garden project.

Chris Wilson, Parks, Gardens, and Program Support Manager, stated that we are aware of the operating costs and are making a request of \$350,000+ through the formal service enhancement process.

Action Taken

A motion was made by Paul Brown and seconded by Marc Bush to approve the submission of the PARTF grant application. A vote in favor was unanimous.

War Memorial Stadium

Bruton asked the Commission to recall the May 2007 Commission meeting when the Commission deliberated on the War Memorial Stadium renovations that had been proposed by Greensboro's Facilities and Engineering Department and Parks and Recreation Department. The presentation ended with perhaps taking another look and speaking with those in the community who may be interested in a private fundraising effort.

Bruton continued stating that at this time we are back to the original proposal. On December 18, 2007 City Council passed a resolution for the sale of forty million dollars in bonds. One and a half million dollars of that forty million was included in their resolution for the funding of this project. This item is brought back for your discussion in terms of the original proposal.

David Hoggard, Chair, stated that part of the demolition proposed was much more than had been discussed in all previous discussions. Hoggard stated that he had the idea of perhaps private fundraising and the idea fell through. Hoggard extended his apology for this. As it stands now a big portion of the stadium will be demolished, however good things are going to happen. It's been demonstrated so far that a third base side is not needed. Hoggard stated that it is his understanding that the City Manager wants this to go before the neighborhood association and City Council will vote on this again. Hoggard stated that his objection to this is that once the stadium is down it will never be rebuilt. The proposal takes down considerably more than was ever proposed in any other discussions and years worth of public input sessions. The reality of the situation is that the voters turned down the bond for the stadium. It would cost less to not take the stadium down. The area right past the press box should be left for future use. What is planned will take the stadium down way below 2,500 seats and once it's gone it's gone. The extra amount taken down on the third base side is unnecessary. Hoggard stated that he will appear before City Council on a personal basis to keep that portion of the stadium.

At this time Hoggard recognized the attendance of Councilperson, Trudy Wade, Parks and Recreation newly appointed liaison.

Action Taken

A motion was made by Marc Bush and seconded by Paul Brown to approve the original War Memorial Stadium renovation proposal. The Commission voted 7-1 in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Beaman, Free, Galbreath, Scott, Brown, Bush, Ponton. Nays: Hoggard.)

At this time Hoggard turned the meeting over to Randy Scott, Vice-Chair.

NEW BUSINESS

Budget Outlook

Maxson stated that as most have heard from the media, the city wants to find \$500,000 to fund needs in the Police Department to address the gang and crime issues in our community. Most funds for the \$500,000 will come from a position freeze. The city is in a situation in which all positions are frozen. Any exceptions to the freeze will be granted by the City Manager and only for service critical positions. We are proceeding with submitting exceptions to the freeze based on the criteria of service critical positions. We have programs throughout our department for children and adults that need to continue. Through the coming season there will be cases in which existing staff is absorbing more duties, but we are committed to the citizens in providing quality service. Although it will be a difficult spring time this is all necessary because of the changing needs in our community such as the crime issue, resources for the Hope Project and allocation of resources for Youth First.

Maxson continued stating that looking into next year we already know that the department needs to be part of a review process in order to meet budgetary objectives and council priorities as the city needs to come up with a reduction of 49 full-time employees possibly through retirement and attrition through resignations. It is our department's goal to work towards this goal with the City Manager's Office to meet council objectives and review vacancies that we have in the department. Currently we have seven or eight vacant professional positions and maintenance positions. We are assessing the need of those positions to see if they can be considered by the City

Manager's Office towards the objective of reducing the number of full-time staff in the city. This is all designed to meet changing needs in our community and to put the city in a better financial standing.

Maxson continued stating that we are in the midst of budget preparations and staff throughout the department will be receiving their budget preparation materials. We will be working on our maintenance and operations budgets comparing current year revenues and expenses against what we project for the coming year. We have not yet received specific City Council objectives for next year. Other than the small fee increases that can be adopted within our department the support of the department comes from tax dollars. A tax rate increase or no increase determines what our budget entry will be in the coming weeks. Next month we should have a good idea of the priorities for the coming year including targets for the department in terms of maintenance and operation and more specific targets about our personnel objectives. A couple of projects are already a part of our budget next year for operations of Keeley Park and the Gateway Garden.

Mary Vigue, Budget and Evaluation, stated that she has not been given direction for a target.

Rose Marie Ponton, Commissioner, inquired as to what programs we have that relate to the gang prevention and have we conducted youth surveys for program suggestions of what they would like to have. We need to attract our youth and this affects the budget. Ponton also asked if there are plans to work with the neighborhoods and churches. She would not want to see our programs cut and our children not have the opportunity to come to centers and so forth.

Hughes replied stating that the Hope Project and Youth First are programs we currently offer. Darryl Kosciak, Youth First Coordinator, and Ron Harris, Community Outreach, are both working with the Police Department to attract youth at an early age. Hughes stated that we are working with churches, neighborhood groups and the school system. The entire community is becoming involved.

Maxson stated that the City Manager's Office supports our efforts with programming. They support that we should not cut any program that would go against youth benefits. For years we have been one of the leaders in the community with youth programs helping the kids, giving them things to do and developing a support system for them. Because of the rising crime rate in Greensboro more people are seeing the benefits of Parks and Recreation and what it has to offer in terms of youth programming. Our reductions would have to come elsewhere.

Galbreath inquired as to whether this will impact space for summer programs, specifically Bur-Mil Park and can more spaces be added to these programs.

Wilson replied stating that because of the reimbursement process with Guilford County there shouldn't be an impact on that particular program.

Maxson stated that due to current resources there is not the ability to expand programs. Bur-Mil has been able to make some expansion because of the contractual arrangement with Guilford County.

Paul Brown inquired if there is a particular age that children are being influenced by gangs.

Hughes replied stating that the average age around nine or ten. The Hope Project targets middle school aged youth.

Maxson stated that if the budget is in such condition that there must be program reductions and resource allocations we will return to the Commission for discussion.

Cemeteries Update

Mike Moye, Cemeteries Superintendent, informed the Commission that the Cemeteries Division is one of the oldest in the city and has been in existence for over 130 years. Union Cemetery is the oldest city cemetery which is historic and not active. Greenhill, Maplewood, and Forest Lawn Cemeteries are all active cemeteries. Moye stated that some

of the challenges for the Cemeteries are budget restraints, staff shortages, maintenance issues because of staffing and the budget situation we have had for years. This last year was an extremely hard year, just as the rest of the city, because of the drought. Over 35 trees were lost. There are problems with vandalism and illegal activity. Cemeteries are not likely to be patrolled by police on a routine basis; however they do respond to specific problems.

Moye presented the following cemetery information to the Commission:

Union Cemetery

This is the oldest city cemetery and probably the least known located at East Whittington and South Elm Streets. It is the oldest African-American cemetery in the city and was established in 1880 by the congregations of St. James Presbyterian Church, St. Matthews Methodist Church, and Providence Baptist Church. In 1993 this cemetery was placed on the national registry for historic places. No burials have taken place since approximately 1915. Majority of the graves are unmarked.

Greenhill Cemetery

This city cemetery is the second oldest located at 901 Wharton St. north of downtown. In 1877 the city recognized the need for a municipal cemetery. After several years of construction the first interment was in 1882. In 1888 Greensboro City Hall burned and all records prior to that date were destroyed in the fire. This cemetery had a free ground area where the city provided burial for those who could not afford it. This cemetery is 51 acres and has over 6,000 ft. of fence, 3 miles of paved road, 7,000 ft. of water lines. There are a total of 16,000 graves and approximately 13,000 have been used. There are 43 graves that remain to be sold. The design of this cemetery was appropriate during the 1800's, but is not conducive to modern maintenance techniques and equipment. It takes our crew twice as long to do maintenance than at Forest Lawn Cemetery.

Maplewood Cemetery

This cemetery opened in 1918 and is located on Bingham Street. This cemetery provided burial for African-Americans after Union Cemetery closed. The first burial took place on February 6, 1918. Records are poor for this cemetery prior to 1930. This cemetery also had a free ground area and has one of the two veteran's areas in city cemeteries. It is 25 acres with approximately 4800 ft. of fence, almost 2 miles of road, 2600 ft. of water lines, and has over 12,000 graves with approximately 9,000 burials that have taken place. Vandals are constantly cutting the fence on the back side of the cemetery. This area is a short cut to English Street and to East Market Street. Once a month the fence is repaired and it is usually less than 48 hours before the hole reappears. Prior to December there were no spaces available to sale. Working with the Greensboro Engineering Department we were able to expand two areas and create approximately 80 new graves. Within 5 days of the spaces becoming available 5 lots were sold and 2 burials took place. Greensboro's Urban Forester, Mike Cusimano, gave permission to remove cedar trees in another area currently under development. The work is still in progress with more grading to be done. Spaces will be available for sale around early summer which will give another 150 graves. This gives a total of 230 grave spaces that have been developed since December 2007.

Forest Lawn Cemetery

This cemetery is the newest and largest of the city cemeteries located at 3901 Forest Lawn Dr. In the mid 1920's the city recognized that Greenhill Cemetery was going to fill up and so they purchased the land in 1923 to build Forest Lawn Cemetery. It took several years utilizing prison labor to build the cemetery. The old jail building still remains onsite that was built to house the prisoners in the 1920's while the cemetery was developed. The cemetery opened in 1928 and the first burial was on October 15, 1928. There are 76 acres, 51 have been developed. There are 14,000+ ft. of fence, over 11,000 ft. of water lines and 4.2 miles of paved road. There are 25,000 graves with approximately 13,500 burials. Currently without any development there are approximately 3,000 graves available for sale. If you include the 20+ acres that have not been developed there is enough space to last the city a minimum of 80-100 years based on the current rating.

Moye continued stating that unlike corporately owned cemeteries, such as Lakeview, Guilford Memorial Park, or Westminster Gardens cemeteries the city cemeteries allow upright monuments.

In 1937 City Council decided that Forest Lawn Cemetery would be the only cemetery to allow above ground crypts or private standing mausoleums. There is a section in the cemetery set aside for this and the last available lot was sold in spring 2007. New development has taken place to start selling lots by this spring for a new mausoleum area. At the current rate one mausoleum is sold every 2-3 years. The new lots will last the city another 30 years unless there is more demand than in the past.

Cemetery crews have been working very hard since last fall to get the cemeteries back to better shape and to restore turf.

Moye stated that the cemeteries conduct disinterment's, which have to be done by hand.

Moye stated that the cemeteries now have a bulletin on Channel 13.

Ken Free, Commissioner, inquired if city employees and board members receive a discount.

Moye continued stating that city employees do not receive a discount on the purchase of burial space as the fee is part of the perpetual care fund. City cemetery lots are the least expensive in the city at a cost of \$1,050.00 regardless which cemetery or space.

Sportsplex Update

Lane Newsome, Sportsplex Manager, stated that the Sportsplex closed the month of September to refinish all the floors, build a new ladies restroom and expand the men's locker room. THE RUSH fitness complex has been added and opened January 2, 2008. THE RUSH fitness facility is 5600 sq. ft. within the Sportsplex and is open 7 days a week. They are open Monday-Friday 6:00am-8:00pm, on Saturdays from 8:00am-6:00pm, and on Sundays from 10:00am-6:00pm. The first week of opening 55 people signed up. THE RUSH is offering all city/county employees and Parks and Recreation Commission members a special rate of \$29.00 enrollment fee and \$29.00 per month offer. This offer is good at any of their facilities throughout the Triad.

Newsome gave the following statistics from the past four years from July – December of each year:

Participants

19,216 participants in 2004
37,726 participants in 2005
51,121 participants in 2006
74,017 participants in 2007

The top 5 draws to the Sportsplex

Basketball with 17,092 participants
Soccer with 16,416 participants
Volleyball with 15,808 participants
Spectators with 12,889 participants
Hockey with 4,311 participants

Revenue comparison

2005 - \$191,851
2006 - \$293,768
2007 - \$336,505

Top 6 revenue generators

Soccer - \$174,699
Volleyball - \$52,516

Concessions - \$41,503
Basketball - \$19,927
Sponsorships - \$18,700
Inline Hockey - \$15,690

Newsome informed the Commission of upcoming Sportsplex events.

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

- NONE -

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Kuester stated that the Commission will be contacted regarding possible dates and times for a tour of Parks and Recreation facilities.

Kuester stated that the actual appointment of the Parks and Recreation Commission was in 1933 which was the actual start of the department, which makes Parks and Recreation's 75th Anniversary. We will be making celebration plans and asking the Commission to participate.

Kuester thanked the Commission for a full year of commitment. Kuester addressed City Councilperson, Trudy Wade, saying that attendance with this Commission has never been a problem as reported in the past of other citizen boards. The word that this Commission spreads to support us is most helpful particularly in times of bond issues and events where we have had to call on our citizens and get their involvement.

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

Marc Bush stated that he is looking forward to hearing more about War Memorial Stadium. The North Carolina Marathon will be held May 3, 2008 and will be based downtown as opposed to Country Park.

Lori Galbreath requested information be sent to her regarding Bur-Mil Park camp registration.

Paul Brown welcomed Councilperson Trudy Wade and opened the floor to her for any comment.

Councilperson Trudy Wade stated that she has never seen so many Commission members in attendance and went to one yesterday whose seats were not all filled. Wade stated it seems that this Commission is doing a terrific job and she is glad to be a part of it.

Ken Free commended staff for a year of successes and best wishes for next year.

Randy Scott apologized for not attending the past two meetings as his wife was ill.

With no further business Scott adjourned the meeting at 7:29 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcie Richardson, Executive Assistant
Greensboro Parks and Recreation