



Parks, Arts, Recreation & Culture (PARC) Commission
Thursday, January 5, 2012
5:34pm – 7:21pm

Bailey Road Recreation Center
11900 Bailey Road
Cornelius, NC 28031
www.cornelius.org/parc

MINUTES

1) Parks, Arts, Recreation & Culture Meeting

- a) Call to order – Chair Trimbur called the meeting to order at 5:34pm.
Commissioners Present: Chairman Bruce Trimbur, Michael Culbreth, Karen Tovar, Chris Jones, Del Arrendale, Nicolle Lewis, Dan Kelly, Travis Dancy, Town Commissioner Chuck Travis
Staff Present: Director Troy Fitzsimmons, Recreation Superintendent Ryan Hager, Recreation Center Programs Supervisor John Anderson, Karen Ulmer
- b) Introductions – New PARC Commissioner Michael Culbreth, Seat 1, was welcomed to the board.
- c) Public Appearances - None

2) Approval of minutes

Minutes from the December 1, 2011, meeting were approved as written.

3) PARC Commission Issues/Presentations set for a specific time

5:40- 5:50 – Tobacco-Free Park Ordinance, Ryan Hager and Patricia Bossert
Superintendent Hager brought the sample tobacco-free ordinance (attachment) to everyone's attention. He said that the parks becoming tobacco free has been a staff goal for 2012 as well as supported by the recent CHANGE Tool suggestions by the Mecklenburg County Health Department. Other communities in the area, including Mooresville, Concord and Kannapolis, though none in Mecklenburg County, have enacted similar policies. Patricia Bossert, Grassroots Manager with the American Cancer Society, stated that there are three main benefits to going tobacco free in parks: 1) Both smoking and secondhand smoking are not healthy, 2) Cessation of tobacco use improves role modeling for young people and 3) Cessation of tobacco use reduces litter in the park, noting that consuming cigarette butts is one of the leading causes of poison for children and is highly toxic to small animals. Director Fitzsimmons said that maintenance staff report large amounts of cigarette butts in all of our parks.

Enforcement would require staff to speak to violators first, would then call police only if that does not work. Ms. Bossert added that these bans typically become self-enforced as the public becomes familiar with the policy and that nationwide support for tobacco-free parks is well over 60-70%. Chair Trimbur asked how many signs would need to be posted. Fitzsimmons said we would need to post several in each park but that Ms. Bossert will help PARC secure grant money to help pay for signs. PARC would work with all of its partner organizations to help spread the word. Commissioner Travis asked if policy would apply to Mecklenburg County parks in Cornelius but it would not. Commissioner Arrendale made a motion to recommend implementation of a tobacco free ordinance for the parks. Commissioner Dancy seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Staff will send the ordinance to Town Attorney Bill Brown and then on to the Town Board.

5:55- 6:10 – Robbins Park Parking, Troy Fitzsimmons

Director Fitzsimmons reminded the Board that parking has been an ongoing issue with residents at the Preserve at Robbins Park. He showed a map of the area with several areas marked (attachment). The parking was all originally set up as parallel parking and works well until the area becomes very crowded. Classica Homes came to the Town with a proposal asking that the areas directly in front of the current or future houses be completely eliminated or restricted to residents only, by permit. Additionally, they asked that certain areas be relined for angled parking to add 15 additional spaces and they would pay for that. They also have 12 additional spaces behind the tennis courts on the plan, but PARC staff has determined that it is not in a good area for parking. Classica added that angled parking was safer but PARC's research has shown that angled parking is actually less safe than parallel. The roads were designed to accommodate parking on both sides of road. The Town Planning Director said the roads would have to be rezoned for a change to parking because parallel parking was in the original approved plan. Eliminating all of the requested spaces would result in a net loss of 53 spaces. The proposal also asked for additional landscape buffering at the playground. Recently, homeowners donated some plants and PARC installed them. Now they want to take out those plants because they are too small and then replace them with larger plants. Fitzsimmons could agree with that as long as it was not an out-of-place hedge; it would need to blend with current landscaping. Commissioner Duncan was not able to attend but emailed his comments to Chair Trimbur: He does not think there is exceptionally heavy use of the park. It can be a safety factor to have high hedges around play areas. There are many areas around town where parallel on-street parking occurs successfully, such as in front of Cornelius Elementary School. The house across from the park that is for sale actually mentions the playground in its sales brochure. We received a waiver from Classica that all homeowners signed saying they are all aware that there is a public park in the neighborhood. Fitzsimmons believes Classica is going to ask the Town Board for rezoning. Commissioner Travis said some residents have already come to the Town Board but he is not sure how people can ask for rezoning of property they do not own. He is not sure there will be support on the Town Board because of this issue.

Commissioner Tovar made the following motion:

"The Cornelius PARC Commission recommends rejecting the proposal from Classica Homes and strongly believes that the park and parking at Robbins Park should stay as it is currently. The park and parking are functioning properly with on-street parking and are standard for public parking in the Town of Cornelius. The streets were developed to accommodate on-street parking in accordance with accepted standards and approved plans. We see no evidence that the current public parking experience at Robbins Park has been unsafe or haphazard. The Town has similar on-street parallel parking in front of Cornelius Elementary School, Cornelius Public Library and retail businesses on Catawba Avenue. We do not support the privatization of the public, on-street parking spaces on Robbins Crescent Drive and other streets. Expansion of tennis court parking is not desirable as it would require people to park further away and there is ample on-street parking already provided. Diagonal and parallel parking are similar in providing safe, on street parking; even though each has strengths and weaknesses, our research has shown that diagonal parking is actually less safe than parallel parking. We have adequate, safe and functional parking in place.

We urge caution in screening areas of the park from the eyes on the street by filling the middle ground with plant material. High hedges around play areas create hidden areas that make those spaces less safe.

We strongly protest the relocation of the playground equipment and the concept of emptying a park of its amenities to mollify a small contingent of people who feel they are being inconvenienced by a public park. This portion of the park was developed in accordance with the adopted master plan which was carefully planned and designed in cooperation with the developer over several years. Classica Homes' marketing material and website note the park as an asset, as does the sales brochure for the corner

house that is currently listed for sale. We believe that neither the reputation nor the financial prospects of this neighborhood are being damaged.

In summary, we do not support accepting any portion of the proposed solution.”

Commissioner Lewis seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Commissioner Arrendale suggested that the PARC Board members attend the Town Board meeting when the rezoning proposal comes before the Town Board. Commissioner Travis said there is an informal meeting on January 17 at 3:00p at Town Hall to discuss this topic.

4) PARC Commission Subcommittee Recommendations & Reports

- a) Items to be placed on record – None.
- b) Commissioner Reports
 - 1) Commissioner Michael Culbreth – He appreciates the opportunity to serve on the board. He took park tour with Troy and discovered some parks he did not know about, such as Yacht Club, Jetton Neighborhood and Walter Henderson Parks, and has already taken his son to some of them. He noted that Walter Henderson Park has a lot of washing on the trail and around the park. Director Fitzsimmons said that has been a continuing problem but we have made a number of improvements and continue to work on it.
 - 2) Commissioner Karen Tovar - Will be taking an upcoming webinar about the impact of community gardens and role it can play in parks and communities.
 - 3) Commissioner Chris Jones - Drives by Robbins Park several times daily and observes that it is always busy and active and seems well used.
 - 4) Commissioner Tedd Duncan – Absent.
 - 5) Board Chair Bruce Trimbur – No report.
 - 6) Commissioner Del Arrendale – No report.
 - 7) Commissioner Nicolle Lewis – The Town has been looking for pictures for its new website and she submitted from Robbins Park.
 - 8) Commissioner Dan Kelly – No report.
 - 9) Commissioner Travis Dancy - Powerade State Games were awarded to the Charlotte-Lake Norman Region (Charlotte, Huntersville, Cornelius, Davidson, Mooresville) for 2013-2014 and may likely get two additional years. These games promise a significant financial impact. He and Ryan Hager travelled to Durham and participated in the bid presentation.
- c) Town Commissioner Report – Commissioner Chuck Travis – The annual Town Board planning retreat will be held Friday, January 20, at The Peninsula Club, beginning at 8:00am, and it would be nice to have some PARC commissioners attend and share their priorities and opinions.
- d) Standing Committee Reports
 - 1) Director’s Report – Director Fitzsimmons reported that PARC will be offering full summer day camps this year in response to the strong need heard from parents. They should be a huge success, and will be held at Bailey Road Recreation Center as well as some field trips. Ryan Wertz has secured an agreement with the Charlotte Disc Golf Club to run some clinics for kids and summer camps. We are working with the Historic Preservation Committee on a Revolutionary War encampment and reenactment at Legion Park. We continue to work on acquiring synthetic turf, meeting with North Meck Soccer next week to see what they might contribute. A joint meeting with the PARC Commission and Transportation Advisory Board was held December 20 to discuss the Town’s pedestrian plan and many good ideas came out of that. Caldwell Station Creek Greenway grant is still pending official approval. John DeKemper has been working on getting a PARTF grant for WAC and Robbins Park that would allow us to redo the pond area, establishing a viable fish habitat and providing handicap accessible platforms, etc. WAC Phase 2 is complete with the exception of road widening; we are going through the condemnation process. Anticipate opening by July. Cornelius Arts Center – the minutes from the meeting with a consultant to discuss

improving existing, building new or upfitting other space will be sent once approved. The next step is to put numbers together to achieve any of these three options. Two Eagle Scout projects are now underway at Robbins Park to extend existing trails. A coyote was caught on camera in the Robbins/WAC area on December 20. The Town has hired a consultant to do a field evaluation with all departments to establish methods to improve costs, become more efficient and reduce revenue leakage. There have been many issues with field and tennis court lights at Bailey Road Park. When poles were installed, they did not include a cover plate and rain leaked in, which corroded wire harnesses and ballast boxes. Installer is no longer in business and not covered by insurance. Working on figuring out how to replace or repair damaged or missing components and get money to do so.

5) Old Business

Chris Jones asked about the recent agreement with Xtreme lacrosse. Superintendent Hager said everything has been great so far. Jones also asked whether or not the Veterans Monument at Rotary Plaza should be a park. Public Works maintains it now, along with the rest of the Town Hall grounds. Commissioner Culbreth was concerned that if it is called a park it might be perceived as a playground, which would be disrespectful.

6) New Business

a) Recreation Center Programs Annual Report and Tour, John Anderson
Superintendent Hager introduced John Anderson, Recreation Center Programs Supervisor. One of his programs is the Lake Norman Teen Council and they were represented by several members in attendance: Jocelyn Pianowski, Jackson Michael, Jamie Michael, Ben Hilse and Patrick Ryan. The council is jointly run by Cornelius, Davidson and Huntersville and provides area youth with opportunities for service, leadership and social interaction. The council started with eight founding members and is now up to 45 members. Meetings are led by an Executive Board. In January 2009 they became a charter member of the NC Youth Council, which works to provide a voice for youth in North Carolina. The LKN Teen Council is self-funded through fundraisers, such as pretzel sales and face painting. Some of these proceeds are donated to area charities. They have many plans for future events and activities. Chairman Trimbur thanked the group for coming and commended their service and involvement, noting the council is great for them and for our community. Chris Jones said he would like to explore some partnership ideas with Rotary Club and will discuss that with Supervisor Anderson. Anderson then gave a presentation featuring the many recreation center programs and future project plans and was commended by the board for the job he is doing.

7) Adjournment – Meeting was adjourned at 7:21pm, followed by a guided walking tour of Bailey Road Recreation Center led by John Anderson.

Next Meeting – February 2, 2012 5:30pm

Future Dates: Thursday, March 1, 2012; Thursday, April 5, 2012; Thursday, May 3, 2012