



Parks, Arts, Recreation & Culture (PARC) Commission
Thursday, June 2, 2011
5:30pm

Cornelius Town Hall Meeting
21445 Catawba Ave
Cornelius, NC 28031
www.corneliuspr.org

Minutes

I. Parks, Arts, Recreation & Culture Meeting

- a. Call to order: Chair Trimbur called the meeting to order.
 - 1) Present: PARC Commissioners, Gary Knight, Karen Tovar, Tedd Duncan, Bruce Trimbur, Lenzy Wallace, Travis Dancy, Town Commissioner Chuck Travis, and PARC Director Troy Fitzsimmons.
- b. Introductions: none
- c. Public Appearances: none

II. Approval of minutes (attachment)

- a. The minutes from the May 5th meeting were approved.

III. PARC Commission Issues/Presentations set for a specific time

5:45 – Arts Center Task Force Presentation – Assistant Town Manager Andrew Grant & Bruce McMillen, Chair of CATF, presented information on the Arts Center Task Force. Mr. McMillen explained that the conclusion reached was to partner with multiple organizations, not just CAP, and provide these organizations with space. He stated we would be moving from a single organization model to a multiple organization model as well as moving facilities. Commissioner Duncan asked how long the current scenario is proposed to continue. Mr. McMillen responded that it will continue for up to 2 years or until the Arts Center can move into a new facility.

Chair Trimbur asked who on the Task Force will stay to help see these recommendations to fruition. Mr. McMillen responded that PARC Commissioners Knight and Wallace will be responsible for the ongoing work.

Commissioner Tovar asked if the cultural partners have been approached and asked to participate along with CAP. Mr. McMillen responded that no, to his knowledge they had not been approached at this time. Andrew Grant added that we would like to get those additional players back into consideration.

Chair Trimbur asked if there was a new CAP Board with different members at this time. Mr. McMillen answered that yes, there were at least four. Chair Trimbur also asked if any of our Town Board Members were on that board. Andrew Grant answered no. Chair Trimbur stated that this sounded like the Town Board and Town Managers are supportive of this effort and that we are trying to do something regionally through Cornelius.

Commissioner Knight added that we also need to recognize that we provide programs for people outside of Cornelius whether it is through sports, camps, etc. so in a sense this modeled the same way and providing services to those outside of the Town.

Commissioner Duncan added that he appreciated the work done behind this. It seems as though a strong plan has been developed. The only sour note/concern was regarding the goal of making CAP a viable entity. There is nothing against that group, just confused as to why that is one of the goals of this process. Andrew Grant responded that we need to develop positive relationships with other organizations, but since we've had this relationship with CAP for years we need to continue partnering with them as our current provider who has had successful programs. Commissioner Duncan stated that is an important and valid point to make, but just to make it clear it is in our own self interest. Andrew Grant added that a conversation has been held with CAP and they are supportive of these goals as we have recommended.

Commissioner Knight added that Mr. McMillen's leadership of this group was great and he's very proud of the work that has been done. This provides a way to progress into the future without stepping on a lot of toes.

Commissioner Wallace added that he's worked with Bruce McMillen previously and he led us to good decisions with great leadership.

Chair Trimbur stated it is exciting that Cornelius is taking on this role of regionally providing this service. Commissioner Wallace added that there was a plan done in 2004 by a consultant group that looked at Davidson, Huntersville, Cornelius and what each town contributes to cultural arts. Davidson and Huntersville had completed theirs, so we need to complete ours.

6:15 – Synthetic Turf Cost Analysis – Director Troy Fitzsimmons presented information on synthetic turf versus natural turf including pros, cons and an operational cost analysis. He reported that we have a proposal from North Meck Soccer to enhance their annual contribution and participation in the project. We will be looking into this further but wanted to bring it to the PARC Commission’s attention and get some feedback on what would make the offer better.

Commissioner Knight stated this was an excellent presentation and believes fescue is likely to be nonviable as a grass in the region as global whatever continues. He stated that the critical thing now is to get the Town Board to buy in and move on this and begin with Bailey as a test park. If this is successful, then we can eventually have synthetic turf in all the major parks. This way we will have eliminated the likelihood of spending all this time trying to pay CMUD’s bills.

Commissioner Dancy stated he is a huge advocate for this and from a tournament and tourism standpoint synthetic turf would hugely change the dynamics. Looking around us regionally, Huntersville is putting in synthetic baseball fields and Mooresville is opening parks including synthetic fields, and Elon Park in Mecklenburg County has synthetic turf as well. One good example as far as loss in revenue and economic development went back to February 2010 with the Visit Lake Norman.org Soccer Series there was a [storm](#) system that came through and wiped a tournament out. We lost about 500 hotel nights. As Troy mentioned the recovery with these synthetic turf fields and drainage is unmatched. It’s a whole new ballgame. From a tournament organizer standpoint it is so much more appealing.

Director Fitzsimmons added that the Thomas Finlay, President of North Meck Soccer, wanted to be here to answer any questions, but couldn’t. There are tournaments that he wants to go for, but he cannot guarantee they will be ready to go, he can’t succeed at getting them and they move on to other places.

Chair Trimbur asked if there were benefits or anything that could be used as marketing tools to say we are using this to be more “green” and have less water consumption. Todd Penley with Medallion Turf responded that yes, there is virtually no water usage with synthetic fields. Watering the fields is in a sense counterproductive because it raises the humidity level and it is a wasted effort. There are definitely positive spin in regards to water conservation. There are definitely some positive green aspects. Commissioner Duncan added that you are also cutting out fertilization, all the chemical aspects natural turf fields require, energy, fuel, manpower for the maintenance process, etc. Chair Trimbur agreed that it would be a massive asset to have.

Director Fitzsimmons mentioned that Bailey Road Park isn’t being used now [as the fields were recently renovated](#). There is a large cost upfront, but at the point you have a park such as Bailey Road shut down that is huge. Commissioner Knight stated it would be a good idea to sit down with the Town’s Business Manager, Jackie Huffman and work out the numbers. Part of this analysis should include what lost investment we have with our current parks when we are not able to use them. So when you add that as a loss to these numbers, it could possibly bring us to a breakeven point.

Commissioner Duncan added that he is a huge fan of synthetic turf. There is a phenomenal difference in level of use, time range of use, and the pounding you can put on a field that you can’t touch. He asked about the distinction between soccer versus football fields. Director Fitzsimmons answered that you can have lines built in and still drop chalk lines if needed. Mr. Penley added that these fields are extremely flexible and can be marked for more than one sport and you have the ability to use paints that last anywhere from one day to one month. Commissioner Duncan also asked Town Commissioner Travis if we have any hint or clue of the current temperature of the Board for a multi-million dollar capital outlay. Town Commissioner Travis responded that the attitude from the Board is that we already spend a lot of money on parks and maybe that isn’t where money should go for a period of time. In order to make this marketable for the Town Board we have to see a return on investment. It really comes down to budget. Staff will need to work with Jackie to get those numbers. It is a great idea and something we should look into but it has to work financially.

Commissioner Knight added that we need to have commitments from not only the current groups but others as well. When looking over this document from North Meck Soccer, they stated their total contribution would be \$450,000 over the course of 15 years, maybe that could be \$600,000 and maybe we could get \$600,000 for baseball and football. If we could do that and put together a package, it may make these numbers work. He agreed with Town Commissioner Travis that when WAC and Robbins Park are finished the Town will be finished with PARC

at this point. However, this is such a good idea, if we use the groups interested and work with Jackie, we can come back to the Town Board and show them how it will work.

Director Fitzsimmons responded that we would like to see this happen, so we will work on the numbers some more. The impact to future PARC projects would be Robbins Park. We have an additional two multipurpose fields proposed that will most likely have to be shut down after usage. It becomes a question of what is in the best interest of the Town – build additional fields and have to periodically shut them down, or focus our resources on existing fields where we know we'll have them available for usage pretty much 24/7.

Commissioner Dancy stated that we can also include sales tax revenue from hotels, gas purchases, etc of visitors of these tournaments while they are here.

Commissioner Duncan also added he has never seen an ROI analysis on Phase II West Catawba improvements.

IV. PARC Commission Subcommittee Recommendations & Reports

a. Items to be placed on record – none

b. Commissioner Reports

1) Commissioner Gary Knight – nothing to report

2) Commissioner Karen Tovar reported that she is still searching for a location for a community garden and may have stumbled across something but needs to have a discussion with Director Fitzsimmons.

4) Commissioner Tedd Duncan – nothing to report

5) Board Chair Bruce Trimbur reported that everyone should try to attend the Symphony in the Park event on June 11th. It would be wonderful if everyone could attend. June 15th begins the movie series and 80's Night in the Park on June 25th.

6) Commissioner Lenzy Wallace reported that he would like to congratulate Troy on becoming Director. He is a great choice and I'm sure he'll do a great job. Now with a new Director, this group has a chance to re-examine itself, to evaluate and redirect energies to support the new Director. It's my hope that the Board would clamp down on behaviors detrimental to group progress and really support the mission of PARC. Over the past two months, I've examined all of last year's PARC minutes and agendas. I've talked to several people about the function of this board. My experience on April 7th underscores the need for a discussion of civility. Many of you are familiar with Patrick McHenry's calling Elizabeth Warren a "liar" during a house panel hearing. It seems that uncivil discourse is the new norm in many places, and not just in politics. You might call it a hijacking of our moral values and ethical standards. However, the tide now is turning and people in groups that operate like that are finding that their group becomes more and more dysfunctional. Dysfunctional when bullies rule the roost, dysfunctional when group members play one-upsmanship, dysfunctional when the board is split along an ideological line, dysfunctional when individuals in a group practice setting up and blind siding group members. The group can earn a public perception of being dysfunctional. Members of the group will not give their very best to the group efforts, if there is a bully in the house. They may fear also being hammered. Again I repeat, it is my hope that the board will clamp down on behaviors that are detrimental to group progress and really support the mission of PARC. To be effective supporters of Troy, and the PARC mission: a climate needs to be created which allows people to disagree agreeably, where people can put ideas out there without fear of reprisals or being stepped on by any member of the group, you need to dis-allow tactics seeking to hammer committee members, stop those who would ferment discord within the group, and recognize those who would use this venue as a bully pulpit for their personal and/or political ambitions. A new day calls for new thinking. You have an opportunity to turn the page.

Chair Trimbur responded by asking who we needed to talk to about incidents needing to be addressed in the future? We need a procedure or process in place. Commissioner Duncan responded that given the relationships we all have, this could be a self-policing activity, and not a process. We should be comfortable in our own group and able to say if something doesn't sit right. If we can't pull that off, then we can involve a 3rd party. In the past our worst and least productive moments were when we weren't talking as a group, face to face, and communicating within the meetings. Discussion was happening after the meeting or before the meeting. We need to be open and comfortable and know how to disagree agreeable. Commissioner Wallace laid it out very clear. I have full confidence in everyone that sits on this board.

7) Commissioner Travis Dancy reported that he wanted to make the Board aware of a truly unique event that PARC will be involved with hosting on Aug 7 – 13. The International Tournament of Champions, which

consists of wheelchair basketball teams from across the world, will be coming to JV Washam, Bailey Road Recreation Center in addition to five other gyms for this tournament. The National Wheelchair Basketball Association is organizing this event. There will be a lot of tourism and economic development around it. This is a unique and great event for PARC to be associated with. Hopefully there will be opportunities for the Board to get involved.

Commissioner Knight added that as a former Executive Director of the Miami Project to Cure Paralysis, he hoped the Town will take a proactive position of checking that all the venues will have ramps and hotels have ADA compliant rooms. Rather than having the Town painted as a place that was not ADA compliant or ADA friendly it would be better to have someone knowledgeable of this check for these things.

Commissioner Dancy responded that the President of the National Wheelchair Basketball Association, who is in a wheelchair himself, has been doing site visits of all venues and hotels and are compliant. We are in a good position.

Commissioner Duncan added that it would be great to have a photo opportunity of them out at our facilities.

- c. Town Commissioner Report - Town Commissioner Chuck Travis reported that the Town Board is really excited about the arts in our Town and community. We are looking at hiring artists, bridge designer and landscape architect to make that interchange our signature to our Town so when you get off of I-77 at exit 28 you are in Cornelius, and we want art to be a part of that. We've had a few discussions with some artists who are interested but most likely we will be doing some type of design competition to get multiple entries. That is sort of the first place we can really make a mark in our community about the arts in addition to having this great arts center in town. Secondly, we dedicated the Veteran's Monument this past weekend which was a great service. It was a little more intimate and cozy because of the trees, and really felt like a neighborhood celebration. This will give us more opportunity to have more significant community activities. He would like to challenge the PARC Board with how to get involved and start managing activities that expand our community even further beyond just Veteran type activities. Commissioner Duncan spent hours and hours working on this and should be commended. It wouldn't have happened if Commissioner Duncan hadn't made it happen.

d. Standing Committee Reports

1) Director's Report – Director Troy Fitzsimmons reported that the Memorial Day program had over 150 people in attendance. Rhonda Hollingsworth is working on getting sponsorship renewals: MI Connection \$11,500 and North Meck Animal Hospital \$1,000 in contributions. He pointed out one of our employees, Ryan Wertz went through the Lake Norman Leadership Program and graduated on May 11th and should be commended for that. Ryan put in a lot of work and effort going through that program. On the capital side we finalized an agreement with NCDOT regarding a conservation easement for the eco park site directly across from Home Depot. We've also begun work with NCDOT on determining a trail line for continuing Caldwell Station Creek from that eco park site up to Bailey Road. On the Operations side we held our bid opening today for our Landscape Maintenance Services. The low bid was from University Turf Management which includes WAC and Robbins Park once completed. We pooled together Town Hall, Police Department, Fire Departments, and I-77 & Catawba Avenue to get better overall unit pricing. We top dressed the Bailey Road Park fields. Those fields are shut down with the exception of a couple previous commitments. We are trying to keep people off for at least 6 weeks while ~~that~~ new Bermuda grass gets reestablished. We have been in contact with the Police Department regarding coyotes and they have posted warning signs at Robbins.

V. Old Business - none

VI. New Business – WAC Tournament Operations Contracting Options

Director Fitzsimmons presented information on the Tournament Operations Proposals. Commissioner Knight stated that you want to see in the contract that they are providing liability insurance naming the Town as additionally insured including things like salmonella poisoning at the concession stand and other things that can happen during the course of an activity. They also need to provide evidence of workman's compensation insurance so that the Town is protected. They also ought to be bonded and have some sort of insurance that if they fail to meet those projections the Town will receive that money under any circumstances. If any organization will be running that program there needs to be a police department check on person's associated with the programs whether it be staff or volunteers, etc. This way the Town is in the clear and all of that is covered when hiring

people from these types of organizations. Director Fitzsimmons responded that we do require that with any program providers we work with. Commissioner Knight stated that you want to think about all the catastrophes that could occur and write the contract with all these possibilities in mind.

Commissioner Duncan stated he would be interested in knowing what each of these group's experiences are in managing similar facilities and what their current commitments are. Director Fitzsimmons responded that Nations Baseball has been in the business for numerous years. They provide tournaments at Mecklenburg and Gaston County facilities. LKNRA is a bit of a start up organization and are new to the game. Their proposal, because of that, concerns us a little bit.

Commissioner Duncan stated that the LKNRA proposal mentions no limit to the number of tournament, which is concerning. Director Fitzsimmons agreed that is concerning and Commissioner Knight's suggestion of bonding is a good idea for that reason. Commissioner Dancy agreed with those comments and added he would like to see the Town operate WAC hands down. If there is anybody to consider here it would be Nations Baseball. They have a proven track record with producing great tournaments. Compared to LKNRA which has no experience, we need to look at Nations Baseball. Director Fitzsimmons added that one of the major cons is losing some control out there. Chair Trimbur asked if there was anything the Board could provide for moving this forward. Director Fitzsimmons stated he was hoping for a motion giving staff direction as to what way to proceed. Chair Trimbur asked if anyone with the Town has experience running tournaments. Director Fitzsimmons answered there were a few staff members who do, but as a Town no. Chair Trimbur suggested contracting them for a year or so because of the learning curve involved, to try it out. Commissioner Dancy responded that he has no concerns as far as a learning curve.

Commissioner Knight stated that in the broader picture, if we contracted with Nations Baseball, what does that do for staff. Does that mean we will lose somebody in the process? The Town has an investment in making its citizens happy. It is for the Town's benefit to become good at running these even if we have a net loss because we should be able to reach a point where we are able to be somewhat equivalent to Nations Baseball in the future. Director Fitzsimmons answered that these numbers would be including new staff we do not have yet. Commissioner Knight responded that in that case, I would go with Nations Baseball.

Commissioner Duncan asked for a pro and con list between our staff running it and any other things we may not be seeing versus Nations Baseball for the next meeting. Director Fitzsimmons responded that yes, we can work on a list like this to present at the next meeting. We have a little bit of time to work on this further.

Commissioner Dancy added that if we were to go with Nations Baseball it would only be baseball. They do not have a softball program as it stands now and he would like to see more diversity. Commissioner Knight added that maybe we are looking at a sole source provider. If we shouldn't have a sole source provider for the arts, maybe we shouldn't for this either. We could look at who could provide concessions, who can provide softball, who can provide baseball, who can provide soccer, etc. that way we have the opportunity to maximize the benefit to the community. Director Fitzsimmons stated we will come back with a pro and con list and have another discussion with Nations Baseball to work out some details.

Director Fitzsimmons announced that Commissioner Jamie Sherrill will be resigning due to relocating outside of Cornelius. We will be looking at getting a replacement on the commission as soon as possible. Commissioner Knight recommended that we find persons who have children in PARC's programs as a replacement for Commissioner Sherrill's seat. We need to have that instantaneous feedback that we are missing on this commission.

VII. Adjournment

Chair Trimbur adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting – July 7, 2011, 5:30pm

Upcoming Meeting Dates
Thursday, August 04, 2011
Thursday, September 01, 2011
Thursday, October 06, 2011
Thursday, November 03, 2011
Thursday, December 01, 2011