



Parks, Arts, Recreation & Culture (PARC) Commission
Thursday, April 12, 2012
5:30pm – 7:00pm

Cornelius Town Hall
21445 Catawba Avenue
Cornelius, NC 28031
www.cornelius.org/parc

MINUTES

- 1) **Call to Order** - Chairman Trimbur called the meeting to order at 5:34pm
Commissioners present: Michael Culbreth, Karen Tovar, Chris Jones, Tedd Duncan, Chairman Bruce Trimbur, Del Arrendale, Nicolle Lewis.
Staff present: PARC Director Troy Fitzsimmons, Recreation Superintendent Ryan Hager, Karen Ulmer
- 2) **Determination of Quorum** – Quorum was achieved with seven commissioners in attendance.
- 3) **Approval of Minutes (attachment)** – Minutes from the March meeting were approved as written.
- 4) **Public Appearances – Citizen Concerns/Comments** - None
- 5) **Presentations**
 - a) **Pedestrian Plan – Karen Floyd, Planning Director**

The Town is in the last stages of this plan. Planning staff will take it back to the Transportation Advisory Board one more time, then to the Town Board on May 7 to vet one more time. NCDOT is reviewing the plan also. Having a completed pedestrian plan will be another tool in the Town’s tool box to get grants and other funding for projects. The emphasis has been on “walkability” to all of our parks, open spaces, schools and both retail and civic destinations. Commissioner Duncan commended Planning for sending the PARC Board the narrative that helped them get behind the development of the pedestrian plan. Ms. Floyd noted the Town Administration asked for notes on the plan reserving the right to construct various width paths in the future, depending on topography, financing, etc. Director Fitzsimmons urged that paths should be ten feet wide. Ms. Floyd said that NCDOT has no money so, for example, the Town is installing sidewalks instead of the State installing them. We want to make sure we are doing things right but we also have to be responsible with citizen’s money, so if we want ten-foot-paths but we can only afford eight-foot-wide then we will have the flexibility to do so. The Town is trying to create a trail all around Cornelius (the “Emerald Necklace”) so that everyone can walk or bike. Mr. Fitzsimmons clarified that the Pedestrian Plan is a long term vision, 20 - 40 years down the road. Mr. Duncan said many people’s attitudes have changed in favor of ped/bike options and urged the Board to keep an ongoing focus on PARC’s priorities in the evolution of this plan. Ms. Floyd said a goal of the Town is to have a better walk score. The following issues were brought up by the Planning Board:
Issue #1: The Planning Board thought Planning Area 3 Future Study should be removed and replaced with a study at Robbins Park to allow people across the street from the park to improve access to the park. Mr. Duncan said we should not have to pitch one area of study against the other. Commissioner Arrendale made a motion that “The connection bridge between Jetton Park and Ramsey Creek Park in Study Area 3 of the Pedestrian Plan should be kept in the plan and, in addition, a study area at the

Robbins Park location to provide east-west pedestrian access should be added.” The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jones.

Discussion: Commissioner Culbreth was concerned about building a bridge between two Mecklenburg County parks. Ms. Floyd responded that the Town is not saying we should pay for it or even that we will pay for it but that it is something that the Town may want as an amenity.

After no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Issue #2: Surface of shared use paths. The Planning Board requested that the Town’s consultant bring more facts to compare concrete vs. asphalt. Town staff was concerned about durability and maintenance of asphalt and that it may not be the best surface. Commissioner Jones asked about green surfacing ideas, such as recycled tires. Ms. Floyd such surfaces were not recommended as being durable. Commissioner Duncan thought this meeting was not the appropriate time for these details to be discussed. Commissioner Arrendale disagreed, saying it is important for the Planning Board to know how the PARC Board feels about this issue. Ms. Floyd believes the surfacing details should be determined at the time of construction because the construction technology will likely change in future years. Commissioner Lewis made a motion that “The PARC Board is not comfortable selecting a preference about one surfacing material over another at this point in time, and we would not expect the Town to do so either, and we would expect the appropriate surface to be selected at the time of construction so the Town can capitalize on the most appropriate materials and technology at time of construction.” Commissioner Jones seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Issue #3: Planning Director Floyd asked the PARC Board to recommend adoption of the plan. Commissioner Tovar moved that “The PARC Board agrees to adopt the Pedestrian Plan and recommends it to the Town Board and asks that it be incorporated it into the PARC CIP and future pedestrian projects.” Commissioner Jones seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

b) Fees & Charges – Ryan Hager, PARC Recreation Superintendent

Superintendent Hager said that every year the PARC Department does a study of our charges for facility rentals and program fees and we try to coincide with the Town Board’s budget process. We took our current rates and compared those to the average of towns in our area. Some of them had some random fees that skewed the numbers but we still included all of the results. We have very few non-resident rentals. We give our residents a little bit of a discount from the average and we charge our non-residents a little bit more than the average. The only change Mr. Hager recommended is an increase in athletic field light usage fees. He asked for a motion that we could bring to the Town Board for their final approval. Commissioner Duncan made a motion to accept and recommend this fee scale. Commissioner Jones seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

6) Director’s Report – Troy Fitzsimmons

- The Town Board uses an electronic agenda called NOVUS. All department committees and boards will be moving to this system, so the agenda template from April forward has changed to reflect consistency among the boards.
- Events coming up: April 21, Earth Day Celebration at Robbins Park. April 28, PARC Days with CPD and Coca Cola at Old Mill Village and Glen Oak Green and Pitch, Hit and Run at Bailey Road Park.
- Stopover at the Springs was successful with more than 400 people over the two days. Hop Into Spring had 275 participants.
- Caldwell Station Creek Greenway - We received endorsement from MUMPO for the \$ 2.1 million grant. It now goes to the NC Transportation Board on May 3rd for approval.
- WAC Phase 2 - All surveys and designs have been completed and approved for road widening, which should finished by July. Signage and press release coming soon.

- Bailey Road Park soccer and football field will be shut down mid-May for rehabilitation and be closed for 6-8 weeks for turf grow-in.
- Antiquity Greenway – We are partnering with Mecklenburg County to get a Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program grant. The Town Board will match the grant, up to 20% of the cost. Mecklenburg County would cover another 20% and the rest would be covered by the grant.
- Bailey Road Park baseball and tennis lights - Passed around sample of damaged, corroded wire. Work has been done to repair and replace damaged parts. System is fully functional.
- Bailey Road Park will be a host site in July 2012 for the Profession Disc Golf World Championships. Staff s working with Charlotte Disc Golf Club to prepare the course.
- QR codes – The PARC Department has begun using QR codes and will begin adding them to all flyers. Once the Town’s new website is in place, we will add them to park signs.
- Executive summary of the Comprehensive Master Plan (Navigate Cornelius) is currently being reviewed by Town staff. Copies were passed out so PARC Board can review also and get their comments back to Mr. Fitzsimmons by Friday, April 20.
- Rhonda Hollingsworth has left PARC and we promoted Mindi Stoner to Special Events Coordinator. We are currently receiving application for a Recreation/Arts Coordinator. 13 resumes have been received so far. Application deadline is April 18.

7) PARC Commissioner Recommendations & Reports

a) **Items to be placed on record** - None

b) **Commissioner Reports**

- 1) **Commissioner Michael Culbreth** – He likes QR codes and wants to see them on the park signs. Regarding Walter Henderson Park, he asked if could do more to improve the park, such as identifying plants and trees along the trails, perhaps as Eagle projects. Mr. Fitzsimmons said we are constantly working with Scouts and this suggestion could be a good project.
- 2) **Commissioner Karen Tovar** – She noted that she is seeing Cornelius Arts Center programs being advertised in the paper. She also showed a tear sheet from the paper highlighting a Q&A with Director Fitzsimmons about why WAC had not yet opened.
- 3) **Commissioner Chris Jones** – He would like to signage at the entrance to WAC to let people know when it will be opening. He added that it is great to see all the activity in the parks.
- 4) **Commissioner Tedd Duncan** – He loves the “front door parks”, saying they make the town feel like a better place. He asked that the Town and its programs support low income housing.
- 5) **Board Chair Bruce Trimbur** – He shared the Gametime product catalog and brochure, which feature pictures of our tree playground at Robbins Park. He said we need to applaud Troy Fitzsimmons because he spearheaded the concept and got the tree playground made. It makes him proud that this park is part of our community. He went to an HOA meeting at Antiquity and they began a discussion about a community garden with Cam Finley, a senior partner with Venture Properties, the community developer. Commissioners Trimbur and Tovar have also met with Gary Knox and they are progressing towards getting some land turned over to the Town faster than originally thought. They want it to be sustainable. PARC staff is working on getting some grant money. A restroom and amphitheatre are included on the plan and Mr. Finley is discussing turning these amenities over to the Town.
- 6) **Commissioner Del Arrendale** – He asked for more information about what is going on with the WAC turning lane. Mr. Fitzsimmons said the Town has determined that opening the facility without a turning lane would create a liability issue. NCDOT required the turn lane and if we open up without the required lane, the Town would be liable for any accidents. There were delays because we could not get rights of entries from adjoining property owners and had an issue with a safety barricade for a natural gas pipeline transfer station, but are working as hard

as we can to get the turn lane completed. We should start construction by May and the lane should take 7-8 weeks to construct. If we had waited for all the turn lane issues before beginning Phase 2, we would probably just be breaking ground on the fields. Mr. Arrendale also wants to promote having garden clubs in our parks. This concept works in his hometown, where a club took over and beautified the parks for free. Chair Trimbur said a local garden club will soon be taking this initiative with the Veterans Monument. Mr. Fitzsimmons said NC Wildlife will be putting signs identifying trees at Robbins Park. Mr. Arrendale would like to see discussion of how to involve garden clubs as an agenda item in a future month. He also suggested terrace and vertical gardens up walls and suggested we could do it on one of our public buildings or in one of our parks. Commission Duncan noted there is one of these walls at Queens University in Charlotte. The group talked briefly about mobile gardening and urban gardening, rooftop gardens, etc. Mr. Arrendale would like to see yearlong agenda items that the Board could work on long term and involve other people and groups.

7) Commissioner Nicolle Lewis – She attended the reenactment with her family and they really enjoyed it. Showed alumni magazine from WCU and they have a Parks and Rec management class and they partnered with Cullowhee and thought it would be great to partner with a local school with a recreation management program. Mindi will be attending a branding and marketing teleconference hosted by NCRPA.

8) Commissioner Dan Kelly - Absent

9) Commissioner Travis Dancy - Absent

c) **Town Commissioner Report – Commissioner John Bradford** - Absent

8) Old Business

a) Robbins Park – Director Fitzsimmons reported that the issue of parking complaints has quieted down. He distributed a map of the area involved in our PARTF grant application. The proposed projects would include a trail from WAC to Robbins Park’s pond and add picnic spots. The trail is slightly more than one half mile. The back of the map included a list of the current NC PARTF Authority Members. He encouraged the Board to contact those members to lobby for awarding the grant to us.

9) New Business

a) July meeting date - Due to proximity of the July meeting to Independence Day, the commissioners chose to move that meeting to the following Thursday, July 12.

b) Antiquity Greenway – Director Fitzsimmons presented a map showing the scope of what the grant project may entail, including a path connecting Cornelius’s town center to the South Prong Rocky River Greenway. There are two trail route options: It may follow the power line easement but there is also an option for running the trail along the wall. Commissioner Duncan added that the beauty of the piece is its connectivity to the existing greenway.

10) Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 7:16pm.

Next Meeting: May 3, 2012 5:30pm

Future Dates: Thursday, June 7, 2012; **Thursday, July 12, 2012;** Thursday, August 2, 2012;