

# Recreation Advisory Board February 14, 2011



## **Members present:**

Sara Manuel, Chair  
Lonnie Gilliam  
Wayne Wheeler  
Mary Ann West  
Mildred Nance-Carson  
Hutch Kerns  
Cecil Bothwell, City Council Liaison

## **Staff present:**

Megan Shepherd, Special Projects Coordinator  
Debbie Ivester, Assistant Director  
Roderick Simmons, Director  
Kathy Connor, Park Maintenance Superintendent  
Diane Ruggiero, Cultural Arts Superintendent  
Nikki Reid, Real Estate Manager  
Frank McGowan, Business Services Superintendent  
Amy Rickman, Interim Recreation Superintendent

## **Guests present:**

Sara called the meeting to order at 12:31 p.m.

### **1. Approval of January Minutes**

Hutch requested to correct his comments regarding the marketing program to read that he felt print was only one piece of media, and with the increase in online marketing there are many opportunities to add more diversity to marketing.

Debbie corrected that Lonnie seconded the approval of the 2010 Annual Report, not Wanda.

Pending these changes, Wayne motioned to approve the January minutes, Hutch seconded, all approved and the motion passed unanimously.

### **2. Land Acquisition: Jane St. Property at Riverside Cemetery**

Nikki Reid, Real Estate Manager for the City, presented a proposed land acquisition property that will be going before City Council on February 22. She showed the location, near Riverside Cemetery, on a map. The County foreclosed on this parcel and offered to donate it to the City.

Wayne had heard concerns from nearby homeowners regarding improper activities happening on the property and wondered if things will be different under City management, since it'll still be an undeveloped parcel. Nikki confirmed the land will only be used as a park buffer and won't be developed.

Roderick explained there are City codes & ordinances to keep squatters away. This type of activity wouldn't be enforced if it was private property. The County lacked adequate resources to maintain the parcel, which is one reason we are considering accepting the donation. Maintenance for the parcel includes routine maintenance of landscape and patrol.

Cecil asked if the property will be mowed, which it will, like other City-owned buffer areas nearby. Hutch asked about the one remaining house in that block, which will remain occupied. He had mixed feelings about the acquisition, from a land-use standpoint. He wasn't sure a cemetery needs a buffer from residential areas since by definition the cemetery is a passive park. Hutch asked if the City could sell the property in the future as residential parcel. Roderick confirmed that Council can sell property at any time and regularly looks at land use among City property. Roderick said this property will be owned by the City, not APRCA, so the City may use it for something else in the future.

Lonnie noted that Rosewood Avenue on the other side of cemetery is all single family homes with a slight buffer. He supported this land acquisition because it will improve the quality of life for residents in the area.

Mary Ann asked what the tax revenue we're giving up is. However, because it's already County-owned, this isn't a concern.

Mary Ann motioned to support the Jane St. property land acquisition, Wayne seconded, all approved and the motion passed unanimously.

### **3. Land Easement: Metropolitan Sewer District Easement at Livingston St Park**

Nikki Reid presented a land easement request at Livingston Street Park. As we planned for the second phase of the Livingston Street Recreation Center, we found a 24 in. sewer line was in the way. Al worked with MSD to relocate the easement to accommodate the new construction. The new easement request will follow the tennis courts by Town Branch Creek, then pass by the fire station and South French Broad Rd. This allows MSD to improve the pipe line itself and remove pipes in the center construction area. A small bit of new line will come through fire station area, but Nikki checked with Fire Department and they feel it won't impact their operations.

Wayne asked how the easement impacts property, since it's underground. Nikki said it does impact buildings. Greenways can be built over MSD lines, but buildings cannot.

Roderick explained that in early construction drawings, there had to be a walkway connecting buildings to accommodate this easement. Now that MSD will move the easement at their expense, we can better connect the buildings.

Hutch asked about ownership of the area in question. Nikki said it's a permanent easement but the land will remain City-owned. Hutch asked if other departments or staff will review this easement request; Nikki said it is limited to herself and staff from APRCA, though they consult with other departments.

Hutch also asked about the specific location of the greenway and the easements. Nikki explained MSD will allow a greenway build on the easement.

Lonnie motioned to support the easement request at Livingston Street Park, Hutch seconded, all were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

#### **4. Director's Report**

Roderick presented the new quarterly report format. He reported that City Council held its annual retreat last Friday, and hopefully over the next few months Council will narrow its goals. There was no discussion of CIP or bonds at that retreat.

The department directors' retreat is scheduled for March 11. After that, there may be more information about reprioritization of CIP projects. Construction of the new Livingston Street Center is progressing well. We are also replacing the playground equipment in Martin Luther King Jr Park bring equipment up to code. As part of that, staff met with the East End community to talk about moving forward. For the next 2-3 months we'll work with the community for the final site plan.

Mary Ann asked about the AB Tech proposal to construct a road through Walton Street. Roderick said they haven't submitted a formal proposal. If they do, the Recreation Advisory Board will be the first to review it.

Sara liked the new format of the quarterly report. She asked about the need for a new veterinary facility at the Nature Center. Roderick said that we thought we would have to construct that to become reaccredited, but that we were able to meet the standards without building a new vet center. Staff has finished the strategic plan for the Nature Center and is now looking at site development. Within the next 6 months, we should have a site layout for CIP improvements over the next 5-10 years addressing the visitors' center, vet center, exhibits, and more.

#### **5. Pack Square**

Roderick reported that Pack Square Conservancy presented their proposal for the new building to City Council last week. County Commissioners will review it next, which is the final step. Construction is scheduled to start in March. Cecil was glad we will finally have restrooms in Pack Square Park.

## **6. Bele Chere Committee**

Roderick reported that the Bele Chere team held a kickoff event last Wednesday. Diane reported that the RFPs are out, applications are open, and everything is moving according to schedule.

## **7. Asheville Parks & Greenways Foundation**

Roderick reported that the Parks & Greenways Foundation met with staff last month to discuss the best position for the Foundation to be in to help the department as we move forward. Hopefully, within next 3 months we'll have a recommendation for how to solidify that relationship.

## **8. New Business**

Wayne asked about the attendance requirement because it seemed some members haven't been there for a while. Megan said she'll check the attendance records and get back to Sara with any problems.

Cecil asked about the status of the seats for chess players. Debbie said she spoke with Charlie last week and they are discussing details regarding the level of work the artist will do and ensuring proper liability protection. After that, we'll be ready to move forward. Cecil liked that citizens were willing to make donations and wanted to respond quickly, since he thought it might encourage more donations.

Lonnie noted that there's been a lot of increased usage at Aston Park, especially since the playground equipment installation. The area is also very well policed. Cecil added he supports adding a crosswalk to make that area even safer.

Hutch reported he was recently at Carrier Park and it was packed—every activity was being utilized.

Lonnie moved to adjourn at 12:55 p.m., Wayne seconded, all approved and the motion passed unanimously.