

## **Recreation Advisory Board Minutes**

**4.8.13**

### **In Attendance:**

#### **Board Members**

John Parrish  
Ashley Arrington  
Todd Dunnuck  
Mildred Nance-Carlson  
Josh O'Conner  
Hutch Kerns  
Wayne Wheeler  
Barry Mundt  
Jordan Veale

#### **Council Liaison**

Cecil Bothwell

#### **Staff**

Cathy Ball, Executive Director of Public Works and Multi-Model Transportation  
Christy Bass, Interim Business Services Superintendent  
Alex Carmichael, Interim Special Projects Coordinator  
Debbie Ivester, Assistant Director of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts  
Al Kopf, Superintendent of Parks and Planning  
Kristen Perez, Events Specialist  
Amy Rickman, Superintendent of Recreation  
Roderick Simmons, Director of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts  
Sandra Travis, Program Supervisor for Cultural Arts

#### **Guest Presenter**

Guillermo Rodriguez

### **Call to Order:**

Hutch called the meeting to order at 12:35 p.m.

#### **1. Approval of February Minutes:**

Josh moved to approve the February minutes. Mildred seconded and the motion passed with all in voting favor.

#### **2. Appoint Nominating Committee: 2013-2014 Chair & Vice Chair:**

Board chair terms run from July 1st to June 30<sup>th</sup>. Anyone interested in serving as chair or vice chair should contact Wayne. Only Josh, Hutch, and Wayne have expressed interest so far.

#### **3. Bele Chere Update:**

Roderick Simmons presented changes in the Department and Bele Chere. In 2007, the Bele Chere programming budget was running a \$107,000 deficit. Staff worked to reduce this subsidy over the years. Last year the programming budget came out \$16,000 ahead. This does not include other operational costs to the City, such as staff overtime. When those costs included, there is a \$400,000 deficit.

Roderick presented the Cultural Arts Division budget. \$337,000 is all Cultural Art salaries and benefits; of that \$201,000 is salaries and benefits for staff dedicated to Festival. The remaining \$136,000 is for the

rest of Cultural Arts staff and operating cost. There is an additional \$138,000 in program costs to other departments supporting Bele Chere.

Sales tax revenues are not included in the Bele Chere budget because they are too difficult to isolate. It is estimated that \$400,000-\$500,000 is generated in additional sales tax during Bele Chere. The total economic impact is estimated to be between \$8 and \$10 million. A new Bele Chere economic impact study is scheduled to occur at the 2013 festival.

If Bele Chere is removed from the budget, \$200,000 will be retained to invest in other third party festival options in the future.

Ashley asked how the staff time was divided and what percentage was directed to Bele Chere. Roderick said that the staff multitasks across multiple festival projects, so he loosely estimates that 70-80% of the festival salary budget is directed toward Bele Chere.

Guillo Rodriguez, Chair of the Bele Chere Committee, presented the state of planning for Bele Chere. The Committee is a volunteer group working on behalf of the Recreation Advisory Board (RAB.) Guillo asked RAB to support the Committee in its request to fund this year's festival.

Guillo said that the Committee is changing the messaging this year. He pointed out that most of the vendors at Bele Chere are from the Asheville area, but that has not been advertised. So the Committee created a logo for the vendors to display.

Food trucks will be added to this year's Bele Chere, which are local mom and pop enterprises that are easy to inspect and bring their own clientele.

This year's selection of musicians has real local street credit. The survey at his year's festival will identify where people come from, what they like, what they don't, etc.

Guillo said that he is concerned about the direction of the Parks and Recreation program in general as impacted by the budget. Parks and Recreation is part of the quality of life that draws people to Asheville.

Wayne asked about the logo. Guillo reported that it looks like a big stamp, marked "local." Wayne asked if the food trucks would park in the footprint. Guillo said that they would. The footprint will be expanded so anyone within the Business Improvement District can participate in the fair.

Mildred asked if the food trucks will pay a higher fee than vendors with booths. Guillo referred to Sandra Travis, Cultural Arts Program Supervisor who explained the fee structure and fees will remain the same.

Ashley asked if the City has signed contracts for the musicians, and if it is danger of breaching contracts if the festival budget is not approved. Sandra reported staff is in the process of negotiating those contracts. She explained that the contract riders were negotiated to protect the City. All City contracts have terms and conditions included to make them dependent on the budget being approved. The headliner contracts might represent a bigger risk.

Guillo said that the Committee is currently working under the assumption that the 2013 budget will be in place.

Wayne commented that local musicians have complained that they are never selected. Guillo responded many local bands never apply. Sandra said Bele Chere has an existing standard requiring a minimum of 50% of the bands to be local.

Debbie Smith, also from the Bele Chere Committee, said that the Committee is asking the RAB to support their funding request for this year. She said the Committee is emphasizing the local and conducting a feedback survey.

Ashley asked if Bele Chere is getting any money from the Tourism Development Authority(TDA), or if it has in the past. Guillo said that they are not providing funds. Debbie added their advertising contributes to the festival, but not with real dollars. Roderick reported conversations with the TDA began evolving as of last week.

Councilman Bothwell said this budget discussion represents a best-case scenario. If the current legislation pending in Raleigh passes, the city expects a \$6-\$7 million deficit that will result in raising taxes and cutting services. Councilman Bothwell encouraged everyone to contact their state representatives and tell them to “lay off” the cities in this state.

Ashley asked if the Committee has considered ticketing Bele Chere. Sandra stated a gated approach for headlines entertainment occurred about 4 years ago with mixed success. Ticketing the entire event is logistically impossible.

#### **4. Director’s Report:**

Roderick presented the State legislation, as it would affect the City budget. He gave a background on how the Parks, Recreation & Cultural Arts Department (PRCA) has closed deficits in the past by cutting center hours and discontinuing rentals. Fee adjustments are slated for this year, but those will Aston Tennis Center, swimming pools, Food Lion Skate Park, discontinuing Bele Chere, and eliminating youth and adult athletics.

John asked about attendance at the Nature Center. Roderick reported approximately 100,000 in 2012. Wayne asked how much the Friends of the Nature Center currently contribute to the budget. Roderick said that they contribute quit a bit to the capital budget.

Mildred asked if the City has seen any gains since management of the golf course was taken over by a third party. Roderick said the City is paid a set amount, but if the golf course makes \$1 million, then the City gets an additional 2%. It is too early in the management agreement to realize any amount beyond the set rate. John asked if the pools could be contracted out the same way. Roderick said not likely since the pools are not profitable.

Cathy Ball, Executive Director of Public Works and Multi-Model Transportation, spoke about the pending legislation in Raleigh and the anticipated impact on the City. The Utility Franchise Tax alone could take \$1.5 million from the City. The water system transfer would take away \$2 million in annual revenues (excluding lose of asset value.) The Privilege License (FY15) will eliminate any license revenues. The loss of the Beer and Wine Excise Tax and the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Development Review would contribute to further loss of revenue to the City. The City currently can use 5% of water revenues for water related infrastructure. A bill removing that ability has passed the House. House Bill 418 would transfer the City and County Parks and Recreation Departments to a new independent Parks and Recreation Regional Authority. These bills could have a \$5.7 million impact on the City.

Councilman Bothwell corrected popular misinformation. There used to be a Buncombe Water Authority. The City wanted to upgrade water pipes but the County objected to the expense. Since the City took over the water system those upgrades have been made. Also, City support services (payroll, human resources, information services, etc.) serve all the departments. There is no savings to the City through the elimination of support positions if the water system is taken away. Councilman Bothwell said the

Legislature is trying to force the cities to raise taxes or cut services so current elected officials are less likely to be re-elected in the next election cycle.

Roderick added that by current State statute, the City and County Parks and Recreation Departments could merge if they both so decided. That option is already in place without this bill.

Ashley expressed concern about a parks and recreation battle like the current water battle. Once the recreation facilities go into a joint authority, they could not be returned without a vote by the Regional Authority. Roderick said there would be a lot to consider before entering into such an authority, such as an emanate domain policy.

Ashley asked what would prevent the County from raising taxes inside the City once it took over the parks. Cathy discussed the concerns about a joint authority functionally having its hands tied and compared it to the water system. She expressed concern that if this is done in a rush it will not be done right.

Wayne asked what monies are currently budgeted for specific projects, such as the Dr. Wesley Grant Sr. Southside Center or other capital funds. Some capital projects might require increased operational costs. He wanted to know hypothetically, would funds for those projects be frozen. Roderick said indirect costs for capital projects always have to be considered.

Josh asked if Bele Chere is eliminated how staff time will be reallocated. Roderick said the positions dedicated to festivals will be eliminated. Josh asked if the Department was looking for a recommendation from the RAB. Roderick said no, this presentation is just to keep the Board informed.

Hutch asked if the town hall meeting would be extended. Councilman Bothwell said that another meeting is likely to occur in April. Ashley asked if it would be after the working hours. Councilman Bothwell replied that it would. Barry said Leadership Asheville will host Finance Director Lauren Bradley on April 24th. She will review the financial circumstances presented at the town hall meeting.

Wayne said closing the Aston Tennis Center and letting it be used unsupervised will be detrimental from both a maintenance and public safety standpoint.

## **5. Reports:**

### **Bele Chere Board**

Todd Dunnick made no further report other than that presented in the Bele Chere update agenda item.

### **Asheville Area Riverfront Redevelopment Commission**

Wayne did not attend the last meeting due to an out of state trip, but will keep the RAB updated.

## **6. Other Business:**

Debbie said that she will email the RAB more reference material regarding the legislation discussed today.

Josh said that he will join the Asheville Parks and Greenways Foundation. Debbie said that there is no requirement for this Board to vote on that liaison.

## **7. Adjournment:**

Josh moved to adjourn. Ashley seconded and the motion passed with all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 2:02 p.m.