

FROM: Parks and Recreation Advisory Council

SUBJECT: Monthly Meeting

DATE: December 2, 2015

LOCATION: EAC Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT: Neal Bench; Joel Bulkley; James Carter; Evelyn Daniel; Michael Dempsey; Allan Green; John Greeson; Tori Williams Reid; Haywood Rhodes; Betty McDade Khan; Rachel Massai; Rob Robinson; Daniel Siler

MEMBERS ABSENT: none

STAFF PRESENT: David Stancil; Lynn Hecht

- I. Beginning time of meeting: 6:35. Roll was called. Introductions were made.
- II. Meeting Summary (11/4) was approved with no comments from the Board. There were no additions/changes to the agenda.
- III. Report of the Chair (Bench)
 - a. Recognition of James Carter. The board presented Carter with a certificate of appreciation for his years of service with the Parks and Recreation Council (PRC). This was his last meeting as a member.
 - b. New Appointment. Michael Dempsey was present and introduced to the council (beginning officially January 1, 2016.)
- IV. New Business
 - a. Primitive Camping at county parks and nature preserves. In October, staff met with the County Attorney, a Sheriff's Office lieutenant, the Fire Marshal and the Risk Manager about the potential for primitive camping at County park sites. In summary, the group felt there was considerable potential liability involved with unsupervised primitive camping within parks. The County does allow group camping at Little River Regional Park. The County Attorney has stated that Blackwood Farm Park (BFP) cannot be open without staff because of the pond and its inherent liabilities (attractive nuisances). All of the County public safety reps suggested that the County should not take on primitive camping due to the liability of camping when there is not a staff member there. It's possible that primitive camping could occur at LRP because there is a caretaker who lives on site. It was also possible that primitive camping might occur in the future at sites on the Mountains to Sea Trail (MST) under certain conditions. Stancil notes that the County may have a new park staff person to man the Orange County trail

sections of the MTS. The Sheriff's Deputy was concerned about people walking along the roads (as potential connecting sections of the MST.) The Attorney also raised issues that have come up in other areas of "squatting" on public lands that could arise from primitive camping. Green said that there is no connection between LRP and the MST. Green expressed that he was not happy with this decision and felt Orange County officials are too worried about his safety. Green added that this county is a safe place and it should be safe to have primitive camping in the parks. Green asked if the sheriff's staff can handle the check-in of the primitive camper and provide a few overnight checks for the campers. This could alleviate the cost of a staff person there overnight. Green would like to write a letter to the BOCC stating they are too risk averse. There was not discussion from the rest of the council on this idea. Stancil suggested that the Council consider meeting with stakeholders and begin a dialog on this subject. Primitive camping will be revisited at the February meeting.

- b. MST Master Plan Report-Next Steps. Stancil and Green were at a recent meeting and gave an update. On November 17th, the NC State Parks division presented the statewide MST Master Plan to the BOCC, and much focus was on the segment of the MST that runs through the county. Five community residents spoke about the need to get this segment built. Former NC DENR Secretary and Chapel Hill Mayor Howard Lee were there and also supported seeing the trail finished. Commissioner Dorisin asked Stancil about the potential route and where the sections of the MST were located, how the waystations would be built, and what the maintenance needs and the cost for getting this done might be. He asked for a plan and timeline for all this. Stancil says he is preparing this follow up report for the BOCC, and that based on current thinking there will likely be a February – June master plan process for MST Segment 11 (between Occoneechee Mountain and Alamance County). This project has moved up in priority ahead of work on the Millhouse Road Park. Green presented to the Council his own plan to be considered for the MST plan. Bench spoke on primitive camping on the MST once it is fully developed and that primitive camping should be allowed if someone wants to hike the entire county. Bench pointed out that Stancil has to work within his constrictions to develop a plan. The plan may not move forward as quickly as some would like.
 - c. Meeting Calendar. Bench suggested moving the picnic from May to June to get more daylight.
- V. Old Business
- a. 2015 Annual Report/Work Plan. No input provided, so Stancil will move it forward.
 - b. Set Date/Location for Biennial Joint Advisory Board Meeting. Bench suggested that this be held on the Council's March 3 PRC meeting date.
- VI. Report of the Director (Stancil)
- a. Fairview Park, Phase II Update. Staff is on schedule for Phase II of the park. The parking lot is being designed. Staff is working with Mr. James Stewart's wife to

get a sign made in honor of Stewart for his vision of a Field of Dreams. There will probably be a ceremony in March.

- b. Parks and Recreation Master Plan-Report Card: Staff and Department Leadership Team have been working on one year assessment.
- c. Other Projects and Activities. SportsPlex celebration of 10 years of working with the county will be December 11. The Soccer Showcase at Soccer.com Center is going on with the girl's event the weekend before Thanksgiving and the boys this weekend. Teams come from all over the nation.

VII. Council and Committee Reports

- a. Intergovernmental Parks Works Group. No report.
- b. Items from the Council. No items from the council.
- c. Friends of Orange County Parks and Recreation (FOPR). No report.

Next meeting is at the EAC conference room in Hillsborough on 2/3/16.

Meeting adjourned at: 8:05pm

Name of Notes Taker Lynn Hecht