

**TOWN OF MINT HILL
PARK AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MINUTES
February 10, 2015**

The Park and Recreation Committee of the Town of Mint Hill met in regular session on February 10th, 2015 at 8:00 a.m. at the Mint Hill Town Hall.

ATTENDANCE

Chairman: Ron Freeman

Members: Sandy Barnett, Roger Bowden, Ray Thompson, and Michelle McDonald

Absent: Eddie Mobley and Bryan Burns

Town Manager: Brian Welch

Deputy Manager: Lee Bailey

Commissioner to the Board: Lloyd Austin

Public Works Employees: Chris Cochrane

Program Support Assistant: Candice Everhart

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chairman Freeman at 8:04 a.m., who declared a quorum and asked everyone to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance and observe a moment of silence.

Approval of Minutes of January 13th, 2015: Mr. Bowden made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thompson and unanimously agreed, to approve the minutes of January 13, 2015 as presented.

Old Business: None.

New Business:

- A. Discussion and Decision On Request Filed By Terry Brown For Mint Hill Men's Softball League:** Mr. Freeman stated that the request was to waive the fees for Mint Hill Men's Softball League.

Mr. Bowden asked, was the request approved last year? Mr. Freeman responded, yes. This was maybe the third year we had done this.

Mr. Bailey stated that we had been approving this on a yearly basis and if we liked, we could change that to approving multiple years at a time.

Mr. Thompson asked, had there been any issues at the fields during these times? Mr. Bailey informed him that there have not been any issues and they offer maintenance while they are there as well.

Mrs. Barnett asked, what were the fees that were waived? They are nominal, responded Mr. Bailey. Mr. Welch added, the fees may add up to approximately \$300-\$400, but

they maintain the grass and the fields they play on which make this a wash almost. We also do not waive the light meter fee, therefore they do pay for the lights that they use.

Mr. Freeman motioned to approve the waiver of field rental fees for one year. Mrs. McDonald seconded the motion. Mr. Freeman asked for those in favor, which the majority of the committee agreed. Mr. Freeman asked for those not in favor, which Mr. Bowden agreed. The motion carried to approve the waiver of field rental fees for Mint Hill Men's Softball League.

B. Mecklenburg County Senior Citizens Nutrition Program: Mr. Bailey stated, Michelle would like to partner with the Town on senior programs, but we don't have the staff to help with that. She will elaborate on that for you. There is no action to take. It is just informational.

Michelle Hitselberger introduced herself to the committee. She has worked in Mint Hill for three years now. Her friend introduced her to DSS in Mecklenburg County which is where she found out about the Nutrition Program. The Mint Hill Senior Nutrition Program has been here for 27 years when she began working. They provide free lunch as well as programs at the church for citizens of Mecklenburg County over the age of sixty. There were an average of eighteen seniors attend on a daily basis when she started and now they have about fifty. We are looking to expand and grow. I would like to partner with you because I have a bigger vision of what we can do by maximizing our resources. I'm not asking anything from you as far as staff. I'm only asking for your support. I would like to have, every other month, a committee or board member to come speak at a program we call Lunch and Learn. This would be to help further educate the citizens in Mint Hill of what is going on in their community. My request again is just to seek official partnership with you right now.

Mr. Freeman asked if this is more about nutrition and not just a free lunch? Yes, that's correct. It's also not just about the healthy eating; it's also about the social, mental and physical aspect of getting together and doing something for the whole person.

Mrs. McDonald said, I go there about once a month and volunteer. It's a great program for us to have in the community because there isn't anything like it here. I think if there is any way we can help with support, putting it in the newsletter, or speaking at the lunch and learn, we should really take advantage of that to get them as much publicity as possible.

Mrs. Hitselberger stated, March 18th is the next Lunch and Learn and if any of you are available and would like to come and help us with the opening that would be wonderful. May is Older Adult month. I wanted to see about working with you to do a big picnic in the park where we could open it up and really broadcast it.

Mr. Freeman asked, if this was to be approved would it need to go up to the Commissioners? Mr. Welch said, I don't think we need to have any official decisions

made right at the moment. To advertise their program in the Newsletter, we don't need approval necessarily; she would just need to get with Mrs. Smith.

What about a partnership, asked Mr. Freeman? What I understood was that we aren't making any decisions on a partnership at the moment. Mrs. Hitselberger was here to give us information and insight into the senior programs that are offered to possibly pursue a partnership eventually, stated Mr. Welch.

Is this funded by Mecklenburg County, asked Mrs. Barnett. This is a Mecklenburg County program. When we have an event or a program, we always like to add their seal so that people are aware of who is helping to make this possible. If we were to become official partners with Mint Hill we would reciprocate that any way we could.

Mr. Freeman said, I would like to see us as a committee recommend to the Town that they support this program, and that in doing so in our newsletters and website as recognition of the program.

Mr. Bowden motioned that there be a favorable recommendation made to the Board of Commissioners in reference to publicizing the Senior Nutrition Program. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion and the committee unanimously agreed.

Mr. Freeman stated that the committee would take a break before continuing with the Planning Session.

C. Long Range Planning Discussion: Mr. Bailey stated that the committee would follow the outline for the long range planning discussion. Each topic was discussed approximately twenty to thirty minutes. The committee started with discussing Veterans Memorial Park.

I think the existing conditions of the park are in excellent shape as far as the physical condition, said Mr. Freeman.

Mr. Thompson asked are there were a lot of visitors to the Korean War Memorial? Mr. Cochrane replied, there isn't really any way of tracking where the visitors to the park go while they are there due to the park being vast and spread out.

Mr. Freeman stated, he goes there to walk his dog and people are not picking up after their animals. He would like to see citations given out to those not complying with the rules. Mrs. McDonald mentioned they could implement what the park downtown by the BB&T ball field did, where they marked dog litter not picked up with little flags. This would show how much there is left behind.

Mrs. Barnett asked, How much more land can be utilized for extending the trail? Is there room to carve out more trails in the wooded area? Mr. Cochrane stated, we have a creek that runs through behind the tennis courts and it is a low land so it's very wet.

Some of the trails run right along the property line and without opening up more around the tower area you're pretty close to what you have now is all you can due to the creek and that low land area.

Mrs. Barnett stated, once that tower goes, by 485 you could extend that so the runners could go off in that distance and keep the dog walkers and families closer. Mr. Cochrane said, yes, there is a lot of area utilized around that tower whatever it gets allotted for.

The tower area is not part of the park. The Town owns that property, but it's not officially the park, said Mr. Bailey.

How many acres is that area, asked Mr. Thompson. 5.44 Acres, responded Mr. Bailey. *Is the tower active?* I would have to check with Charlotte because we have given them a year a few months ago. We weren't using it anymore, so we agreed to let them use it for a year until they found other arrangements, answered Mr. Welch.

Board of the Purple Heart gave us a proposal a while back about putting a monument out there. What is the status of that, asked Mr. Bowden. They're raising money. The money they had, they found out they could not use for that particular purpose. It had to be strictly for their mission.

Second, the memorial that's in front of the Police Dept, we talked about moving that out to the park too. What's the status on that? It's still in the works. I've been talking with the project manager and it's going to be up to the Board to decide once they see the numbers for construction whether we'll be moving forward with that.

Third, previous discussions on AFMAC Armed Forces Archives and Museum of the Carolinas, are they still in the works? I haven't heard from them in probably a year, responded Mr. Welch.

When is the last time we had a report at Parks and Recreation or at Board of Commissioners about their status that we have a tentative agreement with them? Commissioner Ross stated, most of the people affiliated with the group have since left.

What is the agreement, asked Mrs. Barnett? I may be corrected here, but to the best of my recollection there is no agreement. It was reported in the newspaper by AFMAC that the land was given, the land was donated. That never happened. That is not true and never was true. The Board voted in principle, as a non-binding vote of support, to have AFMAC come back when they had their act together and their funding together and we'll talk.

Correct, that's how I remember it, stated Mr. Freeman.

They were going to build something where that house is, correct, asked Mr. Thompson.

Mr. Bowden said the building was proposed to be between where the house and the Korean War Memorial was. Once the Korean War Memorial was in construction the plans showed walkways coming from the Korean War Memorial to the AFMAC Museum. The design of the museum was changed drastically. I would like that contact be made with them and then be called on the carpet here to give us a report of where they are. I do recall that Mint Hill agreed in principle that once they were ready they would possibly be allowed to build the structure at that location. Not that the land was given to them, but that they'd be allowed to build. I think we need a report from them on what their status is. Mr. Welch stated, I'm not sure who to even call. Bill Dixon would be my first call, but he has stepped down from his position.

Bill is still on the board, but in an advisory position so he should still be the first point of contact, stated Mr. Bowden.

It makes it hard to have long term planning for the park when we are waiting around for a building that was talked about some years ago. There is only so much land and usable space at that park that we've just went over. How do you maximize it for the community when you're hanging around waiting for people to raise money, stated Mrs. Barnett.

I think if truth be known, their funding didn't come through the way they thought it might and we probably aren't going to hear anything else about that, stated Mr. Freeman.

For a while they backed off funding because they were competing against the Korean War Memorial. When I was on the Board we made the intentional decision to back off fundraising so we didn't interfere with the Korean War Memorial, stated Mr. Bowden. We will reach out and if there is anyone to give a report, we will have them give a report, stated Mr. Bailey.

Mrs. Barnett said, if you have gone to the park recently, the fields have been closed for the past few weeks. There is minimal extra space for kids to play football, etc. I think we need to be mindful of that because if people use up all of that spare space, there is nowhere else to go and the kids will stop going to the park.

Mr. Freeman stated, something I've noticed is there are a lot of bicyclers on the tracks. One almost ran me over last week. I think we should change the signs and not allow bicyclers on that track. Are you referring to the paved track, asked Mr. Cochrane. Yes. Bicycles are allowed there, and I ride them myself, but I don't think that is a good place to ride a bike.

Mr. Freeman motioned that the signs be changed to no longer allow bicycles on the track in the future. Mr. Welch asked, what about roller blades or anything else with wheels? I think it's a good time to address that and consider that as well. I don't see them to be as dangerous as bicycles though. I'm just asking because words can mean everything. What if it's a little six year old and they live in Brighton Park and that's the

only place the parents can teach them to ride a bike, or what if it's a tricycle? It's not a bicycle it's a tricycle, said Mr. Welch.

Mr. Bowden said, also some parents will jog and their child follows them on a small bicycle. If we say no more bicycles, that means no more bicycles, stated Mr. Welch.

Mr. Freeman stated, I'd say no bicycles because that track is heavily used by walkers and joggers and I don't see that bicycles of any type should be on there.

It's a good point with the kids though, because that may be their only place to go to ride a bike, said Mrs. Barnett. Maybe you could say no full size adult bikes. That may be the middle ground, stated Mr. Bailey.

Is there any way to research what types of rules that parks of similar size may have in regards to that, asked Mrs. Barnett.

I can tell you they wouldn't allow it, stated Mr. Freeman. I'm not sure if Cherry Park still does, but they used to have a paved path and they had a line down the middle of the path for bikers on one side and walkers or joggers down the other, stated Mr. Bailey.

We could make a recommendation to research further into this, stated Mrs. Barnett. We will do some research and come back with recommendations. I'll talk to Public Works and see what we can actually do, stated Mr. Bailey.

June Tunes and Movies on the Lawn may be moved to the Park this year. The attendance is not as good here as we had hoped. We originally wanted to have those events here to promote Downtown business, said Mr. Bailey.

I think it's a great idea to move it to the park, stated Mrs. Barnett.

Mrs. Ross stated, there is not a good space to have that at the park. It was really nice when we had it at the old Town Hall. Mr. Welch agreed it was similar to an amphitheater.

Mr. Freeman asked why they couldn't continue to have it at the police station. Mr. Welch responded, due to security issues and traffic it would make it hard for them to get in and out of the parking lot.

There is a very nice amphitheater at the Stallings Park and I could see something similar to it at Wilgrove Park, but at 218 there's traffic noise. An amphitheater would be an asset, said Mrs. Ross

Mrs. Barnett agreed, there would be a sound element at Veterans Park, but the visibility would be very good.

It was a problem at Town Hall with how loud it was, stated Mrs. Ross.

Is the purpose of an amphitheater to project the noise outward? If so, then maybe it would funnel that sound out and it would help with the traffic noise, said Mrs. Barnett. Will they have a band at Mint Hill Madness this year, asked Mr. Bowden. Yes there will be, stated Mr. Bailey. That goes along with Sandy's second recommendation here to build a band shelter. This could be a good solution.

The next item down is the use of the park house. I'm going to say let's take the house down and build a stage theater there, stated Mr. Freeman.

Mrs. Ross said, Stallings is a small park but it is very nice. They have several picnic shelters, a splash pad, and a stage area.

It would really give a focal point at the park, and would allow us to save money that we spend on renting tents and stages. That would establish the park as the place to go for all of these events and brand it in that way, stated Mrs. Barnett.

A smaller amphitheater would serve the size of the bands that we have play at our events, said Mrs. Ross.

You're right about the placement of it Ron. That's about the only place you can put it without cutting into other space that is already used, stated Mr. Welch.

Mr. Bailey said at the bottom in Wilgrove where the creek crosses that is a low point so it's wet there sometimes, but it would be nice to build it back there at the trees so the noise goes away from the park.

Wilgrove isn't a great place to lay down blankets because it's damp and there are tree trunks out of the ground which makes it not very flat. Also it's so shaded back there it is hard to grow any grass, stated Mr. Welch.

Mrs. Ross said, that's what makes this an ideal place because people don't have to sit out in the sun.

Mr. Bowden said that he believes this is an item the committee should recommend to Staff to further research and come back with a follow up.

Do we know how many people enter and leave the park every day, asked Mr. Thompson. Mr. Cochrane responded, the park security has a clicker to record the people at the track, soccer field, play area, and every where around the park. I was curious whether more people got to Wilgrove or Veterans? Veterans definitely, stated Mr. Cochrane.

Let's move on to the existing conditions at Wilgrove Park, said Mr. Freeman.

I visualize a Dog Park at Wilgrove. The trees and the shade are nice and there aren't as many kids at that park, stated Mrs. Barnett.

Where would they put one, asked Mr. Thompson.

Do people still use the tennis courts, asked Mrs. Barnett. They stay full. We even have people waiting in line at times, responded Mr. Cochrane.

What else do people use that park for? How much is it utilized, asked Sandy.

There are a lot of birthday parties and the walking trail is used, said Mrs. McDonald.

There were some loose wires on a pole where the park lights are, and I wanted to see about them getting fixed, said Mr. Thompson.

I think overall the park is in great condition, stated Mr. Freeman. Let's move on to future plans for Brief Road Park.

This is a raw sight. This is the best time to decide on a walking trail through what trees are there. I think that needs to be one of the first decisions. We need to decide on how long we want it to be and how wide, should it go around the perimeter or have a shortcut through the woods halfway through for those who don't want to walk the whole trail, etc. Then, plan the fields and other uses for the park around that trail, stated Mr. Bowden.

Mrs. Barnett said, I agree to a point. How do you incorporate the trail around the perimeter with the parking? Safety wise, how do we make sure the cars are moving safely with a trail around the perimeter?

Mr. Freeman asked, are we hiring a design firm for this? Yes. We can't start construction without plans, stated Mr. Welch.

I've been told people would like to see Lacrosse fields, and a Legion field. The comments I've received are that they would like multi-purpose fields, said Mr. Freeman.

I would like to see rectangles on our side since there are diamonds on the MHAA side. A nice walking trail that can meander through everything, with a couple of shelters, bathrooms, any accessory structures we may like, a small storage shed would be things I foresee needing here. If there is a mom and a dad with three kids, ideally they would all be able to be doing something while there, stated Mr. Welch.

I asked some people around town how important lighting would be out at the fields and around the park and they said extremely. I've also been told that the walking trails are very important, stated Mr. Freeman.

Mr. Welch said, a trail is easy to design around the fields. There will be plenty of space. *If you make it a 5K, then you open it up to events for High Schools, said Mrs. Barnett.*

How much space would the parking take up to get to the fields because parking eats up space, said Mr. Thompson.

We only have 17 acres there right, said Mr. Freeman. We have 27, said Mr. Welch. It depends on what design we go with.

Is there anything that it should not include, asked Mr. Bailey. I would hope that our first thing would be to get grass laid out there. I don't think we should build a stadium right away because that will take the longest and may put everything else on hold, said Mrs. Barnett.

I don't think it needs to be a major event center, said Mr. Bowden. Are you not looking to use the Legion field to host major tournaments, asked Mr. Cochrane.

Mr. Freeman said he would like to see it be used for tournaments. That's what he has heard people would like to use it for.

They have a legion sized field at MHAA already I thought, said Mr. Bowden.

Mr. Freeman said it's not large enough for Legion. It is referred to as a senior little league field.

Does the Town of Mint Hill ever talk about having Park and Recreation as one division managing it, asked Mrs. Barnett. It would add a lot of zeros to the budget, stated Mr. Welch.

What is the time frame to hire someone to start some plans, asked Mrs. Barnett. We are going to talk in March at our retreat about the operations that go into the planning process for that, stated Mr. Welch.

Mr. Thompson asked, do you have an RFP for architects in order for them to give us a proposal? There won't be any money involved with that. Typically architects will give us a binder of their work, stated Mr. Welch.

Will there be any more grants applied for, asked Mr. Freeman. We didn't have a concept for what the park would be at the time of the grant application this time. Once we have a concept we will apply for a grant, but the most we would receive is \$500,000. We will apply for it when we have something on paper, stated Mr. Welch.

Mr. Bowden suggested contacting the University for an intern who could come in and help for a summer. Mr. Welch informed him the reason for not doing that would be that it's more trouble sometimes to find work for an intern to do if there isn't enough. Also it's hard to really understand the process and function of everything in just a few months. It would be more beneficial to have someone around for a year or more, but most interns are not looking for that long term.

Mr. Bailey stated that we would use the remaining time to discuss general topics.

Mr. Freeman asked if the park fees were still concurrent with what it takes to maintain them? Mr. Welch stated, the fees are there to help with the maintenance. There is no money being made off of reservations and it's certainly not keeping the lights on per say, but it helps to have the nominal fees for maintenance purposes.

Mr. Freeman asked, is some of that refundable? Mr. Bailey stated that either Michelle Farrar or Candice Everhart could give insight to people's reactions to the park fees and if there have been any issues with that. Ms. Everhart stated, the Town had started accepting credit cards as payment and the citizens seemed to like that option. There haven't been too many complaints other than from people not within Mint Hill Town limits since the price is double for them. I think they are usually understanding about why we have that policy so it's not much of an issue.

Mr. Bailey said, he would personally like to go to one fee. *Mrs. Barnett said she likes the differentiation between the two since the people who live in Mint Hill are the ones paying our taxes.*

Adjournment: There being no further business to come before the Board, Mr. Thompson made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Bowden and the Committee unanimously agreed, Chairman Freeman adjourned the meeting at 9:51 a.m.

Candice Everhart
Program Support Assistant