

DRAFT

**Cary Town Council Work Session Minutes
October 25, 2011
Room 10035, 316 N. Academy Street, Cary, NC
5:30 p.m.**

Present: Mayor Harold Weinbrecht, Mayor Pro Tem Julie Robison, Council Members Gale Adcock, Don Frantz, Jennifer Robinson, and Jack Smith

Mayor Weinbrecht called the meeting to order at 5:31 pm.

Mayor Weinbrecht invited Council Member-Elect Lori Bush to join council in the work session discussion.

The staff report follows:

- 1. Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Master Plan Update (PR12-13)**
Consideration of issues related to the update of the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Master Plan

Speakers: Danny Hopkins, PRCR Director; Doug McRaney, Parks Planning Manager; Anne Miller, GreenPlay (Consultant) and other staff

From: Danny Hopkins, PRCR Director
Prepared by: Doug McRaney, Parks Planning Manager
Approved by: Benjamin T. Shivar, Town Manager
Approved by: Michael J. Bajorek, Assistant Town Manager

Executive Summary

The purpose of this work session is to provide Town Council with an update on the current status of the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Master Plan. In addition, a summary of the input and findings will be presented to council for review. These findings are based on considerable input obtained from Town of Cary residents regarding the future of the Town's park and recreation system. The Master Plan is scheduled to be completed by the spring of 2012. Staff requests council feedback and direction for continued development of the master plan. Staff expects to present the draft plan to council in February 2012.

Background

The Town's nationally accredited Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department oversees a park system of over 2,400 acres of combined parks and open space. This system consists of 22 developed parks, 58 miles of greenways, 3 community centers, 13 staffed facilities and 4 major sports and entertainment venues. The council-approved 2003 *Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Facilities Master Plan* has been the principle guide for capital budget planning, programming and facility development for the last eight years. Since 2003, the Town and its system of parks, greenways and facilities has continued to grow, including in ways that the 2003 plan did not anticipate (e.g. special facilities). Given the amount and scope of change the Town has experienced during the past few years, this update is significant in defining the direction for park and facility development over the next decade.

Discussion

In March 2011, council approved hiring the consulting firm "GreenPlay" to complete the PRCR Master Plan. There are three major phases to this planning process. These include:

- Phase 1: Information Gathering
 - Public Process

- Inventory and Analysis
- Phase 2: Findings
 - Identification of Key Findings, Issues
- Phase 3: Plan Development
 - Generate Options and Recommendations

The first phase (Information Gathering) took place between May and September and is now complete. To accurately reflect the needs and desires of the community, it was essential that this first phase include a comprehensive public participation process. Below is a listing of the range of approaches that were used to obtain input. The engagement process emphasized data collection methods that were efficient, effective, and incorporated the Town's available resources to the greatest extent possible. This process was critical in obtaining information to determine community values and needs.

- **Joint PRCR Boards and Committees Meeting** - On May 10, 2011, the Town conducted a joint meeting of its PRCR Boards and Committees. The purpose of the meeting was to "kick-off" the 2011/2012 Master Plan process. The Boards consisted of the PRCR Advisory Board and the Public Art Advisory Board. The Committees include the Athletic, Cultural Arts and Greenways. The Boards and Committees were divided into four groups and asked to complete a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) for Greenways, Recreation Programs and Community Facilities, Parks and Open Space and Cultural Arts.
- **Focus Group Meetings** (June, July and August) - A series of focus groups were held in June, July and August 2011 to obtain input from stakeholders on a variety of topics: indoor and outdoor athletics, community centers and special use facilities, parks and open space, and cultural arts, greenways and venues. After a project overview of the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Master Plan was provided to attendees by the Planning Team, community and staff stakeholders discussed a series of questions related to the focus group topic. Over 200 citizens attended these meetings.
- **Public Meetings** (July 18 and 19) - The Town of Cary held two public meetings to gather input as part of the process to complete the Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources Master Plan. Over 100 citizens attended. In terms of format for the meetings, a short project overview was presented to the public followed by several questions regarding the value and vision of parks, recreation, and cultural resources to the Cary community. Then participants were asked to circulate to different stations (Values/vision, System Overview, Parks and Recreation, Cultural Arts, Greenways and Open Space) that were set up around the meeting room. At each station were a series of questions. The questions were printed on large sheets of paper and tacked to the wall. Participants were given post-it notes to write comments. Staff and consultants were assigned to each station to answer questions as needed.
- **Master Plan Survey** - The purpose of this study was to gather public feedback on the Town of Cary's parks, recreation, open space and trails programs, services and other community investments. The survey was conducted using three methods: 1) a mail-back survey, 2) an online invitation only survey, and 3) an open link online survey for members of the public who did not receive a randomly selected survey in the mail. The analysis focused primarily on surveys received via the first two methods. A total of 5,100 surveys were mailed to a random sample of Cary households in August 2011, with 5,010 being delivered after subtracting undeliverable mail. The final sample size for this statistically valid survey was 661, resulting in a response rate of 13.2 percent. The open link survey generated an additional 808 responses.

- **Benchmarking Comparative Data Analysis** - Comparative data from the following seven communities was collected and analyzed in comparison to the Town of Cary. The communities were chosen because they are known for having quality parks and recreation systems. Each community was sent a benchmarking data request form and self-reported the data.
 - Clarksville, TN
 - Fort Collins, CO
 - Lakewood, CO
 - Naperville, IL
 - Plano, TX
 - Rockville, MD
 - Scottsdale, AZ

- **Master Plan Email** - As part of the public process of the Master Plan, a specific email address was created (parksplan@townofcary.org) to provide citizens an additional opportunity to share ideas and concerns with the Town regarding the development of Cary's future parks system. Aside from the focus group meetings, public meetings and mail-in survey, citizens wishing to provide additional input could do so through this email. Between June and September 2011, 116 emails were received regarding the Master Plan. These were grouped in the following areas: Parks and Open Space (20), Greenways (12), Facilities (81), and Downtown (3). The majority of the emails for new facilities were for a farmers market (64).

- **Indoor and Outdoor Facility Inventory** - A formal inventory process was used to obtain a current inventory as well as level of service being provided by the Town's parks and facilities.

Schedule

The Master Plan is currently in Phase 2: Findings. This phase will extend into December of 2011. Based on this work session, along with public input staff receives during this phase, Plan Development is expected to occur in January 2012. A second work session will be scheduled for February 2012 with a draft of the Master Plan for council to review. Additional public meetings will be held at that time. The plan is expected to be completed by late Spring 2012.

- Phase 1: Info Gathering – Aug-Sept 2011
- Phase 2: Findings – Sept-Dec 2011
- Phase 3: Plan Development – Jan-May 2012

Fiscal Impact

There are no operating or capital impacts associated with this staff report.

Staff Recommendation

Staff requests council feedback and direction for continued development of the master plan.

GreenPlay Consultant Anne Miller reviewed the above staff report and the PowerPoint presentation (attached to and incorporated herein as **Exhibit A**).

Miller stated Cary's parks and recreation trails stand out as unique with an overall high quality. She said Cary is in a good position in terms of visioning and planning.

Miller said focus areas and recommendations provided by stakeholders at work sessions will provide quantitative and qualitative information sources, which will be viewed as a whole for a sense of balance.

Robison asked if individual park usage was used as survey data points. Miller said yes; the survey shows the average response of the entire sample.

Miller stated there were favorable responses to the level of services provided in Cary parks; however, the survey is a good reminder that marketing is important.

Shivar asked about the types of community recreation center options on the survey. Miller said a few examples were given, such as gyms, aquatics, and fitness areas.

Robinson asked why the survey only asked about outdoor aquatics instead of indoor/outdoor aquatics. Miller said the staff management team was more interested in the outdoor component.

Robinson asked if the indoor recreation facilities in the survey mentioned aquatics. Miller said there was an amenities choice for the indoor facilities questions.

Robison asked about self-identified priorities on the survey. Miller said there was a list of choices and write-in opportunities.

Robison asked if the data presented was a combination of the web and mail-in surveys. Miller said the information presented to council was based on the statistically valid mail-in survey. The web-based responses were used to validate and further analyze the three geographical areas as defined by the plan.

Frantz asked if cost factor was part of the survey. Miller said some sections of the survey had qualifiers that included costs in the context. Hopkins added that all aspects will be considered and shown with mapping tools when they are done.

Miller said Cary's demographics are unique in the state so planning for growth and understanding how it will affect the parks and recreation system is important.

Miller stated park trails are ranked high in national surveys. She said a country-wide trend is to have larger multi-purpose recreation centers.

Miller said previously purchased Town-owned land has positioned Cary well for the future. Cary also has a lot of amenities that other communities do not.

Robison asked if recreation questions were exclusive to community centers. Miller said they included indoor recreation space. Cultural resources facilities and historic preservations questions were also included, but not highlighted.

Robison asked if private recreation facilities were considered. Miller said they were included in the inventory and level of service analysis. She said only Town-owned facilities were included for benchmarking purposes. Robinson asked for benchmarking data. Staff will provide council with that report.

Frantz asked for financial data. Miller said it was not included because it would not be a fair comparison.

Robinson asked if county/city cooperative efforts were included. Hopkins said cities were selected on a value basis and people's perception of a park system.

Bush asked if people in the same area asked about similar data. Miller said top priorities were the same with a few exceptions, such as programming. For example, east Cary ranked aquatics as a high priority, and south Cary ranked trails as a high priority.

Miller stated the inventory and level of service is called composite values methodology, whereby all components of a park/recreation facility are reviewed. She stated the staff management team visited each Cary park and facility and rated it using a scale based on Cary's values: 1) meets expectations, 2) meets expectations for its function, or 3) exceeds expectations.

Miller stated the maps within Exhibit A were generated by combining the facility components. She said the darker shades on the maps show facilities with numerous components and the lighter shades are those facilities with fewer components. Hopkins noted that for modeling purposes, the central area takes up a large portion of what is traditionally viewed as west and north. The maps are only a generalization of gathered data, not a prescription for a recommendation based on the analysis.

Robison asked what defines the west area. Miller said it's the area west of Highway 55. She added that density varies significantly in the different subareas, but there is a good distribution of park services across Cary's planning area.

Miller stated the composite analysis shows that 97 percent of Cary residents have access to park services. She said 76 percent meets or exceeds the threshold value of at least four separate components within park facilities. She stated walkability, trail networking, and density were areas analyzed with the four components. The analysis concluded that Cary enjoys a high level of overall service. Distribution of services is based on population, and even distribution throughout Town is expected. She said they didn't see any significant shortfalls or gaps.

Miller said goals for level of service strategy are needed. Partnering with schools for recreational facilities was discussed by the focus groups. She said there are opportunities to strengthen that relationship.

Robison asked about sustainability practices pertaining to park facilities. Miller said facilities can be built to LEED design standards, and low impact development and stormwater management can be done.

Miller reviewed the next steps as noted in Exhibit A.

Weinbrecht wants to see an analytical map for passive recreation, public art and active recreation, especially in west Cary.

Frantz said the data presented doesn't show a big demand for the performing arts. He stated follow-up questions pertaining to public art might provide good information. He asked about partnering with the high school and county for tracks.

Bush asked if there were any open-ended questions on the survey. Miller said yes, there is an appendix that contains all of those comments. Hopkins said themes were categorized using the comments.

Bush asked if the uniqueness to each park was considered. Miller said it was considered by the focus groups.

Adcock asked if thoughts were similar among the randomly selected people. Miller said there were similarities overall. She said setting priorities will be a challenge.

Weinbrecht asked if analytical maps could be generated online. Miller said that's a possibility.

Bush asked about the next steps in the planning process. Miller said the next steps are visioning and strategizing. Hopkins added that staff will be meeting with various departments to draw on their areas of expertise.

Robison asked for a copy of the mapped visuals presented at this meeting. McRainey said copies will be provided to council and placed online.

Robison said she needs time to consider the information. McRainey said staff will seek plan approval in June.

Robinson wants the rapidly growing west Cary area to be considered in the plan.

Smith said Cary is also seeing an explosion of seniors, which needs to be considered. Robinson stated one of the highest rated initiatives chosen in last year's retreat was amenities and living for seniors.

Hopkins said an interdepartmental team is finalizing a report for council that will be incorporated into the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Master Plan. He said it will include topics such as benchmarking, recommendations on efficiencies and existing services. McRainey stated data gathered in the survey about the senior center will be included in the report.

Bush asked if census data was compared to the demographic information in the survey. Miller said typical survey practice is to slightly adjust the base for the demographics.

Robinson asked if citizens ranked any trail use impediments. McRainey said that type of question was not in the survey.

Frantz wants more data on fitness centers. Adcock said people are looking for multipurpose centers.

Robison wants to focus on improvements, renovations and upgrades instead of big, new facilities.

2. 2012 Council/Staff Retreat Planning

Consideration of timeline options for the Council/Staff Retreat

Shivar reviewed the following location and schedule options for the 2012 Council/Staff Retreat:

Option 1 (In-town)

Thursday:

Evening: council convenes for team building activity and dinner

Friday morning:

8 – 10 am: Council has breakfast together, additional team building exercise

10 am – noon: Session

Noon – 1 pm: Lunch

1 – 5 pm: Session

5 – 7:00 pm: Staff/council social time

7 – 10 pm – Dinner

Saturday:

8-8:30: Breakfast

8:30-noon: Session

Noon – 1 pm: Lunch

1 pm – 5 pm: Session

Option 2 (In-town)

Friday morning:

8 am – Noon: Council has breakfast together, team building exercise(s)

Noon – 1 pm: Lunch (staff joins council)

1 – 5 pm: Session

5 – 7:00 pm – Staff/council social time

7 – 10 pm – Dinner

Saturday:

8-8:30: Breakfast

8:30-noon: Session

Noon – 1 pm: Lunch

1 pm – 5 pm: Session

Option 3 (Out-of-town)

Thursday:

Mid/late afternoon: council arrives for team building activity followed by dinner

Friday morning: Council has breakfast together, staff arrives by 10 am

10 am – noon: Session

Noon – 1 pm: Lunch

1 – 6 pm: Session

5 – 7:00 pm: Staff/council social time

7 – 10 pm: Dinner

Saturday:

8-8:30: Breakfast

8:30 – noon: Session

Noon – 1 pm: Lunch

1 – 3 pm: Session

Option 4 (Out-of-town)

Friday:

Council arrives 10 am for team building activity

Staff arrives to join council at lunch

Sessions from 1 – 6 pm

6 – 7:00 pm – Staff/council social time

7 – 10 pm – Dinner

Saturday:

8 – 8:30: Breakfast

8:30 am – Noon: Session

Noon – 1 pm: Lunch
1 - 3:00 pm: Session

Shivar said travel times for out-of-town options are about two hours. The downside of an out-of-town location is the cost, with option 3 being the least costly of the out-of-town options.

Shivar said retreat facilitators could cost between several hundred dollars (using someone from the School of Government) and \$7,000. He doesn't believe a facilitator is needed for the council/staff portion of the retreat; however, if council thinks differently, then a non-participating staff member can facilitate that portion. He said a professional will be needed for the council teambuilding portion.

Robinson said council only needs time together. She wants a teambuilding activity rather than a teambuilding session and believes a facilitator is not needed.

Adcock said the best teambuilding session they had was impromptu. They spent time getting to know each other. Shivar said council needs to be mindful of public notice requirements.

Robinson said if the retreat is out-of-town, then a location with elements that would benefit Cary would be useful. Frantz said an out-of-town location will give more together time with fewer interruptions. Adcock said with the options presented, an in-town location will give council more quality together time.

Smith thinks option 1 could work with certain commitments and an appropriate environment.

Robison said an out-of-town venue will provide a higher quality experience. She prefers an option that launches the retreat with numerous hours of council teambuilding time, such as option 2.

Weinbrecht stated social and structured times are important. He prefers an out-of-town location where they have less distractions and disruptions.

ACTION: Robinson moved that council choose Option 3 (out-of-town). Weinbrecht provided the second.

Adcock said if going out-of-town they should get the biggest bang for their buck. She said the most important thing is that they spend quality time together.

Bush would prefer to go out-of-town. She said when you stay local you have more interruptions.

ACTION: Mayor Weinbrecht called for a vote on the motion. Smith and Adcock voted no; all others voted aye. The motion passed by a majority vote. (Council member-elect Bush did not participate in the vote.)

Human Resources Director Vee Willis said Wilmington, Greensboro, Wrightsville Beach and Winston Salem are out-of-town possibilities. The council does not want to consider Midpines.

Robison suggested using the meeting facility in Hillsborough that Leadership Triangle uses. Council consensus was that they did not want to use that facility.

Adcock asked about the budget for the retreat. Willis said the budget is about \$14,000. She thinks she will be able to stay within the budget even with a facilitator.

Assistant Town Manager Mike Bajorek said if the retreat is in town, it will cost about \$5,000 for food and lodging; going to the coast or Greensboro is about \$11,000 for food and lodging; and some places, like Southern Pines, is about \$8,000. Those are ballpark figures to provide comparisons.

Shivar said staff tries to cover contingencies in the budget. Using a private facilitator is going to be higher than using the SOG. If using a private facilitator out-of-town, it may require transferring money from another account, which has been done in the past.

Adcock said the Town has to pay the facilitator's expenses. Shivar concurred.

ACTION: Frantz moved to go to Wilmington for the retreat. Weinbrecht provided the second.

Robinson asked Willis to provide council with three places in Wilmington for the retreat.

ACTION: Mayor Weinbrecht called for a vote on the motion. Robinson and Smith voted "no"; all others voted "aye". The motion passed by a majority vote. (Council member-elect Bush did not participate in the vote.)

Willis will confirm a Wilmington location and send information to council. Weinbrecht asked if council will have options. Willis said the Wilmington Hilton is available. She said it would be helpful to have a second location choice in the event things don't work out in Wilmington.

ACTION: Robinson moved that staff consider Salisbury as a second choice. Frantz provided the second. Smith voted "no"; all others voted "aye". The motion passed by a majority vote. (Council member-elect Bush did not participate in the vote.)

Robinson asked about the cost of taking the train to Salisbury. Willis said it's about \$30 one way per person.

ACTION: Robinson moved that staff consider Charlotte as a third choice. Smith provided the second.

Willis said staying on the outskirts of Charlotte would be less costly. Robinson said the train station is on the outskirts.

ACTION: Mayor Weinbrecht called for a vote on the motion. Smith provided the second. Adcock voted "no"; all others voted "aye". The motion passed by a majority vote. (Council member-elect Bush did not participate in the vote.)

Bajorek summarized council's discussions stating that council agreed on option 3, which is out-of-town. Staff will look for hotel options in Wilmington first, then in Salisbury, and finally in Charlotte. Staff will provide council with an itinerary.

Weinbrecht adjourned the meeting at 7:21 p.m.