

**CITY OF MONROE
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
PHIL BAZEMORE ACTIVE ADULT CENTER
500 W. JEFFERSON STREET
MONROE, NORTH CAROLINA 28112**

**TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2024
6:00PM**

AGENDA

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Item 1. Approval of Minutes – February 20, 2024

Item 2. Public Tree Ordinance

Item 3. Financial Report

Item 4. Divisional Program Updates (MAFC, Parks Maintenance, Recreation)

Item 5. New Initiatives

- A. Innovation
- B. Conservation
- C. Training and Safety

Item 6. Other Business

ATTENTION COMMISSION MEMBERS: Please contact Angie Sustar at asustar@monroenc.org or 704-282-4651 to confirm your attendance. Thank you.

**CITY OF MONROE
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
FEBRUARY 20, 2024
MINUTES**

The Parks and Recreation Commission of the City of Monroe, North Carolina met in the Phil Bazemore Active Adult Center, 500 W. Jefferson Street, Monroe, North Carolina at 6:00PM on February 20, 2024.

Members Present: Chairman/Council Member Franco McGee and John Thomasson

Members Absent: Debbie Dillion

Staff Present: Ryan Jones, Tyson Carrier, Darren Baucom, Kellie Corcoran-Walters, and Angie Sustar

Guests: Coach Donald Kincaid, Tracey Kincaid, and Dr. Joe Milner

Chairman/Council Member Franco McGee called the meeting to order at 6:04PM and welcomed everyone in attendance.

Chairman/Council Member Franco McGee introduced himself, shared his resume, and his goals.

Item No. 1. Approval of Minutes from December 5, 2023

Motion: John Thomasson moved to approve the minutes of the December 5, 2023 meeting.

Second: Chairman/Council Member Franco McGee

Action: The motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously with the following votes:

AYES: John Thomasson and Chairman/Council Member Franco McGee

NAYS: None

Item No. 2. Introduction of Tyson Carrier, Athletic and Special Events Supervisor

Parks and Recreation Director Ryan Jones welcomed and introduced Tyson Carrier as the new Athletics and Special Events Supervisor. Mr. Carrier was previously with Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation at Eastway Regional Recreation Center. Mr. Jones shared that Eastway Regional Recreation Center was named one of the best recreation center in Mecklenburg County. He stated that Mr. Carrier has experience with youth athletic leagues and special events and has hit the ground running. He will work to improve our sports leagues, provide the best quality programs for our youth, show appreciation to our coaches, and communicate effectively to our parents.

Mr. Carrier thanked Mr. Jones for the opportunity to serve the Monroe community. He shared that he is excited to be here, is looking forward to getting to know everyone, and desires open communication.

Item No. 3. Bearskin Greenway Phase III and Creft Park Renovation Project Update

Parks and Recreation Director Ryan Jones provided a brief project update. He advised that the City had been awarded a N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Grant (PARTF) in the amount of \$500,000 in matching funds for the Bearskin Greenway Phase III and Creft Park renovation project. He stated that this is the second PARTF grant that we have been awarded in four years. He advised that the first PARTF grant awarded in 2020 was a \$425,000 matching funds grant for the Belk Tonawanda Park Phase 1B expansion project that included construction of the splash pad, a shelter, restrooms, accessible paths, outdoor fitness equipment, outdoor games, a renovated bocce ball court and helped to provide more connection through the park because a lot of the amenities were not accessible. He stated that the goal for the future is inclusive Parks and Recreation programming. He stated that member John Thomasson had been helpful in providing inclusive playground equipment through the Monroe Union Breakfast Rotary. Mr. Jones advised that staff have focused on providing playground equipment that is inclusive meaning that kids are playing together on the same equipment. He stated that research has shown that the more kids play together that have a disability the more confident they become. He advised that there was a park renovation project in almost every park this past fiscal year. He stated that the renovation at Don Griffin Park provides more of an inviting play structure that allows kids to play on the same structure. He advised that since the current playground equipment there was in good shape, they were able to add on the new equipment. Mr. Jones advised that Creft Park located in the Winchester area is in need of a renovation. He shared the value and connectivity that a greenway provides to a community, and how this project will connect Don Griffin Park to Creft Park. He advised that the Creft Park renovation project will include accessible paths throughout the park, an inclusive kids zone that is a multipurpose space to allow kids to utilize all kinds of games/structures, outdoor fitness equipment, and fence the outdoor basketball court. He also stated that by using our logo at each park, people know it is a City of Monroe of park.

Chairman/Council Member Franco McGee thanked Mr. Jones for taking the initiative and addressing the needs of the community.

Item No. 4. Special Event Updates

Mr. Jones provided insight of the planning process for special events. He advised that in January and February staff submit permits for all special events for the year. He advised that Parks and Recreation manages the following special events:

Easter Eggstravaganza – (3/23)

Music on Main Concert Series – (4/26, 5/17, 6/28, 7/26, 8/23, & 9/27)

Car Cruise-In – (4/12, 5/10, 6/14, 7/12, 8/9, 9/13, & 10/11)

Juneteenth Celebration – (6/15)

Fourth of July Celebration – (7/4)

Halloween Happening – (10/19)

Christmas Tree Lighting – (12/7)

He stated that these special events are in addition to all the community happenings events that our community centers coordinate on a monthly basis. He advised that the events have a highlighted theme and this month's is Black History.

He provided a brief update on the upcoming Easter Eggstravaganza taking place on Saturday, March 23, 2024 at 10:00am at Parks Williams Athletic Complex. He advised that in addition to the Easter egg dash, our community center staff provide an arts and craft station, there will be inflatable amusement

attractions, and fun food vendors.

Mr. Jones shared that the line-up of performers for the Music on Main concert series is almost finalized and will be announced at the next meeting. He advised that the Union County Community Arts Council partners with Parks and Recreation and sponsors two of the bands in the MOM concert series. The six concert series starts in April and runs through September and draws a large crowd to the downtown area.

Mr. Jones provided a brief update on the Car Cruise In event scheduled to take place the second Friday of the month and runs April – October.

Mr. Jones stated that these events have taken place for years and the focus is to utilize partners that will allow these events to be taken to the next level and provide a better opportunity for the community to come and enjoy the events. He shared that even though the weather didn't cooperate this year and the Christmas Tree Lighting had to be rescheduled, the evening was a huge success. As well, Santa's Workshop Experience took place downtown that included professional actors that interacted with visitors. He advised that through partnering with Carson Kids, children on the spectrum were able to enjoy the Santa's Workshop Experience in a controlled environment.

Item No. 5. Juneteenth Update

Mr. Jones provided a brief update on the Juneteenth Celebration event. Mr. Jones advised that Council Member McGee advocated for the City to take over the coordination of the event. He advised that this year we are evaluating our approach and we are including community champions to be on the planning committee to make sure we're focused on every aspect that this event encompasses. The goal for this event is unity and inclusion.

Chairman/Council Member Franco McGee stated that this is an important event that it's an opportunity to bring some education and awareness of what Juneteenth is. We were excited to have this as a paid holiday for the City and the next step was to make sure everybody understood why and to celebrate it as a collective. He stated it's not a black holiday it's an everybody holiday. It is an important holiday as Mr. Jones said, inclusion and awareness and a huge education component to make sure everybody understands why Juneteenth is important and why we celebrate it. He stated that he is excited and looks forward to the new approach.

Item No. 6. Facility Updates

Mr. Jones stated that there have been projects in almost every park over the last fiscal year. He advised that the focus will shift to the community centers as they need deferred maintenance issues addressed. He advised that the gymnasium floors have not been updated in fifteen years and are in need of attention. He advised that some issues had been addressed such as, at the Dickerson Recreation Center gymnasium where there was exposed insulation panels, holes in the insulation, and poor acoustics which caused loud echoes, Darren Baucom, Parks Maintenance Superintendent, Thomas Latimore, Recreation Division Supervisor, and I essentially installed carpet covered boards and replaced all the floors. This project potentially will allow us to take the next step and catch our community centers up. This project is a comprehensive list that addresses the needs that our community centers have. Our community kids and the families that live in the communities deserve a nice facility to go to. He advised that the goal is for the community centers is to be inviting.

Outdoor Facilities Update:

Parks Maintenance Superintendent Darren Baucom provided an update on projects that have been completed over the last fiscal year and those currently underway. He stated that at Sunset Park we added a dog park, renovated the basketball court, and construction of a new bathroom and sidewalks connecting the amenities is underway. He advised that new playgrounds have been put in at Creft Park, J Ray Shute Community Center, and Don Griffin Park as well a renovation of the basketball court at Creft Park, new tennis courts sidewalks, bleacher pad, and new bus parking lot at Dickerson Recreation Center.

Item No. 7. Divisional Program Updates

Parks Maintenance: Mr. Baucom provided an update on projects that are currently underway. He advised that loose leaf collection season is coming to an end. He reported that every year 15,000 – 17,000 cubic yards of leaves are collected by our leaf trucks. Winter parks maintenance projects are being completed and staff have begun the transition of servicing equipment and preparing for the mowing season. He advised that someone has been promoted to fill the vacancy left when Jackie Stegall, Senior Equipment Mechanic retired in November after 25 years of dedicated service to the City.

Mr. Jones stated that the parks maintenance division is responsible for loose leaf collection, mowing of the right of ways, mowing of the Hwy. 74 medians, maintaining 37 acres of two cemeteries, and maintaining all the parks. He advised that there are eleven parks maintenance staff and it is impressive all that they are able to accomplish.

Chairman/Council Member Franco McGee stated that he is appreciative for all the guys do. He stated that Parks and Recreation does a lot and that many do not realize everything staff does and that he is very appreciative for all their efforts.

Athletics: Athletic and Special Events Coordinator Tyson Carrier provided updates on athletic programs. Youth basketball season wrapped up the all-star tournament this past Sunday. He stated that there will be an end of the season “basketball bash” for all athletes at the Winchester Community Center. This event will celebrate our players, coaches and parents. We have purchased hot dogs, chips, lemonade and the Police Department will be joining us at the grill. There will be a raffle and everyone attending will be given a ticket and if selected you will be able to come onto the court to do a competition. We have gift cards from local businesses and MAFC provided coupons for free admittance to the pool. There will be a DJ to emcee the event, a bounce house, and the main theme is to celebrate our kids that signed up for the City of Monroe’s basketball league. He stated his #1 passion is the kids, for them to flourish and grow, and to get ready to play for their school’s teams.

Chairman/Council Member Franco McGee asked everyone in attendance to introduce themselves.

Coach Donald Kincaid introduced himself and stated that he runs a privatized JUCO athletic program and considers himself an extension of Parks and Recreation. He shared about the work he is doing in the community. His wife, Tracey Kincaid shared that while Coach Kincaid is the face of their program, she handles all administrative support aspects of the program.

Joe Milner introduced himself as a father of three, a local family physician, and an avid runner at Dickerson Park. He stated that he wanted to join because his family has benefited so much from the Parks and Recreation Department. He stated that the Parks and Recreation Department in Monroe is outstanding. He stated that the Dickerson camp has been great for his daughter, and the affordability of the program is fantastic, and there are people in his office who would have a hard time making ends meet if it weren’t for the affordability of the camp. As well, the special events have become very important to his family. He stated that he wants to be a support in any way possible and from a

professional side lower the bar to getting engaged in physical activity is huge. He shared how he has witnessed his patients benefit from our parks and greenways and the Monroe Aquatics and Fitness Center programs.

Staff attending introduced themselves as did Chairman/Council Member Franco McGee.

Monroe Aquatics and Fitness Center: MAFC Superintendent Kellie Corcoran Walters stated that she has been with MAFC a little over a year. She provided an update on programs and projects currently underway. The Uplift to MAFC Phase 1 project to completely refresh the front lobby and offices with new flooring, fresh paint, new art work and MAFC branding installed in the lobby and down the main hallway is complete. This Saturday we have Dance Cardio for ages 10 – 13 yrs old., the second session of winter swim lessons begins Monday, Summer Day Camp registration begins March 2, a program to the Charlotte Checkers, the Easter event is March 22, there are also two programs that MAFC is running with Parks and Recreation: The Kenny Gattison basketball camp at MAFC and we have coordinated with Tyson to offer free clinics to the community centers to teach basketball and leadership skills. Kenny is committed to teaching leadership and what it means to be a leader in the community. Also, we have swim lessons with Olympic Gold Medalist Cullen Jones. He will be conducting clinics at MAFC and will also conduct “safety around water” and swim lessons at the Winchester pool.

Member John Thomasson shared his passion for serving the community. He is the President of the Monroe Union Breakfast Rotary. Member Thomasson thanked staff for their assistance with the Harlem Wizards event at Monroe High School. He advised that the money raised by the event goes to Rotary projects such as scholarships for high school students. He also shared information on the tree planting project he began with sponsorship from Pilgrim’s Pride Corp. He works with the county arborist and local elementary schools to talk to the fourth graders and have the students assist in planting trees on school grounds and then they get to take trees home to plant.

Discussion followed.

Recreation Division Update: Mr. Jones provided an update on recreation programs. He stated that the Phil Bazemore Active Adult Center opened in June 2023 and on average there are about 160 people a day that participate in the programming. He advised that there’s a variety of programming offered for those that are fitness minded, those who want to play cards/games, do ceramics, wood working, line dancing, Zumba gold, chair yoga etc. He stated that when we designed this building we recognized how important it is to provide an open area for a senior adult for the social aspect because we don’t know what chapter of life that they are in and we want to offer a space where they can come and feel connected and that’s why the area is open. Evening classes are being offered for the younger working senior as well as those that may not have transportation until their relative is off work. Mr. Jones shared upcoming events for senior adults on Care Fest – An event to share resources available to seniors on March 13 and Car Fit –A program to improve driver safety that will take place in the lower parking lot on March 27.

Mr. Jones stated that community centers are more than just recreation facilities, they are resources for the community and we treat them that way. They are safe havens for kids and families to go to and we program specifically with that in mind, “that kids have options”. He stated that we have learned that kids want to feel a part of a group and feel safe. Sometimes they don’t know what safe is and just because they feel they belong doesn’t mean it’s the best environment for them. Our community centers provide a safe environment with positive role models and opportunities where they can explore a hobby or something along those lines that they enjoying doing and could possibly turn it into a career.

Mr. Jones provided an update on summer programs. He advised that the summer camp guide will be available soon.

Member John Thomasson stated that he would like to lay a challenge on the table and it's something they struggle with in the Rotary Club youth; but have made tremendous progress when talking about inclusion, providing opportunities for people with disabilities, about people from different parts of the country, it's still a challenge in particular a lot of the Hispanic community is very insulant for various reasons, language barriers, geography, some undocumented so it creates a lot of separation that they'd like to break down and they'd like to find ways get everybody involved in all resources available. He stated that "we've not been very successful at it and even though we've done a lot of outreach it's a tough thing to break until you can get them around this table. You have to get them in the programs and even though they're 20% of the county's population and here in the Monroe area." He stated that he wants to get people involved and taking advantage of the programs offered and resources available.

Chairman/Council Member Franco McGee stated that he likes to think of Parks and Recreation as a pipeline of possibilities and for kids it's important that they see themselves as being able to come to a recreation center or experience parks and recreation and dream of things that they may think that they cannot even do. It's important that we provide that type of space and opportunity for our children because they don't know what they don't know. He stated that just because you start from, I grew up in Icemorlee and in a single parent home and being a council member isn't something that was on my radar it just happened to be something that; I've always been an advocate of leadership, I'm a lifer here in Monroe and this was just the next step for me and I just try to lead the way and be a possibility agent for other people to let them know that they can do it too. I feel if that's a mindset we have as a collective we can be more inclusive and bridge the gaps wherever they are and I feel we are on the right trail of doing that.

He expressed his appreciation to Mr. Jones for his direction and the focus on programming. He thanked everyone around the table for their input, service, and their work in the community. He stated that our community centers are not just for the kids but for the community. He shared from his experience when he worked for Parks and Recreation as the recreation center supervisor at Sutton Park Community Center.

Tracey Kincaid asked if Monroe had ever thought of doing a Hispanic festival to try to bring out the Hispanic community. Mr. Jones stated that one was planned but had to be canceled due to a hurricane and attempts to reschedule the event have not been successful. He advised that the Chamber of Commerce was part of the committee planning the event. He stated that a benefit of the committee was that a good foundation was established with the Hispanic community.

Dr. Joe Milner stated that if there are any materials in Spanish, he is the only Spanish speaking primary care physician outside the Latino clinics in Union County with 30% or more of his patient population is Spanish speaking and he could give information out. He stated that he thinks ultimately having a regular touch point is the hardest barrier to overcome because a festival is great but where a lot of his patients run in to issues is when they call the office and you have to put a translator on and most of hospital follow up visits is just filling in the gaps what gets lost with good intention but translation services are only so good and he's always willing to work with staff on that.

Tracey Kincaid stated that during her time as a child care director, many of the parents do not speak English at all so the child is translating for the parent and that's why she was asking about a festival where you could get the information out that the community centers are there for them. If the information is in Spanish, they'll know there is a program.

Chairman/Council Member Franco McGee thanked Mr. Jones for bringing that information back up and he would like to add the Latino Festival back to the list. He stated that coordinating a festival with Hispanic Heritage month would be a good.

Item No. 8. Financial Report

Mr. Jones stated that in the future quarterly financial reports will be incorporated into this meeting to show the Commission where we are as far as our budget goes. He stated that Parks and Recreation is one of the few departments that operates from the general fund and also the enterprise fund. MAFC operates as an enterprise fund which means their revenue pays for their expenses. Mr. Jones stated that it's very impressive that MAFC has been in operation for 25 years and has not spent one penny of general fund dollars that it's all been self-funded from memberships and programs that they operate. He stated that during the Covid shut down the MAFC was able to utilize reserve funds and avoid the lay-off of any staff even when the center closed for a while. He advised that the MAFC has a decently healthy reserve fund and that they continue to work diligently to rebuild funds. He stated the he is seeing positive trends forward. Mr. Jones stated that the Recreation side is, it is funded by the general fund which is subsidized by taxes. He took a moment to share an overview of the budgeting process with the commission.

Chairman/Council Member Franco McGee stated that he did mention to Mr. Jones that in the private sector you have QVR quarterly budget reports and he feels that we should assimilate the same idea that where you've been a good steward of the monies we're spending and it shows Council that we are aware and so when we need to ask for more money we have those numbers to do that efficiently. He stated that quarterly would be fine, so we could do that so we could be aware of where we are so if we need to move anything around we have the opportunity to do that instead of waiting until the budget time maybe we run out of money or try to do some budget amendments at that time he just wants us to be able to have the flexibility to be able to do that. He stated that this actually shows that we are thinking outside the box and being aware of where we are financially so if we need to make some moves we have the opportunity to do that because we have the numbers and we know where those numbers are.

Member John Thomasson asked Mr. Jones if there was a regular update for the Council of not just the budget but of goals and attainment.

Mr. Jones stated that annual updates are provided. He stated that there are general program updates when there are items that require action. Typically, one is provided for the budget meeting for the financial picture and another one at the end of the calendar. He stated that he has provided several updates for example: The Beyond the Bell program and what we do.

Discussion followed.

Item No. 9. Other Business

Mr. Jones provided a brief update on the Pinedell Avenue Property "Lake Minehaha" pond project. He advised that the property will be utilized to provide outdoor recreational opportunities for internal programming.

Mr. Jones advised that staff is transitioning to special event planning mode and working to get Tyson the resources he needs.

Chairman/Council Member McGee asked if QR codes are being utilized to access program and special events information. Mr. Jones advised that there has been a shift that from a hard copy program guide to an electronic based guide and there are links QR codes within the guide. He stated that one great benefit of the electronic based guide is that it allows the real time revisions, updates, or corrections

without changing the QR code.

Discussion followed.

Coach Kincaid asked if anyone knew of any sponsors or volunteers that would like to assist his program, he needs tutors for the study halls he offers.

Discussion followed.

Mr. Jones expressed his sincere appreciation for all in attendance.

There being no further business, Chairman/Council Member Franco McGee made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion: Chairman/Council Member Franco McGee made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Second: John Thomasson

Action: Motion to adjourn passed unanimously with the following votes:

AYES: Chairman/Council Member Franco McGee and John Thomasson

NAYS: None

Respectfully Submitted,
Angie Sustar,
Administrative Services Supervisor
Parks and Recreation Department