

# Intergovernmental Parks Work Group

## Agenda

October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021

5:30 p.m.

Virtual – “Go to Meeting”

- 5:30**     **1. Welcome / Call to Order**
- 5:35**     **2. Introductions / Review of Meeting Notes** (Attached)
- 5:45**     **3. Presentation on the Orange County Countywide Racial Equity Plan**  
Annette M. Moore-Director of the Orange County Human Rights and Relations Department  
And  
Anita Jones-McNair- Director of the Carrboro Recreation and Parks Department and the Carrboro Race and Equity Officer
- 6:15**     **4. What’s on the Horizon? / Long Range Parks and Recreation Plans** (10 mins max)  
a. Town of Carrboro  
b. Town of Hillsborough  
c. Orange County  
d. City of Mebane  
e. Town of Chapel Hill  
f. Others
- 7:00**     **5. Adjournment** – Next meeting April 13, 2022

# Intergovernmental Parks Work Group

## Meeting Notes of April 14, 2021

### Members Present:

Jean Hamilton - Orange County Commissioner  
Amy Bell - Orange County Commissioner  
Pam Hemminger – Chapel Hill Town Council  
Robb English – Hillsborough Board of Commissioners  
Susan Romaine – Carrboro Town Council  
Aaron Davis - Mebane City Council Appointee  
Renuka Soil – Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation Commission  
Jesse Mowles – Hillsborough Parks and Recreation Board  
Deon Temne – Chapel Hill/Carrboro City Schools  
Cecily Kritz – Orange County Parks and Recreation Advisory Council  
Kim Piracci – Orange County Commission for the Environment  
Bo Howes -Triangle Land Conservancy  
Kim Livingston – Eno River Association  
Bill Goa-UNC Recreation

### Absent:

Tamara Sanders - Carrboro Parks and Recreation Board  
Vacant – Orange County Board of Education  
Sara Childs - Duke Forest Resource Manager  
Yinka Ayankoya - OWASA Board of Directors  
Vacant - Orange County Department on Aging Advisory Board

### Staff Present:

Dave Stancil; Marabeth Carr; and Beth Young; - Orange County, Dept. of Environment, Agriculture and Parks & Recreation  
Phillip Fleischmann - Chapel Hill Parks & Recreation  
Anita Jones-McNair and Wendell Rodgers - Carrboro Recreation & Parks  
Stephanie Trueblood - Hillsborough Planning

### Agenda Items / Notes (April 14, 2021)

#### 1. Call to Order

Chair Hamilton called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM

#### 2. Introductions / Review of Meeting Notes

Dave Stancil asked all the members to introduced themselves and who they represented

- Bo Howes- Director of land protection and stewardship and has been on IPWG quite a while. TLC is on because of Johnston Mill Nature Preserve and Brumley Forest Nature Preserve.
- Kim Piracci -Orange County Commission for the Environment. Tonight is her first meeting.
- Jean Hamilton- New on IPWG here to learn and support the parks Orange County
- Bill Goa – Director of Campus Recreation at UNC. He is always interested hear about peoples programing as we put graduates into them and take your youth into ours. Always fascinated with COVID restrictions what protocols the different organizations are using.
- Jesse Mowles –Town of Hill first meeting he’s looking forward to listening and learning

- Kim Livingston – ENO River Association; Director of Conservation and Stewardship. They have a nature preserve north of Hillsborough and a partnership with ENO River State Park. Just interested hear how everyone is addressing the increased park use.
- Robb English – Hillsborough Board of Commissioners. Robb has been with IPWG for many years in several different capacities and now as a representative from the town of Hillsborough board. He's interested in joint use and forming partnerships with everyone but mostly with municipalities and the county.
- Mayor Pam Hemminger – Representing the Chapel Hill Town Council. She was part of the IPWG from the beginning. Pam mentioned the Parks locator map and resolution passed for collaborations between the schools. She said the community doesn't see us as separate entities; that's why collaborations are so important. Would like to change the meeting time and or date. She is proud of staff working together during the pandemic. Excited about the other opportunities for folks that are out there.
- Susan Romaine- Carrboro Board Town Council. She was elected in Nov 2019. Tonight is her first meeting with IPWG. During COVID she was a regular at Hank Anderson Park and is interested in accessibility to all community members.
- Renuka Soll – Chair of the Chapel Hill Parks & Recreation Commission. She is excited to hear what other towns are doing and possibly doing things jointly.
- Cecily Kritz –Orange County Recreation & Parks Advisory Council. Her main goals are to expand access to parks, greenways and trails. She pointed out that we are all now faced with budget issues coupled with high facility use and that we need creative solutions to solve this; which almost always involves collaboration.
- Amy Fowler- She is the other new Orange County BOCC member. She is also a pediatrician and runner. Stressed the importance of recreation to physical and mental health.
- Deon Temne -Chapel Hill / Carrboro City Schools. He is looking forward to working with everyone.

Dave next asked staff to do the same

- Anita Jones-McNair - Director of Carrboro Recreation and Parks and Cultural Resources and is also the Race and Equity Officer for the town.
- Stephanie Trueblood– Public Space Manager for the town of Hillsborough. She noted that Parks and Rec is a critical component of public space. She doesn't think staff typically gets to choose what is reported to us. That staff is here to serve. Stewardship and sustainability are what continues to be exciting and that there is lots of possibilities for partnerships across jurisdictions. And she'd like to see expanded opportunities for connectivity.
- Phil Fleischmann – Director of Chapel Hill Parks & Recreation. Likes the ability to share in the ideas of collaborations and this group is a great venture to share ideas to get on the same page for collaborations this group also presents a great venue for alignment for staff leader's elected leaders and board's leaders to get on the same page for interest for planning purposes.
- Aaron Davis – Director of Mebane Parks and Recreation (serves as both Mebane City Council member slot and Staff Support). This was his second meeting after 2 years in Mebane. Excited to partner with everyone and has news to share about Lake Michael latter; which many people don't realize it is partly in Orange County.
- Wendell Rodgers - Facilities Administer for the Town Carrboro Recreation and Parks. He oversee their parks system and Century Center. He is always interested in hearing what his other colleagues are doing. He and Anita are both long time members.
- Marabeth Carr – Orange County Landscape Architect in charge of developing parks for Orange County. She has been on the committee since 2004 so she considers herself one the old timers of the

committee. She thinks this committee it's a great way for all of us to get-together and have dialog about everything related to Parks and Recreation

- Dave introduced Beth Young who is overseeing the zoom meeting

**3. Providing Recreation Programs and Park Management during the Pandemic - Lessons Learned and Challenges Faced** Each jurisdiction was asked to talk about how and what challenges and issues they have faced in the past year (10 minutes max each group).

- Dave (Orange County) - We all have had to learn so many new things quite a bit of knowledge and awareness came out of the last 13 months so it seemed appropriate to let each jurisdiction talk about what we did find out and how we did.
- Phil (Chapel Hill) - one of the biggest things was the importance of dialog with other agencies and piers tricky time to navigate. Having the ability to bounce ideas off others was phenomenal. After a few early missteps everyone got on the same page with what they could and should be doing which helped the public find consistency. Eventually they could function with a modified operating status after the expiration of the stay at home order so there were different opportunities available. At this point staff is comfortable with sanitation and screening protocol. Staff was adaptable and the state and Orange County Health Department was helpful in providing information. We learned the importance of all of our services particularly for opportunities for folks to be able to get outdoors with families recreating. They saw a general trend in large usage numbers in trail use. Bolan Creek saw 3000-5000 more visits per month which really paints the picture of the importance of what they have and were able provide throughout the pandemic. They accomplished some significant projects with help from our community and other agencies. They opened Booker Creek Basin Park with help from their public works department. They had a public art installation on Bolin Creek. The art; a mural is on the structure that goes underneath MLK. Booker Creek trail now has some painted public art of the sewer pipes also; which you can see from Franklin Street. They saw growth in their adopt-a-park or trail program. Removing Invasive species added value to the parks and to the ecology. They held a virtual Arbor Day celebration in November an installation at town Hall wrapped up a yearlong tree planting campaign that resulted in planting 400 trees within the town. They partnered with YMCA and Chapel Hill/Carrboro schools and the public schools foundation to host scholastic support center centers for 100 youth per day between Community Center and Hargraves very proud of that and it was great to be able to use the rec centers in a different way. They had a lot of great experiences in regard to our operation and we continue to the importance of ours services. Pam added - we created more spaces for pickle ball and provided more activities for more people and staff did a great job.
- Anita- (Carrboro) Challenges Faced:
  - Access to PPE, particularly in the early stages of the pandemic.
  - Closing park amenities (playgrounds, pavilions, etc.) and Century Center
  - Planning and implementing programs based on the uncertainty from month to month.
  - Educating and balancing resident needs and special interest groups wants with the use of park amenities.
  - Virtual fatigue - schoolchildren online all day, professionals on Zoom meetings, etc. Some do not want to recreate in that manner.
  - Providing virtual programming to all of the community. Working through and with disproportionate resources, neighborhoods, understanding of technology, etc.
  - High quality virtual content for events, concerts, etc. requires a certain level of equipment, expertise, etc. Comes at a significant cost premium vs. in-person events.
  - Programming during winter months more challenging since we could not move some programming outdoors as we could with other seasons.
  - Concern as the pandemic continues whether or not participation patterns in recreation will change and how we can continue to respond to it.
  - Adequate resources to accommodate work from home.
  - Maintain an extra layer of control as it relates to budgetary spending. (Postponed park projects and the use of some part-time employees.)Lessons Learned:
  - The pandemic reaffirmed the importance of recreation and parks opportunities; providing benefits (physical, mental, and emotional health; socialization; etc.)

- Parks are essential infrastructure. They offer access to programs and services, provide gathering spaces, exposure to nature, physical activity, and safe social distancing during the pandemic which provided healthy resilience.
- People have placed an increased value on outdoor recreation. Outdoor programming is as popular as ever and use of local parks has increased.
- Virtual platforms have presented new opportunities to increase engagement, hold meetings, and supplement traditional programming moving forward. Also an opportunity to reach new audiences is not limited by geography. We have seen participation from all over the country, as well as from outside of the US (England, Australia, Brazil, etc.) with some of our online events such as the Carrboro Music Festival, Carrboro Film Festival, and the Freight Train Blues Concert Series.
- Park and recreation agencies have continued to deliver vital services and programs to the community throughout the pandemic.
- Messaging via online postings, signage, flyers, other newsflashes, alerts, other means become vital to educate the public and share opportunities.
- Technology allowed us a smoother transition to remote work.
- Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and WebEx meetings seem to replace conference calls and in-person meetings. Zoom Meetings have been an extremely effective and efficient means of communicating with staff and other colleagues. They eliminate travel time, and tend to focus attention on important agenda items.
- Electronic signatures for many documents expedited faster, easier workflows.
- An opportunity to cross-train staff to better support our Front Office operation where most incoming inquiries regarding the department programs and facilities are handled.
- Staff has demonstrated remarkable dedication during these uncertain times, and adapted well to the changing work environment. We also learned that our agency can adapt quickly and effectively to the new reality.
- Once approval was given to limited programming, some small tweaks was all that was needed for some events, for example, we held the outdoor Kite Fly event, utilizing three fields instead of one. Some Summer Camps were held successfully last summer outdoors using smaller groups, social distancing measures, etc. without major changes to program content.
- While we have adapted many programs to a virtual or socially distanced environment, there is no true replacement for in-person engaging events. Example: Many of our seniors, fitness class participants, etc. are eager to return to in-person programming and be with their peers.
- Susan (Carrboro) - Anita, Wendell and Charles have been a savings grace for the community. They have risen up to provide the recreational opportunities both thru outdoor space and virtual platforms at a time when there has been so much anxiety because of the pandemic.
- Stephanie (Hillsborough)– So much of what Anita and Phil said hold true for Hillsborough. The town works on an accelerated budget then COVID hit and she lost everything. There are so many delays and so much need. While trying to serve the public from home what became clear was the outdoor spaces in Orange County are vital to mental health. Eno River Confluence property Brumley; Sevenemile Creek provide such important places to go. And this group continues to celebrate that. When their budget got slashed the years became a year of planning and responding. As a result they initiated a new Strategic Plan for the town board. The identified on community connectivity; racial equity; public safety and sustainability main objectives. At the same time working on the COVID recovery plan and the Racial Equity Plan. She suggested Anita could report to the group on this important work at a future meeting. The town is also working on a new comprehensive sustainability plan. Parks and outdoor and public spaces community and equity and connectivity are embedded in all of these plans it is important in all of these plans. There has been so much work to protect these spaces we need to continue that effort. All this is difficult to do virtually so not to miss groups. As we move forward to try to do planning better and involve more people. We have learned that whatever is going on socially plays itself out in our parks. To figure out how to open spaces without having a police ability. She highly praised the Orange County Health Department. And wants to encourage recognition for them. She said could not have done it with them. She is also hoping there will be some stimulus funding to help support projects. She appreciates her colleges.
- Dave – Said he would like to echo so many of the things that have already been said. But particularly the praises for the Orange County Health Department they have worked tirelessly and always have been there for us. To him the last 14 months have been in three stages. The first stage or the beginning of the initial lockdown was how to close things? And...how to get supplies like PPE. Sometimes even though a park maybe closed it could be in a neighborhood where it's impossible to

permanently close. We ended up bubble wrapping our playgrounds locking our restrooms. Acknowledging that even though playfields and some facilities were closed like Central Recreation facility; places like Little River Regional Park, Blackwood Farm Park; Hollow Rock Nature Park and Sevenmile Creek Natural Area were seeing historic usage highs. Thank goodness for all the miles of trails. He received emails and calls from folks expressing thanks for having access to trails that they helped play a key role in physical and mental health. Since there wasn't too many places for folks to go we were glad to have those places. Even though sometimes supplies were stressed but we figured a way through it.

Then the second stage- Sort of a beginning to reopen phase. Learning things like where we need hand washing stations and signage. Sanitizing was done more often. Making sure people follow the three "W's" Allowing limited usage of ballfields moved us quickly to virtual formats. One of our lessons learned is that we will continue to do some of these programs. Some at greatly reduced cost. Recreation even started an insta-cart service ...where we would deliver supplies for our programs like Legos to people without contact.

But even though we had success; we have to acknowledge that there were certain parts of the population that may not as well served; especially in our rural areas. Where internet access is limited. That virtual programs aren't a panacea that there is still a need for in person programs or explore other opportunities getting people access to what we do.

Stage Three-How to bring things back safely now looking into hosting limited summer camps. The Health Department was of great help telling us how many people we can serve; how COVID protocols will work. Things like volleyball camp will be moving outdoors. Figuring how to bring things back safely.

1. Learning how to do things virtually.

2. Getting the messaging out and working on outreach how to make sure programs and facilities are accessible to people.

3. Seeing how important open spaces are to the community not just for recreation but for mental health as well.

We have learned a lot and will continue

- Amy (Orange County) -Thanks to you guys for all you've done and she does hear what everyone is saying about the OC Health Department and maybe there will be a way to acknowledge them. She also expressed appreciation to all the departments who have helped the health Department accomplishing their mission. Their efforts are so critical to all of us to get back to normalcy.

Jean- Echo's what Commissioner Fowler said and that she serves on the Board of the OC Health Department and she will share with them what she's heard tonight. And she gave a thank you for all the work to everyone. Now; the question is how we need to go forward with limited resources. The BOCC will have to balance out needs and to make sure everyone has access, and to see who is not being served and what we need to do better to serve them.

- Aaron (Mebane)– great job to everyone they hit all the high points. Recreation and Parks are essential the pandemic brought that to light. Trails and parks being open was so important to mental health. In the beginning of the pandemic he thought he could work from home, but he was wrong working from home with four kids didn't work so he worked from his office alone the rest of time. The first week or two he decided as a leader it was up to him to lift everyone up. He said everyone needed to take a lesson from Jim Valvano who preached "spend time in thought everyday". Which allowed his staff to spend more time thinking about everything especially equity and inclusion. They never had tons of programs but now because of the pandemic they have doubled their offerings. They worked closely with the Health Department and spent time how to be more equitable. They came up with a pod system that worked so well they will probably continue to use it. Things they learned was to be super flexible and creative. That safety was the most important aspect. And that if people couldn't follow the rules then they had to learn how to say "No". They got backlash when events were cancelled but they creatively made new events as they held new replacement programs that helped. That they were able to do a lot of projects and improve facilities. At Lake Michael they hired an engineering consultant to do a dam assessment and it will be important to get focus on making improvements. They added an automatic gate for safety. They made improvements to the boat house and added new dock and kayak launch. They are working on trail connections to adjacent residential developments. One big future item is to expand the trail network around the lake which would be a 3.2 miles loop. Also they opened Gates Farm Park which has two miles of trails. The opening of that was great timing with the pandemic.

Dave next invited our other open space partners to share their experiences.

- Bo Howes (TLC)– confirmed they had similar experiences that the others did. Their only facility that has a counter is Brimley Forest and in 2019 it registered 16,000 users and in a partial 2020 they had 32,000. With

more users it did but a stain on the trail systems especially for maintenance. Since they don't offer restrooms or have trash cans they didn't have those types of issues and where they did have portalets they simply removed them; but are planning on adding them back soon. They also purchased 60 acres adjacent to Brumley off University Station Rd and are planning on adding a parking area to make a southern entrance.

- Kim- (ENO River) ENO was pretty similar to TLC. They opened Confluence Natural Area 7 days a week as opposed to weekends in response to the increased need. With only one part time staff person who helps manage 7000 ac in their response they ramped up their volunteers and trained them virtually did a lot of individual or pod trail work and keep their restrooms closed.
- Bill (UNC) UNC- in person program started this semester every one filled to capacity. They are events and activities like zip lines corn hole competitions and fitness programs using guidelines. He stressed that the demand is out there and he phrased all out for keeping trails etc. opened.  
No one else spoke

Dave phrased everyone keeping to schedule. One of long standing the ground rules of the group is starting and ending the meeting on time. This was because many of the group had 7:30 meetings to attend.

#### **4. Future Meeting Topics**

- Dave added the request from Pam Hemminger's on the meeting date/time change. Historically it has always been the second Wednesdays originally quarterly and then changed to a twice a year format. Dave offered to put a doddle poll out there. (It was pointed out that we may still need to meet virtually)

##### **Meeting topics**

- Amy- Connectivity as it been a topic in the past. Dave mentioned it had but it had been awhile and gave a quick overview of past topics
- Stephanie- Climate crisis and what we can do within our jurisdictions to bring parks and recreation space in alignment with climate goals. Would be a good idea to attend or participate.
- Dave- Social Justice
- Stephanie – when we passed Master aging plan a couple years ago and we looks at ways to support to that plan. She suggested that Anita present the racial equity plan once complete to see what ways this group could support the recommendations that come out of that plan Anita said it might be ready by October and that would be timely. Expand the school boards relationship to have discussions to use curriculum quality control. Or even jobs or sustainability classes within our curriculum.
- If anyone has any other later thoughts email Dave or Marabeth
- Bill- enjoyed the tour of sportspelx
- Marabeth – reminded everyone needs to update their info on their interactive maps.
- Robb- wanted to highlight accessibility on trails and all of our parks.
- Marabeth- Aging would like to highlight different parks on the lobby monitors. If you have videos they can use please let us know.
- Dave – we will send out a doddle poll on next meeting dates and times. Jean- keep our original date in reserve.
- Stephanie- maybe keep the date and shift the time earlier Dave asked if a 4:30 or 5 would work. And there were a few folks who said it wouldn't work.
- Phil- please keep one or two updates from each jurisdiction on the agenda.
- Anita- Wanted everyone to know Orange County Health dept. will help with event or reservation review.
- Dion- as a closing remark please give themselves grace for doing the best they can.
- Dave we will see you in October.

#### **5. Adjournment 7pm.**