

## SPECIAL MEETING

The Town Council of the Town of La Grange, North Carolina met in a Special Meeting at the Town Hall on November 2, 2009, at 5 p.m. with the following present:

Mayor Woodard H. Gurley; Mayor Pro Tem Bobby Wooten; Council Members Larry Gladney, Elliott Sutton, George Koonce, Gregory Rouse and Clifton Harrison; Town Manager, John P. Craft; Town Attorney, George Jenkins, Jr.; Town Clerk, Nelda H. Johnson, CMC.

Absent: None

Guest: 17

Mayor Gurley called the meeting to order and stated that the purpose of the Special Meeting was to receive public comment relative to the proposed multipurpose recreation complex to be constructed off of North Charles Street. Mayor Gurley turned the meeting over to Manager Craft to address the public.

Manager Craft thanked everyone for taking the time to attend the meeting as this was an informational session to receive public comment on the Town's proposed recreation complex. Manager Craft gave an overview of the project and provided a map outlining Phase I and Phase II of the project. The recreation park will be located off of North Charles Street on approximately 62 acres of land with about 35 acres to be developed. The Town was very fortunate to acquire a grant from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund to purchase the land and there was no cost to the taxpayers. The projected cost for the entire complex will be about 1.4 million dollars.

The first part of the project was to find a location for the park and then the Council needed to determine what the Town needs was and then what the citizens desired. A citizen survey was mailed with the monthly utility bills and these surveys were returned to the Town with citizen comments and desires and these helped to determine an overall site plan.

Phase I of the project will include 2 baseball fields, 2 playgrounds, concession stand and bathrooms, picnic shelter and additional bathrooms and 2 basketball courts.

Phase II will include 2 additional baseball fields, one additional basketball court, multipurpose or soccer field, tennis courts and a walking trail.

The Town submitted an application to the State for funds to help build Phase I but was not awarded a grant this funding cycle. The grant was for \$500,000 with a dollar for dollar match by the Town. The Town does plan to submit a second application to seek a recreation grant in the next funding cycle. The Town will not know until September 2010 if a grant will be awarded to begin Phase I.

Carl Hinson, 209 West Washington Street, asked if the fields were going to be lighted.

Manager Craft stated that all baseball fields would be lighted; but, there were no plans to light the multipurpose field at this time.

Paul Thompson, 509 A South Wooten Street, asked how the Town would control the use of the fields.

Manager Craft stated that a Recreation Advisory Board would be appointed by the Town Council to oversee the use and set guidelines and rules.

Creig Foss, 608 South Charles Street, asked if Phase I was funded, would Phase II automatically be funded or would the Town have to requalify.

Manager Craft answered that yes, the Town would have to submit an application for the funding of Phase II. Priority would be given to Towns that had begun Phase I.

Paul Thompson questioned if anything had been included for senior citizens.

Manager Craft stated that there has been discussion about building a Community Center at a much later date, but at this time there was no area or activity in Phase I geared directly for the senior citizens.

Brandon Foss, 311 South Caswell Street, asked how the Town would combat vandalism.

Manager Craft stated that the Town planned to place surveillance cameras throughout the complex. There would not be a continuous fence around the complex, but the playgrounds would be fenced for safety.

Keith King, 2172 Hardy Bridge Road, asked about staffing the recreation facility especially when Phase II was completed as the volunteers were doing all they could at this time.

Manager Craft stated that the Town will partner with Lenoir County to help contribute to this project. To help keep the grounds, the Town is increasing the use of inmates. Should a Recreation Director be needed in the future, the Council will consider the position.

Paul Thompson asked if the County would own, or partly own, the facility.

Manager Craft stated that this recreation park would be owned by the Town of La Grange.

Joseph Harrison, 604 South Caswell Street, asked about the maintenance, also the staffing, who would promote tournaments as additional staffing is needed when hosting a tournament, and would the citizens have an increase in Town taxes to pay for these needs.

Manager Craft stated that over the years, the Town has saved funds from sales tax that has been earmarked for recreation. Taxes are not anticipated to increase for the purpose of recreation because the Town Council has just lowered the tax rate as part of the new budget. The Council has agreed to add an additional staff member next budget year to the Public Works department that will work with the inmates at the recreation facility for the purpose of maintenance. Manager Craft stated that when the Town sees a need for additional personnel the Council will address the needs.

Paul Thompson asked about the Advisory Board, would it be established now or after the park is built.

Manager Craft stated that this is an area that the Town Council needs to address.

Ruby Gurley, 405 Lake Pines Drive, asked about the grant application that was submitted and not funded. The Towns that were funded, did they have more to offer or what do we account the reason for not being funded.

Manager Craft stated that a detailed review had been asked for of the Town's last application. The State has a point system and certain criteria have to be met. There were a lot of Towns and good projects to be considered and Towns that were already in a second funding phase were given priority. The fact that the Town already has a functional existing park, even though its use is limited, gave a deduction in points. Manager Craft briefly explained how the State uses a point system to help in awarding the grants.

Debbie Foss, 608 South Caswell Street, questioned why the Town was continuing to spend money at the local Community Park.

Manager Craft stated that a sprayground was being constructed for the children to use next summer and the local park would be utilized more by children and adults that walked opposed to the new proposed park on the north end of Town.

Council Member Gladney spoke on behalf of the sprayground stating that another reason the Town wanted the sprayground in the local park is because if the Town does not receive a grant this year, the Town would still be putting off the kids and they would not be receiving anything. We still do not know just how long it will take to build our new recreation park and we do not need to put the kids off and not offer anything.

With no further comments, Mayor Gurley thanked everyone for their attendance and interest in the Town's proposed park and was excited about moving forward and as we need to prepare for our children's future.

Mayor Gurley declared the meeting adjourned.

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Nelda H. Johnson, CMC, Town Clerk

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Woodard H. Gurley, Mayor