COUNTY AGENDA REQUEST

Department:	Parks and Recreation	Presenter(s):	Darryl Hicks
Meeting Date:	Thursday, November 15, 2012	Type of Request:	Old Business

Wording for the Agenda:

Discussion of the results of Phase II of the segmented approach for Fayette County's Parks and Recreations Needs Assessment.

Background/History/Details:

In 2003, the Board of Commissioners adopted the Fayette County Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment. The Needs Assessment has been used to guide the County in planning, developing and maintaining Fayette County's parks since its adoption. To continue to adequately plan for the future and to ensure the Assessment is still representative of the community, the Needs Assessment needs to be updated. In September 2011, the Board of Commissioners approved Phase I of the Needs Assessment which included a Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey. Survey results were compiled and made available for the Board of Commissioners review and comment in April 2012.

In June 2012, the Board of Commissioners approved Phase II of the segmented approach which consisted of setting the Vision and Goals Element of the Needs Assessment. As part of the process, two meetings were held with key stakeholders to obtain input and make recommendations of visions, goals and strategies for the Parks and Recreation Department.

A summary of the input from these meetings is now available for the Board of Commissioners review and comment.

What action are you seeking from the Board of Commissioners?

No action is requested at this time. The purpose of this request is to submit the results of Phase II of the Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment.

If this item requires funding, please describe:

Not Applicable.

Has this request been considered within the past two years?	Yes	If so, when?	Thursday, June 28, 2012
Is Audio-Visual Equipment Required for this Request?*	No	Backup Provided with Request?	Yes

**** All audio-visual material must be submitted to the County Clerk's Office no later than 48 hours prior to the meeting. It is also your department's responsibility to ensure all third-party audio-visual material is submitted at least 48 hours in advance.***

Approved by Finance	Not Applicable	Reviewed by Legal	
Approved by Purchasing	Not Applicable	County Clerk's Approval	Yes
Administrator's Approval	Yes		

Staff Notes:

Summary of Input Meetings on August 18 and September 15, 2012
For Fayette County Parks, Recreation, Leisure and Fitness Planning

These meetings were sponsored by the Fayette County Parks and Recreation Department on behalf of all governmental and organizational entities in the county with an interest in collaboratively planning for the future of parks, recreation, leisure and fitness programs and services for the benefit of the entire county. The purpose of the two planning meetings was to create input and recommendations to present to the appropriate governing bodies and organizational entities.

The tasks for these meetings were to:

- come to agreement on a preliminary Vision statement for these programs and services
- draft goal statements in keeping with that Vision, the recent needs assessment survey of Fayette County citizens and the experience and perspective of all those attending the meeting
- discuss and document possible major strategies or action steps to implement the draft goals, if they are agreed upon going forward with this planning process
- discuss and document possible obstacles and challenges for each goal
- Discuss possible collaboration opportunities

Vision Statement Drafts Created in This Meeting

Version A: Moving forward together to provide recreation, leisure and fitness opportunities to foster a high quality of life for all ages in Fayette County.

Version B: Moving forward together to provide recreation, leisure and fitness opportunities to foster a high quality of life for all ages in Fayette County. These services are recognized and appreciated as valued county assets that are broadly enjoyed and supported by the community for recreation and social interaction.

Draft Goals, Strategies/Action Steps and Issues, Challenges or Obstacles to Address

The group created priority goals based on the needs assessment survey results, their knowledge and the Vision statement. They were to consider factors such as impact, cost, demand for services and programs and other issues they surfaced in discussion. Possible major action steps/milestones/strategies are included after each goal as well as possible challenges or obstacles associated with that goal. These inputs are intended to provide some traction for the ongoing planning effort. They are a starting point, not a comprehensive list of everything that should be considered. (TBD below = date to be determined) These goals are not in any priority order, with the exception of Goal 1, step A which should be addressed first.

1. **Put into place the necessary structures to ensure collaborative, comprehensive ongoing planning for all major aspects of programs and services county-wide in the areas of parks, recreation, leisure and fitness programs, activities and services. Major actions/strategies include:**

    A. Create a county-wide intergovernmental commission to discuss recreation, leisure and fitness opportunities (recommend to be done by 6/31/13). Create an inter-governmental agreement laying out exactly how the agreed upon goals can not only be met, but sustained into the future of Fayette County.

    B. Explore **all** funding possibilities to meet the needs of parks, recreation, leisure and fitness opportunities, including, but not limited to taxes, splost, bonds, corporate sponsors, grants, special issue funding like bike friendly, private donations (be creative for example in memoriam or live tribute), usage fees, etc.

    C. Develop an organized system of parks and recreation facilities that will make structured/active as well as unstructured/passive recreation accessible to all county residents. This goal should include selecting future park locations throughout the County for regional, community and neighborhood park facilities.

    D. Improve the condition of existing recreation facilities to a consistent and desirable standard of quality.

    E. Plan for effective ongoing management of all facilities, programs and services.

    F. Plan for cost-effective maintenance, including long-term replacement like HVAC, to provide safe, secure, convenient and pleasurable use of all properties and facilities.

    G. Plan for effective ongoing marketing and communication about what's available. For example, expand marketing of Adult leisure and recreational activities. The survey shows there is a lack of knowledge about available Adult programs and activities.

    H. Plan for volunteer use including recruitment, management, recognition, etc.

    I. Conduct a regular Needs Assessment every 3 to 5 years re: parks, recreation, leisure and fitness needs and changing trends in Fayette County.

2. **Create 3 new walking trails and 2 new bike trails by TBD.** (This responds to top desires in survey results, it's low cost to create and maintain and could be done on existing properties.) Major action steps/milestones could include:

    A. Determine if the walking and biking trails should be utilized for connectivity or just fitness.
    B. Create a master plan as to where trails should be located.
    C. Create a time table or phased approach as to implementation of each of the various trails.
    D. Determine costs
    E. Secure funding for implementation of trails.
    F. Secure land or right of way if needed.
    G. Begin construction.
    H. Marketing to the community both to get funding and to promote the trails once they are completed. Some ribbon cutting ceremonies would generate positive publicity.

Issues, Challenges or Obstacles to Creating Additional Walking and Biking Trails

Save money. Do the right planning and construction up front to encourage all the ultimate uses immediately. Plan ahead. What is the ultimate goal? Is it exclusively for one use in one location? Should it eventually be interconnected with other facilities, path networks, throughout a city, etc? Don't put in a simple walking path that in a few years will have to widened to accommodate walking, running and biking, then shortly after paved and widened to accommodate golf carts. Remember, the walking path of today may be on private or other non-public property that will have to be bought, or never available, for expanded usage.

Trails could be placed in complexes (sports, parks, schools, etc.) that are already in place, which takes away what would have been the biggest issue which is finding land to build these and funding money to purchase the land.

This is a low cost action point. Walking trails can exist alongside biking trails. If the entire County can work towards gaining Bike Friendly Status, then funding is available through Grants.

Lack of political support and advocacy would be an obstacle.

Securing the necessary funding needed for implementation.

If trails are for connectivity, determining the best route to meet the county-wide recreation needs.

Securing land or right of way if needed.

"How's it going to be paid for?" The public appears to be anti-tax, anti-SPLOST, even somewhat anti-government. It comes back to good marketing, establishing a believable need, mobilizing those in favor of spending resources on what they will use, and generally selling the project/s.

The entire county will need to work together on this with a special committee heading this up. This committee will need the skills and resources to search for available grants from the state as well as donations from other organizations like Running Clubs, Biking Groups, Local businesses, etc.

Walking and Biking trails are probably the easiest to designate but should not be confined to being around an existing facility. We do want nature trails too.

Update from the City of Fayetteville on current related efforts. The City of Fayetteville is currently addressing the sidewalk and hiking trails. We are extending the sidewalk from downtown out to the Waterfall by the end of this year or early next year depending on how soon the contracts can be struck. We've turned over management of the 300 acres at the end of Burch Road known as the PK Dickson property to the Southern Conservancy. They are making plans and raising funds to build trails, but as they are a charitable organization dependent on donations, it is hard to fix a definite date.

With nearly zero residential development happening now it is hard to get things like Heritage Park built, which was a "gift" from the developer. That forces us to look for more creative means to raise the necessary money; bake sales probably won't quite cut it.

3. **Add playgrounds to 2 to 4 existing parks/facilities by TBD.**

- Create a master plan as to where and what kind of playgrounds should be installed.
- Prioritize parks based on ease of addition and perceived need.
- Draw up plans
- Price the necessary equipment
- Calculate any cost savings by building 4 versus 3 or 2 playgrounds.
- Create a time table for phased approach as to implementation.
- Develop additional maintenance plans as needed
- Determine initial costs and ongoing operational/maintenance costs

- Develop political support and advocacy
- Secure the funding for initial installation as well as operational cost. (MOMS club one resource for this.)
- Site prep and equipment installation

Issues, Challenges or Obstacles to Adding These Playgrounds

Deciding on what playground features to install

Planning for areas of shade from the sun

Ensuring adequate parking

Securing the necessary funding needed for initial installation as well as operational costs.

Choosing the appropriate locations so people will be encouraged to use these playgrounds.

Budgeting for ongoing maintenance so they remain safe and desirable.

"Please" or "Not" in "my backyard. Some neighborhoods might want the expansion of playgrounds; some might not.

Type of playground – toddler vs. older kids

Lack of political support and advocacy

Selection of location - Which recreation areas/priority?

ADA compliance

Liability

4. **Build a multi-purpose facility that includes track, indoor swimming, multi-purpose rooms and trails by TBD. (**There was much discussion on this goal. Here are those comments.)

When looking at the survey results, a multi-use indoor sports facility with excellent gym facilities was one of the top 5 items chosen in the survey that people would like to see created or expanded. A well conceived and designed multi-use facility could cover needs

in many areas of social, recreational, fitness and leisure needs and address aspects of overall well-being for county citizens.

Multi- purpose is the way to go. The more amenities a facility offers the more attractive it becomes. This will also help create more revenue outlets through impact fees which in turn will help offset the cost of operating the swimming portion of the facility. Multi-purpose rooms would be important to include.

Swimming was also a strong need as expressed by the survey results. There's no county-wide swimming facility and all ages could benefit from it. There may be an opportunity to use a closed school as the facility base which could be centrally located, could reduce cost of construction, solve the restrooms and parking issues, help the community and school board by purchasing the closed school. A swimming facility could be used for competitive swimming, lessons, sports, recreation, fitness water aerobics and therapeutic purposes.

Location will be a complex discussion with strong opinions and desires depending on where people live. Everyone wants it convenient to them. We should keep in mind that the location that turns out to be the most convenient for the most people, considering both current and projected population density in various areas of the county, may not be centrally located. Some serious thought needs to be put into this issue.

One opinion was that we should evaluate if it would significantly cut costs to only address the fitness and therapeutic type swimming facility and would that best serve the needs of the citizens. Possibly in this scenario, encourage more use of the PTC pool for recreational purposes.

An alternate view on the cost of indoor pools was this: Indoor pools are very expensive to operate. The Peachtree City pool does not come close to paying for itself. Saying a smaller pool will be far less expensive is really not accurate. You still will have to pay millions for a permanent enclosure (I would never recommend the bubble system to anyone). There still has to be dehumidification, water filtration, water recirculation and other systems, plus all the maintenance and other associated costs. The smaller the pool the fewer the people and uses that can be accommodated.

Here's another participant's view. I like the multi-purpose facility idea, because overall cost of construction and maintenance should be less (only one parking lot, etc. etc.), staffing costs should be less and overall utilization of the facility should be greater. If moms, grandparents too for that matter, can drop off the kids for some supervised activity while they go for a swim it should lead to higher utilization of a multi-use facility than just having a swimming pool by itself. It seems logical to me that the more features we

can pack into one facility, the more utilization we will have of that facility. If we had to build it in stages, we should have a master plan that would make sure that we didn't build something that could not be expanded upon or added to later.

Swim facilities are expensive to build and to maintain. The cost of maintaining pools over time is very high. Unless we have a great financial plan in place the other facets of the facility will suffer financially.

Swimming v Splash parks: Narrow down the need for this activity. Pools are money pits! Visit Clayton Parks and Rec. and get a better perspective on their costs for their pool maintenance.

We can consider creating a multipurpose facility that does not include swimming. There are strong opinions on both sides of this issue.

Major milestones/large action steps that would have to be addressed in order to implement a multi-purpose facility

- Determine best location for such a facility
- Determine what amenities will be offered at this facility
- Explore the possibility of collaborating with the Board of Education to utilize a closed school facility as a multi-purpose facility where upfront funding needs might be minimal
- Identify possible facilities to purchase if a closed school is not an option.
- Create plan for new site and facility to explore that option- building design, plans and construction costs
- Do feasibility study on all options and compare them
- Determine operational costs and how they would be funded on an ongoing basis once facility is operational.
- Secure funding to purchase land, construct facility or retrofit an existing facility.
- Begin construction work or refurbishment.

Issues, Challenges and Obstacles Associated with a Multi-purpose Facility

Determine whether or not to include a pool in the facility and, if so, what kind.

Determine the right location.

Here's one example of a participants thoughts on how this might unfold. Realistically, this might take till Jan 2016 to fund and build. First would be site visits to some other

facilities to see how others have done this and learn the problems they have had to solve (Gwinnett Co has some very nice pool facilities, but I'm not sure if they are multi-use) by March 31, 2013. Second would be to decide on a location by June 30, 2013. Third would be drawing up at least preliminary plans by Aug 31, 2013. Fourth would be securing funding, which would probably need to be public and private. Private funding from advertizing, donations, memberships, grants, etc. Public funding would likely be by way of a SPLOST which might push the vote till the Nov 2014 elections, which could make the deal not doable by January 2015, but assuming funding is achieved, ground breaking by May 1, 2015

This goal is going to require a major marketing effort to bring about a public "buy-in." A perceived value by a majority of Fayette County residents will be needed to approve many of the possible funding options. This will be difficult should the economic downturn continue (or not abate quickly enough), and the current anti-tax environment prevail.

Gaining the support of influential figures in the community will be necessary to make the most out of this kind of facility. Without everyone's support, it will not be what it can and needs to be.

Several dynamics can suppress or accelerate funding. Everyone needs to be on board. Opinion will move the funding in either direction depending on what support is given. Finding the appropriate centralized location for such a facility

Repurposing existing buildings may be more expensive than building new.

Consider Marketing and Sponsorship committees. Partnering with our community (e.g. Delta and Piedmont Hospital) long term to keep costs down for our taxpayer.

Securing initial funding as well as operational funding. Future sustainable funding is the biggest obstacle because it will be VERY difficult to survive on impact fees alone.

If a closed school facility can be obtained through a collaborative agreement, evaluate whether or not the facility can feasibly and financially be refurbished into a quality facility that the citizens can be proud of.

Space and land on existing facilities may already provide what is needed to begin construction of buildings to house "multi-purpose" activities.

Location and costs are our major obstacles. If this were to be a Tournament venue for the Southside, would we have enough to cover and maintain this facility? The location of this

facility is key to its success. If we go with the tournament mentality then it needs to be close to area hotels, building it on the outskirts of our county will send revenue to neighboring counties. Safety and security issues are easier if facility is very central. The question needs to be asked, personal use or a tourism revenue base for our hotels and county? Voters need to know direction and how costs will be offset? Educating the taxpayer, being transparent is a challenge.

Consider "phased" development that would initially focus on development of an all-weather (year round) recreation facility that would first work to develop an aquatic education and therapeutic facility and eventually a full recreational swimming facility that could support individual and organized aquatic events.

Opportunities for Collaboration That the Group Identified for Provision of All Services in Recreation, Leisure and Fitness

- Private clubs, gyms, golf courses etc.
- Churches
- Neighborhood Associations
- Private Developers and Corporations
- Chamber of Commerce or Community and Visitors Bureau
- Possible help from schools – swim teams at a swim center; cross country teams on walking, bike trails.
- Possible facilities for specialty exercise/fitness groups – boot camp groups, senior walking groups, day cares.

LOST funds. If chosen as a funding option, promote more awareness about this process as well as the end result and how the funds will be used by each entity. People need to be informed so they have a better understanding of how these funds are distributed.

Collaboration between the cities in Fayette County will be a large benefit. Right now, it seems that each city parks and recreation department is only concerned about what is going on in their city alone and almost 'competing' if you will among each other. If they can collaborate to create and meet the needs of those in each community, it would best benefit everyone- from the employees to the civilians, as duplication of work would be cut down. With Fayette Senior Services' and Peachtree City's recent partnership being developed (with the Gathering Place), our biggest problem has been getting everyone on board that these are not <u>two separate</u> organizations, but <u>one</u> to best serve those at hand. It takes some time to move past this, but it is improving and the programming, attendance

and success has skyrocketed in return. The county could have the same results with more teamwork and greatly cut down on duplication of work.

Regarding the multi-purpose facility, collaboration with the BOE around the school closure properties might benefit both entities.

Build on success, expertise and activities (individual and organized) already existing at various County recreation areas.

Develop County recreational/leisure activity at one or two "hub' recreation areas and export/make accessible to other recreation areas.

Conduct organized activities/events at recreation areas to build and showcase activity interest.

The school board and the recreation department could coordinate more to better utilize the school facilities while those are not in use for school facilities.

I am loath to suggest another level of governmental bureaucracy, but perhaps a "recreation authority" (composed of members from each municipality and the county at large) that could manage all recreational facilities in the county would be in order. (See Goal 1, item A.)

What Are the Obstacles to Forming Collaborations and Partnerships in This Area of Parks, Recreation, Leisure and Fitness?

- Operational cost of facility owner.
- True equality in funding and programming needs for all parties who are collaborating
- Private or political interest
- Funding and working together by the cities within Fayette County
- Perceived competition among specific groups for financial resources
- Making sure everyone has the county wide citizens in mind and not what might be best for their communities
- Convincing each entity that it could be beneficial
- All parties feeling a sense of equity in terms of ownership and funding
- Poor communication between various groups; not recognizing a common ground
- Age group distrust
- Lack of political support and advocacy
- Function of location – Why collaborate if have facilities/services?
- Future funding
- Current County budget shortfalls

- Turf wars and differing ideas of what would provide the most benefit to the community.

Most people do not have a full understanding of where tax monies are going and how they are being spent. This, along with other sources of funding, causes each entity to put up their barriers trying to protect what they have. Determining who is part of these collaborations and who is responsible for forming various partnerships is a large issue.

Moving past comfort zones will be the biggest challenge. All of our areas of expertise and departments are used to working individually. Compromise, listening and discussing with open minds is the most important aspect to working together and that is going to be the first thing that needs to be addressed in this continuation.

We do not have a full understanding of how the taxpayers' funds are distributed amongst the "players". This does cause conflict. More transparency is needed here

Other Concerns or Questions about Long Term Planning for Recreation, Leisure and Fitness Services and Programs for the Citizens of Fayette County

Don't go for the big ticket item first. Go for the smaller projects that give something to as many people as possible within the county. Build the support and enthusiasm.

Recreation budgets are shrinking all over the country. Each community is tightening their belts and operating on much leaner budgets. Overall I don't think Fayette County as a whole has done a good job in long term planning and it's only going to get more difficult in our current financial situation.

How do we keep the momentum going on the interest in expanding and enhancing Parks and Recreation services and amenities? How can we better enlist the support of both the youth and senior citizens?

I feel we have failed to plan for the long haul financially. In moving forward I would like to see 5-10 year maintenance costs and money put aside for a rainy day. We also need to do a better job of educating the public regarding the costs of these services. Their taxes do pay for some of this, but nominal fees will be assessed to maintain the high standard of service they have come to expect from the county. If we do our due diligence on all projects, there should be no surprises.

Long term plan should be balanced to address needs of and allocation of priorities and resources to: adults and youth, organized and individual activities, each recreation area/park, and the county as a whole. How we will deal with use by surrounding counties needs to be addressed.

Regional or County promotion: Never promote or advertise a facility as Regional unless you are going to generate income from it. Always focus on use by the taxpayers who are funding it. If free and not on their dime, why should anyone outside of Fayette County contribute to costs here when they can just use it for free? Try to never locate anything conveniently close to another county. That will just encourage their usage and discourage within the county usage.

On the issue of distance to travel: Seniors want everything very close to where they live. Most are not willing to travel from, say the Gathering Place, in Peachtree City, to the Senior Center, in Fayetteville, or vice versa. In Peachtree City, we have those who feel the Gathering Place is too far for them to travel and they want a second center on the north side of town for them. This also applies to many others as regards the indoor pool as well. They do not want to drive from Fayetteville or north Fayette to Peachtree City. The same would be true for many in Peachtree City if the indoor pool was in Fayetteville. It also applies across the board on all kinds of facilities. People do not want to travel, in general. They want it in their backyard. So, if not convenient, in their minds, they simply will not travel and will ask their local elected to provide it or put in polls they want it.

People are going to have to be educated that costs will never allow everything to be conveniently located for every resident in every part of the county. Some wants could never be justified in cost for more than a single facility for the whole county, if even one could be justified at all.

We know that green space sells, resulting in higher home prices. I don't know, but assume that having nice recreation & leisure facilities would do much the same. Pools are very expensive to maintain and operate, but if projections are correct regarding the aged population in Fayette County by 2040, we need to be providing leisure and recreation facilities that the senior population can utilize and benefit from, in addition to the traditional ball fields and such for the kids.

In keeping with Fayette County's reputation for being a premier county, these should be state of the art “world class” facilities. I think a high quality project would be easier to sell to the tax payers than an “elcheapo” project. However, if public funding fails for a project such as this, I think we should look into doing it with private funding sources.