

**ORANGE COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

ACTION AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT

Meeting Date: November 5, 2009

**Action Agenda
Item No. _____**

SUBJECT: Community Use of Schools Facilities for Recreation

DEPARTMENT: ERCD, P&R

PUBLIC HEARING: (Y/N)

No

ATTACHMENT(S):

IPWG Principles and Recommendation
Map of Parks and School Facilities
Summary of Other Jurisdiction Actions

INFORMATION CONTACT:

David Stancil, 245-2590
Lori Taft, 245-2660
Marabeth Carr, 960-3880

PURPOSE: To review a set of guiding principles and recommendations from the Intergovernmental Parks (IP) Work Group regarding the potential for use of school facilities for community recreation purposes.

BACKGROUND: The IP Work Group is a multi-jurisdictional 27-member committee with representatives from the County and all towns, both school systems, parks advisory boards and other parks and conservation interests. The group meets quarterly and was created as an outgrowth of the 1999 Joint Master Recreation and Parks Work Group report. The IP Work Group's mission, approved by all governing boards, is:

1. To gather, exchange and **share information** on parks planning and development in the municipalities and County.
2. To **maintain and update the Inventory of Parks and Recreation Facilities** developed as part of the Joint Master Recreation and Parks report, including new properties acquired or dedicated.
3. To foster communication between the municipalities and County on **future opportunities and collaborative ventures**.
4. To provide a **coordinating mechanism for updates to parks and recreation plans** in each jurisdiction.
5. To **review and inform the municipalities and County concerning parks needs** and potential opportunities.
6. To develop **parameters for parks standards** (leaving flexibility for the actual standards to vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction within these parameters).
7. To **develop and coordinate public education and public outreach** on parks issues (coordinated brochures, etc).

During late 2007 through mid-2008, the IP Work Group discussed the issues surrounding the use of school facilities for community recreation use. The group heard from staff and board representatives from the schools and parks and recreation departments. Because of the complexity of the topic and the need for buy-in at multiple levels, the IP Work Group attempted to review current policies, identify key shared issues and assumptions, and from those develop guiding principles and recommendations for the schools and jurisdictions as a beginning point for future potential solutions.

The attached document outlines 10 guiding principles, acknowledging the past history of working together and the need for school activities to take precedence, but also identifying disconnects and inadvertent disincentives to public access that may have occurred over the years, as well as some of the challenges that need to be balanced. It was noted that facilities at elementary schools offer the most opportunity for shared use, due to lack of school sponsored after school sports and competition for fields and gyms. Developing a tiered-fee structure for use of facilities to allow for community recreation was also identified as a key issue, as policies are re-examined.

The IP Work Group proposes three recommendations to accompany these principles:

1. Each elected board is asked to endorse the 10 Guiding Principles,
2. Each board is asked to authorize their relevant staff to participate in a comprehensive re-examination of policies governing community use, and
3. That the actions by the elected boards be forwarded back to the IP Work Group for coordination of further exploration and discussion.

The guiding principles and recommendations have been approved by the Carrboro Board of Aldermen and the Hillsborough Board of Commissioners. The Chapel Hill Town Council is slated to consider approval of the recommendations on November 4, and the results of that discussion will be shared with the Board. The City of Mebane has no Orange County schools within its jurisdiction. A table summarizing these actions is attached.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: There is no financial impact associated with approval of the recommendations and guiding principles. Resolution of issues that preclude community use of school facilities could result in a future cost savings to the County and other jurisdictions, if fee schedules are adjusted and more facilities are made available for community use.

RECOMMENDATION(S): The Manager recommends that the Board approve the guiding principles and recommendations, and refer this matter to the IP Work Group for further examination, authorizing Parks and Recreation and ERCD staff to participate in the planned review of existing policies.