

**CITY OF FAYETTEVILLE / CUMBERLAND COUNTY
FAYETTEVILLE–CUMBERLAND PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES**

March 10, 2026

PRESENT: Thomas Hatch, Brenda Gordon, David Breece, Helen Brockett, Roderick Gooden, Linnie Guzman, Steve Harper, Naynesh Metha, Crystal Moore-Williams, Vickie Mullins, Council Member Jones, Commissioner Patel, Michael Gibson, Jessica Legette

ABSENT: Brett Chivers, Maria Covington, Stacy Bolton, Lee Spruill

1. Quorum 5:35 PM
2. Call to Order
3. Invocation by Ms. Gordon
4. Approval of Agenda – Mr. Hatch shared with the Commission that he would like to amend the agenda to move the Renaming of North Street Park Baseball Fields” to earlier in the agenda.

- March 10, 2026 (Action)

Motion: Mr. Gooden
Second: Ms. Guzman
Unanimous

5. Approval of Minutes

- February 3, 2026 Regular Meeting (Action)

Motion: Mr. Gooden
Second: Ms. Mullins
Unanimous

6. Renaming of North Street Park Baseball Field

Mr. Grant Bennet shared that he is a lifelong resident of the City of Fayetteville and has grown up in the recreation department. He shared his community would like to rename the Baseball Field after his father, who has coached in the community for many years. Mr. Bennet shared that his father has been a coach and mentor to a number of young Fayetteville citizens who have even gone on to play professional ball. Mr. Bennett shared that his experience growing up in the community has led him to return to the community following his studies, where he runs a non-profit (26 Project) that is committed to serving the community. He shared that much of his passion for the community stems from his upbringing in the community and the leadership and mentoring his father showed. Mr. Bennett shared with the Commission that he is speaking to them while his father is still with us, despite terminal illness, because the community would like

for him to be able to smell his flowers while he is still here and able to see how he is appreciated. Mr. Bennett shared that his father has positively impacted hundreds of children in the community through his volunteerism.

Mr. Gooden thanked Mr. Bennett for sharing his father's services with the Commission. Mr. Gooden inquired as to what the field is named currently. Mr. Bennett shared that the field is not currently named, only the overall park is. Mr. Gooden inquired as to whether or not the community has provided input to Mr. Bennett about this naming request. Mr. Bennett shared that he has not spoken with the community. Mr. Gooden suggested canvassing the community around the park to see if the community around the park has any support for the renaming. Mr. Bennett shared that while he hasn't canvassed the community about the naming, he and his family hold many events in the park (he referenced backpack drives and youth programs), and that the community is incredibly supportive of the activities.

5:44 PM Mr. Metha joined the meeting; Ms. Williams joined the building

Ms. Mullins shared her understanding that Mr. Bennett is trying to surprise his father and that the renaming request is for the field his father has been coaching at for many years.

Ms. Gordon inquired as to whether or not the community was canvassed for the naming of the Bill Crisp Senior Center. Mr. Gibson shared they were not. Ms. Gordon inquired if City Council simply made the decision. Mr. Gibson confirmed. Ms. Gordon shared that she was simply looking for past protocol.

Mr. Hatch shared a point of clarification that this request comes to the Advisory Commission and they provide their recommendation, which is then returned to City Council. City Council would then determine how this moved forward.

5:47 PM Commissioner Patel joined the meeting

Ms. Guzman thanked Mr. Bennett for visiting with the Commission from Atlanta to share about his request. She requested confirmation that the 26 Project was willing to contribute financially. Mr. Bennett confirmed that they are and that the desire was for signage and potentially beautification. He shared that the 26 Project has a partnership with Major League Baseball, as they assist with a community event with Major League Baseball and the Fayetteville Woodpeckers. He believes he would also have support from that group. He confirmed he would not be seeking any funding from the recreation department.

Ms. Gordon inquired about the cost of signage. Mr. Gibson shared that the field signage is typically around \$400.

Mr. Gooden inquired as to what the department has in place when an organization states they will assist with something. Mr. Gibson shared that contracts can be put into place, and that the department has a long history of groups upholding their word when they commit to assisting with upkeep or beautification. He shared further that those groups are then typically good watchdogs over whatever it is they've adopted, which benefits the department.

Ms. Guzman made a motion that the Advisory Commission recommend remaining and send the notice to Council. Ms. Gordon seconded. Unanimous.

Mr. Gibson shared the next steps: staff would send the Advisory Commission recommendation to City Council. If City Council were to move forward with the renaming, Mr. Bennett would be notified.

7. Public Comment

None

8. Government Updates

- City Council Update
 - Council Member Jones shared that any updates he would have provided are all listed in Mr. Gibson's Director's Reports. He shared that there is now a Capital Improvement Project and Maintenance Committee providing oversight for all projects. He would like to invite Commission members to attend a meeting, which is held every third Tuesday at 2:00 PM at City Hall. Ms. Guzman inquired if this is a new Committee. Council Member Jones shared that it is. Ms. Gordon inquired if the information in those meetings is the same that is already shared with them. Council Member Jones confirmed that it is the same information.
- County Commissioner Update
 - Commissioner Patel shared that there are no big project updates to share. He shared that the Commissioners are looking to get ahead of their budget cycle and are looking to be more proactive. He shared a request for a prioritization from the community regarding Capital Projects for the Commissioners to look into. The desire is for the Commissioners to ensure they're looking to fund the right projects based on what the community is looking for.
- Council Member Jones wanted to let everyone know that the Cricket Courts that have been newsworthy lately are not a City project. These are a private project.

9. Director's Report

Mr. Gibson shared that the basketball tournament has begun.

He shared further that the City believes they have a responsive bidder for the McArthur Road project and is negotiating with the vendor.

He also shared that all sidewalks are complete at the Tennis Center project and the paving can now follow, as the contractor is available.

Mr. Gibson shared that work has begun on the splash pad at North Street and he anticipates a ribbon cutting in early May.

Mr. Gibson shared that he department is still waiting for the County Manager to provide information on a location for Cedar Creek Park.

Mr. Gooden inquired if there was an update on pickle ball courts. Mr. Gibson inquired as to what courts Mr. Gooden was looking for an update on. Mr. Gooden indicated the ones on the hill. Mr. Gibson shared that the department will have the courts at the Tennis Center lined with the tennis courts.

Mr. Gooden inquired as to whether or not parks and recreation has been prepared for the ripple event of the schools closing. Mr. Gibson shared that the closings would not impact parks and recreation due to the joint use facility agreement in place with Cumberland County Schools.

Mr. Hatch inquired as to how many schools would be impacted by the closings. Mr. Gibson directed Commissioner Patel to respond. Commissioner Patel shared that he believes it would be unfair to provide any guidance on this, as the school board is still working through their list and has not made any final decisions on the potential closings following their evaluations. Mr. Harper inquired as to when the meeting was for the school board. Mr. Hatch shared it is this evening.

Mr. Gibson shared further that any of the assets that either the City or County have built on school property are not in jeopardy.

Mr. Hatch shared with the Commission that he knows his absence in February may have left many members wondering about the new agenda he has created. He shared that the agenda items are the 5 big things that fall under parks and recreation, identified in the department's adopted 2020 Master Plan. He shared his desire to ensure the Commission is aware of the items identified, so the focus remains on the bigger picture of what is needed.

He mentioned a concern the Commission shared previously about field rentals. Mr. Gibson shared that he looked into the concern Mr. Chivers shared previously and the issue was fields were not rented at the initial conversation, and were then rented by someone else. Mr. Gibson shared that the community is remarkably active and the facilities receive significant use. He shared that the department is a regional provider. He shared that access to facilities in the department is great, and amenities are varied. He shared that greenspace was identified in the Master Plan as a need and that the department has identified that in part with additional greenways, Veterans Park Phase 2, the Cape Fear River Park, and McArthur Park. He also shared that the investment in lighting for the Jordon Soccer Complex have also extended use there, which frees up space at other facilities. He shared that the inventory of facilities has been growing since the Master Plan was adopted. He also shared that a Greenways update would be coming to the Commission in the coming months. Mr. Gibson shared there is currently funding for design (not yet construction), but the goal is to have plans shovel ready, so that when funds for construction are available, the department is ready to move quickly with the projects.

Ms. Gordon inquired if the group is a Commission or a Board. Ms. Legette shared that the group is a Commission and the City Clerk will be attending the April meeting and will be able to provide answers to all of these questions.

Mr. Hatch continued, regarding the remaining agenda items, asking if there was anything members wanted discussed.

Mr. Metha inquired as to how a timeline or something can be put into place with online reservation of fields. He would like a definitive timeline for implementation. Mr. Gibson shared that it depends on what is desired for implementation, sharing that the department is for community. He shared that when the department is overloaded, it starts to infringe upon the citizens' ability to use their own facilities. He shared that when the department transitioned to offering online registration, it was a big change for citizens and the department now sees about 80% of registrations online. He shared that shelter rentals currently are offered online, but that field and gym rentals are something he needs to have a conversation with the Manager and Council about, as he is very concerned that online registration would create a different way of behaving for the department. He reiterated his concern that citizens would then not have their facilities available to them. Mr. Gibson shared that there was an item brought to the Council about tech literacy for the area Seniors. Staff will be working to implement programming to assist the Senior population in advancing their knowledge and comfort level with those services. Mr. Gibson shared he can't provide a date that he would make that transition.

Commissioner Patel offered that he is a restaurant owner and most of his general managers are young. He shared that his group missed a catering order today because his manager could not be reached via a call to her cell phone. He shared that he understands the reasoning for the request, but encourages that things like this be considered.

Council Member Jones shared with the Commission that he supports advances in technology, but that it is not the goal to push out the community. He foresees an extended roll out if this were to happen so the community had time to become acclimated. He shared that the desire of Council to increase programming means that space needs to be available and the desire is not to push anyone out.

Ms. Mullins shared that she understands what the Council Member is saying, but shared that there is no internet and service where she lives. She mentioned these kind of decisions impact the entire department and not just the City.

6:25 PM Council Member Jones left the meeting

Mr. Gooden asked the Commission to use caution making comments on intellect. He shared that sometimes it's not because a person can't, it's because they don't want to. He shared that if everything were to only be offered online, he would be lost as a customer. Mr. Gooden shared that he appreciates everything Mr. Gibson has shared today and that being in the room with him has allowed him to feel the passion Mr. Gibson brings to the community.

Mr. Metha shared his recap that the goal is not to do this tomorrow, but rather to develop a timeline and plan. He shared that the goal is to reach out to peer cities and counties to find out what they're doing. He would like to see the department become 2026, and reiterated he's not asking for this tomorrow. Mr. Metha share his belief that the new facilities coming online mean the department has to have these tools available.

Mr. Gibson shared that the tech will be in place for courts and fields at the tennis center and baseball field. He shared that the department will continue to meet with DistiNCtly regarding tournaments as they have for the last 10 years.

Ms. Legette shared that the department had reached out to staff at the City of Raleigh to inquire about their field rentals. She shared that fields in the City of Raleigh can only be reserved through the Field Reservation Specialist, and that only 1 individual holds that position and handles all field reservations, even for those located at a recreation center. Ms. Legette citizen may request a rental using a Google form submission, and the Field Reservation Specialist then reviews the rental and determines what is possible, based on availability, equity, and a number of other factors. She shared that a citizen cannot simply reserve a field online and then go use it without any interaction with staff. Ms. Legette shared further that staff learned that the City of Raleigh's recreation department has no permanent indoor pickle ball courts, and that if a citizen someone wanted to rent indoor space for pickle ball play, it would simply be a gym rental. Their citizens can bring their own pickle ball nets or rent from the City.

Mr. Gooden inquired about wifi availability to stream games. Mr. Gibson shared they all facilities have public wifi, but that the setup for the tennis center is enhanced for online viewing and the baseball fields are planned the same way. He shared that this would be set up for the championship court for tennis, and he foresees multiple fields with video service at the baseball complex. He shared that this service generates revenue and the department is working on it.

Mr. Gooden shared that he attended a tournament in Wilmington and each ball field had a camera. Ms. Legette shared there it technology, like the GameChanger app, which uses video and artificial intelligence to provide audio for listeners through an app, with a digital display to indicate players on a field. However, these services come at a cost. Mr. Gibson shared that everything the department is designing has the functionality, it just depends on whether or not there is the money to make it happen.

Ms. Brockett shared with the commission that she has worked with Mr. Gibson for over 20 years, dating back to when there was not recreation facility in the Gray's Creek area. She shared there was previously a contract in place to allow for recreation services at the Hall Park facility that is not owned by the department. She shared that she has found Mr. Gibson to be honorable and sincere over time, and has had the best interest of the community in mind.

10. Parkland Updates (Discussion)

None

9. Programming Updates (Discussion)

None

10. Operations Updates (Discussion)

None

11. Equity Considerations (Discussion)

None

12. Interlocal Agreements (Discussion)

None

13. Committee and Partner Reports

- Tennis Center Committee Update
 - Mr. Hatch shared that there was a committee created for this and that they reached out to see about visiting the facility. He shared they have not been able to visit the facility yet, but that he has driven by to look. He shared that his question for Mr. Gibson is what the date is for fines to the contractor by the City if the facility is not done on time. Mr. Gibson shared that is with legal now. He reminded the Commission that the department has to have a TCO (temporary certificate of occupancy) in order to bring citizens in the building. Mr. Gooden shared that the Commission will be able to see the facility with elected officials, just not before.
 - Mr. Metha shared that he completely agrees but that it defeats the purpose of having a Committee. He shared his belief that if they are tasking the Commission with providing parks and recreation updates, and you can't provide updates, what is the purpose of being here.
 - Ms. Gordon inquired as to whether or not the Council asked the Commission to create a committee. Mr. Gibson shared that they did not.

6:39 PM Mr. Harper left the meeting

- DistiNCtly Fayetteville / Fayetteville-Cumberland Sports Commission Update

14. Old Business

15. New Business

- Renaming of North Street Baseball Fields (moved to earlier in the agenda)

16. Adjournment @ 6:42 PM

Motion: Ms. Moore-Williams

Second: Mr. Metha

Unanimous



Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission: Directors Report

March 2, 2026

Program Updates:

- FCPR basketball tournament scheduled to begin on March 2 (girls league), and March 7 (coed league); a total of 158 teams are scheduled for tournament play
- Late registration is now open for Spring Sports, as space is available (Baseball, Softball, Indoor Soccer)
- Summer Camp registration began March 1st; camp is offered in weekly sessions throughout the summer, from May 26 through August 14

Project Updates:

- Meeting was held with stakeholders; department is awaiting update from County regarding feedback on park location
- Cape Fear River Park bid posting was delayed a week and Construction Management anticipates it posting March 3
- Bids were opened for McArthur project, and the lowest responsive bidder is under review by City Purchasing
- Concrete work is scheduled for the last pour (sidewalks) on March 4 at the Courts at Glenville Lake; paving will not begin until all sidewalks are in place. A "First Look" event is anticipated for March.
- The contract for the Splash Pad at North Street Park was awarded; construction began February 23
- Installation is complete for the new playground unit and music features at the Gilmore Adaptive Recreation Center