



Date: February 15, 2012

To: Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager  
Through: Theodore L. Voorhees, Deputy City Manager  
From: Rhonda B. Parker, Director of Parks and Recreation  
Subject: Request to appear before Council Work Session 2/23/12-Lisa Richmond

### **Executive Summary**

Lisa Richmond of 216 Walton Street in Durham made an official request to appear before City Councils' Work Session 2/23/12 and is scheduled to appear on that date.

Staff from the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) met with the Birchwood Heights Neighborhood Association Board on Friday, September 2, 2011, and again on Tuesday, January 24, 2012, to discuss future transition steps to assist the Birchwood Heights Community with identifying services to meet their needs, provide information for managing their center and building a coalition of services to include DPR, Neighborhood Improvement Services and the Durham County Cooperative Extension. At each of these meetings, Rhonda Parker provided a summary of the history of support from the City of Durham and Durham Parks and Recreation Department since 1995.

During the years of our partnership, City staff has addressed all concerns as raised by the Birchwood Heights Neighborhood Association Board such as staffing, programming needs, community engagement and awareness, language barriers, and financial hardships. It was agreed upon by all attending the meetings that DPR and the Birchwood Heights Neighborhood Association Board had exhausted efforts to engage not only the youth but the parents as well.

DPR records indicate that during the 2010-2011 school year, only 2 children were participating in the afterschool program and one was an employee's child. Making a data-driven and pragmatic decision, DPR ended staffing for this facility during the budget process in June 2011. DPR offered transportation to the East Durham Recreation Center for any child interested in participating in the 2011 summer camp and the 2011-2012 after school program. There were 20 youth from Birchwood registered for the 2011 summer camp out of the approximately 60 registered overall at the East Durham site. No youth registered for afterschool during the 2011-2012 school year. It is imperative to mention that all parties were in full agreement that a different type of service obviously was needed to meet the needs of the community. This conclusion was discussed in March, 2011, and information provided in writing to Ms. Atwater, President of the Birchwood Heights Neighborhood Association.

On Tuesday, January 24, 2012, DPR coordinated a meeting with several outside youth organizations to present their programming to the Birchwood Heights Neighborhood Association Board. The following youth organizations made presentations to the board:

- The Q Foundation of Charlotte, NC
- (YES) Youth Education for Savings Consortium, Inc. of Morrisville, NC
- In the Citizens School Program of Charlotte, NC
- Green Light Counseling of Durham and Raleigh, NC
- Durham County Cooperative Extension

During the meeting, board members seemed to become defensive and began to question presenters on their intentions, asking them why they had been invited to speak before the Birchwood Heights Neighborhood Association Board. DPR explained that staff had invited each youth organization as a way to inform the board on exceptional youth organizations that are providing a positive service to youth and could possibly offer those services to the Birchwood Heights community. As of today, the youth organizations continue to show an interest in working with the Birchwood Heights Neighborhood Association Board on various projects.

### **Recommendation**

DPR staff recommends that the City resume working on a transition plan incorporating various youth partners to address the issues in the Birchwood Heights Community and continue working closely with the Birchwood Heights Neighborhood Association Board as part of a team including Durham Parks and Recreation, Neighborhood Improvement Services, and Durham County Cooperative Extension.

Next steps moving forward will need to include:

1. Board and Volunteer Training
  - NIS will work with Mike Schiflett to plan and provide an initial training opportunity for the board. NIS will also work with Durham County Cooperative Extension and/or other sources to develop a list of follow-up training opportunities for the board and volunteers from the community.
2. Afterschool Programming
  - Board members will start planning and pursuing afterschool programs for youth. Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), has been suggested as the first program to be offered by the Durham County Cooperative Extension. Board members will follow-up on EFNEP to get the process started.
3. Computer Lab establishment
  - DPR will take the lead on working with Duke and the board regarding the development of the computer lab. DPR has drafted a letter for the board to have computers donated from Duke University-Procurement and Supply Chain. DPR has also provided the board with information on Kramden Institute, an organization in Durham that donates refurbished computers to individual children.

4. Community Survey

- The board has decided to take the lead on getting the surveys out to the community. However, NIS has been assisting and will continue to work with the board and residents as needed.

5. Community Garden

- DPR and the Durham County Cooperative Extension are collaborating by applying for a grant through Nourishing NC Community Garden Grants for the Birchwood Community, Briggs Avenue, and Leigh Farm Park. Cooperative Extension has already identified Birchwood Community members to assist with organizing this community garden, if the grant is received.