



**2017 Board Annual Retreat**  
**County Commissioner's Topic of Interest**  
**Submitted by: Commissioner Cotham**

**Topic of Interest: Unpaved Park Amenities for Seniors** - I continually hear from people over 50 who have bad knees and feet that they want walking paths outside that are not asphalt or concrete. Also, they want tennis courts, at least a few, that are clay courts so they can stay fit but not have the added stress and pain in their joints. So I would like to know the cost and if this is feasible to do. Orthopedic doctors with whom I have spoken said it would be helpful.

**Response:**

Mecklenburg County does not currently have any public clay courts. They are a popular alternative to asphalt courts due to softer surface and less stress on the knees. Construction cost is higher at \$25,000-\$60,000. If we decided to build clay courts one option would be to rebuild on an existing site. Some basic information regarding clay courts is provided below.

Traditional clay courts are composed of natural or processed clay that is mixed, crushed, screened, and blended with sand and salt. A less expensive alternative is similar in texture, but is composed of natural stone, brick, or tile that is crushed, ground and screened. Both types of clay provide a softer playing surface than hard courts. Most recreational players, particularly those over the age of 50, prefer playing on clay. However, maintenance is much more time intensive and more expensive than hard courts. To maintain them, you must be diligent in following a regular schedule.

**Daily Maintenance**

- Brush the entire court surface using the drag brush. Use a drag mat if the court has excess leaves, pine needles, stones, or other large debris particles. Brush after each match or, if the courts have not been used, brush at the end of the day
- Clean the lines/tape with the line sweeper. Be sure to roll the sweeper over the center of the lines and completely brush the clay off of the tape.
- Water the courts thoroughly and uniformly. Most clay courts will have some sort of sprinkler system installed. If there is no such system, a garden hose with an adjustable nozzle will work. Set the nozzle to a medium-fine spray and gently water the courts. Avoid over watering and forming puddles on the court. Also avoid spraying the water too hard, which can cause the

courts to erode. Roll the courts using the court roller. This helps compact the clay and reduce erosion. It also helps improve moisture retention and court drying time.

- Top dressing, patching and rolling of courts should also be done monthly. Court rollers are expensive and contracting for monthly maintenance is also an option.

There are unpaved trails throughout the Park & Recreation system; most parks have some unpaved trails (see list below). Individual park maps can be found at [www.parkandrec.com](http://www.parkandrec.com)

<b>Soft Walking trails: South Park Region Total: 32.8 miles</b>
James Boyce Park – 1.9 miles
Mason Wallace - .65
Marion Diehl - .75
McDowell NP 7.0 miles
Big Rock NP - .5 miles
Col. Francis Beatty – 6.4 miles
Renaissance Park – 6.5 miles
Idlewild Park – 1.26 miles
Copperhead Island – 1.24
McAlpine Creek Park – 3.3 miles
Elon Park – 1 mile
Park Road Park – 1 mile
Walkers Branch - .5 miles
WR Davie - .5 miles
Flat Branch NP - .3 miles

<b>Soft Walking trails – North Park Region total: 59.81 miles</b>
Clarks Creek NP – 7 miles
Latta Creek NP – 16 miles
Reedy Creek Park/NP – 10 miles
Ribbonwalk NP – 2.7 miles
Evergreen NP – 2.0 miles
Hoskins Park - .38 miles
Nevin Park – 1 mile
Sherman Branch NP – 12 miles
Park Road Park – 1 mile
Sugaw Creek Park - .75 miles
Ramsey Creek Park - .5 miles
Rural Hill – 2.5 miles
Mallard Creek GW – University Research Trail – 1.18 miles
McDowell Creek Dirtway - .8 miles
McDowell Creek Wynfield – 1.0 mile
West Branch NP – 1 mile
Stephens Road NP - ?

Soft walking Trails – Central Park Region total – 3.32 miles
Kilborne Park - .72 miles
Chantilly Park – 1.0 mile
Lincoln Heights - .5 miles
Briar Creek GW (Myers Park HS) - .6 miles
Reid Park - .5 miles