

**MEETING MINUTES  
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION  
Thursday, February 20, 2014**

**Plantation Rifle Range  
5102 Samish Way  
Bellingham, Washington**

**PRESENT: Commissioners: Paul Woodcock, Gordon Rogers, Jeff Margolis, Richard Sturgill**

**Staff: Michael McFarlane, Rodney Lamb, Jerry Warren**

**ABSENT: Janet Boyhan, Kenneth Kiesner, Theresa Sygitowicz**

Prior to the meeting call to order the commission members completed a tour of the Plantation Rifle Range.

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Commission Chair, Paul Woodcock at 6:57 PM

Chair, Paul Woodcock suggested that Item III. Public Input/Communication could be moved to the beginning of the meeting. Commission members agreed that it would be timelier for the presenters to not have to sit through the Agenda and Minutes Approval process prior to their presentation.

**I. PUBLIC INPUT/COMMUNICATIONS**

The Chair recognized Patrick Alesse and Harry Skinner. A packet of material was provided for Commission review.

The presentation consisted of a brief review of the packet contents. They discussed that it contains information comparing two parcels; Parcel A which is currently on the list for possible acquisitions in Birch Bay and Parcel B, a property that is currently available in Birch Bay but is not on the list for possible acquisitions in Birch Bay.

In conclusion, the presenters are requesting that Parcel B is placed on the list of potential acquisitions that the Commission considers the reasons listed in the packet supporting Parcel B over Parcel A.

Mr. Alesse and Mr. Skinner were thanked for their input and recommendations.

It was suggested and agreed that Commission discussion regarding this recommendation be added to the current agenda under New Business.

**II. AGENDA**

**A. February 20, 2014 Agenda Approval**

**MOTION:** It was moved by Gordon Rogers, seconded by Jeff Margolis and passed unanimously to approve the February 20, 2014 Agenda with the following additions:

Add for discussion/information to Item VIII. New Business;

A. Proposed Park Acquisitions - Birch Bay

B. Proposed Storm Water Improvement at Cottonwood Beach

### III. MINUTES

#### A. **January 16, 2013 Minutes Approval**

**MOTION:** It was moved by Richard Sturgill, seconded by Jeff Margolis and passed unanimously to approve the January 16, 2013 Minutes as written.

### IV. DIRECTOR'S / OPERATIONS REPORT – MICHAEL MCFARLANE

#### A. **Reconveyance Update**

1. **Legal Documents** – Mike stated that a conference call was held on Wednesday, 2/18/14 with DNR. The purpose of the call was to review the title report and discuss property easements, deed restriction, and historical transactions. Some of the transaction date back to the early 1920s and 30s and will take some time to review but that at first glance everything looks to be in order.

There is still some work to be completed on the tower leases in terms of maintenance responsibilities and lease status.

2. **GIS Trail Mapping** – Staff continues with on-site mapping efforts in order to complete the maps prior to the park planning process.

3. **Locks** – DNR locks have been changed on several of the main access gates.

4. **Signage** – Work continues on the signage. The next large job will be posting the boundaries and access points on the property.

5. **Removal of mountain bike structures on DNR lands** – Work with the Whatcom Mountain Bike Coalition continues in an effort to remove some mountain bike structures that were previously erected on DNR lands. Work projects are being organized to remove those structures.

6. **Planning Process** – It is the goal to begin the planning process in late March. Commission members will receive notifications and updates as they are established.

The plan is to organize two work groups. One will address recreational issues and the other will deal with environment management strategies.

There are agencies, stakeholders and adjoining property owners that have an interest and will contribute in various capacities. This will be a public process.

The final process will be to refine the budget proposal by the end of March for Council action, dependent on County Executive input.

It was asked if it was Mike's intention to seek Commission representation on the work groups. Mike stated that it is his thought that the Park Commission will be involved in an advisory capacity that will oversee the planning process.

Mike stated that attendance during any portion of the planning process would be welcome. He stated that there are also Whatcom County Council members that are interested in attending the public meetings and being involved in the process.

## **B. Staffing**

**1. Operations Manager** – Parks is currently scheduling interviews for this position. There were approximately 39 candidates that applied for the position.

**2. Seasonal Extra Help** – Advertisements for seasonal extra help will be released the first week in March. This is an employment period from April through the end of the year.

The employment application and application process are on the County web site.

**3. Park Ranger Position** – The applicant that was selected to fill this vacancy was Rob Boleak. He previously worked at Whatcom County Public Works, giving him extensive experience with equipment and maintenance. In addition, he has a law enforcement background, is a U.S. Air Force veteran and has excellent organizational skills. Parks is pleased to have him on the team. His current assignment is Silver Lake Park working with Lead Ranger, Erika Miranda.

Per an email request, Mike touched on County organizational continuity. Mike stated that many of the County employment positions are union positions. Individuals that sign for a position must meet minimum qualifications that are based on a job description and a variety of contract requirements. Some positions such as administrative positions have guidelines that are established in a manual and in some instances have County testing requirements.

Measures that are being implemented are capturing the institutional knowledge. Mapping this knowledge of systems, such as water, electrical, etc. and updating the operation manuals that are located at each park on a regular basis.

Cross training within positions provides a back-up of knowledge between parks and in an effort to reduce training time many of our supplies/products are kept standard from park to park reducing the need to train on different products when rotating staff.

**C. Everson Senior Center** – The hours of operation at the Everson Senior Center have changed from Wednesdays and Friday to Monday and Friday, beginning March 1<sup>st</sup>. This will provide a cost saving for the Council on Aging by consolidating the meal program in the Everson and Sumas Senior Centers to the same days.

## **D. Contracts**

**1. Northwest Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Center** – The Whatcom Humane Society will be assuming responsibility for the Northwest Wildlife and Rehabilitation Center prior to the end of this month. They will continue to accept wildlife through the center in order to keep wildlife and domestic animals separated.

**2. Camp Horizon** – The lease amendment to add the hostel building to the Camp Horizon contract has been drafted and has gone to the Camp Horizon Board for review and approval.

**3. Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Interagency Agreement – Pine and Cedar Lakes, Hovander boat launch and Tennant Lake** – The State requested that these locations be handled as an extension of their current agreement. The insurance and indemnification

language has been updated and approved by the County and the amendment has been sent to the State for approval.

**E. National Recreation Park Association (NRPA) Promotion** – As discussed in the December 2013 Commission meeting, Macy's is partnering with NRPA to participate as a local representative in a national park-promotion campaign. Samish Park has been selected by as a potential recipient site for a shopper / company matching donation program. Shoppers will be asked if they wish to donate \$1.00 to the campaign and Macys will match donations, dollar for dollar. That campaign will be running from March 7 – 31, 2014. The promotion package has not yet arrived from NRPA but is anticipated to arrive next week and will be distributed at the March, 2014 Commission meeting.

**F. Tennant Lake Vandalism** – This past Tuesday there was an incident of attempted break-in at the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center building. The incident was called in by the upstairs apartment tenants when a window was broken. By the time law enforcement arrived the individual had left the scene. The officers tracked the person with their K-9 unit and arrested him.

**G. Maple Falls Elementary School Site** – Council approved moving forward with obtaining an appraisal on the site. An appraiser will be selected and a contract for an appraisal will be drafted.

**V. OPERATIONS – MICHAEL MCFARLANE**

**A. Silver Lake Park Cabins** – Work at the Silver Lake Park Cabins is wrapping up. The final part of the project is the installation of fans on three of the new propane fireplaces. There were complaints that the stoves were not providing enough heat throughout the cabin. The addition of the fans along with new insulation and windows should take care of any heating problems.

**VI. DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT REPORT – ROD LAMB**

**A. Lighthouse Marine Park Dock Renovation** – The in-water marine work window is currently closed so work has temporarily ceased on this project. The in-water work will begin again after July 15, 2014.

During the closed work window all upland improvements were completed.

Completing the permitting process and final approval of the deck specifications is pending the engineer design drawings from the dock manufacturer.

**B. Hovander Trail** – Parks is currently working with the Whatcom Conservation District to prepare the trail for the mitigation planting. The planting will be a volunteer effort coordinated by the Conservation District and the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association. There will be a community volunteer effort on April 19th.

The final portion of this project will be the installation of trail signage and an information kiosk. It is anticipated that this will be completed by the end of February, 2014.

**C. Lookout Mountain Trailhead** – The water pressure issue that was discussed at previous meetings has been resolved.

A new generator has been installed that will provide backup power for the restroom in the case of a power outage.

An information kiosk is being built by the Parks Maintenance crew and should be installed by the end of February, 2014.

**D. South Fork Park** – A request for qualifications was released for civil engineering services to construct the South Fork Park access. Out of 10 applications received, Reichhardt & Ebe Engineering has been selected to be the best fit to provide these services. Meetings with the contractor were held to discuss the project scope and evaluate the opportunities and constraints of the project.

This access will provide an road & parking lot for South Fork Park.

**E. Nessel Farm Building Restoration** – This project that was shelved last summer due to time constraints but has now been placed back on schedule.

Meetings were held with Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt of the Nessel Foundation and the structural engineer to discuss modifications to and completion of the design drawings. Once this is completed the final drawings will be the basis to release a request for qualifications.

The scope of work will include the foundation restoration, a new roof and new siding. This will stabilize the building and prevent any additional degradation of the structures.

The target to begin the work is summer 2014.

**F. Silver Lake Road & Electrical Improvements** – Meetings were held with Whatcom Builders to discuss the possible strategies and designs to improve the roads at Silver Lake Park in the most cost effective manner keeping in mind any future road disturbance that may be required for upcoming electrical improvements.

Whatcom Builders suggested that rather than putting down new roads now it would be better to pulverize existing degraded asphalt. This would create a gravel camp road in the interim and then plan to pave them over time as funding for the electrical upgrades allows.

## **VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**A. Multi-use Trail Etiquette and Safety** – Mike provided a photocopy example of a multi-use trail sign that indicates a yield pattern for multi-use trails users.

Trail courtesy is an issue that continues to be a struggle on the multi-use trails, more so on some trails that accommodate high speed bicyclists and trails that have higher usage.

As the planning process for the trail portions of the park moves forward, these concerns will be addressed with signage, traffic direction and trail routes.

There was a suggestion that when the discussion of signage is on the table that reminder signage for bicyclists to ring a bell or make some audio response prior to passing be considered.

Also discussed was the need for continued education among all trail users to be considerate of one another.

**B. Comprehensive Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan (CPROSP)** – Mike announced that the CPROSP is now posted on the Whatcom County Parks and Recreation web site.

The first Public Open House meeting will be held March 6<sup>th</sup> from 6-8 PM at the Bellingham Senior Activity Center, 315 Halleck Street, Bellingham. This will provide an opportunity to meet staff, solicit

comments, answer questions. There will be a mini-slide presentation on previous accomplishments and an update on the plan's components.

**ACTION: Park staff to send the Commission members a reminder notice regarding the CPROSP Public Open House Meetings.**

Tuesday, March 11, 2014 there will be a County Council work session to obtain input from Council for additions and/or changes to the Plan. It will also provide Council with a question and answer period.

Mike discussed the relationship of the CPROSP to the overall County Comprehensive plan and the direct uses for the Parks' plan.

The Chair recognized Gordon Rogers. Gordon asked Mike if he had a sense of whether or not the newly appointed council members have a change in expectations for the Parks Department or are they similar to those that have been established in past years.

Mike stated that in general Council is very supportive of parks and trails and that there are many initiatives on the table for park acquisitions and trail development. It is his belief that it will take some time for the new council members to sort through all the information and form an agenda for parks.

Mike stated that he has had conversations with several Council members to explain the current status of some of the immediate plans, where the Parks Department needs to proceed and answered many good questions regarding the history in terms of what works and what doesn't based on his experience. It is felt that the CPROSP will be an excellent tool for County Council to educate themselves on the direction that the Parks Department is going.

He feel that at this point there has not been enough time gone by since the new members took office to really get into any in-depth conversations or work sessions on park issues. However, because the Council will need to approve the CPROSP and that a new budget will need to be discussed that there will soon be an increase in conversations regarding park issues, projects and capital improvement plans.

**C. Acquisition Ranking** – Mike provided and compilation of the Commission's returned ranking documents. He discussed how he compiled the information and explained that there were some properties/projects that when all the numbers were considered some sites were tied and therefore received the same ranking number.

There was a question regarding the omission of a ranking number on Property/Project #11. Mike stated that one Commission member did not provide a ranking for this property and that threw the numbers off giving the property an out of proportion ranking.

Mike reiterated that this is simply a tool for the County Executive who asked for the ranking to get a general idea of the Commission's proprieties for acquisition. Mike stated that this information will work very well for that purpose.

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Proposed Park Acquisitions – Birch Bay** – The Chair recognized Mike. He discussed the history of Parcel A which is the Voigt property that was brought before the Commission in 2013.

He discussed that a community committee along with other interested entities brought a request before the County Executive and some of the Council members to acquire the Voigt property.

The message from the County Executive at that time regarding acquisition of this property was that because the County is previously committed to a rather substantial Public Works project to provide a walkway/bike path in Birch Bay that the community would need to provide the majority of means for this acquisition. As a result, and because there has been no directive from the County Executive, the Parks Department has not proceeded with this acquisition in Birch Bay.

Mike discussed that prior to the Voigt property there was property available around the golf course. The property was brought to the attention of the County Executive and some of the council members that were in office at that time, and it was indicated by the Executive that because it was a high priority in the Birch Bay community, the County would support buying a parcel of this property for a public restroom and some limited parking on the water front side. When the property came up for bid it was at a price higher that the County could bid and was sold to another entity.

In the interim the Birch Bay community formed a committee to discuss avenues for acquiring properties for a community based park and commenced with the planning process. This planning process is on the web and if interested Mike can provide that web site address.

The overall priority for the community is to provide public restrooms in this area. It was pointed out at that time that there was not just the acquisition to consider but also development of the property and long term maintenance, which would include keeping the restrooms clean and could require several visits a day during the summer season. The final message that went back to the community was that they would need to acquire the property in this area and operate it.

Mike discussed that at this time there are two parcels in this area that are available. Both parcels have potential beyond public restrooms and both could provide good sites for a community park.

After additional research Executive Louws stated that the County may be interested in a parcel to accommodate a public restroom. However at this time the County is not actively pursuing either property, even though there is a desire among different factions in the community to have the County acquire and develop a parcel in the area.

Mr. Alesse was recognized. He requested that during any decision making process the Parks Department may go through the factors to consider would be which property would provide the best value and long term benefits for the community.

Mr. Skinner was recognized and pointed out that this property would not only provide room for parking and restrooms it would also provide an area for a park.

It was discussed that there is already a large State park in the Birch Bay area that provides beach access. That in the Birch Bay area, Whatcom County Parks has Bay Horizon Park which is underdeveloped but has a lot of potential, Sunset Farm, which has developed primarily as an equestrian facility through demand but it is also a public park and can be used for other activities.

In addition there is Bay Crest Trail that could be extend, the Broadway access that recently had some development, the Jackson access and Cottonwood Beach which provides a parking area for beach access, as well as a number of Public Works road ends also providing beach access.

In terms of restrooms, there is the restroom building at the end of Alder Road that is maintained by the Haven Condominium Association but could be maintained by the County to keep it open year round, if desired.

There was discussion regarding the Public Works berm and walkway project that the County has committed to fund. Mike stated that this would provide flood protection an off-road area for pedestrian/bike traffic.

It was discussed that the Birch Bay property that was presented at the beginning of this meeting would qualify for consideration to the list of potential future acquisitions in the Birch Bay area.

**B. Proposed storm water improvement at Cottonwood Beach in Birch Bay** – Mike provided and discussed maps showing two alternatives that Public Works has proposed for installing/re-routing a storm sewer outflow pipe either to its current location on a private beach or onto Cottonwood Beach.

The Department is asking the Commission to provide a recommendation whether or not to accept re-routing the storm sewer outflow onto Cottonwood Beach.

Both alternatives were discussed in term any benefits that would be realized and/or what the impact would be to Cottonwood Beach. Also discussed were the source and pathway of the storm water, the reasons for a storm sewer in this location and the reasons for a change.

Mike stated that he discussed the impact on the park with Rod Lamb, Parks Planning and Development Supervisor. He also discussed the legal considerations and impacts of re-routing the pipe onto the beach. Their outcome was that there was no apparent benefit to the park or the public.

After additional discussion it was the consensus of the Commission to invite Kraig Olason, Public Works Storm Water Senior Planner to the March 20, 2014 Commission Meeting to discuss the plan in more detail from a Public Works point of view and to better inform the Commission prior to a recommendation.

**ACTION: Mike will contact Kraig Olason, Public Works Storm Water Senior Planner and invite him to the March 20, 2014 Commission meeting to discuss the storm water alternatives in more detail from a Public Works standpoint.**

## **IX ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**A. NEXT MEETING:** Thursday, March 20, 2014 6:00 PM. The meeting will be held at the Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Administrative office with a tour of the Northwest Wildlife Rehabilitation Center located at 3671 Mount Baker Highway, Deming, Washington.

## **X. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** It was moved, seconded and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 PM.

Transcribed by: Pat Fisher, Clerk III

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director