

**MEETING MINUTES  
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION  
Thursday, August 21, 2014**

**Roeder Home  
2600 Sunset Drive  
Bellingham, WA**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

After a tour of Lookout Mountain Forest Preserve and Stimpson Family Nature Reserve Restroom Project, the meeting was called to order by Commission Vice-Chair, Jeffrey Margolis at 6:30 PM.

**II. ROLL CALL**

PRESENT:

Commissioners: Gordon Rogers, Kenneth Kiesner, Richard Sturgill and Jeff Margolis

Staff: Mike McFarlane, Christ Thomsen, Rodney Lamb

EXCUSED:

Paul Woodcock, Janet Boyhan and Theresa Sygitowicz

GUESTS: Daniel Probst, Cascade Mountain Runners

**III. PUBLIC COMMENTS / COMMUNICATIONS**

**A. COMMENTS:**

1. Jeff Margolis provided pictures of the newly painted VanZandt Community Hall.

**B. COMMUNICATIONS:** There were no public communications from the guests.

**IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

1. Gordon Rogers requested a point of order. The Motion that passed regarding Item X., B. "Preserving A Way of Life" A Natural Heritage Plan for Whatcom County was not passed with a quorum vote. Because Theresa abstained, there were only three actual votes. Gordon pointed out that Roberts Rules of Order states that an abstention is not considered a vote and in this situation resulted in the lack of quorum and therefore the Motion could not pass.

Gordon requested that the topic be revisited.

**V. AGENDA**

**A. AUGUST 21, 2014 AGENDA APPROVAL**

**MOTION:** It was moved by Richard Sturgill, seconded by Gordon Rogers and passed unanimously to approve the August 21, 2014 Agenda with the following addition: Item VIII. Unfinished Business, B. "Preserving a Way of Life" A Natural Heritage Plan for Whatcom County.

## VI. MINUTES

### A. JULY 18, 2014 MINUTES APPROVAL

**ACTION:** The July 17, 2014 Minutes Approval will be tabled until September 19, 2014 as there were not enough members at the August 21, 2014 meeting that were at the July 17, 2014 meeting to provide a quorum vote.

## VII. STAFF REPORTS

### A. DIRECTOR'S REPORT – MIKE MCFARLANE

**1. Acquisitions** – The Department continues to work on several acquisition proposals for Whatcom County Council and Executive Louws regarding the following properties:

**a. Birch Bay** – There is a Phase One assessment underway for this property. The appraisal is complete and will be presented to County Council in late September or early October.

**b. Maple Falls School Site** - The appraisal is complete. The District is currently in the process of completing a purchase and sale agreement. When this is received a recommendation will be forwarded to Council.

**c. Galbraith Mountain** – Coordination continues with all the parties involved to draft a proposal.

**2. Budget** – The first budget meeting will take place on Tuesday August 26, 2014.

**a. Canyon Lake / South Fork Park** - At this time, the Executive had indicated that the funding for Canyon Lake and South Fork Park will move from the 2015 budget to the 2016 budget. Additional information will be forthcoming at Tuesday's meeting, however Mike stated if this is the case then the road repairs for Canyon Lake will be pushed back another year.

There will also need to be a discussion regarding South Fork Park to determine if funds that are currently in the Capital Project Fund can be moved to complete a limited amount of work in 2015 and then continued into 2016/17 budget year for project completion. It is thought that this is technically feasible but must be reviewed and approved.

**b. Volunteer Staff** - There have been changes in the duties and responsibilities of the Volunteer Center. The Volunteer Center has indicated that they will no longer provide volunteers for the docent program at Hovander House. In addition, there have been some changes in the County-wide contract that will also affect various Department volunteer programs.

Because the Department has a large number of volunteers assisting with several projects and activities, the Department has requested funding for a Volunteer Coordinator position for 16 hours a week to provide dedicated time to manage the Volunteer Program. Mike discussed the coordinators duties and responsibilities. These could include screening volunteers and tracking and scheduling hours.

**c. Extra-Help Staff** - The Department is also requesting a \$1.00 per hour increase for the extra-help staff in order to raise the hourly rate to \$12.00. This will allow the Department to

be competitive in the employment market. In addition, a request for an increase in extra-help hours has been included to cover miscellaneous needs such as the Nessel house restoration and hours that will be needed when the park opens.

Mike will update the Commission on the results of the first budget meeting at the September Commission meeting. The Executive's Budget will be released in October, 2014 and will provide the Executive's recommendations on the Department's requested items.

Mike briefly discussed the Department budget in terms of expenditures and revenues and that it is expected to remain relatively the same for the next three to four years.

There was some discussion regarding REET II funding and how these funds can be applied. Mike explained that the REET II funds can only be used for capital projects and cannot be used for payroll expenses unless it is directly related to REET II funded projects.

There was also discussion regarding rates and fees and justification for increases and / or decreases.

A suggestion was made to make donation boxes available in the parks. It was discussed that there is currently a donation box at the Roeder Home and that there will need to be consideration given to the best locations for the boxes and how to manage them.

Gordon asked if there has been additional communication from Rud Browne. Gordon suggested that an invitation could be extended to him to attend a Commission meeting in order to complete the trails discussion that was cut short at the previous meeting he attended.

**ACTION:** Mike will contact Rud Browne and extend an invitation to attend a future Commission Meeting.

Gordon Rogers suggested that if Mr. Browne cannot attend a meeting that he would be willing to head a committee to meet with him at his convenience. Jeff Margolis stated that he would like to hold a position on the committee.

**3. Planning Commission Meeting** – Mike reminded the Commission that the Planning Commission Meeting regarding changes in Levels of Service (LOS) will be held on September 25, 2014 at 6:30 PM at Whatcom County Planning and Development Services (PDS), 5280 Northwest Drive, in the portable unit in front of the main building. For meeting information call PDS at (360) 676-6907

**4. Glacier Property Lot Line Adjustment** – Efforts to do a lot line adjustment by the owner of the property that is encroaching on County Department property has stalled. The owner is being asked by PDS to consolidate lots as a condition of approving the lot line adjustment. The owner has indicated that she is not willing to address these requirements. Updates will be shared with the Commission.

**5. Glacier Restroom Properties** – County legal staff informed the Department that there was quiet title settled on these parcels. Mike briefly discussed the background on this issue.

## **B. OPERATIONS REPORT – CHRIST THOMSEN**

### **1. Staffing**

**a. Extra-Help** - The Department is experiencing a reduction in seasonal staff due to an unanticipated early return to school. Recruitment efforts are being made to hire replacement staff for the remainder of the season.

**b. Conservation Parks Steward** – An internal job announcement will be released on Monday 8/25/14 – Saturday 8/30/14. If a qualified candidate is not found internally a national announcement will be released.

Christ discussed the unique and diverse skill set requirements for this position which may make it difficult to identify a candidate. It was felt that a national search will provide a larger selection of candidates. The national announcement will be open for one month.

## 2. Revenue

**a. Camping and Cabin Fees** – Christ discussed the recent change in the manner in which fees are collected for reserved camping and cabin sites. In the past one night of the stay was collected up front and now the entire fee for the stay is collected up front. There was a discussion on the refund policy which remains the same.

**b. Plantation Rifle Range** – It is expected that the Range will continue to meet their revenue projections.

**c. Rental Properties** – All of the Department's rental properties are currently full but as a fail-safe, a vacancy cushion has been figured into the revenue projections for these properties. There was a two month vacancy at the Silver Lake Apartment and the Tennant Lake Apartment tenants have given notice. Because this is a clean and desirable unit it is anticipated that it will not be vacant for long.

## 3. Projects

**a. Bay to Baker Trail Bridge** – After visiting this site it has become apparent why this structure has not been completed. This site needs a great deal of pre-construction work and planning prior to attempting the project. The site is an old abandoned railroad cut that has a stream running into it that has produced 8-10 inches of organic matter and developed into a very soft, wet base that will not facilitate foot traffic. Christ provided photos of the site for Commission review.

**b. Wilkinson Rental** – The contractor has removed the asbestos from this site and will be submitting air quality testing results in order to complete the paperwork required for demolition. The septic has been abandoned. The demolition should take place early next week.

**c. Tennant Lake Trail** – The maintenance staff are raising some low sections of the trail that get inundated during the winter months and have completed culvert maintenance to assure good water flow/drainage.

## 4. Incidents

Christ commented that he in spite of the diversity of our parks he is quite impressed with the small number of reported incidents.

**a. Employee Injury** – A few minor staff injuries were reported, some due to incorrect lifting techniques. Training sessions are being scheduled to review correct lifting methods to reduce injuries.

There was an injury involving an individual that jumped off a rental boat at Silver Lake Park and injured himself. The individual refused treatment and did not provide any personal information for follow-up. The incident was documented by park staff.

**b. Structures** – As a result of the break-in incident two month ago at the Silver Lake Park barn, there was a discussion on ways to mitigate these problems in remote areas. It has been decided to install motion activated lighting on the barn to reduce the attractiveness of another break-in.

There was a brief discussion regarding converting the residential rental properties around Lake Whatcom to public rental facilities. Mike stated that this has been discussed in the past but no conclusions have been made as to whether or not this would be feasible or profitable. Mike also discussed the impacts this would have on the budget and staffing demands.

### **C. DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT REPORT – ROD LAMB**

**1. Stimpson Nature Reserve** – Rod discussed the funding for the newly installed restrooms at this site. He explained that the funding sources were the Rotary of Bellingham and the Whatcom Land Trust.

The project was primarily managed by the Whatcom Land Trust with Wilson Engineering retained for engineering services and permitting assistance. The permitting process will be complete once the Department receives sign off on the certificate of occupancy for the ADA parking.

The possibility of erecting park notification signs prior to the entrance and perpendicular to the road to increase visibility was discussed. Rod stated that this is a good point and could also apply to Lookout Mountain. He stated that he could draft a 24 X 24 inch County sign indicating parking and restrooms approximately 500 feet ahead of the entrances and on both sides of the road for both facilities.

It was also suggested and generally agreed that the Stimpson sight distance could use some brush management close to the road pull-out for visibility. Rod commented Whatcom Land Trust is hosting a volunteer work party at Stimpson just prior to the Thanksgiving holiday to clean up the grounds and plant some native plants and he will recommend adding this to the task list.

In addition, the Land Trust has plans to fund a kiosk for the trailhead that will include a map, an interpretive panel and the park rules.

**2. Lighthouse Marine Park Dock Renovation** – The question regarding the stamped engineer of record has been resolved and now includes the manufacturer's drawings in the calculation package, verifying that they are based on design specifications.

There is a request in to the manufacturer to clarify some minor structural details and make a few small adjustments to the calculations report. Once these are cleared up that portion of the review will be complete and work can begin on manufacturing the docks themselves. The completion timeline has not yet been determined but it is anticipated that because the manufacturer is wrapping up their busy season it could be some time in the next few weeks. Since they will not be installed this year this should not be a problem.

The project has been difficult to complete in a timely manner due to very stiff regulatory requirements under which Park's was required to operate.

It is anticipated that the pile driving activities will not be delayed and installation can be completed prior to the in-water work window.

**3. Hovander Picnic Shelter Driveway Relocation** – The project was approved by Planning and Development Services (PDS) and permits have been issued. The project was released for bid and out of the three bids that were received Whatcom Builders submitted the low bid.

The contract has been signed by the County attorney and forward to the Executive for approval. The contract will then be forwarded to Whatcom Builders for signatures.

Once the contract has been signed by the contractor a pre-construction meeting will be scheduled for the first week in September.

#### **4. South Fork Park**

**a. Design** – Reichhardt & Ebe Engineering submitted the preliminary horizontal alignment / topographical survey report for the two trail heads located at South Fork Park. A meeting was held with the engineers this past Tuesday to discuss changes in the design based on how the conceptual master plan laid out on the actual survey results. A slight shift in the design will be done to provide a better fit and reduce the need for land fill.

Rod stated that he will continue to work with the horizontal alignment in the layout of the restrooms and other on-site day-use facilities. He will then meet with the engineers to go over the design layout of these facilities to be able to begin grading, complete the storm water reports and move forward with the permitting process.

Rod discussed that there will be restrooms, a picnic shelter and an ADA accessible restrooms and mounting ramp at the equestrian trailhead, and restrooms, a bike parking area and a kiosk at the hiking trailhead. These structures were included in the conceptual plan but some minor changes may be needed to accommodate actual field conditions.

Jeff asked if Rod could go into more detail on the picnic shelter design. Rod stated that it will not be a “catalog” shelter but would be constructed with materials that may be donated by the Back Country Horsemen. There will be a design meeting to determine the size and placement in relationship to the parking and day-use activities.

**b. Nessel Farm Building Restoration** – Rod is working with Zeeigers Engineering Inc., a structural engineering firm funded through the Nessel Foundation, to develop foundation and structural repair drawings for the farm house and the machine shed. There are a few drawing revisions to be made prior to bidding the project.

Department staff will do a site visit to conduct a survey of the existing structures, determine the condition of the building roofs and necessary siding repairs.

Rod’s initial recommendation for phase one is to complete the foundation repairs and structural stabilization as one contract as this could reveal important information about the condition of the siding and other structural facts that would inform a second bid package that could require a different contractor skill set than the foundation and structural repairs.

The first bid package is expected to be ready for release in September and the project is expected to extend into 2015 given the time of year that we are releasing the bid.

**5. Silver Lake Park Road and Electrical Improvements** – Pacific Survey & Engineering Company has been selected as the consultant for this project. They teamed with K Engineers to

provide the electrical portion of the project as they previously provided an entire inventory of the electrical system in 2011 when a new shower and restroom facility was being considered but not constructed.

A project scoping meeting was held earlier in the day. This is a complex project and this initial meeting was to identify the scope in sufficient detail that Pacific Survey & Engineering Company can produce a task and fee schedule for their services.

During the meeting it was identified that consideration should be given to improving the water system at the same time that the park is being trenched for the electrical system updates. This would require developing a phasing plan for the next six to eight years and completing each phase during separate budget cycles. This would then bring the park up to speed for approximately the next fifty years.

We are requesting Pacific Survey & Engineering Company to submit a finalized scope by September 10<sup>th</sup> in order to submit to Council for approval at the September 29<sup>th</sup> meeting and begin work the first part of October.

**6. Reconveyance Planning** – A good base line of inventory has been completed and the Department will now begin looking at an analysis in terms of sub-basins, drainage and major corridors and connection points between existing recreational facilities. Efforts will continue in the next few weeks to develop preliminary trial alignment alternatives.

Unfortunately the Special Projects extra-help staff person has accepted a job and will be leaving us at the end of next week. A job description will be posted in the near future to fill that position in order to continue the inventory and mapping of the Reconveyance area.

A meeting was held with King County to study their trail system. In the meeting it was shared that in their permitting process, they have an agreement with their PDS whereby they can construct up to 7000 linear feet of trail in any year through a procedural permit. The process included providing notification on one form that the process was being initiated, acknowledging any pre-existing conditions and abiding by them. Pre-existing conditions can include such things as having an erosion plan, not filling any wet lands or not disturbing so many square feet at one time and / or basically following best-management practices to protect the environment. This is a conversation that Rod would like to start with Whatcom County PDS to see if they will consider such an agreement.

**7. Semiahmoo Fish Processer Cover** – The designs for the fish processer cover are ongoing. Rod has started the design but has not yet completed the framing drawings. Completion of the project has been delayed as there have been other priorities that have come up over the last few months.

**8. Samish Foot Bridge** – Plans are being discussed and developed to replace the footbridge that is close to the new fishing dock. It is a wooden, 12 X 6 foot structure whose footings are getting close to being unstable and crosses a creek that is deeply incised. The bridge has been temporarily stabilized for another season but will need to be replaced during the next open-water work window prior to the next park busy season.

It is being considered to increase the span to 20 feet, installing it with I-beams and using three inch decking materials so that it will be stable well into the future.

The project will require a shoreline exemption from the County and hydraulic project approval (HPA) from WA State Department of Fish and Wildlife. Application for these will allow time to

develop preliminary drawings, determine project costs and develop budget strategies to fund the project.

There was a discussion regarding the fact that no treated materials can be used in the stream which would raise the question of what materials to use for the I-beams. It was suggested that aluminum may be a viable material as opposed to I-beams that were not galvanized and would eventually rust. Alternative materials are being considered.

**9. Silver Lake Signage Improvements** – The Silver Lake Park road improvement budget for this year included a line item for other improvement associated with the road. This will be used to install improved directional signage at Silver Lake.

**10. Hovander River Trail** – Rod is working with Frank Corey, Whatcom Conservation District, to begin the next phase of blackberry management. This service is being provided by Frank at no cost to the Department and will be spraying the blackberries in the near future when conditions are optimal. The Department will post notices that this activity is in progress.

There was a lengthy discussion on alternative methods of blackberry removal, the mitigation plan and the permitting requirements.

Jeff asked to go on record that he believes sprays have residual effects and that it is his view that spraying will be detrimental to the river's water quality. He stated that blackberries always come back because birds re-deposit seeds and will then need to be sprayed again. It is his recommendation to clip them down as opposed to using spray.

Rod stated that he shares Jeff's water quality concerns and that it is best to not apply pesticides except when absolutely necessary. Frank Corey's specialty is riparian restoration and has extensive experience in application procedures for blackberry control. Frank has assured the Department that if the blackberries are sprayed for two years in a row and the native plants are allowed to become established they will shade out many competitors including blackberries. Rod stated that his experience with riparian restoration supports this practice.

There was additional discussion regarding the mitigation plan and the permitting requirements, that the blackberries are not native and that the nature of the root system is such that they cannot be simply cut them back for eradication.

## **VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**A. Lake Whatcom Reconveyance Planning** – Mike discussed that the next phase of the planning process is to refine the maps and identify the corridors prior to the next meeting and with the recent loss of the individual that was providing GIS and the several, Council mandated projects that need immediate attention, it has not been possible to set a date for that meeting. The Department plans to return to the process as soon as possible.

There was a discussion to clarify that there are two parks in the Reconveyance area, Lookout Mountain and Lake Whatcom Park and a brief discussion on where the trail systems in each park leads.

**B. TRAILS** – This is a Commission Agenda Item and was placed was placed back on the Agenda for discussion as a result of a request made several meetings ago.

There was a discussion regarding the Coast Millennium Trail. This project has been in development for quite some time and up to now has been somewhat dormant. Recently the Blaine/Birch Bay Park and Recreation District #2 entered into an agreement with the property

owners between Lincoln Road and California Creek to purchase an easement owned by the Birch Bay Sewer and Water District that will provide a vital portion of trail connection between Birch Bay and Blaine.

There was a request for an update on the alternate Canyon Lake access. Mike stated that Sierra Pacific will have the gate open at the access through Racehorse Creek only until August 26<sup>th</sup> at the latest and will then close it again.

The access road off Mosquito Lake and Canyon Creek Roads continues to remain closed to motor vehicle traffic. Until the road is rebuilt there is only hiking or biking access. It is the Department's tentative plan to address the repair next year.

**C. "PRESERVING A WAY OF LIFE" A NATURAL HERITAGE PLAN FOR WHATCOM COUNTY** – A point of order was requested at the beginning of the meeting under Item IV. Commissioner Comments. The Vice-Chair opened the floor for discussion on this matter.

Gordon Rogers was recognized. Gordon stated it is his understanding that the resolution that was drafted and approved by County Council in 1991 does not adopt the plan but basically recognizes it. Since then many things have changed and the recommended goals and mission statement have never been accomplished. In addition, requirements that the Executive was made responsible for by this document have also never been addressed to his knowledge.

Gordon discussed that segments of the plan that dealt with funding were removed by County Council because they were supported by a wide variety of sources and had significant impacts on the tax payer. He stated that because there is no funding for the directives and goals that are contained in this document that it does not make sense to incorporate it into the County Comprehensive Plan.

Vice-chair, Jeff Margolis was recognized. He stated that his first point is that this is a resolution and not a plan but rather a conceptual wish list and a frame work for the future. He discussed that some portions of the document may be inappropriate for this day and age. He suggested that in the next month or so a committee of Commission members can remove the hindrances, distill the document and come back with a list of updated values and goals that the document was originally trying to propose. He discussed that PDS requested input from the Commission as to whether or not to endorse including the Heritage Plan in the Comprehensive Plan and it is his fear that not including it in the Comprehensive Plan will be "throwing the baby out with the bath water".

Gordon countered that the motion that was voted on was to incorporate the plan into the County Comprehensive Plan and that is his concern. There is no question that the document contains some good points and it is not his intention to bury the document but that it is not appropriate for the County Comprehensive plan at it is currently written and for the reason he previously stated. He discussed that he would be willing to work on plan modifications to address these concerns.

Mike explained that the document is already referenced in the Comp Plan. The difference between this and the Park's Open Space Plan is that it references the Open Space Plan that was adopted in an earlier version, not the recently adopted version. The argument was that it should be the most recent version that gets adopted and that this is a different plan.

Mike stated that how, why or when they are going to revise it is unknown. The Natural Heritage Plan came as a surprise as this is not the document that the Department has oversight. At one time it was referenced in the Comp Plan and has been with PDS or in the Executive's office and his understanding is that the goal is to clean up the Comp Plan.

Mike stated that he does not know what they are proposing as far as an amendment or if they have it docketed for discussion but that he can make a call to get clarification on their intension and when that would take place.

Gordon stated that if there is not any risk of a final decision he would be willing to table the decision for a later date.

It was also suggested that it would be wise to have the absent Commission members in attendance prior to voting again.

**ACTION:** Mike will resend an electronic copy of the Heritage Plan to Commission members and email the results of his request to Planning and Development Services for clarification on their intent in regards to the Heritage Plan.

Commission members will meet to discuss the Heritage Plan to identify applicable portions of the document, not in an attempt to rewrite but to comment on the Plan as written.

Jeff asked Mike to clarify the proper procedure for email communication between Commission members. Mike stated that if no action is recommended and is simply an informational communication that sending him a copy would cover any requirements for Commission member email communications.

There was concern expressed that Commission members should be notified of the results of this discussion and point of order as soon as possible. Gordon stated that he would be willing to do that via email.

**ACTION:** Gordon Rogers will contact Commission members via email regarding the point of order regarding the Motion on July 17, 2014 Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Meeting, Item X., B. "Preserving A Way of Life" A Natural Heritage Plan for Whatcom County.

**ACTION:** It was the consensus of the Commission to table the recommendation to PDS regarding the document "Preserving A Way of Life" A Natural Heritage.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**A. BRUCE BURBEE, EVENT DIRECTOR, SILVER LAKE OUTDOOR FESTIVAL** – Christ Thomsen updated the Commission that Mr. Burbee canceled his Special Event application and event.

## **IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **A. SEPTEMBER MEETING DATE, TIME AND LOCATION**

The September 2014 meeting date is September 19, 2014, 6:30 at the Roeder Home.

## **X. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** It was moved by Ken Kiesner, seconded by Richard Sturgill and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Transcribed by: Pat Fisher, Clerk III

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director