

MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, May 16, 2019

Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Administrative Offices
3373 Mount Baker Highway
Bellingham, Washington

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Committee Vice-Chair Sonja Max at 6:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Commissioners: Brad VanderWerff, Richard Sturgill, Susan McClendon, Sonja Max

Staff: Michael McFarlane, Rod Lamb, Christ Thomsen

EXCUSED

Commissioners: Jeff Margolis

GUEST(S)

None

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

None

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

None

V. AGENDA

A. May 16, 2019

MOTION: Brad VanderWerff moved to approve the May 16, 2019 agenda as written. Richard Sturgill seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VI. MINUTES

A. April 18, 2019

MOTION: Susan McClendon moved to approve the April 18, 2019 Minutes as written. Brad VanderWerff seconded. Richard Sturgill abstained.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. Director's Report – Michael McFarlane

- i. **Boys & Girls Club Lease** – Mike received a request from the Boys & Girls Club to renew their lease for the baseball fields out at Smith and Northwest next to the soccer fields. The existing 25 year lease expires in 2020.
- ii. **Lummi Island** – There is a group of citizens on Lummi Island who would like to build a small play structure across the street from the ferry landing where the upper parking lot is located. Currently, the community has been planting fruit trees in this area. Whatcom County Public Works would have to grant permission for the structure and then the details (who would pay for it, install it, maintain it, etc.) would have to be worked out. WC Parks will be working with the community members to find out if this is a viable proposal the community wants to pursue.
- iii. **Lake Whatcom Storm Water Fee Proposal** – The County Council established the Lake Whatcom Stormwater Utility Service Area within the Lake Whatcom Watershed. The purpose of the new stormwater utility is to provide additional funding to clean up and protect Lake Whatcom water quality. A consultant and citizen advisory committee was selected to create a fee rate structure and has made their recommendations to the Council. Their recommendation includes basing fees on the size of single family residences (small, medium, large) and the size of impervious areas of non-residential parcels. WC Parks would need to pay fees for the two leased single family residences, parking lots, and restroom structures within the watershed. The Council will discuss the recommendation at their next meeting.
- iv. **Scottish Gathering** – The Scottish Gathering is being held at Hovander Homestead Park in June. The organizer was very resistant to the insurance requirements for having animals on display at the event. County legal staff advised insurance was necessary to adequately protect the County and its residents from lawsuits.
- v. **Bellingham Senior Activity Center Parking Lot** – WC Parks received approval from the City of Bellingham and Cornwall Center for the parking lot lease at the Bellingham Senior Activity Center. WC Parks will be moving forward with that agreement as quickly as possible.
- vi. **Park Brochure** – The new park brochure is out for quote. The goal is to have the new brochures printed by July.

B. Planning & Development Report – Rod Lamb

- i. **Lighthouse Marine Park Playground** – WC Parks crew has mobilized at Lighthouse Marine Park to build the playground. Construction fencing has been put up to keep the public safe and all necessary excavation has been completed. The form boards for the equipment have been installed and the crew is now getting ready to install the form boards for the

concrete curb that keeps the fall protection in. The target is to have this completed by the end of June.

- ii. **Maple Creek Campground** – Williamson Construction has made good progress. The project is about a week ahead of schedule and the contractor has made suggestions to help reduce costs. One of the major components of this project is replacing the water distribution system. There was a small issue on Monday when the contractor hit the 4-inch water main. Staff shut the well off and the contractor was able to make the new connection a day ahead of schedule. The park only lost water for about four and a half hours. The main issue now is getting new primary electrical service from Puget Sound Energy. The electrical designer on PSE staff is leaving and the engineer assigned to this project by the project electrical engineer is also moving on. Rod is trying to persuade PSE to allow the project electrical contractor to install PSE's conduit so that work can continue on schedule.
- iii. **South Fork Park** – WC Parks didn't place very well with the grant application, but will remain grant eligible. WC Parks is still working to resolve the bridge crossing at Hutchison Creek with the Lummi Tribe. As soon as that is resolved, regardless of grant status, permitting will begin for the trail.

C. Operations Report – Christ Thomsen

- i. **Staffing** – All seasonal positions are filled and the administration is really pleased with the caliber of hires. The Maintenance III (Carpenter) position is still open as a result of some missteps in HR; that position now closes May 21st. The Maintenance and Construction Supervisor moved on, so that position is currently vacant and recruitment will begin shortly. The Outside Maintenance Coordinator is retiring May 31st and recruitment will begin soon for that position as well.
- ii. **Operations** – Opening fishing day at Silver Lake went off without a hitch. The Maple Creek Campground was closed because of the construction project, but the rest of the campsites were full. The beautiful weather has allowed for new full-time staff to experience the busyness of the parks that comes with good weather. This was good a good test run for the upcoming season and things are in really good shape.
- iii. **The Iron Chink** – The Iron Chink was sandblasted, powder coated, painted, and placed back at Semiahmoo on a newly poured concrete pad. The interpretive panel will be reinstalled soon and a roof structure will be constructed to protect it from the weather as staffing allows. The Iron Chink was invented to butcher fish and replaced about 12 workers.
- iv. **WC Parks Crew** – WC Parks crew is helping Rod with the playground installation at Lighthouse Marine Park through June. The crew has also

been helping with issues that come up at the Silver Lake campground project.

- v. **Bellingham Senior Activity Center Landscaping** – There was a site visit today at the Bellingham Senior Activity Center to review the planting and irrigation plans. That project will begin soon and is expected to be completed in the next couple of weeks.
- vi. **Lake Whatcom Trail Construction** – Christ presented the current Lake Whatcom Trail Construction plan. The purple trail is an extension of the Chanterelle Trail that was built two years ago. The green trail is an existing social trail that will be improved and upgraded to a mountain bike trail. The intent for the trails at Lake Whatcom was not to have trails that are technical mountain bike trails, but instead provide user friendly decent trails and trails that allow users to travel longer distances. The goal for next year is to build a hiker only trail down to the Hertz Trail, which would create an entire loop in the Lake Whatcom Trail system.
- vii. **Silver Lake Water Level Update** – There has been a lot of rain and the beavers have been very active. Each day, the dam is reduced and each night, but beavers build it back up. However, there has been a reduction in the lake level. The pedestrian bridge across the lagoon is out of the water and the boat launch dock is close to being out of the water.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. **Biannual Departmental Brief to Natural Resources Committee** – Michael McFarlane appeared in front of the Natural Resources Committee and updated them on projects going on in WC Parks. Mike presented the results of the 2018 Senior Services Surveys and the 2018 Parks Surveys. Survey results are posted online and will be used when the Comprehensive Park Recreation Open Space Plan is updated. Mike gave an update on the Maple Creek Campground renovation. There had been quite a bit of concern about the number of trees being cut and Mike shared pictures that were taken after the tree harvesting to show the character of the campground was maintained. Mike explained the issues with rising water levels at Silver Lake because of the beaver dams and that the installation of the playground at Lighthouse Marine Park had begun. Finally, Mike discussed the Plantation Rifle Range HVAC project and the Plantation Rifle Range use, expense, revenue, etc. The Council had a number of questions about the operational costs of the range and the declining attendance and revenue over the past 5-6 years. The Council brought up the idea of having someone else come in and operate the Range more like a business. The Range is a public range and the original intent was to allow people a safe place to shoot

at a reasonable price. The County Council can set policy on how to run the Range, but cannot do so until they negotiate the labor impact because of the Union Employees working at the Range. The Council would need to collectively make a decision in order to make any changes; another appropriate place to address any sort of change would be during the next budget cycle.

B. HB 1591 and Camping in Public – House Bill 1591 was a piece of legislation that was essentially a bill of rights for the homeless. It was quite broad and basically prohibited law enforcement, security, or staff from harassing the homeless. If harassment was interpreted by the homeless (for example, by trying to move them out a park, public building, greenspace, sidewalk, road, etc.), they would have the funding and support to civilly sue whoever was violating their rights. The Governor’s Office, the Washington Association of Counties, the Washington Association of Cities, and the Washington Business Association were opposed to it because it basically prohibits anyone that has public property or lands from being able to manage them properly. Fortunately, the House Bill died and never made it out of the Senate or to the Governor’s desk. Jeff Margolis had shared some information with Michael McFarlane about a lawsuit in Boise, Idaho, where the city was being sued because of the way they were handling the homeless camping in public.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION

The next Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission meeting will be held on June 20, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. at the Roeder Home, 2600 Sunset Drive, Bellingham, Washington.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

Transcribed by: Kristin Lunderville, Clerk III
Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director