

MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, November 16, 2017

Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Administrative Office
3373 Mount Baker Highway
Bellingham, Washington

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Jeff Margolis, Committee Chair at 6:13 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Commissioners: Chad Perrin, Theresa Sygitowicz, Jeff Margolis, Sonja Max

Staff: Rod Lamb, Christ Thomsen

EXCUSED

Commissioners: Richard Sturgill, Kenneth Kiesner, Susan McClendon

GUEST(S)

Daniel Probst

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS - None

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS - None

V. AGENDA

A. November 16, 2017

MOTION: Theresa Sygitowicz moved to add the discussion of squatters in parks and the hiring of seasonal extra help, under New Business. Jeff Margolis moved to add the discussion of park rest benches to New Business. Theresa Sygitowicz moved to accept the November 16, 2017 Agenda as amended. Sonja Max seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VI. MINUTES

A. October 19, 2017

MOTION: Sonja Max moved to approve the October 19, 2017 Minutes as written. Chad Perrin seconded. Theresa Sygitowicz abstained. The motion to approve was not called due to a lack of quorum.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. Director and Operations Report – Christ Thomsen (Michael McFarlane, Director on vacation)

- i. Plantation Rifle Range** – The airborne lead and noise exposure testing and sampling work is complete. Results are pending. The Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE) visited the Range recently for an unannounced site visit to review hazardous waste disposal procedures. These include lead and gun cleaning solvents. Department staff spent three plus hours with DOE to discuss Range procedures. Results of the inspection are pending. It is thought that it will be favorable. Christ discussed the areas and issues that are inspected along with the compliance requirements for any findings. The report results will be shared at the meeting following receipt.
- ii. Lookout Mountain Communication Towers** – American Tower Company's occupancy lease was not renewed and were scheduled to remove the tower but were unable to remove it during the open land disturbance window. A lease extension will be entered into until June, 2018 when the tower is scheduled to be removed. Lease negotiations are ongoing with Skagit County for the construction of a new tower and land occupancy. Construction is scheduled during the months of June – August 2018. Bonneville Power is currently working on the access road to their tower in order to complete a tower upgrade this coming summer.
- iii. Special Events** – The update to the Special Event Application is moving forward. The new application will capture additional information to better assess the event needs and parameters. A Special Event page has been added to the Parks web site that will provide information to the applicant regarding timelines and insurance requirements, and has a link to the new application. The Department has had to extend the timeline for a completed application to 90 days prior to the date of the event beginning March 1st. This information has been communicated to past event applicants. There was a suggestion that a press release could be helpful. Christ provided an online presentation on the Parks & Recreation Special Event page.
- iv. South Lake Whatcom Park** – In response to a request to investigate a trash problem in the park, Park staff discovered some limited trash that has since been cleaned up. Signs were also created for seven properties, including South Lake Whatcom Park, addressing litter.
- v. Staffing** – The Department currently has three full time position vacancies. The first and second round of interviews has been completed for the Park Attendant. The practicum testing will be completed by the end of the month. The second round of recruitment for the Regional Park Supervisor has begun. Interviews are scheduled for November 30th. The Repair Maintenance III/Carpenter position will be released for external

recruitment next week. Theresa commented on veteran's hiring practices. She stated that she would like to see a notation for added points for veteran's status during the interview process in order to encourage the hiring of veterans. Christ stated that the hiring process is provided by the County Human Resources (HR) department, and though there is open communication between departments regarding suggestions for change and improvements, adding veteran points is not something that can be given at the Department level. Christ stated that he would contact HR and let them know of Theresa's inquiry. Theresa suggested partnering with Wounded Warriors, that it is a win-win situation for the Department, is good public relations and gives a veteran a job.

- vi. **Minor Capital Projects** – The floor of the Fragrance Garden has been completed, the doors to the restroom replaced and additional walkways added, and will be opening very soon. The Department is in the process of hiring an engineer for the Samish deck. It is thought that the engineer will be hired and building supplies purchased prior to the end of the year and built next spring.
- vii. **Water System Replacement at Headquarters** - An engineer has been hired for the replacement of the Administrative Office maintenance compound water system and should complete the engineering portion of this project this week. Bids will then be release for quotes and enter into an agreement by the end of the year.
- viii. **Hovander Maintenance Shop** - The Hovander shop building continues to move forward. This is a project budget and will be moved forward into 2018.
- ix. **December 21, 2017 Commission Meeting** – The meeting will be held at the Roeder Home and will start ½ hour early to accommodate a social segment and pot luck appetizers. There was a brief description of the December meeting activities.
- x. **Facility Equipment Replacement Schedule** – Theresa asked if the Department has an equipment replacement schedule and are being pro-active about replacing facility items that have a limited life expectancy in a timely manner in order to avoid emergencies with equipment failure due to extending replacement past the life expectancy. Christ stated that there is a replacement schedule built into the CMMS and, based on available funds, the goal is to be pro-active for replacement. In addition, if there is a particular furnace, or hot water heater, etc., that is posing a problem but is not at the end of the expected life, and it is wise to replace it, it is being scheduled out in the budget and maintenance schedule.

B. Planning & Development Report (Rodney Lamb)

- i. **Silver Lake Road & Electrical Improvements** – Rod had a pre-application meeting with County Planning & Development Services (PDS) to discuss the road and parking lot improvement project at Silver Lake and is still waiting for their staff report before he can submit the permit application package. PDS did agree to allow modifications to the existing Maple Creek Campground permit instead of beginning a new permitting process, which will reduce the permitting time and the consulting services cost. Because of the number of trees that will need to be removed Rod is working with a timber cruiser to determine the current market value on timber. Theresa suggested calling Great Western Mill for a quote.
- ii. **Lighthouse Boardwalk Renovation** – HB Hansen was awarded the contract for the Lighthouse Boardwalk Renovation and has begun demolition on the boardwalk, removing the decking material of the areas we are going to keep and pulling out the areas that are being replaced. In the process of removing the old materials it was discovered that an unanticipated portion of the sub-structure will need to be replaced as some of the posts were being born by the deck structure itself. Rod has a meeting with the project engineer and contractor to discuss the recent discoveries and evaluate the best way to address these issues.
- iii. **Maple Creek Bridge Replacement** – Three bids have been received for the procurement of a premanufactured pedestrian bridge. Big R was awarded the contract with a low bid of \$51,250.00. Their anticipated delivery of the bridge is mid-March. There was some discussion regarding the other three bids, bid prices, etc. Rod stated that there were no local companies that bid the project.
- iv. **Nesset Farm House and Machine Shed Restoration and Building Stabilization** – The final inspection sign-off was completed by County Building Services this week and we are moving forward with project close-out. The next step will be the purchase of a furnace for the house in order to keep the structure and existing artifacts dry and protected. The Nesset Foundation will reimburse the County for the cost of the project.
- v. **Lummi Island Overlook** – Mocerri Construction was the low bidder at \$76,710.00, met all the qualifications and requirements, and has been awarded the contract for replacing the stairway to the shoreline and re-surfacing the existing wood deck. Rod discussed the other three bidders, and the project specifications, timelines and selected replacement materials.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. **Trail Proposal – Daniels Probst** (Staff request to transcribe this item verbatim).
Jeff Margolis “Where are we going with this, Dan?”

Daniel Probst “First, I would like to thank you for putting me on the Agenda. My original goal was to talk to the Commission about how public and private partnerships can save the County a lot of money in constructing trails and I have a proposal to construct about another 2 miles of trail in Lake Whatcom watershed. I’m actually going to postpone that presentation for probably about another year. I spoke to Reid Parker last week, he’s the Conservation Steward, manager for the park and we weren’t able to come to agreement on any of the things that wouldn’t be needed to take on an additional project, and basically said there is no amount of resources that could make that happen, that he’s just completely overwhelmed, in fact he said that he has more money than he knows what to do with and that no management resources, you know, I was trying to talk about, you know, what do we need and we weren’t able to have an open an honest conversation. So, trying to get you guys to rally behind doing anything else without having that information of what the parks would need is, you know, I don’t see that going anywhere until we can have a conversation with Parks, until they are open to talking about what the needs are. So, yea, hopefully in a year from now when they decide to go back to Lake Whatcom Park, then we can have a conversation on how the community can come in and offset some of those costs for trail construction. Thank you.”

Sonja Max. “I have a question. Well I don’t know, it’s sort of really to this, how the public and private partnership can help reduce costs for the County. In the presentation that you gave last time, which was a flow chart of all the different um, the whole process of how a trail is made and planned, you don’t happen to have that? I guess I’m just wondering the costs of each stage are so that when Daniel comes back, says he can help us save X amount of dollars, what stage is that and how much do we still have to front on the planning and the resources and the time that you put in?”

Ron Lamb. “It’s a reasonable question but unfortunately it’s a hard answer because of variables in the actual trail construction. There’s different challenges that either increase or decrease project costs and it’s not just in the actual, you know, final moving of dirt, but at the very beginning of whether, where’s the trail in proximity to the critical areas, what’s the reconnaissance in the level of effort, what kind of environmental review are we going to have, what kind of mitigation costs we are going to have to cover, because of those unavoidable impacts, and that’s, so the process is very similar but the costs for various phases within that process vary a lot.

Theresa Sygitowicz “I have a question. Several years ago when we brought up the fact that we wanted ADA access on some part of the trails that we’re building in the future, are you addressing that or how’s that happening?”

Rod Lamb “We are, we have targeted some of the trails that are closer to the trail head for being those more accessible trails, and that’s still our vision. One of the trails that we’re trying to increase accessibility is that return loop from Hertz

trail, which still doesn't have a final alignment. It's still on our radar but I can't speak to where that is. The trails that are slated for the 2018 construction will not be ADA compliant by a fairly significant amount."

Jeff Margolis "But I'll bet that the Hertz trail is amenable even though it might not formally"

Rod Lamb "Yes, so there's Capital A accessible, which meets architectural barriers compliance American's With Disabilities Act, and they are very stringent requirements to make that. As soon as you step outside of a public building or a developed park that has an accessible route to a bathroom, you get into this area that's not regulated at the local or state level. It's regulated at the Federal level. Anything that's on Federal land that gets Federal money has to meet, what their called now, are US Accessibility Guidelines, and they're an accessibility criteria for the outdoors, and it's a really good, it's the best I've seen yet, and they have been trying to do this for the last three decades, it's a very pragmatic way of looking at the landscape and make this the most accessible as possible, and they define what that is. It's a certain pitch for a certain length of time, based on a certain strenuous level. But even in that, they recognize that not all trails can be made accessible and as soon as you run into a challenge you go through this process of documenting what the challenges are, and why you can't make it accessible and then you're on the hook for making those accessible as you possibly can. And then you provide that information in the form of trail user information that you present to the public so they can make an informed decision about whether they can go forward."

Theresa Sygitowicz "I just thought it would be a great PR situation if we could even have a map up that we can give people, these are the trails or parts of the trails that are currently accessible, so that if they have a child that's in a wheelchair, and that parent or guardian would love to take their child out, they don't have the time to do the background check to find out where the trails are at, you know."

Christ Thomsen "Can I add a little bit?"

Rod Lamb "Yes, in fact while you're getting it I'll start to, that's a really good point Theresa and part of the accessibility that we're doing, I mentioned the Federal Guidelines that aren't required at the local level, we are trying to meet them now because sooner or later they are going to be and so I could answer that question so much better and say yes, in fact our new trail that we just built we've incorporated accessibility guidelines, so at the beginning of the trail we tell you what the pitch is, what the surface is, what the cross slope is and what the overall elevation gain so that you can make that decision before you get out on the trail."

Christ Thomsen "Where can I best find an illustration of that sign?"

Theresa Sygitowicz "But even to the point, if you could do a sub-screen on the web site that said, that had a picture of, these are the, or a some kind of a

description about where these trails are at, realizing the fact that I doubt if these people, they don't need a mile long trail, I mean it's just because the fact of that some peoples with disabilities is just, you know, twenty minutes is all they can handle. But it could be just a simple fact of, my mom is in a wheelchair, she can't get out but I'd like to take her on a park trail to get her out in the fresh air, where can I go?"

Christ Thomsen. "So, I can, because I'm actually disabled. There is a wide range of disabilities, there's somebody that's bound to a wheelchair, there are people with Parkinson's that can't lift their feet very high, there's folks that have, some cardio pulmonary things that they just can't exert themselves the way they are, right? So part of what I'm seeing, and this is my opinion as an Operations Manager for the Department, as we're implementing these things it actually becomes an education component so that we're informing that larger range of folks that have different abilities and what Rod is talking about, actually I'm hoping this isn't the new map, but I'm hoping that we have that information on here to show you exactly what we're doing and we are providing that, working with County Health and providing information there and in fact I just saw one of my acquaintances that is having a hip replaced and he's got this whole book about hip replacement and there's, the front cover now has a picture of, I think it was the Hertz trail and it was part of that recovery process. Here you go, you can go to this trail and we're sharing that information across the Departments and I'm hoping this has got it. Does this one have it, Rod, do you know? It doesn't look like it. I want to show the Chanterelle trail head sign with the cross section and all that. Didn't we show a picture of this? Theresa might not have been there. At the beginning of Chanterelle trail there's a sign and it actually has the topography, so your elevation gain over time, and it has description right when you get to the trail. We are also putting it at the trail head and we're going to be rolling that out across our trail system so that people can be better informed. That information is being brought in, put on our website, it's being put into all of our GIS information so that people can see that and what we have, I was at the Whatcom County Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee meeting last night and they were talking about GIS information. GIS is the Geographic Information Systems, it's what all the maps you see these days are based on. So other parties can at some point, when the County gets a robust enough system where people that access it, they can query that themselves and get that information. So those are the things that we are working on."

Sonja Max "So there's Recreation Northwest is working on a program called "Parkscriptions" that is allowing doctors to actually prescribe time outside for their patients and they have this incredible Whatcom park finder and you can look at all parks in a certain radius and it gives you all of the amenities and whether it's wheelchair accessible and how long the trails are and if there's bathrooms or not and it's an amazing resource and it's not just County parks, it's all the parks."

Theresa Sygitowicz “You have all these maps and whatever about the, of all the trails and things like that but if there was a map that could be put on line, or part of it could be put on line that would show a different color for what is ADA, you know, even if it’s just a quarter mile or eighth of a mile or whatever.”

Jeff Margolis “Yea a person could wheel out to the edge at Pt. Roberts, they can get to that beautiful overlook and it’s practically level from the cemetery. That’s practically wheelchair accessible.

Theresa Sygitowicz “And it’s a great PR plus too. I’m sorry Rod, you can just file that away, I don’t need to see it.”

Rod Lamb “We’ve done, we’ve provided some really, really robust, the best signage that the Parks has ever done on the trail to provide people with not only way-finding, but really the challenge level of the trail and it’ll be, it’s the model, where part of the master plan of the trail plan, it said you need to have a robust signage plan that accompanies trail development and that’s occurring side by side.”

Theresa Sygitowicz “One of the things you might do is to let some of the adult homes in the area know the whereabouts of Chanterelle Trail.”

Rod Lamb “It’s at Lake Whatcom Park and it sort of follows approximately, off road, the Wickersham truck trail road that goes over the top, it’s sort of to the south of that and actually crosses it a couple of times. But it follows that corridor.

Theresa Sygitowicz “Well if you put the data on there and maybe share it with the adult homes that have buses that would take their residents on.”

Rod Lamb “That’s the nice thing, it’s not new but the Hertz trail is really popular for that reason. It’s really accessible and super popular, right on the water and it’s a wonderful place to get out, you don’t have to go very far and you’re right on the water. I think it will always be our most accessible trail at Lake Whatcom Park, in its challenging level in steepness of terrain very quickly.

Jeff Margolis “So, on to New Business.”

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Squatters in Parks – Theresa Sygitowicz – Theresa stated that it has come to her attention through community comment that there are squatters setting up residence off the Mosquito Lake Road. She discussed that squatters are moving out of the Bellingham homeless camps into the County. Christ discussed that the Department is aware of that situation and that since it is common at this time of year for this to happen that park inspections are increased during the off season in order to stay on top of any problems. In addition, if there are reports from the community regarding possible squatters in a particular park, staff will investigate and ask any persons who appear to be overnighters to move along. If necessary staff will contact the Sheriff’s Department to assist in removal.

B. Seasonal Extra Help – See discussion under VII. Staff Reports, A. Director & Operations Report, v. Staffing.

C. Rest Benches in Parks – Jeff Margolis – Jeff asked what the protocol would be to move forward on a partnership with a scouting program to install benches on the Chanterelle trail. Christ normal protocol is for the scouts to contact the land owners with their project proposals. The Department does have some projects in mind for this sort of situation and if Jeff knows of a scouting program to accomplish this project that they should contact the Department.

D. Dangerous Wildlife in Parks – Jeff Margolis – Jeff stated that as a result of the possibility of dangerous wildlife in the parks, he has encountered trail users who let their dogs off leash to warn owners or chase the wildlife off. He asked if the Department would want to post at the trailhead that this area has dangerous wildlife in the area, and make an exception to the park dog leash rule. Christ stated that County code requires dogs to be on-leash except for in approved off-leash areas. Lookout Mountain Park is not an off-leash area and is signed as such and the Department is enforcing that code. In terms of wildlife, the Department has not historically posted signage that a user may encounter wildlife. If there are reports of dangerous wildlife frequenting the area and/or causing problems the Department works with the Department of Wildlife to address the issue.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Jeff Margolis – Jeff stated that he would like to thank Theresa Sygitowicz for her service on the Commission. Theresa thanked Jeff and said that it has been very interesting and informative as well as allowing her to be a mouthpiece for community park concerns that have been brought to her attention. Jeff announced that the VanZandt Community Hall movie on November 17, 2017 is “The Marigold Hotel” and the Winterfest Bazaar is November 18, 2017. There are two concerts coming up, December 10, 2017 is a holiday concert with the Whatcom Symphony at the Mount Baker Theater and on December 17, 2017 a presentation of Handel’s Messiah at the Bellingham Assumption Catholic School.

B. Theresa Sygitowicz – Theresa stated that since this is her last business meeting of the Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission she would like to say that she is fearful of a child being abducted or accosted while visiting a park and would like to keep that in the forefront on the Commission’s agenda. Additionally, she would like to see the Department plant more daffodil bulbs in the parks and to be more pro-active in promoting events in the park.

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION

The next Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission meeting will be held on December 21, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. at the Roeder Home, 2600 Sunset Drive, Bellingham, Washington.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Transcribed by: Pat Fisher

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director