

**MEETING MINUTES  
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION  
Thursday, June 19, 2014**

**Semiahmoo Day Lodge  
2961 Semiahmoo Parkway  
Blaine, Washington**

**PRESENT: Commissioners: Paul Woodcock, Richard Sturgill, Kenneth Kiesner, Gordon Rogers, Jeff Margolis, Janet Boyhan, Theresa Sygitowicz**

**Staff: Mike McFarlane, Christ Thomsen, Rodney Lamb**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Commission Chair, Paul Woodcock at 6:36 PM.

**II. ROLL CALL**

All Commission members are recorded as present.

**III. PUBLIC COMMENTS / COMMUNICATIONS**

The Chair recognized Todd Citron.

Todd stated that he is a Commissioner of and is representing the interest of the Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District Board of Commission regarding the Lake Whatcom Park design and implementation with a high level of concern for impacts to water quality. He stated that it is his understanding that the Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Commission has been assigned the task of design and implementation and as a representative he would like to attend all meetings on the topic and either participate in or witness the process.

**IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

Jeff Margolis stated that he is as interested in the process as Todd. Janet stated that the topic will be listed on the Agenda. The Agenda is public information and is posted on the Whatcom County Parks and Recreation web page one week prior to the monthly meeting date of the third Thursday of the month.

**V. AGENDA**

**A. AGENDA APPROVAL**

**MOTION:** It was moved by Richard Sturgill, seconded by Jeff Margolis and passed unanimously to approve the June 19, 2014 Agenda as written.

**VI. MINUTES**

**A. MINUTES APPROVAL**

**MOTION:** It was moved by Theresa Sygitowicz, seconded by Jeff Margolis and passed unanimously to include the following changes to and table the approval of the May 15, 2014 minutes until the July 17, 2014 Commission Meeting.

1. Change Item X., A. to read June Minutes.
2. Add a summary of Commissioner's comments and/or bullet points highlighting why each Commissioner voted as they did regarding item IV., A.

## **VII. STAFF REPORTS**

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

**1. Canyon Lake Community Forrest Update** – Mike stated that he has emailed John Gold, Area Forester, Sierra Pacific Industries, regularly since January 2014 to follow up on a proposal that was submitted to Sierra Pacific for an alternative access from the North Fork area. In order to obtain access through this route Parks will need to obtain a public access easement from Sierra Pacific to connect from Department of Natural Resources (DNR) lands to the existing county easement. DNR has tentatively indicated that they would support the proposal. Sierra Pacific has been cooperative in accommodating staff access but not for legal public access. Mike is assuming that because he has not received any response to his calls and emails that Sierra Pacific is not interested in making the road repairs on the original access road or granting an easement through the North Fork area.

Mike's last communication to Sierra Pacific also indicated that the County is in the budget planning process and would like to include the road repair costs in the budget figures. If there is no response Parks will pursue the cost estimates and engineering plans to repair the road. There is an existing easement that will allow for repairs without Sierra Pacific Industries involvement.

**2. Capital Projects** – Mike indicated that due to some changes in funding allocation some of the capital project will be resubmitted for the 6 year capital improvement plan. Initially the list consisted of projects that were scheduled but did not have funding, then it was those projects that funding was secured or budgeted for and now the list has returned to those projects that are proposed to be completed over the six year time frame. These will be the projects that will be added back into the list.

Projects have been reviewed by County Finance, Planning and Development Services and the Parks Department in terms of specific scheduling needs over the time frame and Commission has previously reviewed these projects.

Additionally, we have been informed by Administration that approximately 40% of REET II funds and 10% of the REET I funds will be allocated as a planning target for Capital projects. This amounts to approximately \$500,000 annually between the two funds.

Mike provided a brief background and history on REET I & II funds and future fund allocations.

**3. Budget** – The department will begin compiling the budget in July. At the July meeting the Commission will begin reviewing budget items. It is expected that the 2015-2016 budget will be similar to the current budget due to limited growth in County revenues.

Mike also discussed the Parks Special Revenue Fund in terms of moving funding from the grant revenues that were moved from the parks fund to the Conservation futures fund and then back to the Parks Special Revenue Fund. These funds will be used primarily for the reconveyance project but are not limited. Spending for this will begin this year and be ongoing as part of the budget.

Mike asked that if Commissioners have any suggestions or questions that they be emailed to him in the next couple of weeks in order to include them for consideration in the budget.

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

### **1. Staffing:**

- a. Extra-Help** - Christ reported that all but one, possibly two position have been filled for extra-help staff. These positions are for Silver Lake Park and Trails.
- b. Silver Lake Park Ranger Position** - The vacant Ranger position at Silver Lake Park has been filled and will be on duty beginning July 7<sup>th</sup>.
- c. Watershed Ranger Position** – Christ discussed this position with the Lead Rangers for their input on job requirements and then met with Management to further develop the job description. The completed job description has been submitted to Human Resources for review and allocation.

It is anticipated that the position will be announced for recruitment within 3-7 weeks and will then require at least 2-3 weeks for the interview and hiring process.

### **2. Activities** – The parks are in full swing of the busy season. Staff focus is park cleanliness and functionality and customer service.

- a. Wilkinson Rental** – This rental was recently vacated by the tenant and it has been decided to demolish the building. This is located by the Hertz Trail at Lake Whatcom. Parks is currently going through the permitting process which included an asbestos inspection, which was positive and required abatement. Once this is complete the building will be removed. It is anticipated that this will be completed before the watershed window closes on ground disturbance activities.

### **3. Maintenance Crew**

- a. Trails** – Staff focus is brushing and sprucing up the park trails
- b. Silver Lake Apartment Renovations** – The apartment in the Silver Lake Day Lodge has historically been a staff residence and then became a private rental. The apartment is being renovated cosmetically and when the new Silver Lake Park Ranger was hired he expressed that he would like to rent the apartment and will be occupying it shortly before his start date.

### **4. Plantation Rifle Range**

- a. Washington State Department of Health (DOH)** – The recent assessment of the Range water system by DOH was satisfactory with the exception of a deficiency in the spring collection box. To correct the problem the cover on the spring collection box will be replaced. The deadline for replacement is 7/14/14. It is anticipated that this deadline will be met.
- b. Recreation Conservation FARR Grant** – Application has been made for funds to replace the aged HVAC system. The grant is a 50/50 match of \$140,000 coming from RCO funds and \$140,000 local match.

5. **Events** – The following events took place in the parks this past month. They were both large events with many participant and attendees and were conducted with no significant issues.

a. **Ski to Sea**

b. **Highland Games**

6. **Incidents**

a. **Trespass – South Fork Park** – There was damage to the bridge by an ATV. The on-site caretaker observed the incident and immediately notified the sheriff's department who issued a trespass notice that will result in an arrest if they return with the ATV without authorization.

b. **Trespass – Silver Lake Park** – A camper overstayed his visit without paying. The sheriff was called and removed the individual without incident.

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

1. **Lighthouse Marine Park Dock Renovation** – This continues to be a very challenging project. The scheduled pile driving activities that were scheduled for July 25<sup>th</sup> has been postponed until September 29<sup>th</sup> due to surf smelt spawning. The biologist stated that based on last year's survey, September is the end of the spawning season and even though the tides are not as favorable they are acceptable.

Work continues with the dock manufacturer on the boarding float. Revised shop drawings have been received that include more detail on the water ballast system that keeps the float stable during fluctuating tides. It appears that the new design will add the needed stability. Delivery is anticipated sometime this summer.

Staff has been updated so that they can keep the public informed on the progress of the project.

2. **Hovander River Trail** – This project is complete. Copies of an article taken from the Ferndale Record regarding the dedication were shared with the Commissioners. Rod stated that he has a PDF version that he will email on request.

The ribbon cutting ceremony was well attended. The County Executive Louws, Ferndale Mayor Jensen and several Park Commissioners attended and a "good time was had by all".

There are a few finishing touches on this project. The final art work for the kiosk map and rules have been completed and will be installed the first part of July.

There was a question regarding the selection of a representative from the Whatcom Parks and Recreation Foundation to cut the ribbon at the ceremony. The question was predicated by the thought that the Foundation did not contribute to the construction of the trail.

Mike stated that the Parks and Rec Foundation has been instrumental in moving the project forward with the City of Ferndale, the County and the Department of Fish and Wildlife, linking it and other sections to the Nooksack Loop Trail. In addition, they sponsored many of the activities during the day of the ceremony and it was felt that it was a good way to recognize the hidden efforts of the Foundation on this and other projects involving the Nooksack Loop Trail.

There was a question regarding the status of the Coast Millennium Trail. Mike stated that the County has a question regarding how much funds and effort should be expended on a number of

trails, such as the Coast Millennium, Bay to Baker, Nooksack Loop and the Nooksack River trails. These are large projects that require a dedicated individual to see to the logistics of moving these trails forward. Without the Parks and Rec Foundation to see to the funding and lobbying, etc. those links would not happen.

It was commented that the main problem with the Coast Millennium is not funds but liability issues in that, if you invite the public with signage, etc., there is a certain amount of liability (on the roadway portions) to the county.

It was suggested that the Park's Commission re-connect with the Bike/Ped Committee. Mike stated that the liability issues with the County constantly change depending on the various different issues that are on the forefront. He stated that he will touch base with Daniel Tepper and that he was looking to procure some of the original trail markers. Gordon stated that the Council on Governments still has several of those signs available.

Gordon stated that his main concern is that there are many supporters in the county for the Bay to Baker Trail and the Coast Millennium trail, that neither seem to be coming to fruition and seem to have been somewhat replaced by the Nooksack Loop Trail. It would be nice to cement these together in some fashion.

It was suggested that trails could be added to the agenda in order to explore the topic in greater detail and as a dedicated Agenda topic.

**ACTION:** Add Trails as an agenda item for discussion to the July 17, 2014 Agenda.

**3. South Fork Park** – Council approved the design and engineering contract with Reichhardt & Ebe. The project will begin with a survey of the area, a biologist's critical areas report and geo-technical investigations.

**4. Nessel Farm Building Restoration** – Rod met with engineers and the Nessel Foundation regarding plans for building restoration. The bid package is being created and the target date for release is August, 2014.

**5. Silver Lake Park Road and Electrical Improvements** – A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) has been drafted for release for the selection of a civil and electrical engineer to define proposed upgrades and create a phasing plan. The scope of work has been submitted to finance for approval. The target date for release is the end of June, 2014. The project will span several budget cycles. It is anticipated that the first phase will include paving the parking lots by the playground and cabins.

**6. Reconveyance** – Efforts continue to collect inventory information. Our Special Projects Extra-Help staff person has captured a great deal of GIS information from the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Fish and Wildlife and recently quite a large amount of LeDar information from the City of Bellingham (COB).

Public comments from the first planning meeting have been consolidated for review and will be posted on the web when edited to preserve confidentiality of the sender.

**7. Samish Dock Signage** – New regulatory and directional signage has been installed at the boat dock and fishing platform.

## **VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**A. LAKE WHATCOM RECONVEYANCE PLANNING** – Mike stated that he received the compilation of public comments from the first Lake Whatcom Reconveyance Planning session late this afternoon. There were over one hundred attendees at the first planning session with four areas for comment; recreation, natural resources, forest management and other.

Once the comments are edited to remove names and email addresses they will be posted to the Park web page. It is anticipated that this will be completed by the end of June, first part of July.

He explained that the planning process is a public process and that the first phase will consist of at least four public meetings to define the process itself.

The first meeting was to give the public an overview and an outline of requested information. The second meeting will look at preliminary options, both in terms of use and high, low, medium impact, to provide additional data that has been collected, refine the maps and collect public comment on those options.

The process will parallel the State planning processes which is a standard public planning process that includes several draft forms and then a final plan. As this information is pulled together and refined the information will be on the Parks and Recreation Commission Agenda.

Mike discussed that the Parks and Recreation Commission is the Citizens' Advisory Group per the request of the County Executive. He explained that the Commission and County Council will be invited to each planning session as will the public, through public notice. It is anticipated that the next public meeting will be scheduled at summer's end or early fall.

There was some discussion regarding fire safety efforts in the Reconveyance area, the sheriff's tower maintenance and day to day maintenance that will be programmed into the job description for the new position.

## **IX. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. DISCUSSION ON LEVELS OF SERVICE (LOS)** – Mike discussed that in 1991 the Growth Management Act required the need to develop park LOS in order to complete long range comprehensive planning. There were three areas in the park system that were measured, developed parks, trails and activity centers.

The goal is to define these categories so that the Parks Comprehensive Plan's LOS and the County's Comprehensive Plan's LOS are a closer matched and reflects both what the County can afford and what the public has requested.

The definition for developed parks has been defined but there is a need to clarify the trails definition and determine whether or not activity centers need to be included in LOS.

It is Staff's recommendation based on multiple meetings, both in-house and with PDS to eliminate an LOS for activity centers. Mike explained that it would not make sense to base the number of centers on per capita but to make existing centers larger or abandon smaller centers and purchase a larger center to meet the needs as the population grows. It is also not a requirement to provide an LOS for activity centers.

Currently the basis for parks LOS is the acreage of developed parks per capita. It is staff's proposal that instead of basing LOS on acres of developed parks per capita, that parks LOS should be based on the number of regional parks per capita. Regional parks are larger, easier to track, will eliminate any distortion due to reserves of large natural areas and will provide a better measurement for LOS.

In terms of trails, the Parks Comp Plan currently has a breakdown of all different types of trails and activities and is very specific. The request is to provide a simpler definition for trails that can be used in the County's Comprehensive Plan to determine an over-all trails LOS. Staff's recommendation is to define trails in terms of shared-use trails as single-use trails serve a very specific or limited purpose and consists of 13 miles of the 56 total miles of trails. Single use would not be included in the LOS calculation.

Mike stated that in conclusion there are three things that need to be decided at this meeting.

First, to change the basis for park LOS from acreage of developed parks per capita to the number of regional parks per capita, second, to decide if the trails LOS is to be based on multi-use or shared trails only and/or all trails and third, whether to provide LOS for activity centers.

**MOTION:** It was moved by Gordon Rogers and seconded by Ken Kiesner to use regional parks per capita as a definition for parks to meet the LOS; that all miles of multi-use trails define trails LOS purposes and to do away with the need for the activity centers LOS.

Paul Woodcock called for discussion and question. After discussion and clarification on current and projected populations, means of calculation and LOS timeframes the Motion passed unanimously.

**B. DISCUSSION ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE PLAN AND THE WHATCOM COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN** – PDS is requesting that the Parks Comprehensive Recreation and Open Space Plan is placed on this year's Planning Commission docket to remove it by reference from the County Comprehensive Plan. If the plan is adopted by reference into the County Plan it can only be amended once a year and is a lengthy process to navigate. The Planning Commission would like to remove it by reference and instead let it inform the County Plan, provide support and background and allow flexibility for simple modifications. County Parks & Recreation staff agrees and this was the situation with the 2008 PROS Plan.

In addition, the Parks Comprehensive Plan should not be adopted by reference in the County's Comprehensive Plan because the LOS in the Park's Plan are too high to reasonably fund. The County's Plan has to be a realistic budget document and the services that the public has requested and that are reflected in the Parks plan are more than the County can ever afford. These are goals that the department will continue to strive for.

**MOTION:** It was moved by Gordon Rogers, seconded by Jeff Margolis and passed unanimously that the Commission recommends that the Parks Recreation and Open Space Plan not be adopted by reference into the County Comprehensive Plan.

Mike stated that he was asked for input from the Park's Commission on the document "Preserving A Way of Life: A Natural Heritage Plan for Whatcom County". This document was also adopted by reference into the County Comprehensive Plan in the same manner as the Parks Comp Plan and it was asked if the Commission would review and recommend that it also should not be adopted by reference but as with the Parks Comprehensive Recreation and Open Space Plan, use this document to inform the County's Comprehensive Plan. The Parks staff does not have a recommendation although portions of this plan are dated. There are also some very good goals and objectives which have been incorporated in the PROS plan.

It was the Commission's consensus to review the document and add an agenda item for discussion / recommendation to the July 17, 2014 agenda.

**Action:** Commission to review “Preserving A Way of Life”: A Natural Heritage Plan for Whatcom County and add the discussion / recommendation regarding the relationship of the document to the County Comprehensive Plan to the July 17, 2014 agenda.

**C. MAPLE FALLS PARK COMMITTEE MOA (DRAFT)** – Mike provided a DRAFT Letter of Agreement (LOA) between Maple Falls Park Committee and Whatcom County Parks & Recreation to support, maintain and fundraise for the propose community park which would be known as Maple Falls Park, located at 7849 Silver Lake Rd., Maple Falls, Washington. Executive Louws requested that an LOA be drafted prior to property acquisition.

The LOA has been reviewed by the Maple Falls Park Committee, Department staff and County legal staff and is acceptable to all parties.

Mike asked if the Commission would review the LOA and notify him if there are comments or questions.

The Whatcom County Council requested additional information on the project. The appraisal is completed.

There was a question regarding the credibility of the committee and what documents or endorsements support that credibility. Mike stated that the Maple Falls Park Committee has white papers, letters of support from the local Chamber of Commerce and various local businesses and all Committee Members are identified. In addition, there is a petition of support from the community that will become a companion piece to the LOA if the acquisition goes forward.

There was a discussion on whether this site would be a good place to store emergency supplies should there be a natural disaster in Maple Falls. Mike explained that the building on this site has been demolished. He discussed that the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center is the designated staging site for natural disasters in the Foothills area and that the schools are the primary shelters as they provide restrooms, kitchen facilities and larger rooms for meetings. Also, that the Red Cross takes the lead on planning for the Foothills and that there is an Emergency Management Plan in place.

Mike talked about the role that parks would play in the event of a disaster. He explained that it would be a minimal role because if the is the park is full there may not be the capacity to house refugees, nor are they generally set-up to provide assistance during inclement weather however, the parks could provide open space for tent camping during the warmer weather.

**D. FARR GRANT – PLANTATION RIFLE RANGE** – Christ Thomsen discussed the HVAC system at the Plantation Range under his Operations Report. He added that the preliminary grant application will be submitted by the end of June. He will provide the Commission with updates as they arise.

**E. REVIEW LARRABEE STATE PARK’S LONG TERM BOUNDARY** – Mike provided a notification that was received from the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission that under the State planning process they could potentially incorporate bordering County Lands into Larrabee State Park boundaries. Including this possibility into their long-range plans will allow the State Parks Planning Commission the ability in the future to discuss the potential of taking on County, Washington Department of Fish Wildlife (WDFW) and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) properties.

At this time there is currently no commitment or act of negotiations but the Department has met with Randy Kline, Parks Planner to discuss two options; One, that the State will divest



themselves of State Park property and transferring / selling to Whatcom County, WDFW or DNR, or two, incorporate lands from the three agencies into the Larrabee State Park boundaries.

Mike stated that the public's concern is if the State incorporates the County properties into Larrabee State Park, that the activities that take place within those properties be conditioned into the agreement so that there are no changes in those activities. This is a heavily used area for trail based activities.

On the other side of the issue, is if those lands are incorporated into Larrabee State Park it would free up the management / maintenance resources for Whatcom County Parks to apply in other areas.

There was discussion regarding the means of transfer. Mike stated that he does not know at this time what that would require. This notice is simply the first part of their long-range planning process. It has not been officially adopted; however the State Parks Commission is meeting at the end of this month and will be discussing and could adopt this portion of the long-range planning project at that meeting

Mike stated that the notice is informational only and that he will keep the Commission informed on further developments regarding this issue.

## **X. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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

**MOTION:** It was moved by Theresa Sygitowicz and seconded by Janet Boyhan to hold the July 17, 2014 meeting at Lighthouse Marine Park, 811 Marine Drive, Point Roberts, WA. The motion passed: 6 yeas and 1 nay.

Meeting places for carpool, meeting times and tours will be determined at a later date and shared with Commission members.

**B. GENERAL BUSINESS RULES** – Mike provided a final draft of the General Business Rules for Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Commission. The Commission will review the Rules and add them for discussion and / or adoption to the July 17, 2014 Agenda.

**ACTION:** Add General Business Rules as an agenda item on the July 17, 2014 Agenda.

## **XI. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** It was moved by Richard Sturgill, seconded by Ken Kiesner and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 9:03 PM.

Transcribed by: Pat Fisher, Clerk III

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director