

MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, February 17, 2022

Virtual Meeting

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Commissioners: Sonja Max, Terry Terry, Joe Hashmall, Brian Estes,
Pete Coy, Kristen Fagan

Staff: Michael McFarlane, Christ Thomsen

EXCUSED

None

GUESTS

Gary & Margie Hovde, Dean Tharp, Jan Huston

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

A. Dean Tharp – Dean Tharp is very interested in what is being proposed at Lake Whatcom Park as both a neighbor and frequent park user. He hopes the commissioners will give citizens and neighbors the opportunity to share input as the plans unfold. Dean has three areas of concern. First, preserving the quality of the lake and the water quality of the lake. Second, Dean walks the trails at least 3-4 times per week and has seen the increased usage. He appreciates the fact that steps are being taken to manage the increased usage in a meaningful and helpful way to the public. Finally, Dean hopes that the original spirit of what the park was dedicated to provide is considered when creating these new plans. He hopes that consideration will be given in terms of more supervision and maintenance by park staff if there is going to be increased beach use.

B. Daniel Tepper – Daniel Tepper sent information to the commissioners regarding openings on the Whatcom Parks and Recreation Foundation board of directors.

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

A. Pete Coy recently visited a lot of large west coast cities and noticed more and more homeless people camping in parks. He wanted to know what the department is doing to handle the issue in Whatcom County. Mike advised the department has focused on being proactive by not allowing encampments to get established and has had the support of the Sheriff's Department when needed. Pete asked if the department has the support of the county council on that position. Mike advised that the department has not needed to go to the county

council because staff have been able to enforce the existing park rule of the parks only being open from sunrise to sunset.

V. **AGENDA**

A. **February 17, 2022**

MOTION: Pete Coy moved to approve the February 17, 2022 agenda as written. Brian Estes seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VI. **MINUTES**

A. **January 20, 2022**

MOTION: Pete Coy had a correction on Section IV, Item C to change “right-of-way of Highway 9” to “Highway 99 right-of-way”. Joe Hashmall moved to approve the January 20, 2022 minutes as amended. Brian Estes seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VII. **STAFF REPORTS**

A. **Director’s Report – Michael McFarlane**

- i. **Staffing** – The vacant Clerk IV position has been filled. Recruitment is ongoing for the Design & Development Supervisor and Maintenance and Construction Supervisor positions.
- ii. **Camp Horizon Foundation** – Negotiations are underway with the Camp Horizon Foundation for a new 25-year agreement with WC Parks. The Camp Horizon Foundation operates a camp for young adults with disabilities at Bay Horizon Park in the Birch Bay area. That agreement will be presented to the commission for approval when it is completed.
- iii. **Canyon Lake Community Forest** – WC Parks is meeting with a small team over the next several weeks regarding access to Canyon Lake Community Forest. Access to the forest has been a problem since the road washed out. WC Parks would like to get an easement from Sierra Pacific Industries to use a small portion of their access route to allow for public access to the park.
- iv. **Budget Supplementals** – WC Parks has submitted budget supplementals for flood recovery at Hovander and the Birch Bay Beach Park improvements that weren’t completed in 2021. WC Parks is requesting to use general funds recovery work at Hovander so the park can be reopened by Mother’s Day weekend. As FEMA funds and REET funds are received, they will reimburse the general fund.
- v. **Plantation Rifle Range** – WC Parks is working with the Department of Ecology on lead reclamation at the Plantation Rifle. That process is in the early stages and will most likely continue into 2023.

- vi. **Comprehensive Park and Recreation Open Space Plan** – The Comprehensive Park and Recreation Plan is about 40% complete, but has been put on hold until a Design and Development Supervisor is hired.
- vii. **Million Trees Project** – WC Parks met with Michael Feerer from the Million Trees Project. Michael is working with park staff on a proposal for plantings at Hovander Park. The project will be at least a five-year project and the plantings will be used for screening, demonstration, and enhancements for future trails at Hovander.

B. Operations Report & Design and Development Report – Christ Thomsen

- i. **Staffing** – Seasonal extra help recruitment began and interviews will start in March.
- ii. **Operations Update** – Christ reported that work activities have been fairly normal for this time of year.
- iii. **Maple Creek Shower and Restroom Facility** – The Maple Creek Shower and Restroom Facility construction is coming along beautifully. The company providing the septic pumps advised the delivery of the pumps is delayed until April. Unless an alternative can be found, that delivery delay will postpone the opening of the facility.
- iv. **Plantation HVAC and Roof Replacement** – The Plantation HVAC and Roof Replacement is progressing as scheduled. The abatement work is complete and the roof should be finished by the end of the week.
- v. **Nugent’s Corner** – Ted Sellers, the Regional Park Supervisor for the East Region, is managing the implementation of the Nugent’s Corner project. Ted advised the contractor requested to move the work from February to April.
- vi. **Birch Bay Beach Park** – WC Parks staff will begin replacing the frontage fence at Birch Bay Beach Park. That work was set to be completed last fall, but wasn’t because of weather and flooding. Christ is working on getting contracts in place for the remaining work so that it can begin once the budget supplemental is approved.
- vii. **New Projects** – The bathroom, rental house, and office roofs at Lighthouse Marine Park are being replaced this year. The rental house and park office are also getting new siding. The parking lot at the Stimpson Family Nature Reserve is being paved this year.
- viii. **EH1 Trail Construction** – The contractor for the EH1 Trail Construction project will be out in the next few days to begin route scouting and getting prepared to begin construction when the watershed window opens.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. 2023 – 2024 Parks & Recreation Capital Projects

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1IIWAnte2LeujDEuRtlXxvcoWatG1Atbj&usp=sharing> – Sonja Max presented the map she created of capital

projects. Mike asked the commissioners to look at the list to see if there were projects that they would like to see added to the list. Once the list is finalized and voted on by the commission, it will be submitted to the County Executive for review. Ultimately, the list will be presented to the County Council for approval.

B. Multimodal Trails – Sonja Max presented a map of conceptual trail corridors from the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan. Discussion ensued on how to facilitate multimodal trails in Whatcom County.

C. Lake Whatcom Park Trailhead Draft Conceptual Plan – Mike shared MacLeod Reckord's four preliminary designs for the two trailheads at Lake Whatcom Park. The plans are very preliminary; construction on the project will not occur in this phase of the project and is still several years out. Gary Hovde shared his concerns about developing a parking area so close to the lake. Dean Tharp shared his concerns about Lake Whatcom Park becoming a beach park. He said the majority of the parking issues are at the upper trailhead and asked why the department wasn't considering adding parking across the street from the upper parking area. Dean is also concerned that a public agency is proposing impervious surface and pavement so close to the lake when all public policy is taking future development and moving it away from the lake. Dean urged the commission to investigate, look at alternatives, consider the facts, and be a good neighbor to the Huston family, who is going to suffer the most from this development. Jan Huston said she has been a good neighbor to the parks for many years. She advised her family's quality of life has been affected by the increased traffic from the park, the noise, the pollution, and the drunks. She said that it is going to be devastating for her family to have this built right next to her house. She is also worried about the stormwater runoff from the parking lot being close to her well.

D. Request to Purchase Septic Easement Angell – Blue Canyon – Mike shared Whatcom County's Septic and Drainfield Easement with Douglas and Cathy Angell. The easement needs recommendation from the commission, then it is presented to the county's property management committee for recommendation, and then it goes to the county council for approval.

MOTION: Pete Coy moved to recommend approval of the Septic and Drainfield Easement. Joe Hashmall seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

E. 2022 Legislative Session Items – Mike has been forwarding weekly reports from the 2022 Legislative Session related to parks and recreation. The commission appreciates receiving the information and Mike will continue to forward it as it comes in.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION

The next Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission meeting will be held virtually on March 17, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Transcribed by: Kristin Lunderville, Clerk IV

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director