

MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, March 16, 2023

Samish Day Lodge
673 North Lake Samish Drive
Bellingham, Washington

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

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

Commissioners Present: Terry Terry, Sonja Max, Joe Hashmall, Kristen Fagan, Carl Weimer, Frank Boteler

Commissioners Absent: Pete Coy

Staff Present: Christ Thomsen, Rod Lamb, Bennett Knox (by phone)

Guests/Public Present: Daniel Tepper, Wendell Terry

2. Approval of Agenda and Previous Meeting Minutes

Kristen Fagan moved to approve the March 16, 2023 agenda as written. Joe Hashmall seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Joe Hashmall moved to approve the February 16, 2023 minutes as written. Carl Weimer seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

3. Public Comments/Communication

None

4. Director Update

a. Rod Lamb Introduction – Bennett Knox welcomed Rod Lamb back to the department.

b. Review 2023 Project List – Staff have been working to compile a list of key projects that need to be completed. Of the 55 projects on the list, 47 are slated for 2023. Some of the projects include Plantation Rifle Range HVAC replacement, Plantation Rifle Range lead reclamation, Maple Creek Shower and Restroom Facility, EH1, FEMA funded work at Hovander, Lookout Mountain Road Repair Project, Lighthouse Marine Park siding work, paving repairs at East Whatcom Regional Resource Center, Lake Whatcom Trailhead Improvement, Silver Lake Lodge work, Cedar Campground architecture and engineering work, and septic and sewer issues. These projects will be divided up amongst Christ, Rod, Bennett, regional park staff, and maintenance and construction staff.

c. Staffing Update – The Parks Project Manager position was posted and interviews are scheduled for Monday.

5. **Operations Manager Update**

- a. **Samish Bridge Replacement** – Public Works will begin replacing the Samish bridge this summer. Samish Park will be closed to the public for at least 13 months because Public Works will be using the park for a staging area and to potentially house some of their staff during construction. WC Parks and Public Works will be working closely together on community and public outreach so that the public is aware of the impacts to the park.
- b. **Plantation Rifle Range** – WC Parks is in negotiations on the Agreed Order for the Plantation Rifle Range. The Department of Ecology has been running a public comment period on the draft Agreed Order; that comment period closes at midnight. WC Parks is tentatively scheduled to go in front of council with the Agreed Order on March 21st.
- c. **Staffing Update** – Seasonal extra help interviews are scheduled for the next two Fridays. Orientation is scheduled for mid-April and mid-May. The Parks Supervisor position was posted yesterday.

6. **Parks Design & Development Manager Update**

- a. **Update** – Rod Lamb advised that he is very glad to be back. Rod is working on becoming familiar with and organizing the design projects that have been assigned to him so that he is able to collaborate with the new Project Manager as efficiently as possible. Rod and Christ are also working on getting a workspace set up for the Project Manager.

7. **Old Business**

a. **CPROS**

- i. **Proposal** – Staff would like to propose a very responsive, but minimal update to the current CPROS for the commission’s approval. This minimal review will allow the department the opportunity to apply for RCO grants and is only being proposed because of the lack of time to perform a full review. Once the plan is approved, staff will immediately begin working on a full update that will provide a departmental blueprint for the next six years.
- ii. **Current CPROS Goals** – Rod Lamb handed out a document with the CPROS goals that were approved as presented by the commission in April 2021. Rod would like the commission to take a second look at those goals to see if there are any gaps that need to be filled. Rod gave a PowerPoint presentation that introduced the CPROS.
- iii. **Discuss Critical Gaps/Additions** – Staff would like to get a better representation and reach a broader cross section of the community for the full update to the CPROS.
- iv. **Grant Discussion**
- v. **Timeline**

vi. Recommendation

MOTION: Joe Hashmall moved to approve the staff's proposal of a very responsive, but expedited update to the current CPROS. This update will allow the department the opportunity to apply for RCO grants. Once the plan is approved, staff will begin working on a robust update. Frank Boteler seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

- b. Multi-Modal Discussion Update** – Bennett Knox advised there is another meeting scheduled for March 24 with the City of Lynden about the Nooksack Loop Trail. Daniel Tepper shared that he was told BNSF does not have any plans to do anything with this section of rail line. Sonja Max asked if anyone had contacted Everson or Sumas about the topic and the consensus was that neither city had been approached. Sonja shared that she went on a nice field trip with Frank Boteler, Ken Wilcox, and Dan Taylor to scope out some potential multi-modal routes that could take the place of or be in concert with the old Bay to Baker Trail. The group also looked at the rail lines between Lynden, Sumas, and Everson. They concluded that there's a very large right-of-way in the Mount Baker Highway that could be utilized for some of the trail between Bellingham and Maple Falls. There are also some side roads and publicly available land that could host as a trail corridor. Kristen Fagan presented a document with different classes of E-bikes and other things that are becoming electrified and where they are allowed or not allowed.

8. New Business

- a. EV Charging Station Discussion** – Bennett Knox advised there has been interest in the possibility of the county installing EV stations at some park locations. WC Parks has a meeting coming up with public works staff and will initiate a conversation then. Christ Thomsen advised some preliminary work was done in 2021 and 2022 looking at potential locations. Christ advised interest is greater now and the parks department may have a higher eligibility for grant opportunities than other county facilities.

9. Open Discussion

Sonja Max mentioned that the National Forest Service is opening a public comment period on potential routes or route changes to the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail. Sonja advised that Daniel Probst may be reaching out to Bennett Knox regarding this topic. Sonja will send a link to commissioners.

Carl Weimer asked if staff knew when WDFW would be fixing the boardwalk at Tennant Lake. Christ Thomsen advised he did not have an update. WDFW did not apply for FEMA funds to repair the boardwalk after the flooding. WDFW was planned to complete the current fix and didn't have plans to continue to the repairs in the near future. Christ will ask for an update next week when he and Bennett meet with WDFW.

10. Commissioner Engagement Opportunities

- a. March 23, 2023 – All Staff Meeting, Roeder Home, 2600 Sunset Drive, Bellingham, WA**

11. Meeting Input/Evaluation

The commission is glad to have Rod back and Rod is glad to be back.

12. Next Meeting: April 20, 2023, 6:00 p.m.

The next Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m. on April 20, 2023 at the Van Zandt Community Hall, 4106 Valley Highway Deming, WA.

13. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Transcribed by: Kristin Lunderville, Clerk IV

Approved by: Bennett Knox, Parks Department Director