

MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, April 20, 2023

Van Zandt Community Hall
4106 Valley Highway
Deming, 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: Sonja Max, Carl Weimer, Joe Hashmall, Frank Boteler, Pete Coy (by phone), Kristen Fagan (by phone)

Commissioners Absent: Terry Terry

Staff Present: Christ Thomsen, Rod Lamb, Bennett Knox

Guests/Public Present: Will Radecki, Wain Harrison, Breanna Anderson, Maggie Metcalfe, Jeff Margolis, Jerry Hunter, Ryan & Courtney McCall, John Stephens, Dan Probst

2. Approval of Agenda and Previous Meeting Minutes

Pete Coy moved to approve the April 20, 2023 agenda as written. Frank Boteler seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

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

3. Welcome to Van Zandt Community Hall – South Fork Valley Community

Association – Will Radecki introduced the commission to the Van Zandt Community Hall and the South Fork Valley Community Association. The SFVCA maintains and manages the Van Zandt Community Hall and their primary mission is to build community. The association currently has a proposal in to the State of Washington and Whatcom County to fund more renovations of the Van Zandt Hall.

4. Public Comments/Communication

Jeff Margolis complimented the commission on the letter that was written regarding South Fork Nooksack River recreation.

Daniel Probst shared that the City of Bellingham bought some new land in the Lake Whatcom watershed; he is working with the city to look at possible trails on that property to connect the Bellingham Mount Baker Trail. Daniel submitted a draft letter to the county council in support of the comprehensive plan that the forest service is putting together. The council is in support of overlapping the Bellingham Mount Baker Trail and the Pacific Northwest Trail. On May 4th, Daniel is giving a presentation to the

Greenways Committee on the Bellingham Mount Baker Trail. Daniel welcomed Rod Lamb back.

Sonja Max shared a public communication that was emailed to the commission letting the commission and Director know that there was a property on East Pole Road that might be of interest to the county to purchase as a park.

Someone asked if there was an update to community access to Canyon Lake Community Forest. Bennett Knox advised there is a draft easement going back and forth between Whatcom County and Sierra Pacific attorneys.

5. Director Update

- a. **Staffing Update** – The Repair Maintenance III and Parks Project Manager positions have been filled. The accountant took a job with Whatcom County Finance. The accountant position was filled from within, leaving a Clerk IV position open. Staff are in the process of interviewing for the Parks Supervisor position.
- b. **Follow-up on Parks All-Staff Meeting** – There was another all staff meeting to continue to try to build trust within the department and improve communication. All staff members were asked for their input on departmental goals and objectives to feed into the CPROS update. All staff members participated in an exercise to provide thoughts on departmental structure. Generally speaking, there is a desire for a less top-down structure and one that encourages improved communication and staff input in both up and down the organization. Bennett is really grateful to staff for embracing these meetings.
- c. **CIP Update** – Staff are in the process of updating the Capital Improvements Plan. Some projects on that list include repair work to the Bellingham Senior Activity Center, a Forest Management Plan, a Master Plan for Hovander Park, and Canyon Lake Community Park access.

6. Operations Manager Update

- a. **Plantation Rifle Range** – An RFQ was sent out earlier this month for site characterization work at the Plantation Rifle Range. That closed on April 18th and one submittal was received. The goal is to have a contract in place by May 1st so work can be completed by June 30th. WC Parks is still in negotiations with the Department of Ecology on the agreed order. WC Parks would like to present the agreed order to council next Tuesday, so Christ will be reaching out to DOE for an update. County council approved additional funding to complete the HVAC project on April 11th. Christ is ironing out some contract issues and then work will continue to get that project completed. WC Parks is working in conjunction with the Sheriff's Office to apply for state funds to replace the target carrier system at the Plantation Rifle Range.
- b. **Lake Whatcom Park** – On April 11th, county council approved additional funds for the trail work at Lake Whatcom Park to be completed by the contractor

instead of WC Parks staff. That work will begin in June and end in September and will connect the Chanterelle Trail to the Hertz Trail. The trail will open sometime in October after it's had a couple of weeks to settle.

- c. **Samish Bridge Replacement** – Public Works has delayed the replacement of the Samish Bridge, so Samish Park will be open to the public this summer. Public Works will put the project out to bid in October for construction in 2024.
- d. **Mount Baker Highway Construction** – Mount Baker Highway will be closed beginning May 1st for a fish passage project by the Washington State Department of Transportation. The project will close the highway for up to 129 days and a detour will run from Hannegan Road to Smith Road. The project will have a profound impact on WC Parks operations because all staff will be going through detours.

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

- a. **Maple Creek Shower and Restroom Facility** – The new shower and restroom facility at Silver Lake Park partially opened April 14th. Unfortunately, the facility's showers were not opened because of a water pressure issue. Rod is working to resolve the issue which relates to the wells associated with the campground and hopes to have the showers open for opening fishing weekend.
- b. **Cedar Campground Shower and Restroom Facility** – Rod Lamb has a proposal from King Architecture to complete the design and engineering for the Cedar Campground Shower and Restroom Facility. Rod expects the professional services contract to be executed in May 2023, design work to be started shortly afterwards, permit approval in the fall, and construction of the new facility in the spring of 2024.
- c. **Stimpson Family Nature Reserve** – A request for qualifications (RFQ) for design and engineering process has been issued for improvements to the parking lot at the Stimpson Family Nature Reserve. The parking lot is in the watershed, so work can only occur between June and September. Rod expects to have permit approval by the end of the year with stormwater improvements and asphalt paving happening in 2024.
- d. **Silver Lake Lodge Roof Replacement** – The roof on the Silver Lake Lodge needs to be replaced because of leaking skylights and other maintenance issues. Rod is working to get that project started.

8. **Old Business**

- a. **Multi-Modal Discussion Update** – Frank Boteler presented a report on commission related activities by the Chair, Vice Chair, and Commissioner Weimer. Kristen Fagan presented her spreadsheet on electric vehicles.
- b. **CPROS** – Bennett Knox advised he didn't have a significant update on the 2023/24 CPROS plan update, as immediate focus has been on initiating movement on capital projects. Rod Lamb advised he had a good conversation

with Andrea Hood, the new grants manager for the Recreation Conservation Office, who put him in contact with the staff members that will be reviewing the CPROS when it is submitted.

- c. **Update on Boardwalk Repair at Tennant Lake** – A portion of the boardwalk at Tennant Lake remains closed due to damage from flooding in 2021. Staff advised the Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife plan to effect repairs, but the repairs will not happen this year. Staff do not have a timeline of when the repair will happen.

9. **New Business**

- a. **Whidbey Telecom Proposal for Wi-Fi at Lighthouse Marine Park** – Bennett Knox shared a proposal from Whidbey Telecom to set up a modular office trailer in the parking area at Lighthouse Marine Park to provide Wi-Fi to users of the facility, visitors to the park, and campers. The proposal is for a two-year period beginning in 2023. WC Parks is working with Whidbey Telecom on a lease agreement. Whidbey Telecom will be invited to attend the next Parks Commission meeting to introduce the project.
- b. **Hovander Park – Master Plan** – Staff is working to put the Hovander Park Master Plan in the CIP.

10. **Open Discussion**

Frank Boteler mentioned the concrete at Cordata City Park is failing. He wanted staff to know so they could try to keep it from happening in WC parks.

Bennett Knox shared that he met with the Mount Baker Chamber of Commerce and had a lot of conversation about Bay to Baker. Bennett thinks they would be an excellent, energetic group to bring in to the conversation about multi-modal trails.

11. **Commissioner Engagement Opportunities**

12. **Meeting Input/Evaluation**

13. **Next Meeting: May 18, 2023, 6:00 p.m.**

The next Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m. on May 18, 2023 at the Parks Administrative Office, 3373 Mount Baker Highway, Bellingham, WA.

14. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Transcribed by: Kristin Lunderville, Clerk IV

Approved by: Bennett Knox, Parks Department Director