

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION**  
**Thursday, June 15, 2023**

**Lighthouse Marine Park**  
**811 Marine Drive, Point Roberts, 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: Frank Boteler, Sonja Max, Kristen Fagan, Carl Weimer, Joe Hashmall

Commissioners Absent: Pete Coy

Staff Present: Christ Thomsen, Rod Lamb, Bennett Knox

Guests/Public Present: Ramona Ramstead, Bennett Blaustein, Dave Lee, Sandra Raine, Mark Robbins, Allison Candor, Annelle Norman, Erin Kelly, Bill Scheduling

**2. Approval of Agenda and Previous Meeting Minutes**

Kristen Fagan moved to approve the June 15, 2023 agenda as amended. Joe Hashmall seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Frank Boteler wanted to edit the sentence under “Old Business – Multi-Modal Trails” to read “Kayla Schott-Bresler with the Executive’s Office committed to putting together a framework.” instead of “Kayla Schott-Bresler with the Executive’s Office committed to putting together a summary of the meeting.” Frank Boteler moved to approve the May 18, 2023 minutes as amended. Carl Weimer seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

**3. Point Roberts Update**

Bennett Knox thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and began by providing some updates relevant to Point Roberts. He shared that WC Parks is preparing to re-side the office/residence at Lighthouse Marine Park. He introduced Bennett Blaustein with the Point Roberts Historical Society who shared that there will be a 50<sup>th</sup> Year Rededication Ceremony for Lighthouse Marine Park on June 17, 2023 from 11:00am until 12:00pm. Bennett also provided an update related to public dock facilities. He said that in late January he and Christ Thomsen met with the Point Roberts Marina manager to tour the Point Roberts Marina to explore potential for a public dock there. He reported that following the meeting the County met with the Port of Bellingham to explore their interest in the marina. He shared that the Port of Bellingham is exploring purchase and he would look to follow up when there is additional information. Bennett also shared his view of the importance of planning and shared he would like to create a master plan for Lighthouse Marine Park to use as a blueprint for moving forward and implementing the needs of the community and park. Bennett would tentatively like to

schedule that for 2025. Bennett shared that the department is still looking to hire seasonal extra help at Point Roberts with a wage of \$20 per hour. Someone asked if the boat ramp would be cleared once a week. Bennett said that at this time the department does not have the staffing or equipment to clear the boat ramp weekly. Christ advised the department is committed to cleaning it once per month with a target date of the first Friday of the month.

#### **4. Public Comments/Communication**

Someone from the public thanked everyone for coming and shared that she was disappointed that the issue of the dog enclosure was not on the agenda, as it's been brought up several times in communication. Sonja advised she was not made aware to put it on the agenda and welcomed any comments on it. Sonja shared with the newer commissioners that a presentation had been given to the commission over Zoom during COVID about putting a dog park in at Lighthouse Marine Park. Because the commission was unable to go to Point Roberts to assess the area, they deferred to staff to make a recommendation on the dog park. The Director at that time recommended against the dog park for various reasons. Sonja welcomed information on the dog park so that it could potentially be added to the master plan for the park. Other attendees voiced frustration that they would need to wait two more years for this to potentially be a part of the master plan; that the presentation had been given and all they need is fencing and a trash can because the park already has restrooms and parking. Someone said an off-leash park was recently built in Ladner using very inexpensive fencing and thought it was ridiculous that they would need to wait two years for a dog park because it could be done really quickly. She shared that there is no place in Point Roberts where people can legally go with their dogs off leash and as a result they all do it illegally because their dogs need to run. Another person said it's been two years since they made the proposal and they are frustrated that nothing has been done. Another person said that the people of Point Roberts would like to see some investment in Point Roberts and their parks. She expressed that she understands that COVID, of course, did slow things down, but "we followed the Executive's rule, which is, come to me with a plan and come to me with a community consensus". She advised they came with a community consensus of about 80% (which is unheard of in the Point Roberts community) and that the dog park is a very small project dollar wise. The citizen stated that her company does work for the county, so she understands prevailing wage and how the cost assessments go with prevailing wage, and advised that in her opinion this project would be a maximum \$50,000. She said that Point Roberts has done a lot of hurry up and wait and thinks it would give a lot of buy-in for the community with parks and the county if the department didn't wait another two years to start a planning phase. She said if the planning phase is in two years, that means it will be another two years before they actually see any results and it would be appreciated by the community if this small project could happen this year outside of the planning phase. Sonja thanked everyone for showing up and sharing about the dog park. Sonja advised the

commissioners are not against having dog parks, but they're unable to make a vote or have any official direction on it because it's not on the agenda. Someone requested that it be added to an agenda within the next 60 days. They also suggested the commission take a tour of the area because they thought the reasons the former Director gave for why he didn't think the dog park was a good idea weren't valid. They thought he was confused about the location because he had said it was too close to the campground and would block the pathway from the campground. They also said they were willing to consider alternative locations. Someone shared that on behalf of the Chamber, she doesn't believe that Lighthouse Marine Park is the best location for Whidbey Telecom to place their internet site and that there are other better suited locations. Bennett advised this topic had been on the agenda for the meeting, but was removed because Whidbey Telecom said they were considering other locations.

In other public comment, someone shared that her husband had volunteered at the park for years and then was told he could no longer volunteer because the county couldn't afford to pay for insurance for the volunteers. She asked if this was still the case. Christ advised that to his knowledge, this has never been an issue. Someone requested that the portapotty be put back where it used to be in 2016 and 2017 so that people don't use the bushes as their toilet. Another person voiced her frustration about the insurance requirements to sell in the park. She has an ice cream truck and said that she (and others) can't participate in the anniversary this weekend because the county requires an outrageous amount of \$2 million in liability insurance. She asked if this could be reevaluated. Bennett advised the county's legal department puts these requirements in place and that he's wanting to go through a full season before he makes any changes like this, but that he is capturing this feedback as potential changes in the future. Another person shared that most of the people that own property by Maple Beach are Canadian and are dumping their spring cleanup over the wall at Maple Beach. She asked if signs could be put up so these people would realize it's a county park. Christ advised signage won't work because the parks department doesn't own anything above the tidelands and there is no place to put signs. He said that when citizens see this happening they can call the department so that staff can go out and try to educate, as they have no enforcement ability. Bennett thought this could be identified as a rule in the All Points Bulletin. Someone else suggested coordinating with the Natural Resource Division of Public Works to do some targeted education to the people that live in the area. Someone suggested putting the signage and information about Maple Beach at Lighthouse Marine Park. Someone shared that they wanted to put up a bench in the park for their mom and dad who were raised in Point Roberts and was told she couldn't. She said it was like a slap in the face because there are benches in the park from people that have only lived in Point Roberts for 10-20 years, but she couldn't get one for her parents who were raised there. She also suggested a path to the beach that connects to the path coming down from the road so that people will stay away from her fence. Bennett said that everyone was bringing up some fantastic ideas

that need to be considered in context with each other and that is why a master plan is needed for the park. Bennett would like to continue thoughtful consideration of all of these issues. Someone thanked the department for the new deck and windbreaks on the boardwalk and requested extending the deck to include the shelter area. Someone else asked the department to schedule a meeting in Point Roberts with the community in the next 3-4 months to work on long term planning. Bennett said that he will work with Rod to find a time to come back up. Discussion ensued about putting a kiosk in the park where brochures could be placed with information about what to do in Point Roberts. The group went for a walk to view the proposed dog park location.

## 5. Director Update

- a. **Parks-Related Council Activity** – The following four projects made it to the Capital Improvement Plan: the Bellingham Senior Activity Center sewer line replacement, the Semiahmoo Park sewage pump replacement, conversion of a rental at Hovander Park to a Maintenance Shop, and the Sumas Senior Center roof replacement. WC Parks is now working on budget supplemental requests.
- b. **Canyon Lake Access Easement Status** – Bennett Knox advised that negotiations continue to move forward between Whatcom County and Sierra Pacific for an easement to Canyon Lake. Bennett initially hoped to have public access by the end of the summer, but advised that next year is a more realistic timeframe. In anticipation of the agreement the Department has added this project, specifically associated gate and signage installations, to the CIP for 2023 and 2024.
- c. **Forest Management Plan** – Bennett Knox reviewed the work Mike McFarlane had done on the Lake Whatcom Forest Management Plan and is gathering additional stakeholder input, including from other County agencies. The request for proposal will be completed by fall so that the project can be put out to bid.

## 6. Operations Manager Update

- a. **Plantation Rifle Range Agreed Order Update** – The contractor completed their field work for site characterization and will have preliminary results to WC Parks by next Tuesday. Unfortunately, the work that was contracted didn't fully characterize the site and is predominantly looking at the boundaries of the extent of the contamination. WC Parks and the Department of Ecology will be holding a public meeting in late July where the contractor will give a presentation of their work, and then parks and ecology staff will discuss a timeline for the project and answer questions from the public.
- b. **Operations Staffing Update** – Christ Thomsen advised that seasonal staffing levels that had been full at the last meeting were now short 23%. In looking at current vacancies in both operations and maintenance staff, the department is 16% short. This is challenging going into the busy season, but the department is doing its best to assign resources where they do the most good. One of the

vehicles that transports seasonal employees broke down and will be in the shop for repair for several months. Recruitment continues for extra help at Point Roberts.

- c. **EH-1 Trail Update** – The contractor mobilized on site the second week of June and is working from the top down and the bottom up so that they are able to make more progress. Weather permitting, the project is on track to be complete by the end of this build season (September).
- d. **Silver Lake Well Upgrade** – The Silver Lake Park well upgrade was completed and fully resolved the water pressure issues in the park. All shower and restroom facilities are open and working.

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

- a. **Silver Lake Lodge Roof** – The Silver Lake Lodge roof replacement is scheduled to begin after Labor Day and be completed by the end of October.
- b. **Parks Administrative Office HVAC** – The Parks Administrative Office HVAC replacement will be initiated early fall and completed by October 15<sup>th</sup>.
- c. **Van Zandt Community Hall** – Whatcom County will be receiving a \$500,000 grant for the renovation of the Van Zandt Community Hall. Rod Lamb attended two meetings for the steering committee in charge of directing those improvement efforts. The steering committee is planning to hire an architect on their own to complete some preliminary drawings which will give the project a good head start.
- d. **Silver Lake Park** – Tiger Construction is wrapping up the remaining punch list of items on the Maple Creek Shower and Restroom Facility today. Once that's confirmed, project closeout will begin. Rod completed the administrative work necessary to resolve contract complications that arose from that project. King Architecture was hired to complete the design and engineering for the Cedar Campground Shower and Restroom Facility with construction set to begin spring 2024. The fourth and final shower and restroom facility at Silver Lake Park will be located in the Group Camp.
- e. **Stimpson Trailhead Improvements** – WC Parks is in the process of negotiating a scope and fee of work for the Stimpson Trailhead Improvements, as the contractor has expressed some concerns with what is currently budgeted. The contractor will be submitting a draft by the end of tomorrow.
- f. **Miscellaneous Updates** – Rod Lamb advised finance is currently reviewing ten WC Park projects; once reviewed and approved, a bid number will be assigned, and the department can advertise them. WC Parks is identifying the scope and request for proposal for the Bellingham Senior Activity Center HVAC system replacement and road repair for Lookout Mountain LM-2000. Rod advised there is a one-time deferred maintenance grant opportunity through the Washington State Recreation Conservation Office that he will be looking at to see if the department should apply for.

- g. Comprehensive Park Recreation Open Space Plan** – Rod Lamb connected with Nick Norton, the representative from Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, to discuss the department’s strategy of an expedited update to the current plan and then a full, larger effort to revise the entire plan in 2024. Nick understood the rationale for the proposed approach and shared some insight on what the department should focus on with the planned updates.

**8. Old Business**

- a. Multi-Modal Trails** – There was a meeting with representatives of the Whatcom County Bike/Ped Committee, the Climate Action Committee, WC Parks, WC Public Works, and the County Executive. The group expressed a desire to identify a path forward to advance multi-modal trail projects, commit to better collaboration, and build community support. The group is developing a framework to do this. The Bike/Ped Committee is looking to add another unfunded category to the TIP 6-year plan and create a demonstration project. WC Parks is looking to add Maple Falls Bay to Baker Trail as a TIP project. The department has had numerous conversations with stakeholders in the vicinity and would like to convene a stakeholder meeting to develop this shared vision for a Bay to Baker Trail.
- b. A Member of the Public, Daniel Probst** – Daniel Probst shared that he has been working with city and county traffic engineers on a section of the Bellingham Mount Baker Trail. The section is at the end of Academy Road and would connect Silver Beach to Agate Bay Road. He shared that he was told by the county’s traffic engineer to apply for a trail permit on the county right-of-way. Daniel requested a recommendation from the commission to approve using the county’s right-of-way for the trail permit and the Bellingham Mount Baker Trail. He suggested that once recommended by the commission, Daniel would like to go back to Greenways, possibly with Bennett’s help, to find funding to build trail. Sonja Max asked Daniel to put together a narrative describing his request and to give the commissioners a month to review it. Sonja said it could be added to July’s agenda.
- c. Passing of Terry Terry** – Bennett Knox advised the letter from the Executive honoring Terry Terry was sent out yesterday.

**9. New Business**

None

**10. Open Discussion**

Frank Boteler wanted to point out Bennett Knox’s work in recent months in working on multi-modal trail initiatives and rail trail conversions. He also shared with the Point Roberts community members how much he and his wife have enjoyed their time at Point Roberts. Frank would like WC Parks staff to focus on the culture, history, and

beautiful scenery of the area as plans are made for the parks. Someone from the public thanked the commission for coming and for the reminder that the Point Roberts parks are not the only parks the department is responsible for in the county. Another person from the public shared that the county parks are one of the main reasons people come to Point Roberts; that people are awestruck by the beauty. This person was happy that the community members were able to share their passion for the parks with the commission.

**11. Commissioner Engagement Opportunities**

- a. June 17, 2023, 11:00am – 12:00pm, Lighthouse Marine Park 50<sup>th</sup> Year Rededication Ceremony, Lighthouse Marine Park, 811 Marine Drive, Point Roberts, WA**

**12. Meeting Input/Evaluation**

Future Agenda Items:

- Carl Weimer requested commissioner introductions and visions
- Plantation Rifle Range presentation
- Forest Management Plan presentation

**13. Next Meeting: July 20, 2023, 6:00 p.m.**

The next Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m. on July 20, 2023 at the Silver Lake Day Lodge, 9006 Silver Lake Road, Maple Falls, WA.

**14. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Transcribed by: Kristin Lunderville, Clerk IV

Approved by: Bennett Knox, Parks Department Director