

**MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, February 19, 2015**

**Whatcom County Parks Administrative Office
3373 Mount Baker Highway, Bellingham, Washington**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Paul Woodcock, Chair at 6:37 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Commissioners: Paul Woodcock, Janet Boyhan, Kenneth Kiesner, Richard Sturgill, Jeff Margolis and Theresa Sygitowicz, late arrival; 7:02 PM.

Staff: Mike McFarlane, Christ Thomsen, Rodney Lamb

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS / COMMUNICATIONS

A. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

The chair recognized Daniel Probst. Daniel presented a letter that he received from County Executive, Jack Louws for support of the Mount Baker Marathon and the construction of a community supported Bellingham to Mount Baker trail system.

The letter also requested support from city, state and federal governments to realize this vision, specifically that the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest permit an exception to run the historic route through the wilderness area and that the U.S. Forest Service and Washington State Department of Natural Resources review and grant permits for the construction of the Bellingham-Mount Baker trail system through their lands.

Daniel also provided a map of the Stewart Mountain existing trail system showing the 2015 proposed upgrades and extension.

B. COMMUNICATION: NONE

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS – NONE

V. AGENDA

A. AGENDA APPROVAL

Paul Woodcock, Chair asked if there were any changes to the February 19, 2015 Agenda.

Mike stated that the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan maps were not able to be completed in time for this evening meeting and would therefore request that Item VIII, A. be moved to the March 19, 2014 Agenda.

MOTION: It was moved by Jeff Margolis, seconded by Janet Boyhan and passed unanimously to approve the February 19, 2015 Agenda with the above referenced changes.

VI. MINUTES

A. DECEMBER 18, 2014 MINUTES APPROVAL

MOTION: It was moved by Jeff Margolis, seconded by Ken Kiesner and passed unanimously to approve the December 18, 2014 Minutes as written.

B. JANUARY 22, 2015 MINUTES APPROVAL

MOTION: It was moved by Kenneth Kiesner, seconded by Janet Boyhan and passed with four, yeas, and no nays, and two abstentions, to approve the January 22, 2015 Minutes as written. Richard Sturgill and Jeff Margolis abstained as they were not present at the January 2015 meeting.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. DIRECTOR'S REPORT – MIKE MCFARLANE

1. Lake Whatcom Management Program Reporting – Mike discussed that in the past the Department was occasionally asked to provide information and input on the recreational element of the Program Reporting but in 2015, because there is a more robust recreation element and because it is anticipated that the Council will increase the reporting requirements, the Department will now be asked to play a larger role in program planning and reporting.

The document is currently in draft form but Mike stated that he will keep the Commission updated and will provide copies for Commission members once the final report and plan is completed.

2. Maple Falls Community Park

a. Till & reseed lower park area to restore turf – A meeting was held with representative of the Maple Falls Community Park committee. They have requested permission to till and reseed the lower portion of the park in order to restore the turf.

b. Pump Track – The committee informed Mike that there is a group that is interested in installing a pump track, which is a small bike course with dirt berms and rollers designed for bicycling without the rider pedaling. The Department has asked for a design and information proposal prior to approval. This sort of track requires a great deal of maintenance. The Department would require this maintenance to be part of the design. Along with maintenance there could be liability/insurance issues that would also not be assumed by the Department.

3. County/Department Website Update – It is expected that the Department will begin making campground and facility reservations next week. Once the Department has determined that the “bugs” are all addressed there will be a public update and promotion to utilize the on-line, self-reservation system.

The new County-wide website is on track to go live March 11th. When the website is initially released there may be some corrections and updates that will not come over with the new web page and the Department will not have access at that time to all the “tools” to make those corrections or update information but does expect to have access at a later date.

There was discussion regarding public awareness regarding the website changes. Mike stated that since the website is county-wide that the County will provide information for the public.

4. Flagpole Donation – Hovander Park – The Department has received a \$2,500.00 donation from Whatcom Allied Veterans Council to install a flag pole at Hovander Park. It is the goal to install the flag pole prior to the Memorial Day weekend as a dedication ceremony is planned by the donor. The flag pole will be erected by the Hovander Information Office along with the addition of some landscaping elements. The donation will cover most of the costs of the pole, installation materials and landscaping.

5. Temporary, Seasonal Help – The first round of applicant selection will begin February 24th. The application, job description and application instructions are on the County’s Human Resources website. Information can also be obtained at the County Courthouse, Human Resources Department.

The Department will be hiring one office position and several park maintenance positions.

6. Blaine/Birch Bay Community Park - Mike stated that he has not received official notice yet but did receive an email from the Blaine-Birch Bay Park and Recreation District that a total of \$80,000.00 has been appropriated for park development.

B. OPERATIONS REPORT – CHRIST THOMSEN

1. Staffing

a. Conservation Park Steward – The Department has successfully completed the negotiations for this position and two weeks ago Reed Parker joined the Park’s staff. Reed has a degree in Natural Resources and Wilderness Management. He previously worked for the U.S. Forest Service and most recently the Washington State Department of Natural Resources.

Reed’s technical knowledge, skills and background will be beneficial when addressing the unique watershed issues. He is currently assigned the task of identifying trail standards and assisting Rod Lamb in the planning process.

b. Vacant Positions – The Department is currently working with Human Resources to fill the vacant positions that were vacated due to retirements. We have not currently filled these positions but are working toward filling them as soon as possible.

c. Temporary, Seasonal Help – There will be two hiring cycles with 6-10 positions in each cycle.

2. Projects

a. Hovander Walkway – The Operations Department is spearheading the final details of this project. The maintenance crew is currently completing the portion of the walkway that leads to the playground, making it ADA accessible. The next phase will be finishing a walkway around the House.

b. Lighthouse Marine Park Boardwalk – A section of the boardwalk has been closed in order to remove and replace that section by mid-June at the latest.

c. Hovander Park Tree Removal – The maintenance crew is in the final stages of removing a number of big leaf maple trees that had reached the end of their life-cycle, as

well as several trees that had sustained storm damage. These trees were removed because they presented a safety concern.

- d. **Silver Lake Park Security Fence** – The installation of the security fence, including the access gate that was on order, has been completed. The fence will provide increased security for on-site maintenance equipment.
- e. **Tennant Lake Boardwalk** – The Department of Fish and Wildlife provided renovation to a portion of the Tennant Lake Boardwalk out to the overview. This included lifting the boardwalk by approximately seven inches and replacing a section with light penetrating materials.
- f. **Lily Point Marine Park** – During a recent inspection at Lily Point it was discovered that there were a number of hairline cracks in the restroom structure. The manufacturer of the building is CXT Concrete Buildings. A CXT representative was contacted and came out to evaluate the cracks and determine the best way to make the repairs. Staff met with the representative who indicated that the cracks were primarily cosmetic and not covered by warranties, but out of concern for the professional relationship has agreed to repair the cracks and repaint the interior of the building.

3. Up-Coming Spring Projects.

- a. **Hovander Homestead House Roof Replacement** – In the budget process, funding was allotted to replace the roof on the House. An integral portion of the project will be bat abatement and closing any possible access for their return.
- b. **Birch Bay Community Park** – The first phase of this project will be to remove two on-site buildings.

There was some discussion on whether there have been any conversations about a pedestrian walkway constructed along the section of SR-542 that will soon be under Department Of Transportation construction, as the Bay-to-Baker Trail empties onto this section.

Mike stated that the information received up to now has been what has been released in the newspaper. They will be moving both lanes over approximately 100 feet and that will provide time to address the question of a pedestrian walkway. The Department will continue to monitor the project for these opportunities.

C. DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT REPORT – ROD LAMB

1. South Fork Park Trailhead Development – The shoreline application was submitted to Planning and Development Services on February 9, 2015.

Rod explained that Diehl Ford has donated a pedestrian bridge to the Department that they no longer need. The Department has determined that it could be used in South Fork Park on the trail to Nasset Farm where the trail crosses Hutchison Creek. It will require some upgrades and repairs but will be a tremendous cost saving over obtaining or building a new bridge.

A Hydraulic Project Approval Permit has been submitted to the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) on February 17, 2015 to review the technical details to determine if the bridge can be installed.

There is a shoreline exemption permit that needs to be submitted to City of Bellingham to extract the bridge. This will be submitted once the permit requirements are identified by the City.

The County Public Works Department has agreed to extract the bridge and the Department will contract out the transportation of the bridge to Park's Headquarters.

There was discussion regarding the upgraded bridge's materials, dimensions and the adjustments that may need to be made to the installation site.

2. Nasset Foundation Repair - The draft bid package for the Nasset Foundation Repair has been submitted to the County Finance Department. The engineers continue to revise the design drawings and are finishing the cost estimate. It is anticipated that these details will be completed for release late February to early March, 2015.

3. Silver Lake Park Road & Electrical Improvements – Pacific Survey and engineer continues to work on the draft phasing plan and cost estimates. Rod is meeting with them tomorrow to review their progress on the plan.

4. Lighthouse Dock Renovation – Rod has received a reply from the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) and is revising the permit exhibit based on approval to allow in-water work any time there is a minus 2 foot tide. This is somewhat less restrictive than the original permit conditions but still has some problems. Rod continues to work with all concerned to develop a solution while still protecting forage fish.

5. Lake Whatcom Reconveyance Planning – The Department continues to refine the inventory and compile, analyze and interpret data from various avenues.

Rod met with the various recreational user groups today to discuss the planning process and identifying volunteer resources to achieve the objectives, the planning, permitting and implementation of the trail plan.

Mike stated that the user groups are quite anxious to get involved with the trail construction. They have asked if there are some trail sections that they can work on outside of the permitting process, County Council approval and the public process. Staff will meet next week to discuss if there are any areas available for minor maintenance projects that over the course of the season they can work on, keeping in mind the watershed window and land disturbance.

The Bellingham Senior Activity Center has been scheduled for the next public meeting that will take place on Wednesday, March 18, 2015. The details will be posted on the Parks web site and a public notice will be released on Monday, February 23, 2015.

A request for was made to distribute a notice and a flyer to share regarding meeting details to Commission Members. There was some discussion regarding the meeting agenda.

ACTION: Rod to send a notice and flyer with details about the next public Reconveyance Planning Meeting to Commission members.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. WHATCOM COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – CHAPTER 9 MAPS – Deferred to the March 19, 2015 Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Commission Agenda. (See Item V., A. Agenda Approval).

Mike briefly discussed that the goal is to meet with Planning Commission and remove duplicate information and references on the maps, add missing information, determine what needs to be included and generally make them easier to read.

B. LAKE WHATCOM RECONVEYANCE PLANNING UPDATES – See Item VII, C., 4.

IX. NEW BUSINESS - NONE

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. TENNANT LAKE SWAN WATCH – The Friends of Tennant Lake are conducting a Swan Watch on Saturday, February 21, 2015. The gathering will be at sun-up, approximately 7:00 AM to watch the swans take off from the lake. Paul DeBrian with the Department of Fish and Wildlife will provide a talk on swans, and other bird interests.

B. WINGS OVER WATER – March 13 - 15, 2015 the APA Museum at Semiahmoo Park will be open during the Wings over Water event which is a Northwest Birding Festival in Blaine, WA. The information can be found on the web site by searching “Wings Over Water, Blaine, Washington”.

C. Lynden Fair Grounds – Tree Sale – Theresa will send out a notice regarding this event.

D. Concert – Jeff Margolis announced that the First Congregational Church is having an Americana Concert at 3:00 PM.

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION

The March 19, 2015 Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting will be held at the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center, 5236 Nielsen Avenue, Ferndale, Washington. The meeting time is 6:30 PM with a tour of the recently renovated boardwalk at 5:30 PM

XII. ADJOURNMENT - The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 PM.

Transcribed by: Pat Fisher, Clerk III

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director