

MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, April 16, 2015

Silver Lake Park
9006 Silver Lake Road
Maple Falls, Washington

Prior to the meeting Department staff and Commission toured Silver Lake Park and the Silver Lake Park Day use area.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Paul Woodcock, Chair at 6:39 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Commissioners: Jeffrey Margolis, Janet Boyhan Theresa Sygitowicz, Ken Kiesner, Paul Woodcock and Richard Sturgill

Staff: Mike McFarlane, Christ Thomsen, Rodney Lamb

Guest: Erin Osborne, Whatcom County Planning and Development Services

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS / COMMUNICATIONS

A. PUBLIC COMMENTS: The Chair recognized Marty Grabijas. Mr. Grabijas spoke on behalf of the Glacier Trails Committee. He shared with the Commission that the Glacier Trails Committee is expanding their vision of constructing a bike / pedestrian path from Glacier to Horseshoe Bend, to Glacier to Maple Falls and Maple Falls to Deming, by using existing right-of-way, where it exists and/or cooperative land owner's property.

He also wanted the Commission to know that they are extending an invitation to the mountain bike community, other forms of biking representatives and pedestrian recreational users to join in the Glacier Trails Committee in providing safe places along the SR542 corridor to bike and hike.

He spoke to the accident/incident rates of unsafe routes and the positive impact that bicycling and hiking activities have on the local business community.

Mr. Grabijas provided his email contact information to the Commissioners:
marty@mothertech.net

The Chair recognized Joelle Adams. Ms. Adams was representing the equestrian community. She stated that there are some equestrian trail use issues at Silver Lake Park that are making it problematic to stick to the trail corridors along the forestry center open field. These issues are; radio controlled planes and off leash dogs.

Ms. Adams stated that the noise from the radio controlled planes and uncontrolled off leash dogs create a disturbance that can spook a horse, possibly causing injury to the animals or rider.

She is proposing that a possible solution would be to open more trails and open areas to equestrian activities. She asked if at a later date she could share some of the maps that she has created showing the areas of her proposal.

She also stated that there are several horse persons who would be willing to donate time and energy to these solutions. It was suggested that she forward this information to the Park Operations Manager.

It was commented by Jeff Margolis that the issue of radio controlled planes and drones in the park may be a topic for discussion in the future as this is becoming a common activity across the nation. Mike agreed that it may be wise for the Commission to look at some draft policies and recommendations along these lines and that if the Commission has concerns or input to forward them to him.

The Chair recognized Daniel Probst. Mr. Probst provided an update on the Mount Baker Marathon trail building activities and that there has been a recent monetary donation toward trail building tools.

He also wanted to bring to Commission's attention that additional work has been done on a volunteer basis to various trails in the Chuckanut Mountains.

B. COMMUNICATION:

1. Westergreen Law, Sharon D. Westergreen, Attorney and Counselor at Law.

The Chair recognized Sharon Westergreen. Sharon is representing the Westergreen family who is stating that Number 38 on the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 9-1 Existing Parks & Recreation map is designated as Recreation Resource Management Area and includes a portion of the Westergreen's property. The Westergreen family would like the boundary for this designation to be amended to not include their property.

The Chair recognized Pearl Williams-Palmer. Ms. Palmer states that her and her husband have property adjacent to the Westergreen's and would like to make the same request as Sharon Westergreen.

There was some discussion that the designations on this map first appeared in the 1989 Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Open Space Plan which was adopted as part of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan. Department staff was unable to identify the origin prior to that date.

The Chair thanked those present for their comments and asked if there were any additional public comments.

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

The Chair recognized Jeff Margolis. Jeff stated that he emailed Department staff and Commission members a copy of the Olympic National Park website because he felt it was very edifying and correlated with the presentation on business orientation by Rud Browne. This web site is set up in a professional manner and thought the new County web site could benefit from the manner in which the National Park site identified the highlights of the park, various community activities and amenities in the surrounding area and information on the park user demographics. There was also a link to participate in a demographic survey which he felt provided excellent information.

V. **AGENDA**

A. **AGENDA APPROVAL**

MOTION: It was moved by Ken Kiesner, seconded by Jeff Margolis and passed unanimously to approve the April 16, 2015 Agenda as written.

VI. **MINUTES**

A. **February 19, 2015 MINUTES APPROVAL**

MOTION: It was moved by Jeff Margolis, seconded by Theresa Sygitowicz and passed with three yeas and one abstention to approve the February 19, 2015 minutes as written.

B. **March 19, 2015 MINUTES APPROVAL.**

MOTION: It was moved by Jeff Margolis, seconded by Theresa Sygitowicz and passed unanimously to approve the March 19, 2015 minutes with the following correction: Change Items VII. A. 2. and, VIII. B. to read: See Item VII. C. 4.

VII. **STAFF REPORTS**

A. **DIRECTOR'S REPORT – MIKE MCFARLANE**

1. **Staffing**

a. **Construction Maintenance Supervisor** – First round of interviews for this position have been completed.

b. **Point Roberts Ranger** – This position closes next week.

c. **Repair Maintenance Positions** – There are two maintenance positions currently open. The Department is in the process of updating the job descriptions. When the updates are complete the positions will be posted internally and if not filled internally it will be posted to the public.

d. **East Region Range** – The current Ranger has submitted a letter of resignation. This position will go for internal posting first and if not filled internally will be advertised to the public.

e. **Seasonal Extra-Help** – The Department is currently interviewing for the second round of hiring. Recruitment includes an office position and several field positions.

2. **Bay Horizon Park / Camp Horizon Buildings** – Mike discussed that the old Air Force buildings that are located at Bay Horizon Park are used on a seasonal basis by the Lions Club to provide a camp for disabled adults.

Over the years the Lions club has provided some upgrades but it has been brought to the Department's attention that there are fire code concerns with the commercial kitchen. These concerns were reviewed and it was determined that there are upgrades required in the kitchen and other on-site buildings.

The Department is working with Planning and Development Services and code enforcement to determine the scope of the work.

Mike discussed that this will provide a challenge in that the facilities are used on a limited basis and concerns regarding the costs and time for the improvements.

3. Web Site – The Department Administrative Assistant continues to update the park pages on a daily basis.

There are some community links that have not been posted to the site. These will need to be posted after the Department receives notice from the Information Services Department that the site has the capability to receive those links. This is the case with some of the other features such as on-line surveys, tracking demographics, etc.

The on-line reservation system is working very well by the public comments that have been received. There are a few procedural issues that need to be smoothed out but the system is basically fully rolled out.

It was discussed that if individuals have park photos to share for the web site to submit those for approval to Mike. The photos will need to be displayed on a volunteer basis and free from publishing rights. Release forms were discussed.

5. REI Grant – The Department Conservation Steward has applied for a \$5,000.00 grant to provide equipment for volunteer workers to use while working on the trails. If awarded, the funds will be distributed through the Whatcom Park and Recreation Foundation.

The grant application has been submitted to REI for consideration.

There was some discussion regarding the grant application process and how the funds will be used.

B. OPERATIONS REPORT – CHRIST THOMSEN

1. Staffing – Christ stated that with the resignation of the East Region ranger our current staffing level is at 65% of the norm. This reduction weighs heavily on concerns for prepping and managing the parks and providing good public service during the summer season. The staff has been working hard to complete the required work and under the current conditions are doing an excellent job.

2. Seasonal Update – Christ reported that the campsites and picnic areas have all been prepped for opening season. Many of the picnic tables have been painted and all public hands on items have been inspected; repairs are being made as needed and resources are available.

3. Tennant Lake Beavers Return – The beavers at Tennant Lake have returned and are impacting boardwalk associated trails, particularly the areas between the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center and Hovander Park. Signs have been posted where water is breaching the trails.

There was some discussion regarding the heavy infestation of blackberries by the Silver Lake bridge and plans for trimmings them. Christ stated that they are planning to address that after the second round of extra-help staff have been hired.

Also discussed was the trail problem by the church camp at Silver Lake Park. Christ stated that there are design issues that first need to be addressed prior to repairing that section of trail. These will be discussed and an update provided at the May meeting.

C. DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT REPORT – ROD LAMB

1. South Fork Park Trailhead Development – This project is in the permit review process with Planning and Development Services. It has passed through River and Flood and is now with the Engineering Department.

The permits to move the bridge that has been donated by Diel Ford are completed with the exception of the Oversize Vehicle permit. The logistical details are being worked out with the truck driver and the Public Works crane crew. It is anticipated that the bridge will be moved at the end of April barring any unforeseen complications.

2. Silver Lake Park Road & Electrical Improvements – The engineer continues to work on the overall project costs and phasing plan.

3. Lighthouse Dock Renovation – The marine biologist will perform the first surf smelt survey on 4/18/15. If the survey results show that there are no surf smelt spawning activities the ramp will be cleared off and the site will be prepared for pile driving activities to begin the first week of June.

The current plan is to keep the ramp completely clear of sediment to discourage any surf smelt spawning activity and continue to perform surveys between now and June.

4. Samish Park Playground Replacement – This project may prove problematic in that there is an underground pipeline of high pressure liquid petroleum gas that runs in close proximity to the site and could limit the size of the structure. Contact has been made with the pipeline company to begin discussions regarding the project.

Additional plans are to meet with the crew to determine the placement of the playground within the constraints of the existing hardscape, etc. The site location was discussed.

5. Nessel Farm House Foundation Repair – The engineer has completed the drawings and is working on the cost estimate.

A paint sample has been submitted to determine if there is any lead present.

The bid documents are very close to being ready to be published.

6. Lake Whatcom Reconveyance Planning – The Department continues to receive public comments by email. It is thought that most of the comments should be received by the end of April 2015 when the Department will begin to compile and evaluate them.

Christ, Rod and Reid met with the Backcountry Horsemen to receive more input from them regarding their suggestions to increase access for equestrian users.

The source and avenue for receiving comments is posted on our web site. The Department will also continue to invite comment during meetings with user groups and at the public planning meetings.

7. American Rivers – Nooksack River Recreational Plan Study - Rod stated that he participated in this study as a County representative. The plan has been published and is currently posted on the American Rivers web site.

They are interested in providing a presentation to various groups for input and asked if the Parks and Recreation Commission would be interested.

Rod stated that he will be unable to attend next month's Commission meeting so American Rivers asked if they could provide that presentation at the June meeting.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. WHATCOM COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – CHAPTER 9 MAPS – The Chair introduced Erin Osborne, Whatcom County Planning and Development Services, and asked if she would provide a brief history of her involvement in the Comprehensive Plan update process and a genesis of the Recreation Resource Management Areas shown on the Chapter 9 maps.

Erin introduced herself and gave a brief background of her involvement in the Comprehensive Plan update process. She discussed that she is here to pick up where Matt Aamott left off at the April meeting. It is her understanding that the maps have been amended by the Planning Commission to reflect the Park Commissions suggestions and is now with the Park Commission for review and approval.

Erin pointed out that the Recreation Resource Management Area designation is discussed in Chapter 9 of the current Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan that was approved by Council in 1989.

Erin said she does not know the history behind the development of the Recreation Resource Management Area but that the Comprehensive Plan is currently being updated by the Planning Commission and that the update includes a public process.

Mike McFarlane discussed that the Park Commission's role is to make recommendations in an advisory capacity. In that capacity the Parks and Recreation Commission has been asked to review the Chapter 9 maps, update the park properties and make a recommendation to the Planning Commission to include any additions or deletions in the park properties. He discussed that the Planning Commission and ultimately the County Council are the two bodies that have the authority to make any changes to the County Comprehensive plan, including the Recreation Resource Management Areas.

Erin suggested that based on public comments this evening, a possible solution could be to approve these maps under the condition that the property owners who have requested that their property not be included, is noted in the recommendation.

There was concern raised that land owners that aren't in attendance should be notified that their property is included in the designation and that consideration to change the questioned area should not be given for one without notifying all others of similar situation and allow for their input.

MOTION: It was moved by Theresa Sygitowicz seconded by Richard Sturgill to table the approval of the maps until the Recreation Resource Management Area designation is determined.

Discussion was called. Erin discussed that the update in the park properties were the object of the approval, not the maps as a whole. The maps are part of the Comprehensive Plan and ultimately the Planning Commission and the County Council are the two bodies that have the authority to make any changes to the maps, even to include the Park Commission's recommendations.

She discussed that whatever recommendation the Park Commission makes will ultimately be part of the finding that goes forward in a final report to the decision makers.

Erin stated that if the decision is tabled until the issue is resolved she would be willing to do some research, or the Commission could approve their recommended updates to the park property with the stipulation that before it goes to the Planning Commission that some research be done to determine the source of the Recreation Resource Management Areas designation.

Question was called. The Motion passed; 4 yeas, 1 abstention.

ACTION: Erin will research the Recreation Resource Management Area designation and report back to the Park Commission.

B. LAKE WHATCOM RECONVEYANCE PLANNING UPDATE

1. 3/18/15 Public Planning Meeting Power Point presentation – Rod provided a showing of the March 18, 2015 Reconveyance Public Planning Meeting Power Point Presentation. He explained that this version of the presentation includes updates that were added for the recent meeting with the Backcountry Horsemen. He discussed the changes in detail for Commission information.

Rod provided a question and answer period. There were requests for clarification in terms of roads, trails and topographical elements on the maps and the plans for shared use trail etiquette signage.

Christ touched on the coordination and standardizing of maintenance activities for the Lake Whatcom Watershed and the Chuckanut trails and that a maintenance work group was formulated that includes stakeholders, Washington State Parks and City of Bellingham Parks to participate in this discussion.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Change in representation for District 2 and At-Large – Mike discussed that Janet Boyhan has agreed to vacate the At-Large position and assume the District 2 position held by Ken Kiesner. This will allow Ken Kiesner, who is moving out of District 2, to assume Janet Boyhan's At-Large position. This exchange will go to the County Executive.

There is still a vacant position in District 2.

MOTION: It was moved by Theresa Sygitowicz, seconded by Richard Sturgill and passed unanimously to recommend the appointment of representation for District 2 to Janet Boyhan and At-Large to Ken Kiesner.

B. Plantation Range Age Limit – Mike provided a handout of the proposed Plantation Rifle Range Rules showing the additions of the recommended age limits. He discussed that the Department has determined there is a need to develop shooting age limits at the Plantation Range to provide continuity for staff and users.

After extensive research the Department is recommending the following age guidelines:

- Children under the age of 10 are not allowed to shoot.
- Rifle shooter 10 – 18 years old must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Rifle shooters over 18 can shoot independently.
- Handgun shooters must be 21 years old or older.

Mike asked the Commission to consider the proposed age guidelines and if in agreement provide a motion to recommend acceptance.

MOTION: It was moved by Ken Kiesner, seconded by Theresa Sygitowicz and passed unanimously to support the recommended age guidelines for the Plantation Rifle Range.

C. Puget Sound Energy Utility Easement Request – Mike provided handouts showing the location of the proposed easement. He explained what the easement would involve and that that the proposal is being reviewed by County legal staff. This is informational for the Commission as it will require County Council approval.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS – None

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION

The May 21, 2015 Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting will be held at the Roeder Home at 6:00 PM.

XII. ADJOURNMENT – The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 PM.

Transcribed by: Pat Fisher, Clerk III

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director