

**MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, January 21, 2016**

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

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Paul Woodcock, Chair at 6:05 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Commissioners: Paul Woodcock, Janet Boyhan, Jeff Margolis, Kenneth Kiesner, Vern Yadon and Richard Sturgill

Staff: Michael McFarlane, Rod Lamb and Christ Thomsen

EXCUSED:

Commission: Theresa Sygitowicz

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS / COMMUNICATIONS

A. Daniel Probst – Daniel stated that there are several intersections in the Chuckanut trail section that do not have signage and other sections that do not have standardized signage. He would like to propose that he provide standardized signs for all those areas at a cost of \$5.00 per sign. He has photos of each section that need a sign but has not compiled the total number yet. He provided a sample of the sign materials which is poly based. It was discussed that the Department uses metal sign and depending on the application can be reflective when used for traffic, etc.

Daniel discussed that the magazine, South Side Living featured an article on the Bellingham – Mt. Baker Trail.

Daniel requested an option to allow the public to use Parks video equipment for presentations during the allocated time on the agenda for Public Comments / Communications.

Daniel informed the Commission that he has received a donation pledge for trails funding that will require an allocation list of projects prior to being released and has received a donation for trails and would like direction on where it can be applied.

Last Thursday the Whatcom County Planning Commission voted unanimously to add the Bellingham – Mt. Baker Trail to the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan.

B. Phil Damon – Stimpson Family Nature Reserve – See Agenda item IX., D.

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS - NONE

The Chair recognized Vern Yadon. Vern stated that an application has been submitted for this legislative session for \$77,000.00 to be applied to the Kendal Trails for engineering and design and that the Washington State Department of Transportation has agreed to design and build it if funds are available.

Mike added that the County Executive is committed to maintaining and operating the trail once it is completed.

V. AGENDA

A. JANUARY 21, 2016 AGENDA

MOTION: It was moved by Jeff Margolis and seconded by Vern Yadon to approve the January 21, 2016 Agenda as presented. Motion carried with a unanimous vote to approve.

VI. MINUTES

A. DECEMBER 17, 2015 MINUTES

MOTION: It was moved by Jeff Margolis and seconded by Kenneth Kiesner to approve the December 17, 2015 Minutes as submitted. Motion carried with a vote of 5 for to approve and one abstention by Richard Sturgill as he was not in attendance.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. DIRECTORS REPORT – MICHAEL MCFARLANE

1. State Lease Hold Tax Audit – The State of Washington recently completed an audit of the Department's Lease Hold Tax and has determined that some of the non-profit agencies that use our buildings gratis need to apply for a lease hold tax exemption or pay the tax if not eligible for the exemption.

2. Lighthouse Marine Park – At the last Council meeting a resolution of support for the Lighthouse project at Lighthouse Marine Park was approved. The resolution does not provide for any funding for the project and the concern remains that the \$500,000.00 pledge will not cover all the costs to complete the project.

Mike will be meeting with the County Executive to discuss how he would like to move forward. There are two possible options; one is to define the project and costs and determine a funding source, or two; determine what can be accomplished with the pledged funds and consider that to be the project parameters.

There was a request for clarification on the extent of the Coast Guard involvement. Mike discussed that it is his understanding that the Coast Guard has provided information on operating costs to power the light and requested a survey of the new light location.

There was some discussion regarding the project requirements to date. It has been determined that this will need to be a public works projects and that the design will need to meet commercial standards. Mike has provided information to the committee on how to move forward with the process. Mike will report next month on his meeting with the Executive.

3. Park Property Encroachment – Glacier – The Council approved the request for a boundary line adjustment and sale for this property. Mike reported that this issue has taken quite some time to clear up as the owner encountered problems completing a lot consolidation. This

has since been resolved and the owner has hired an agent to draft the deed. When the deed is received, the Department will forward it for legal review, draft a purchase and sale agreement and this will complete the process.

4. Department of Natural Resources Recreational Planning Meetings – Mike discussed that updates on this process are posted online. He encouraged the Commission members to follow the process because of the relationship that this will have with County park lands.

5. East Whatcom Regional Resource Center – Funding is currently available for the food bank distribution area. The first phase of the project has begun with defining the work scope and developing a project description.

Additional funds are being actively pursued to cover the costs of adding a youth component to the project. The desire is to have a covered, heated play area for indoor sports.

At this time the food bank is planned to be a stand-alone building due to the requirements and controls that need to be in place in terms of food storage and clean up.

The building-site that is being considered is on the northwest side of the property, but the final determination will be based on utility runs, road access and the flow and function of the site.

There is an area being reserved at the front of the site for the local fire district.

6. SR 542 Connecting Roads System Analysis – Mike state that next week there is a meeting with the US Forest Service, the County Executive and himself to discuss the road system analysis for the forest service roads connecting to SR 542.

B. OPERATIONS REPORT – CHRIST THOMSEN

1. Projects / Events

a. Maple Creek Park Bridge – The log bridge that crosses Maple Creek in Maple Creek Park sustained damage during a storm event and will need to be replaced.

Christ and Rod will be conducting a site visit prior to scheduling an on-site meeting with the Department of Fish and Wildlife to discuss the permitting requirements.

The goal is to complete that project prior to the summer season because the trail is closed until the bridge is replaced.

b. Glacier Restroom Damage - The Glacier Restroom drinking fountains in front of the building sustained vehicular damage and will need to be repaired / replaced. It is estimated that there was approximately \$3,000.00 in damages. A report was filed with the Whatcom County Sheriff's office but because of high insurance deductibles the costs will need to be absorbed by the Department.

c. Administrative Office – The Administrative office floors were replaced in the reception area, hallway and conference room.

In addition, the sink and countertops were replaced, the walls painted and audio visual equipment installed in the conference room.

2. 2016 Operations Work Plans – The Operations staff have been assigned the task of developing work plans for 2016. Some of the projects that you will be hearing about as we move forward through the year are:

Silver Lake Road and Utility Improvements

Plantation Rifle Range HVAC unit replacement

Installation and implementation of a computerized maintenance management software system

Complete a trail inventory of our trails infrastructure

Develop standardized trail signs

Begin project identification for the upcoming Recreation Conservation Office grant cycle.

Replace the trail bridge over Maple Creek in Maple Creek Park

Replace the trail bridge in Samish Park

Repair the bluff on Cedar Point trail at Lily Point

C. DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT – ROD LAMB

1. South Fork Trailhead Development Project – Bid documents are being finalized for the trailhead development.

Coordinating effort continue with the manufacturer to purchase the trailhead vault toilets that will be located at the proposed trailhead facility.

Planning and Development Services has been contacted to initiate permit approval for the trail construction of the trailhead development. This has been delayed as we have not secured the easement from Department of Natural Resources, but this appears to be on the verge of completion.

2. Silver Lake Road and Electrical Improvements – The upgraded utility plan for the campgrounds has been submitted to the State Department of Health and they have requested some additional details and clarification. A meeting has been scheduled with Pacific Surveying and Engineering next Tuesday to review these comments.

Drawings will need to be re-submitted to Planning and Development Services for the land disturbance permit as they had requested minor modifications to the layout to address perceived impacts to the stream buffer.

3. Lighthouse Marine Park Dock Project – The engineer's modified wave attenuation chamber has been submitted to the contractor who has solicited quotes for fabrication of the new device.

The proposal has also been shared with the manufacturer who is evaluating the proposal to assure that it will work with the design of the dock substructure and not cause damaging stresses to occur elsewhere in the structure.

4. Samish Park Playground – The project is complete pending a review tomorrow of the recently installed guard rail around a retaining wall that meets current fall restrictions. The maintenance crew fabricated the guard rail and it was galvanized off-site and installed today.

5. Lighthouse Boardwalk Renovation – The scope of work and the project description has been drafted for the release of the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for the design services.

6. Birch Bay Community Park – The scope of work and project description has been drafted for the release of the RFQ for design services.

7. Semiahmoo Iron Chink Display Shelter – Preliminary plans are being reviewed by the Department carpenter for comment and evaluation. Once the plans have been approved a materials list can be generated to evaluate construction costs.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. LAKE WHATCOM RECONVEYANCE PLANNING UPDATE – ROD LAMB – The public comments process is complete and all comments have been consolidated. Efforts continue on modifying the plan to include information and details that were generated by the public comments and the maintenance and operations details that were identified by Department staff.

The draft document will be shared with the County Council at the second meeting in February for a work session to update them on the progress and hear their comments. If the Department is given the green light to move forward a SEPA application will be submitted to Planning and Development Services.

The consultant who is drafting an environmental analysis document that will accompany the SEPA application is incorporating some Department requested revisions into the analysis document. The final version should be completed in the next week or so.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. “2015, A YEAR IN REVIEW” DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENTATION – Christ provided an introduction to the Power Point presentation, “2015, A Year in Review”. He explained that the presentation is a concentrated version of presentations that were provided at an all-staff retreat in December by the Lead Rangers, the Maintenance and Construction Supervisor and the Administrative Assistant and focused on the Department’s 2015 successes and accomplishments.

Christ commented that 2015 was a challenging year in terms of staff retirements. He discussed that during the hiring gap the payroll savings were used to hire additional extra help employees and that this year’s crew proved to be excellent in terms of assisting with all the accomplishments that were realized in the parks. He discussed that one of the focuses this year, especially when orienting new employees, was on safety measures on the job and that every time the extra-help employees were observed in the field they were wearing their hard hats, gloves and safety gear.

The presentation individually highlighted each of the Park Regions with pictures of and discussion on completed projects, and how on each of the projects the main focus was making an impact on “where people touched the parks”.

Also highlighted and discussed were the Administrative office accomplishments and the beneficial impact that they made in the field.

B. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

MOTION: It was moved by Richard Sturgill and seconded by Janet Boyhan to retain the current Chair, Paul Woodcock and Vice Chair, Jeff Margolis. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

C. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF 2016 COMPREHENSIVE PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE PLAN (CPROSP) – Mike provided the Commission with an updated version of a Power Point presentation that was previously shown to Whatcom County Council. This updated version will also be presented to Council at the upcoming work session.

The presentation discussed the history of the Plan's development, the content requirements that need to be met, the plan approval process, the required timeline of approval for the State and Federal grant application purposes and that the 2016 plan will be effective for two grant cycles through the year 2020.

It covered the grant awards that have been received as a result of having a plan in place, and the benefits that have been realized in terms of park land acquisitions, repair and replacement of park equipment and facilities.

Additionally, touched on were the areas that the CPROSP identifies; public desires and needs and trends of the community for park recreation and that it is used to inform other plans.

Mike stated that this coming Tuesday the Department will be meeting with the County Council in a work session. This will be the final opportunity for Council to add to the plan prior to approval certification and submittal.

The SEPA determination of non-significance is expected back within the next two weeks. The Department will be asking for a Public Hearing and adoption on February 9, 2016 in order to meet the March 1, 2016 deadline for certification submittal to the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO).

He discussed that the plan is a stand-alone planning document and not an element of the County's Comprehensive Plan which allows flexibility to amend the plan as needed over the life of the document and provide the ability to react to opportunities as they arise.

MOTION: It was moved by Jeff Margolis and seconded by Richard Sturgill to approve the Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan as submitted. Motion carried unanimously.

D. STIMPSON TRAIL WORK – VOLUNTEER USE – (JEFF MARGOLIS) – Jeff Margolis introduced Phil Damon. Jeff updated the Commission, stating that Mr. Damon called him with some concerns pertaining to volunteer activity on the Stimpson Nature Reserve trail and would like to bring them forward for consideration.

Mr. Damon was recognized by the Chair. He stated that over the period of several weeks he has noticed volunteers completing ditching work on the trail that he has observed as being detrimental by creating greater muddy areas and in some instances reducing the width of the trail.

Mr. Damon stated that two days ago he encountered Park staff, Mike Barnes on the trail and voiced his concerns to him. Mr. Damon stated that Mike told him he would relay these concerns to Parks' administration staff. Mr. Damon stated he revisited the trail two days later and observed that the prior damage had been fixed and that the repair work was excellent. Mr. Damon stated that he also phoned Reid Parker who assured him that he would also look into it further.

The Commission thanked Mr. Damon for bringing his concerns forward.

There was a discussion that volunteer management, coordination and work assignments need to be supervised. There was additional discussion regarding trail maintenance goals and construction/repair.

Also discussed were the responsibilities of the Department to respond to comments and complaints from the public and to mitigate and resolve any issues. Christ stated that the

Department is looking into the situation to evaluate the work and improve the volunteer training and coordination efforts, if needed.

E. LAKE WHATCOM WATERSHED – (JEFF MARGOLIS) – Jeff stated that he is concerned that with all the activity in the Lake Whatcom watershed that the Commission may not be as informed as they could be about the efforts that are being taken to assure the water quality in the lake. He would like to request that Mike inform them of any concerns pertaining to Lake Whatcom water quality and report on the interactions that the Department has with other agencies in this regard, in terms of reports and meeting attendance, in order to keep track of this thread of water protection.

Mike responded that he would first like to state that on a county level monitoring the water quality in Lake Whatcom is charged to the County Public Works Department and that each month there is a surface water work session conducted by Public Works staff.

He realizes that there are a number of committees and meetings that address this issue and can understand where Jeff would feel that there are too many to keep up with. Because protecting the water quality in the lake is a joint effort between the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County, Mike suggested going to their web pages as there are a number of documents on line that discuss this issue and are excellent sources of information.

Twice a year the City and the County combine their efforts to provide a work plan that discusses current activity and the future plans for the watershed, and because this has a recreational component to it the Department will provide a report on our activity in the area during the same period of time. These reports can also be found online.

Mike discussed that the Department also attends inter-jurisdictional coordinating team meetings that deal with various items pertaining to the watershed. Occasionally the Department will attend the City of Bellingham Mayor's Watershed Advisory Committee.

He suggested that other sources of information are the Watershed Advisory Committee and the Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District as they are also actively involved in monitoring the activity in the watershed.

There is also a Lake Whatcom policy group that is made up of elected officials and city and county water and sewer districts that set and reviews policy. The Department has been before body occasionally presenting what we would like to accomplish in the Reconveyance area but doesn't actively go to all those meetings on a regular basis either.

Mike assured Jeff that his concerns are duly noted and if there is something specifically that the Department is working on we will do our best to keep the Commission informed but if the issue pertains to the reporting functions, calendar dates for upcoming meeting and meeting agendas, etc., the City and County Public Works web site are the best sources for information.

The Chair thanked Jeff for his comments bringing this forward for discussion.

F. WHATCOM SPORTS & RECREATION – LEASE EXTENSION – Mike stated that Whatcom Sports Commission received \$1.3 million and has another donation of \$700,000 from Phillips 66 to build two artificial, lighted fields at Smith and Northwest. They have asked for an extension on their lease as the naming right are included in this lease and they would like to recognize the donor by renaming the fields.

Mike discussed that second legal in Exhibit A, in reference the Boys and Girls Club is also going to change in this amendment. They have a new agreement with the City of Bellingham but would

like to retain their designated area at Smith and Northwest for a year to see if the new agreement with the City works out. The County and the Soccer Commission have no objections to this.

There was discussion on whether or not the section in the agreement addressing concessions needs additional consideration for possible revenue for the County. Mike explained that there are two things that come into play here. One, this is an amendment to an existing contract that defines the concessions and two, the Soccer Commission is financially responsible for all capital improvements, staffing for their organization, maintenance equipment and supplies for the fields and all other operating costs. The concessions are just one source of income that contributes to the revenues for these costs.

Mike said that the Sports Commission runs a well-managed and robust soccer program and that the County as a whole is very pleased with the agreement and the way they've managed the program. In addition there are unseen benefits to the public other than the public use of the fields in that the Sports Commission organizes some rather large tournaments that benefit the motels, restaurants and other local businesses in the area.

Jeff asked if the contract covers the possibility of bringing in professional soccer leagues and the possible loss of revenue to the County. Mike stated that the contract specifies that the fields are to be used for adult and youth soccer and that there is a clause for performance and expectations. If these were to change then the contract would need to change.

There was additional discussion regarding funding and reporting requirement for the Soccer Commission in terms of usage numbers and non-profit status.

G. CONSERVATION AND PUBLIC ACCESS EASEMENT – LUMMI ISLAND HERITAGE TRUST –The County has committed \$400,000.00 to purchase a conservation and public access agreement in order to insure that the sight is protected and that the public has access to the shoreline.

Mike stated that this is on the Council's agenda for this Tuesday.

There will be a public benefit, particularly for the shoreline as there is 156 acres with 4000 feet of deep, water front access. The process will consist of the acquisition, and site restoration. When that is completed the Department will work concurrently with the planning and development process to open the site to the public.

There is a residence on-site and the Trust considering whether they want to use it as a rental or repurpose it.

It was suggested that the Commission have a meeting out there this summer to review the property, perhaps in July or August.

H. CUSTODIAL AGREEMENT – SOUTH FORK VALLEY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION – Mike stated that the Department has been very fortunate to have a partnership with the South Fork Valley Community Association as they have done an excellent job maintaining and making improvements to the park and Community Hall.

The new agreement combines the lease and custodial agreements. \$1,000.00 has been memorialized as part of the cost sharing for the restroom, and insurance and that the fire insurance for the building has been shifted to the County insurance policy. Jeff pointed out that the insurance is \$1,900.00 per year. Janet asked if they can get Grange Insurance.

Mike pointed out as previously mentioned that the State Leasehold Tax may need to be paid for the radio station's use of part of the facility.

Mike stated that the Department has a good and long standing relationship with the South Fork Valley Community Association and are please to renew the contract. The contract will be going forward but it is doubtful that it will make it to this Tuesday Council meeting

I. LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT RESOLUTION – See VII. Staff Reports, A., 2.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS – Jeff Margolis announced that on May 1, 2016 Dana Lions will be performing at the VanZandt Community Hall May Day holiday.

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION

The February, 2016 Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Commission meeting date and time will be February 18, 2016 at 6:00 PM. The meeting location will be held at the Ferndale Senior Center,

XII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: It was moved by Janet Boyhan, seconded by Vern Yadon to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:56 PM.

Transcribed by: Pat Fisher, Clerk III

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director