

MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, February 18, 2016

Ferndale Senior Center
1999 Cherry Street
Ferndale, WA

Prior to the meeting Karma Wells, Manager, Ferndale Senior Center, provided a tour of the Ferndale Senior Center for the Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Commission.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Jeff Margolis, Vice-Chair at 6:23 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Commissioners: Janet Boyhan, Jeff Margolis, Vern Yadon, and Theresa Sygitowicz

Staff: Michael McFarlane, Rod Lamb and Christ Thomsen

EXCUSED:

Commission: Kenneth Kiesner, Paul Woodcock and Richard Sturgill

GUESTS:

Karma Wells, Manager Ferndale Senior Center / Jet Oldsters
Bob and Mary Joe Aegerter

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS / COMMUNICATIONS

A. COMMENTS –

1. Bob Aegerter – Members of the Whatcom Outdoor Coalition - Bob Aegerter was recognized by the Vice-Chair. Mr. Aegerter provided and read for the Commission a letter requesting that Harriet Spanel be memorialized and that a group of ad-hoc leaders from Whatcom County's conservation and recreation organizations would like to address the Commission with possible naming opportunities.

Mr. Aegerter spoke to his knowledge of the involvement of Senator Spanel in terms of assisting with the approval of conservation funding that was instrumental in the completion of various Whatcom County projects.

Mike stated that he spoke with Paul Woodcock, Chair regarding this request and that Paul expressed his wish to place this on the March Agenda.

B. COMMUNICATIONS

1. Email – Jeff Margolis to Michael McFarlane Re: Request for Presentation – Mike received an email from Jeff Margolis stating that he emailed the Mayor of Bellingham and the

Whatcom County Executive urging them to initiate a project to create a statue to honor Senator Spanel's memory and that others have suggested to him that the Reconveyance be renamed after her. He asked that the Commission consider this request in light of Senator Spanel's contributions to the recreation community. He asked Mike if he has any knowledge of her involvement with the history of Whatcom County Parks.

Mike stated that his knowledge is somewhat limited as she was more active on some of the County and State issues that Parks was involved in before his employment and that he would contact the previous park director to ask for his input.

He discussed that his direct experience with Senator Spanel was with her involvement in the funding of the interpreter position at the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center. He stated that he does know that in regards to Canyon Lake Community Forest it was felt that she was instrumental in helping to navigate the complex transaction to obtain State funding for this site.

It was discussed that there is interest in the community regarding this naming opportunity and that the options for memorialization are being approached by several different organizations as there were various projects that occurred throughout Whatcom County that the State that she was involved in and that are being considered. Mike shared that one of the options being considered is Canyon Lake Community Forest Trail.

Mike also suggested that if Commission members have ideas or input to send them to him and next month they can be compared to the efforts being considered by the City of Bellingham or Whatcom County.

There was additional discussion regarding Whatcom County's naming policies and the pros and cons that need to be taken into account prior to changing a park's name, i.e., administrative expenses incurred as a result, local public identification with a long standing park name and the varying reasons that could justify a change.

2. Email - Jeff Margolis to Michael McFarlane Re: Lake Whatcom Park's Water Quality.

Jeff forwarded a conversation that was posted on Facebook regarding concerns about the activities around Lake Whatcom and the cleanliness of Bellingham's drinking water.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS - NONE

IV. AGENDA

A. FEBRUARY 18, 2016 AGENDA

MOTION: It was moved by Vern Yadon and seconded by Janet Boyhan to approve the February 18, 2016 Agenda as presented. Motion carried with a unanimous vote to approve.

V. MINUTES

A. JANUARY 21, 2015 MINUTES

MOTION: It was moved by Janet Boyhan and seconded by Vern Yadon to approve the January 21, 2015 Minutes as submitted. Motion carried with a vote of three for and one abstention by Theresa Sygitowicz as she was not in attendance.

VI. STAFF REPORTS

A. DIRECTORS REPORT – MICHAEL MCFARLANE

1. Northwest Soccer Park – Mike stated that the County Council has approved the name change for the Northwest Soccer Park to Phillips 66 Soccer Fields. This change will take place within the next 90 days in terms of signage, websites, etc.

2. Lummi Island Trust – It was thought that this transaction would close before the end of 2015 however the purchase and sale agreement was not completed prior to that and the conservation easement required additional review by both County's and Trust's legal staff.

The documents that required the Executive's approval were generated and will be available to him when he returns.

The project received Council approval, the funds were moved forward into 2016 and it is the goal that closing will take place prior to March 18, 2016.

3. Lake Whatcom Reconveyance Planning – A work session is planned this coming Tuesday, February 23, 2016 to update the County Council on the Lake Whatcom Reconveyance trail plan.

At the work session Rod will present the plan to the Whatcom County Council Natural Resources Committee and will provide an opportunity for feedback.

The presentation will include the draft trail plan, describe the process to date, provide comments that have been received from the public and seek Council input and direction on moving forward.

Depending on the outcome of the planning session, the planning document will be amended to include any feedback from County Council.

4. Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan – A public hearing was conducted before County Council on 2/9/16 and the resolution is scheduled for this coming Tuesday's regular Council meeting. Mike shared the outcome of the hearing.

There were concerns raised regarding the amount of public process that was involved in the development of the Plan. Mike provided a memo handout that outlined the public process. The memo documented that the public process included; a public survey, 54 publicly noticed meetings that included 10 community meetings, 31 Park Commission meetings, 6 Planning Commission meetings and 7 County Council meetings, where the plan or elements of the plan were addressed.

In January the Planning Commission approved all of the goals and objectives that the Parks Commission reviewed during 2015.

Mike discussed the various other questions that were raised at the meeting and were able to be addressed during the meeting.

Mike stated that because the March 1st deadline for submitting the required document for grant funding is very close and the possibility that other issues may arise, he contacted the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to request a 60-day extension past the deadline. It is thought that this will be granted.

MOTION: Jeff Margolis moved and Vern Yadon seconded that it be noted in the record that the Commission recognizes and thanks Department staff for all their efforts in developing the Comprehensive Parks, Open Space Plan and meeting the required deadlines. Motion carried unanimously.

Mike thanked the Parks Commission for all their efforts to assist with the process with the many meetings and coordination with the Planning Commission in regard to the plan, and recognizes what a long and arduous process this was.

5. Parks Rules and Ordinances – Mike discussed that several years ago there was an effort to update the park rules and ordinances. At that time the County legal department felt because it was a large job they would not be able to fit a task of that size into their current work plan.

In an effort to re-address this Mike contacted the legal department who expressed a willingness to now begin the process.

Mike discussed with the Commission that there are several issues in the rules and ordinances that need to be updated to current standards. He discussed in some detail the most pressing ones and the updating process.

These will be developed and brought before the Commission for consideration and input.

There was some discussion regarding enforcement, the project as a whole and how to approach it, how the changes will impact recreational elements and public use of the parks.

6. Puget Sound Energy Battery and Sub-station – Glacier – There are several actions that need to be addressed to complete the installation of the battery station.

The battery station is being installed to provide reserve power for the community during outages.

The Department is involved in facilitating the work around the restroom facility. Details are still being sorted out and will be forthcoming for Commission consideration.

7. Installation of a Phone Booth in the Glacier Area – The County Council has asked the Executive to investigate if there is an area in the Glacier area for the installation of a phone booth in order to mitigate the poor cell phone coverage.

The only County owned property in the area is the Glacier Restroom. The Department is providing cost estimates to the Executive Office to determine if this is feasible.

8. Little Squalicum Park – The Environmental Protection Agency is conducting the required 5-year post clean-up inspection of the site.

The City of Bellingham (COB) currently leases this site from the County. The COB Public Works Department has submitted an estuary proposal that requires additional information from the Department prior to approval. The Department is providing this information and making a determination that their plan is consistent with the park plan that was approved in the original lease agreement.

There was some discussion on the location of the park, the City of Bellingham lease agreement conditions and the current environmental conditions of the site. Mike will update the Commission on any development in this matter.

9. Nooksack Tribe In-water Engineered Log-jam project – Nessel – This project will take place close to the Nessel Farm, on private property on the opposite side of the Nooksack River. They are currently in the middle stages of the project and are required to have an owner consent form signed by the Executive in the event that they would need access onto county property.

10. 2015 Lake Whatcom Management Program Progress Report – Lake Whatcom Interjurisdictional Coordinating Team – In response to the Commission’s request last month on Department involvement in the Lake Whatcom clean water efforts, Mike provided a copy of this document for Commission review. The document is online at the City of Bellingham website.

Mike discussed that the report is generated annually and that it discusses the agencies, groups, costs, etc., that are involved in the Lake Whatcom watershed and provides a snapshot of the previous year’s activity in the watershed.

He discussed that the Department provides information that is incorporated into the report but that the report is generated by the City of Bellingham and County Public Works Departments.

The document is routed to the various policy committees that oversee programs, entities, municipalities and infrastructures.

11. East Whatcom Regional Resource Center – The question was raised on the possibility of establishing a senior meal program at this location. Mike stated that it is possible but that there would need to be an additional funding source identified to support it.

He discussed each of the senior centers in the county and their model for funding the meals programs and activities that take place at that center, how they are subsidized, how the County plays into the funding structure and that each center has their own structure depending on ownership and responsibility.

B. OPERATIONS REPORT – CHRIST THOMSEN

1. Projects / Events

a. Maple Creek Park Bridge Replacement – Meetings were held with the Department of Fish and Wildlife to outline their requirements and constraints on building a structure to replace the recently damaged bridge.

As a result, the bridge will be longer and higher off the water and not a single stringer bridge. The bridge will be updated to accommodate designated trail uses and access for park maintenance purposes.

Discussed included the planned dimensions of the structure, the bridge materials and that the resulting proposed budget will require the project to be moved to the 2017 capital projects list.

The site will remain open with informational signs indicating that the bridge is out.

There was some discussion regarding current requirements and how they will affect future maintenance issues when replacing and repairing bridges throughout our parks, and how in terms of the type of structures and materials needed to meet the requirements will impact the project budget.

b. Stimpson Family Nature Reserve Bridge Replacements –Christ discussed that the first few bridges on this trail need to be replaced because they were built with wood materials that have a quick failure rate and are at the point where replacement is a priority.

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Whatcom Land Trust (WLT) were invited to join the Department during a recent site inspection to discuss project as they are on DNR property.

At the meeting DNR commented that as the bridges that are on DNR property they would need to approve the engineering designs, construction and installation of the structure and that because this is a partnership and the requirements adversely impact the County budget, DNR will help financially in the replacement. This project will also be moved onto the 2017 capital projects list.

Christ updated the Commission on the developments to address the concern that were raised at last month's meeting regarding recent work done by volunteers on the Stimpson trail. He stated that he walked the area and observed that there is sub-standard work that will need to be addressed. He briefly discussed the planned adjustments and that the work will take place this spring.

Christ stated that the maintenance staff and volunteers continue to do good work throughout our parks but that there is room for improvement and that the Department is working to rectify this through additional and ongoing training.

It was suggested that contact should be made with Phil Damon to update him on the actions that have taken place since last month's Commission meeting. It was discussed that since Mr. Damon walks this trail daily and with the conversation that took place in January meeting, that Mr. Damon's concerns have been satisfactorily addressed.

There was discussion that in terms of using volunteers when building new trails there is a prescription for the construction details and that over time trail materials used and use patterns can cause a trail to change and the Department's trail maintenance concern is to fine tune the natural life cycle of the trail. The challenges are that during long-term maintenance there may be a false understanding of volunteer worker competency or a miscommunication on the work to be completed and as a result require ongoing management.

c. Canyon Lake Community Forest Access Road Update – In talks with Sierra Pacific last year it was discussed that instead of building or repairing a road that will most likely fail over and over a possible solution would be to explore an easement through the DNR lands to connect up to the road. Sierra Pacific indicated that they would be interested in this scenario if access approval was received from all down-stream property owners.

DNR was contacted and concurred with Sierra Pacific.

Christ discussed the access route, the possible roadblocks, solutions and timelines for navigating a more stable access route for the long-term.

2. Computerized Maintenance Management System Update – The Department is currently populating data into the new system in layers. The first layer is the park properties, the next layer is at the park level and the various structures and facilities located at the park. The Department is moving forward and on track to meet the initial goal date of March 15, 2016.

3. Grants – Department staff attended a webinar hosted by the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) that provided the most current information on this year's grant cycle.

4. Plantation Rifle Range – The organization that leases the Range property to the Department recently sold the timber that surrounds the Range. The purchasers contacted the Department with a request to close the Range while the timber is being harvested and compensation for the surrounding trees that were damaged by bullets.

After discussions with the County's legal department and additional research it was determined that the request may not be valid. Christ briefly discussed the terms of the lease agreement and the County's rights and responsibilities to the lessor.

Christ is meeting with their representatives to discuss this issue and will update the Commission as developments arise.

5. Department Safety Work Group – A safety work group has been established at the Department level to improve the culture of safety and is the genesis for Department training measures. An example is that several of our repair maintenance staff attended flagger training.

The Department has also begun reviewing regulatory safety training requirements in order to select a monthly training topic to meet those requirements.

6. Risk Management Training – Christ recently attended the two day 2016 Risk Management School that discussed risk management in a recreational setting and is hosted by the Washington Recreation Parks Association.

In addition the County recently conducted risk management training for supervisors which he, Mike, the lead rangers and maintenance supervisors attended.

Christ briefly discussed the topics that were covered in both sessions.

7. 2016 Trail Activity – The Lake Whatcom Park and Lookout Mountain trail system will be an Operations Department focus in 2016 once there is an adopted trail plan. There are two main objectives. The first is to identify a set of trails for application of 2017 grant funding. The second is identifying projects that can be completed in 2016 and will focus mainly on maintenance and/or renovation of existing trails.

The Council work session for Lake Whatcom Park and Lookout Mountain trail plan will be on Tuesday, February 23, 2016 at 9:30 AM.

C. DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT – ROD LAMB

1. South Fork Park Trailhead Development – The bid documents for the trailhead development are being finalized.

Rod is coordinating with the manufacturer to purchase the trailhead vault toilet and will submit for a commercial building permit once additional information has been received from the manufacturer.

Meetings were held on-site with Planning and Development Services to walk the first section of the trailhead. Additional meetings will be held next week to walk the two other sections of the trail that cross or are within critical areas.

Meetings were also held with Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to conduct a site review for the trail easement. DNR has asked if they might be allowed to build a trail and provide a connection between the properties. The Department indicated a willingness to cooperate but because of the need to secure public access the Department is continuing with the easement request. There was some discussion on the partnership conditions in terms of monitoring and trail maintenance.

2. Silver Lake Road and Electrical Improvements – Comments have been received from the Washington State Department of Health on the Silver Lake Park water system application. They

have requested additional details and clarifications for the current certification level of the water system.

There was discussion regarding the certification process and the well production and design. Meetings continue with Pacific Surveying & Engineering in order to address the request.

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

The proposal has been shared with the manufacturer to evaluate and assure that the modification will be compatible with the design and not cause damaging stresses to occur elsewhere in the structure.

The manufacturer’s engineer is a naval engineer and has shared several recommendations which are being evaluated by the Department’s contracted engineer to calculate fatigue stresses and the likely serviceable life.

Rod briefly discussed the recommendations and informed the Commission that he will provide an update on the engineer’s evaluation.

4. Lighthouse Boardwalk Renovation – The Request for Qualifications (RFQ) submittals for design services are due on Tuesday, February 23, 2016.

Rod discussed the project scope of work, materials and timeline for completion.

5. Birch Bay Community Park – The RFQ submittals for design services are due on Tuesday, February 23, 2016.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. LAKE WHATCOM RECONVEYANCE PLANNING UPDATE – ROD LAMB – The environmental analysis work is nearly complete. The consultant incorporated most of the changes that staff requested. It was reviewed again internally and there is a need for clarification or additional explanation in a few areas.

A meeting has been scheduled with County Council next Tuesday to concentrate on filling in additional details and providing clarification in the plan document. The Department is planning on presenting the trail plan and progress to the Council in a work session on February 23, 2016.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. 2015 SENIOR SERVICES SURVEY – Mike provided the Commission with a copy of the 2016 survey results for the county senior centers; Bellingham, Blaine, Everson, Ferndale, Lynden, Pt. Roberts, Sumas and Welcome.

The survey breaks down the centers’ hours and attendance, the participants age range, annual income, how the center made a difference in their lives, how effective the staff and volunteers are and individual’s comments.

There was discussion on how the dynamics of some of the communities is changing and how this affects the attendance and activities at the centers.

The future goal is to transfer the survey to an on-line site for public input.

The completed survey is available on the Parks & Recreation web page.

B. 2017-18 CAPITAL PROJECTS – Mike provided for Commission review the Department Work Plan Master Capital Improvements List. Mike discussed that normally the approval of the capital improvements projects are adopted with the County's budget however this year the approval has been moved up and will be approved as a chapter in the County's Comprehensive Plan in June or July. He discussed the challenges and limitations this will present with the operating budget and identifying projects for grant applications.

He also discussed REET II funding and how that figures into the overall budget and how many years of projects the Master Capital Improvement List covers.

Also discussed were the outstanding projects that have not received Council endorsement and/or input or how to approach some of the larger projects such as the trail system in Lake Whatcom Park.

Mike went over the project list, first discussing the document headings and then moving through by park and park projects. He discussed the project type, the scope of work, other potential funding sources, total anticipated cost, the budget and in what year the work would be scheduled and why.

Items that were discussed for clarification were the REET II funds and the division of funds between the Department and the County Public Works, Lake Whatcom Park and the impact that the development of this park will have on the community and that in terms of development the Council has not expressed their desires on the rate of the development of this park.

Also discussed was that the total allotment for Lake Whatcom Park development only represented a small portion of what is needed and that this amount is a placeholder number that will be used for matching grant funds.

Mike concluded with the process that the Capital Improvements List must go through for approval and that it is expected to be approved in June or July.

He discussed the challenges that the County Executive will have with the project list being approved prior to the budget approval in November and the decisions that need to be made without budget information at hand.

Jeff asked Mike if he needed an endorsement from the Commission. Mike said not at this point but that input from the Commission will be needed for the budget.

Mike stated that he would keep the commission informed as this process moves forward.

IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Whatcom County Cattlemen Annual Auction Fundraiser – Theresa Sygitowicz announced that the Whatcom County Cattlemen auction fundraiser takes place on Saturday, February 27, 2016, Deming Log Show Grounds, 3295 Cedarville Rd., Deming, WA 4:30 PM, \$20.00 per person.

2. Whatcom Chorale Concert – Jeff Margolis announced that he will be performing in a concert that will take place March 13, 2016, 3:00 PM at the First Congregational Church, 2401 Cornwall Ave., Bellingham and will consist of a presentation of spiritual songs, sections by Brahms and Schubert and a reading of Emily Dickinson's poetry.

3. Kendall Trail – Vern Yadon announced that he received word that the application that was submitted to the House Capital Budget Committee in the amount of \$77,000.00 to fund the Kendall Trail engineering and design has been 90% passed and that he is expecting to have the final word tomorrow. He will keep the Commission updated.

4. Mt. Baker High School FFA National Presidential Candidate Finalist – Theresa announced that a Mt. Baker high school student has been selected as one of the finalist for the National FFA Presidency.

5. VanZandt Community Hall Seed Exchange - Jeff Margolis announced that on Saturday, March 5th at 4:00 PM there will be a seed exchange at the Van Zandt Community Hall.

X. NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION

The February, 2016 Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Commission meeting date and time will be March 17, 2016 at 6:00 PM. The meeting location will be held at the Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Administrative Office, 3373 Mt. Baker Highway, Bellingham, WA.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: It was moved by Vern Yadon, seconded by Janet Boyhan to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 9:34 PM.

Transcribed by: Pat Fisher, Clerk III

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director