

**MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, March 17, 2016**

**Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Administrative Offices
3373 Mt. Baker Highway
Bellingham, WA**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Paul Woodcock, Chair at 6:09 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

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

Staff: Michael McFarlane and Rod Lamb

PUBLIC COMMENTS / COMMUNICATIONS

A. COMMENTS - NONE

B. COMMUNICATIONS - NONE

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

A. MAPLE FALLS PARK – Vern Yadon commented that he recently walked the Maple Creek Park Trails and observed that the log bridge that covered the river at the beginning of the trail has been damaged but that he was able to make it across.

B. STORM DAMAGE – Mike was asked what the storm damage to the parks was during the recent storms. Mike stated that there were several blow-downs but no structural damage to any of the facilities and no significant slides.

C. PARK OBSERVATION – Jeff Margolis shared that he recently visited a high-volume/high-impact park in California and observed that the public was causing a lot of damage to the path fringe because there was no signage to remind visitors to stay on the path. He wanted to suggest that special attention be paid to high volume areas in our parks as trails are built, in that they are well marked to keep visitors off the fringes of the trails to keep them in good condition.

D. SEXUAL PREDATORS – Theresa Sygitowicz stated that she recently attended a meeting dealing with sexual predators and stated that she would like the Department, because of the many under age visitors to the park and that some of our facilities are so close to the boarder, she would like a more robust review of the protection efforts taken to keep underage visitors safe from predators in our parks.

E. OUTDOOR WORKOUT EQUIPMENT IN PARKS – Vern Yadon commented that he recently saw a video showing examples of outdoor exercise equipment in parks. He stated that this would be an excellent addition to our park trails and would like to see more information on

the brands available and costs for such equipment in order to consider the inclusion of such stations into the trail planning process.

Mike discussed that these additions would need to be considered capital projects, that they are often times in more urban park settings and are usually sponsored. He stated that many of the playground equipment vendors provide outdoor exercise course equipment.

Mike explained that one of the major considerations when installing outdoor equipment is the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of such equipment and that they can sustain costly repairs due to vandalism and misuse in addition to the ongoing maintenance.

Janet suggested a public notice that County Parks would welcome a community initiative to create such a course and that there is a willingness to collaborate with an organization such as the Lions or Kiwanis to create such a feature and act based on feedback from the community.

Vern stated that as with the Kendall Trail, even though the Parks department has agreed to maintain the trail, there are many interpretive features that they would like to see along the route that would not be part of the maintenance agreement and would need to be maintained by the community.

It was suggested that this could be an agenda item for discussion to identify a possible site, equipment, costs and other planning considerations.

III. **AGENDA**

A. MARCH 17, 2016 AGENDA

MOTION: It was moved by Theresa Sygitowicz and seconded by Jeff Margolis to approve the March 17, 2016 Agenda as presented. Motion carried with a unanimous vote to approve.

IV. **MINUTES**

A. FEBRUARY 18, 2016 MINUTES

MOTION: It was moved by Jeff Margolis and seconded by Vern Yadon to approve the February 18, 2016 Minutes as submitted. Motion carried with a vote of four to approve and three abstentions, Paul Woodcock, Kenneth Kiesner and Richard Sturgill as they were not present for the February meeting.

V. **STAFF REPORTS**

A. DIRECTOR AND OPERATIONS REPORT – MICHAEL MCFARLANE

1. Storm Damage – Mike stated the Department has been very fortunate in terms of damage as a result of the two recent, major weather events. Outside of a few trees down on the trails there was no major structural damage.

The crews have been out on the trails and in the parks assessing the roads, trails and structures and clearing up storm debris.

2. Puget Sound Energy (PSE) – The Department continues to work on the easements for the Glacier temporary sub-station. The easement period should run April – September. It was decided to move the location further away from the restrooms.

In addition there is a power pole that needs to be replaced due to woodpecker damage and will therefore be moved and will require a utility easement.

There is a trail license for the Department over PSE property that has expired and we will be requesting a renewal.

3. Glacier Restroom Payphone – The County is exploring a payphone at the Glacier restrooms. It is hoped that the lodging tax will be used for expenses for the phone installation and the replacement of the damaged drinking fountain.

4. Little Squalicum Park – The recently completed EPA testing results are expected to be received in the next couple of months.

The City of Bellingham (COB) is proposing the installation of an estuary on the property. Mike provided a master plan drawing for the project. He discussed the plan and the reasoning for the installation and how the cleanup and contamination of the site affects the project. He explained that there are still some considerations to discuss in terms of permitting, resulting implications and long term management of the site. Mike will be discussing the project with the County Executive next week.

There was some discussion regarding the property boundaries, the soil and water sampling process and the estuary construction materials. There was also discussion regarding the Federal superfund guidelines and the administrative and regulatory authorities involved in a superfund. Mike also discussed some of the history behind the cleanup.

COB is taking the lead in the project.

5. Canyon Lake Community Forest Access – Work continues with Whatcom Land Trust (WLT) to establish public access through their lands. WLT is not opposed to this plan as the road is already there and being used, however there are some technicalities that have yet to be ironed out.

Once the negotiations with WLT and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) are completed talks will continue with Sierra Pacific to work out an agreement for an easement that will open access to the trailhead. It is possible that the access could be available within approximately 60 days from the time an agreement is reached.

6. Blaine Senior Center – Mike met with the Blaine Senior Center board to discuss budget concerns. Mike stated that he had a brief discussion with the County Executive to determine if there are any considerations for an increase to their budget.

The senior center contracts are up for renewal this year and drafts will be drawn up in the next couple of months.

7. Whatcom Volunteer Center – The Whatcom Volunteer Center has notified the Department that they will no longer be participating in the Hovander Docent Program. The Department will now be conducting recruitments and training for this program and are currently working out the details.

8. Lighthouse Marine Park – The Department has a \$27,000.00 budget supplemental going to Council for approval on Tuesday, 3/22/16 to complete the repairs to the Lighthouse Marine Park dock. Rod will discuss the project in more detail in his staff report.

The installation of a lighthouse at Lighthouse Marine Park is not a necessity and it is not currently included in the capital projects budget. The donation can be accepted but the project will need to be scaled down to meet the budget.

The first phase would include design and engineering and the second phase would be the construction. If this is agreeable with the donor then the project could begin in late 2017 and the construction phase possibly in 2018 and 2019.

9. Maple Falls Community Park – The Department met with the Maple Falls Community Park Committee today for a project update. They have contacted a local timber framing guild to explore the possibility for a community build of a park shelter. The Committee has raised enough funds over the past couple of years through community fund raisers to begin the project. It is anticipated that the project could begin in 2018 or 2019.

The Committees next step is to proceed with the conceptual design phase. Once that is completed Mike will share this information with the Commission, however it will be several months before that information will be available.

There was a discussion regarding the population and need that this park would serve. Mike explained that this project is community driven and that the vision is to provide a village green type venue similar to the Birch Bay Community Park vision. Some of their ideas include an area to have a community concert, community activities such as bake sales or art sales; a green space with some recreational amenities.

Vern Yadon commented that there is a spot on this November's ballot to establish a park district in the Columbia Valley urban growth area. He was asked if he knew the boundaries that are being proposed for the district. Vern stated that he does not have that information.

10. Galbraith Mountain – Work continues with the proposals and appraisals. It has been decided to appraise the timber with the property. There is still about a month or two before the initial numbers will be determined.

11. Lummi Island Heritage Trust - Aiston Preserve – It was anticipated that the proposed conservation easement would close tomorrow however the final estimate of closing costs has not been received. This is expected to be finalized next week.

12. Glacier Property Encroachment – The owner is expected to provide the deed for the property line adjustment soon and that is the final step in resolving this long standing discrepancy.

13. Whatcom Parks & Recreation Foundation First Annual Hovander Homestead Bluegrass Festival – The Foundation is having a concert fundraiser on Labor Day Weekend, September 2-5, 2017. Mike provided a brochure for Commission information.

14. Roeder Home Dishwasher Donation – The Friends of the Roeder Home donated a new dishwasher for the Roeder Home that is being installed by the Department's maintenance staff.

15. Comprehensive Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan – The Department received notification that the Plan has been approved and certified for the next 5.5 years, in time to meet this year's grant application deadline.

The first review of Chapter 9 of the County Comprehensive Plan will be April 5, 2016 at the Public Works Health and Safety Committee meeting. The Plan is still subject to Council changes as it goes through that process and on May 3, 2016 the Committee of the Whole will review the

Chapter for the approval. Mike will be attending both of the meetings. He does not expect Council to make any significant changes prior to approval as there has been continued support for the Park plan throughout the process and they are aware that the goals and objectives in the Chapter are in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan. Mike will communicate any problems that may arise in each meeting to the Commission.

There was a discussion that there was only minor public opposition from two individuals; one that the statistics of the annual rainfall reported in a community demographics was wrong and the other was from an individual who requested that it not be approved because there had not been enough time to review the document and had read the laundry list of various ways of funding parks and recreation as an action.

C. OPERATIONS – MIKE MCFARLANE

1. Seasonal Extra Help Recruitment – The Department is in the process of recruiting extra help staff. Approximately 2/3 of the seasonal staff is returning which is a big asset in terms of training and getting work started.

B. DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT – ROD LAMB

1. South Fork Park Trailhead Development – Conversations continue with the vault toilet manufacturer to purchase the trailhead vault toilet. The manufacturer submitted engineered drawings that have been submitted to Planning and Development Services to begin the permitting process. Planning and Development Services (PDS) has requested additional information from the manufacturer and onsite septic approval from the Health Department.

Rod had a field meeting with PDS to walk the first section of the trail and is planning to meet with them again next week to look at two other section of the trail that cross or are within critical areas.

Rod also had a field meeting with Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to review the easement through their property that connects the trail to Nessel Farm. They have requested to be allowed to build the trail and provide the connection between the county properties. This concept has not been vetted by higher levels of DNR authority but the Department has indicated a willingness to cooperate. However, because of the need to secure public access the Department is continuing with the easement request.

2. Silver Lake Road and Electrical Improvements – The Department has submitted the revised water system drawings to State Department of Health per their request. They have acknowledged receipt and are expected to respond by early next week.

3. Lighthouse Marine Park Dock Project – The Department will meet next Tuesday to request a budget supplemental of \$27,000.00 that is needed to complete the project. In terms of who is responsible, Rod stated that he is impressed with the construction project team. The original engineer has redesigned the wave attenuation chambers at no cost, which Rod estimated to be at least ½ as much time and cost as the entire project. They are being extremely careful in their design research and are invested in seeing the project succeed.

The installation contractor has agreed to install the re-manufactured wave attenuation chambers and install the floats as soon as they are available, at no charge. The contractor had no obligation to provide these services but is also invested in seeing the project succeed.

The manufacturer is manufacturing the wave attenuation chambers to the Department at cost.

In the end, everyone has taken some part of the responsibility for the failure which the Department is very pleased with.

The revised design was submitted to the Department on Monday and has been submitted to the manufacturer to guarantee that it is still within the original price that they quoted. Rod is not anticipating any changes there.

Rod stated that it is anticipated that if the budget supplemental is approved it should take approximately a week to get the manufacturer under contract to construct the chambers. The manufacturer has stated that the time frame for manufacturing the chambers is six to eight weeks, with a week for shipping and a week to install for a total of 10-11 weeks for the dock to be in the water.

It was discussed that the only in-water work involves placing the floats and attaching them to the pilings which does not require any additional in-water work permits. There is some maintenance work to be done to the ramp but that is a maintenance activity as opposed to a construction activity and does not require permits.

There was some discussion regarding public notice on dock availability. Rod has been in touch with the local newspaper that negotiations are still in the works but has not been able to give any concrete information up to this point.

4. Lighthouse Boardwalk Renovation and Birch Bay Community Park Request for Qualifications – The Department has completed the review of qualifications for these two parks, made selections of the successful firms and have sent letters to those firms who were not selected. The successful firms will be contacted next week to begin working on contract negotiations and the scopes of work.

5. Nessel Farm Building Foundation – The bid documents and draft contract have been reviewed by the County attorneys. There are a few minor edits that need to be made to the engineer's plans which will be finished by the end of this week, bringing the plan to final fruition.

Rod will meet with the Department maintenance supervisor and operations manager early next week to review the scope of work which includes stabilizing the foundation of the Nessel house, machine shed and replacing the roofs of both structures to historical accuracy in terms of materials and construction. This project will go out for bid in April.

Jeff Margolis asked if there was going to be any type of "ferry" transportation from the trailhead to the Nessel Farm. Rod discussed that in the initial plans of the multi-use trail it was designed to accommodate a horse-drawn carriage to be used during special events. This was thought to be a worthwhile endeavor as the trail is long enough and would provide a wonderful experience in the park.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. LAKE WHATCOM RECONVEYANCE PLANNING UPDATE – ROD LAMB – The Department met with Council last month in a work session to review the draft trail plan and is now in the process of adding the Council comments and a background to the planning documents. It is anticipated that it will be approved by mid-April.

Once the plan is completed the environmental analysis and SEPA checklist will be submitted to PDS for a threshold determination. The plan will then go will go before Council again in early spring.

B. Discussion on Recognition for Senator Harriet Spanel – Mike presented the Commission with a follow-up letter from the Whatcom Outdoor Coalition proposing to name the trail at Point Whitehorn Marine Park after Senator Spanel.

He will be meeting with the Executive to discuss this recommendation and any recommendations that this Commission may have for an alternate location or if there is concurrence with the Point Whitehorn recommendation.

Mike researched Senator Spanel's contributions in other areas outside of the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center or Canyon Lake Community Forest and did not find any other park projects that she was involved with.

He also followed up with the City of Bellingham Parks & Recreation Department Director on whether or not there were any recommendations on their part for recognition and as of last week there were none that were being actively worked on.

There is a group that sent a proposal to Larrabee State Park to rename an overlook.

Theresa Sygitowicz stated that it would be advisable to make every effort to have recognition in the 40th District which Senator Spanel represented. Theresa also stated that she would encourage the Commission to wait on a recommendation until after this has been discussed with the City of Bellingham mayor.

Jeff Margolis stated that he received a communication inquiring about State laws in terms of naming geographic features after a person in less than 5 years of their demise. Mike stated that he could not find any reference to this in either state or federal codes but that the City of Bellingham and some municipalities do have a waiting period of 5-6 months after demise.

Jeff also suggested that the Whatcom Outdoor Coalition recommendation should be presented to Senator Spanel's family to receive feedback and/or approval of the Point Whitehorn proposal prior to the Commission providing a recommendation.

Mike discussed that for the record the Department does not have a preference for any specific recommendations and that the Executive had asked him only to gather any information that was available on recognition proposals.

MOTION: It was moved by Theresa Sygitowicz and seconded by Janet Boyhan to table the discussion of recognition for Harriet Spanel until the May 19, 2016 Commission meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion on Park Ordinances-Rules Revision – At the last Commission meeting it was discussed that the County legal staff had indicated that they were willing to re-address the issue of the Park Ordinances and Rules revisions.

Mike stated that he would like to propose that the discussion this evening center on the process and the role that the Parks Commission would play in making suggestions on changes that they would like to see in the rules and ordinances.

Mike provided a listing of all the areas, ordinances and County Codes that apply. He did not include all the Federal laws or State RCWs that apply but merely wanted to provide an idea of the subject areas that apply to park facilities and that are being reviewed.

Mike also discussed how some are dealt with administratively and some of the issues that should be discussed when reviewing them. He suggested that the Park Commission weigh in on several items at each meeting and as the process proceeds through the year have a general discussion in terms of the issues, how the Department is dealing with the issue, what the rules are currently and how are they being enforced, and if there is any need to revise or change any of the listed subjects.

The process will include a staff review of Commission recommendations, language drafted based on these recommendations and then either bring the language back to the following meeting for discussion or bring the revisions to Commission at the end of the process for a final review.

The next step would be to bring the draft to the legal department for their input and recommendations/requirements and finally to the Executive and Council for review, input and approval.

There was a suggestion that it should be determined which rules will be reviewed and any references and side-bars be provided prior to the next meeting and in the Commission meeting packet.

There was additional discussion regarding how rules and ordinances are created, that some can be affected by recommendations whereas others do have not much flexibility in that regard, how this can be approached administratively and some of the complexities that can impact the process.

Mike stated that he will provide a group of rules/ordinances to be discussed and any pertinent information in the Commission meeting packets.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS - NONE

IX. NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION

The April 21, 2016 Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Commission will be held at the Semiahmoo Park Cannery Day Lodge at 6:00 PM.

X. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: It was moved by Vern Yadon, seconded by Kenneth Kiesner to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 PM.

Transcribed by: Pat Fisher, Clerk III

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director