

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

**Semiahmoo Cannery Day Lodge  
Semiahmoo Park  
9261 Semiahmoo Parkway, Blaine, WA**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Paul Woodcock, Chair at 6:13 PM.

**II. ROLL CALL**

PRESENT:

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

Staff: Michael McFarlane and Christ Thomsen

EXCUSED: Theresa Sygitowicz and Kenneth Kiesner

**PUBLIC COMMENTS / COMMUNICATIONS**

**A. COMMENTS – NONE**

**B. COMMUNICATIONS** – Mike received notification that next Thursday, April 28, 2016 there is a Public Input Meeting to request public comment on the Lake Whatcom Storm Water Plans, at Bloedel Donovan from 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM.

**COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

**A. KENDALL TRAIL** – Vern Yadon stated that the trail is moving forward with project scoping and trail analysis and that the funding has been approved for appropriation by the Governor.

**III. AGENDA**

**A. APRIL 21, 2016 AGENDA**

**MOTION:** It was moved by Richard Sturgill and seconded by Jeff Margolis to approve the April 21, 2016 Agenda as presented. Motion carried with a unanimous vote.

**IV. MINUTES**

**A. MARCH 17, 2016 MINUTES**

**MOTION:** It was moved by Jeff Margolis and seconded by Vern Yadon to approve the March 17, 2016 Minutes as submitted. Motion carried with a unanimous vote.

**V. STAFF REPORTS**

**A. DIRECTOR AND OPERATIONS REPORT – MICHAEL MCFARLANE**

**1. Lighthouse Marine Park** – A meeting was held with the Point Roberts Lighthouse Society to discuss the steps to move forward on the project. They indicated that they were interested in raising additional funds for the project and discussed their initial thoughts on available fundraising avenues.

Also discussed were the various project issues that would need to be addressed prior to moving forward. In order to assist the Society, Rod Lamb will allot some time to meet with Whatcom County Planning and Development to discuss some of these conditions.

This continues to be a public works project. There was discussion regarding building the structure off-site and then moving it to the park in order to circumnavigate public works however the Society is beginning to realize that may in fact, add costs to the project.

Jeff Margolis stated that he would like to know how many park and recreation districts there are in Whatcom County and information on those taxing districts in terms of how they affect their local tax assessments. He suggested that having this information would be beneficial for the Commission when approached by the public on taxing issues in relation to park projects, etc. Mike stated that the Auditor has that information and that what information he could provide would only be a snapshot in time but that he would attempt to provide some baseline information. There was some additional discussion regarding taxing districts and assessments in relation to the park and recreation districts.

It is feasible that the project could be placed on the fourth quarter of next year. This would give the Society more time to raise additional funds, better design the project on the whole and determine what is financially feasible.

**2. Grant Applications** – Staff will be working this week and next to complete grant applications to meet the May 1, 2016 deadline. Mike stated that this year will be a very competitive grant process.

**3. Existing Plan Web Site Postings** – The Department recently received a request to view the Bay to Baker workbook and plan and as a result it has been decided that several of the active older plans will be posted to the Parks and Recreation web site. The Bay to Baker workbook will be posted first and the Department will move forward from there posting other plans.

**4. Theresa Sygitowicz request for clarification on the Department's approach to child molesters in the parks** – Mike discussed the steps that the Department takes in this regard. He stated that the Department screens all volunteers through a national database and that this screening process is more in-depth than the Washington State Patrol or the Whatcom County Sheriff's Department. Mike discussed that the Department does not screen short-term volunteers because they are accompanied and supervised by Department staff.

Additionally, the visibility at and around our park playground areas is kept wide to reduce the possibility of children wandering into a low visibility area or providing a site for possible predators.

Mike discussed that the presence of staff in the parks is a deterrent but that there is limited actions that staff can take without a court order. He discussed that the Department is not usually apprised of court orders because parks are a public forums and unless a person is restricted specifically from a park and the Department is notified, the authority is limited. Mike stated that he has not had a court order brought forward to him in his career with Whatcom County Parks.

Jeff Margolis commented that this discussion brings up the need to know the Department's point of policy or understanding with use of bathrooms by individuals whose sexual identity or orientation do not coincide with their physical gender and the possibility that this provides an increased opportunity for predators to abuse or embarrass children.

Mike stated that in terms of the Washington State regulations, and as the Department is an arm of the State, the Department must follow State law which now states that whatever gender you identify with that is the restroom you can use.

There was a discussion on the Department's responsibility in terms of posting the law and that it is unnecessary and that it has not been mandated to do so. Christ commented that many of the County park restrooms are unisex restrooms and when they are not unisex they are gender posted and are a multi-stall configuration.

**5. Commission Request For Exercise Station Equipment Catalogs** – Mike stated that all the catalogs that the Department had in Rod's office have disappeared. Rod is on vacation so it is unknown if they have been discarded as a result of on-line catalog web sites or if they are stored in another location. He stated that he will check with Rod when he returns from vacation.

It was discussed that it is important to continue to explore the inclusion of trail amenities such as exercise, water and rest stations into trail specifications for health and comfort reasons.

**7. Whatcom County Initiative For the Promotion of a Healthy Life Style Through-out the County's Department Plans** – As a result of this initiative, the Department met with the County Health Department to discuss parks role in addressing childhood obesity, illness recovery and the overall improved health of the community as a whole.

The Department's role is relatively easy as building trails and open spaces automatically promotes healthy lifestyles but there are additional steps that the Department can take. These include identifying prescriptive programs with the medical community that achieve specific goals and provide this information in our brochures on which trails could provide for that.

**8. Whatcom County Districting Plan** – The final plan is approved and was released on-line for public information. Mike stated that the next challenge in regard to the approved plan is to identify how this impacts Commission terms and representation as there are now five districts. When this has been studied and a decision made, based on terms and location, changes will be made accordingly and the Commission updated.

**9. Birch Bay Community Park – New Name** – The working name to date has been Birch Bay Community Park however the community has expressed an interest in renaming the park the Birch Bay Beach Park. The grant application refers to the park as the Community Park and throughout the grant cycle the name needs to remain the same however Mike requested input from the Commission on names.

It was suggested that the name could be offered as a community decision. Mike discussed that at some point there will need to be an "official" name as park signage will force the issue however until that point the grant application will carry the Birch Bay Community Park name.

**10. Canyon Lake Community Forest Access** – Mike stated that he contacted John Gold to request contact information for Sierra Pacific Industries in order to move forward on the easement and/or offer to host a meeting with all the stakeholders to discuss the issue. There was no response from John as of end of day today.

## **C. OPERATIONS – CHRIST THOMSEN**

1. **Seasonal Update** – The season has begun early with the good spring weather. The seasonal help was not all on board before the weather change but we are now ramping up on hiring and have begun the mowing schedule.
2. **Storm Damage** – The storm damage in the parks was relatively minor to include clean-up of most branches and limbs and minor blow-down. There was a minor set-back as a spring storm blew through just as the winter clean-up was complete and required additional clean-up.
3. **Silver Lake Park** – Silver Lake Park is cleaned up and ready for opening day this coming weekend. It is thought that this is the busiest day of the year in terms of camping and day use.
4. **Seasonal Help** – Seasonal staff is almost at capacity for the season. The new employee orientation was held on April 11<sup>th</sup>.

Christ commented that the Safety Work Group that was established at the end of 2015 provided for a much smoother transition during the seasonal orientation on safety awareness this year and seemed a more natural part of the process.

It also provides for a heightened awareness on the job as at the beginning of the work day it is now the practice to review the job, tasks and staff assignments and possible unique safety concerns with the jobs. Also included is a 5 minute critique of the job at the end of the day to see if there are any improvements that can be made to the process.

## 5. **Projects** –

- a. **Lighthouse Marine Park Shower Building** – This project will be completed and open for public use this spring. An insect infestation in a separation wall needed to be addressed and repaired and the shower was dated and needed to be cleaned up.
- b. **Chuckanut Mountain Park Signage** – Christ provided pictures of checkpoint signage that will be added to Chuckanut Mountain Park. He discussed how checkpoint signage works, posting points along the trail and when and how this project will be completed.
- c. **Itinio Point of Sale** – Administrative staff continues to work with the Itinio software reservation system to rollout the point-of-sale feature. Once the feature is in place it is the intention to expand concession sales at the parks.

One of the added concessions will be paddle boards at Samish Park. In the interest of safety, there will be specific life vests for the use of the paddle boards.

## B. **DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT – MIKE MCFARLANE**

1. **South Fork Park Trailhead Development** – There has been no movement on the Department of Natural Resources easement but contract development continues to move forward.
2. **Lighthouse Marine Park Dock Project** – The engineers will be visiting the manufacturing facility to view the structure.
3. **Lighthouse Boardwalk Renovation and Birch Bay Community Park Request for Qualifications (RFQ)** – The RFQ is going forward for release as planned.
4. **Nesset Farm Building Foundation** – The contract development for the building restoration is moving very close to being ready for signatures.

## VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

**A. LAKE WHATCOM RECONVEYANCE PLANNING UPDATE – MIKE MCFARLANE** – Mike stated that the plan is moving forward and once all the parts have been compiled it will be brought back to the Commission for input and then forwarded on to Council.

**B. DISCUSSION ON PARK ORDINANCES – RULES REVISION** – Mike provided an Ordinance and Rules Review Sheet for the followings three park ordinances/rules: Closures, Hours of Operation and Parking.

He discussed that the goal is for the Commission to have a general discussion on each topic, identify any issues and answer any questions. The rule/ordinance will then move forward to a staff review and a finally a legal review by the County Legal Department to decide if it is an ordinance or a rule and if there are any legal concerns. It will then be returned as a total package to the Commission for a final review and ultimately be presented to County Council.

Mike discussed the review sheet and format and explained that in the future the Commission will be receiving a set for consideration prior to each meeting.

He discussed that many of these topics don't have written policies as there was an assumption that on a day to day basis the director would assign policies.

**Closures:** Mike discussed each of the Closure bullet points; Current Status, Emergency Closures, Other Areas Closed to the General Public and Department Recommendations.

The general discussion included clarification on who has the enforcement authority to close and clear a park and the criteria and protocol for closing and re-opening the park, physically and through public announcement, press release and web notification.

**Hours of Operation:** Mike discussed that the Department establishes the hours for the use of buildings, trails and facilities in collaboration with the managers and facility users.

He discussed each of the Hours of Operation bullet points and Department Recommendations.

The general discussion included clarification that the term "sunrise to sunset from an enforcement standpoint is recognized as an established time and that the terms daylight and dark are not, that the park rules and hours are posted at the trail heads and provides a tool for law enforcement to enforce the rules if needed,

**Parking:** Mike discussed that parking is always an issue in the parks in terms of establishing and enforcing designated parking areas, especially during peak season to avoid blocking roads and gates, causing damage to lawn/public areas and for safety, to separate park activity from moving vehicles. Currently there is no written policy on parking or road use.

He discussed each of the Parking bullet points, the Department Recommendations and Related considerations.

There was discussion regarding motorized vehicles and that the term needs to be defined as there are new considerations regarding Other Power Driven Mobility Devices (OPDMD) and identifying trail limitations and classifications for use of OPDMD.

There was discussion regarding the possibility of “park and ride” locations at some park lots and the problems that may be created in other lots in terms of park user’s parking. Also discussed was enforcement for speeding, overnight parking, and other parking infractions.

Mike stated that if there are any comments or observations to please email them to him for further discussion.

**VII. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. NONE**

**VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**A. VanZandt Community Hall Roof Benefit** - Jeff Margolis announced that on Sunday, May 15, 2016, at 3:00 PM the South Fork Valley Community Association is having a benefit to raise funds to replace the Van Zandt Community Hall roof. Dana Lions is the featured minstrel for the evening and a pot luck supper will follow the entertainment.

Jeff stated that to date most of the funds needed to replace the roof have been raised and that this benefit will be the “icing on the cake”. He discussed that there has been some conversations with roofing companies but that one has not been selected yet. There was some discussion regarding materials, construction and tools.

**IX. NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION**

The May 19, 2016 Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Commission will be held at the Samish Park Day Lodge at 6:00 PM.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** It was moved by Richard Sturgill and seconded by Vern Yadon to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Transcribed by: Pat Fisher, Clerk III

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director