

**MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, June 16, 2016**

**Silver Lake Park
9006 Silver Lake Road, Maple Falls, Washington**

Prior to the meeting Ted Sellers, Whatcom County Lead Ranger, provided the Commission members and staff with a tour of Silver Lake Park.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Paul Woodcock, Chair at 6:08 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

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

Staff: Mike McFarlane, Rod Lamb and Christ Thomsen

EXCUSED: Theresa Sygitowicz

PUBLIC COMMENTS / COMMUNICATIONS

A. COMMENTS – NONE

B. COMMUNICATIONS – NONE

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

A. BLAINE MARINE PARK NEW PLAYGROUND – Richard Sturgill shared that over the past year the City of Blaine along with the Blaine Birch Bay Park and Recreation District 2 funded a new play structure at the City of Blaine’s Marine Park. It appears to be a huge success.

B. COLUMBIA VALLEY PARK AND RECREATION DISTRICT – Vern Yadon announced that there have been enough signatures collected to get the petition to form the Columbia Valley Park and Recreation District on the upcoming ballot.

C. RADIO STATION KAVZ VAN ZANDT COMMUNITY HALL BROADCAST – Jeff Margolis announced that the radio station KAVZ that broadcasts out of the Van Zandt Community Hall is now streaming live on the internet at: kavzradio.org

D. VAN ZANDT COMMUNITY HALL ROOF – Jeff Margolis announced that within the next six to eight weeks the roof on the Van Zandt Community Hall will be complete.

III. AGENDA

A. June 16, 2016 AGENDA

MOTION: It was moved by Jeff Margolis and seconded by Vern Yadon to amend the June 16, 2016 agenda to add the discussion of the Commission letter of support to Whatcom County Council for the formation of a new county park district named the Columbia Valley Park & Recreation District to Unfinished Business, and approve the agenda as amended.

The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

IV. MINUTES

A. MAY 19, 2016 MINUTES

MOTION: It was moved by Jeff Margolis and seconded by Vern Yadon to modify and approve the modified the May 19, 2016 minutes with the following correction: Item III. Public Comments / Communications, third paragraph to read; Vern Yadon shared the petition of support for the formation of the Columbia Park and Recreation District and the Kendall trail comprehensive plan.

The motion carried with a vote of four to approve and two abstentions. Janet Boyhan and Richard Sturgill abstained as they were not present for the meeting.

V. STAFF REPORTS

A. DIRECTOR AND OPERATIONS REPORT – MIKE MCFARLANE

1. **Phillips 66 Soccer Park** – Mike passed around and photo of the sports fields showing the recently installed turf and night lighting.

2. **Whatcom County Planning Commission** – Mike provided an update of the most recent meeting of the Planning Commission. There was a request by one of the Commission members to add the value of the road ends where they terminate along Birch Bay area, to the Comprehensive Plan. Mike stated that he is not sure how Planning and Development Services will include that change or if the change will be included.

There was additional discussion regarding road ends, the Departments inventory and use, and how the road ends throughout the county can be utilized, especially in Birch Bay in terms of water access, and how they would be referenced.

3. **East Whatcom Regional Resource Center (EWRRC)** – The lease with the Opportunity Council is due for renewal in August. The Opportunity Council has asked for an increase in the rate that the County pays. The amount of the increase has not been determined yet. There is also some conflicting wording that needs to be addressed. The lease will continue to be a 25 year lease with a review every 5 years. The Department is developing the amendment and it is targeted to be before Council by the end of July.

The Opportunity Council is applying for a Department of Commerce Building and Facilities grant to fund a second building.

B. OPERATIONS – CHRIST THOMSEN

1. **Staffing** – The West Lead Ranger position has been filled by Jill Jacoby. That will leave a vacancy in the Silver Lake Park Ranger position. Recruitment for this position will begin with internal recruitment and depending on the results, could go into external recruitment. The position could be filled as early as July if filled internally, but longer if external recruitment is required.

The maintenance worker who was out on long term leave has returned to duty, as of today.

2. Samish Park – During a recent routine inspection, it was discovered there was more rot in the day lodge deck than was anticipated. It was decided that the existing deck will remain but that the tables and the existing handrails will be removed and a temporary guard rail installed. The deck will remain functional. It is the plan to replace the entire deck next year through the Capital Project process.

C. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT – ROD LAMB

1. South Fork Park

Trailhead Development – The project is currently out for bid and closes on June 21, 2016. Once the bids have been evaluated and the construction contract developed, it will go to County Council for approval on July 12, 2016. If approved, the contractor is expected to begin construction in August, 2016. The anticipated completion date is the end of October, 2016.

There was some discussion on trails development, in terms of easements, trail alignment, connections, current usable trail and future trail expansion. Also discussed were signage, and trail usage. It is anticipated that the current trail usage will not change.

Neset Farm House and Outbuilding Repair – Bids for the foundation repair will be advertised next Wednesday. There will be a bid opening July 19th.

The previously mentioned site-access difficulties have been resolved and access has been approved for a pre-bid meeting on July 7th.

2. Lighthouse Dock Renovation – Rod provided pictures of the newly manufactured wave attenuation chambers that will be delivered to the contractor this Friday. The contractor will complete some minor assembly and once that is complete they will be shipped to the site, the unusable chambers will be salvaged, and the dock re-installed. Target installation date is the week of June 27th.

There was additional discussion regarding the assembly that is required, the construction of the chambers and the installation.

3. Lighthouse Boardwalk and Playground – There will be an on-site, staff work session this week to discuss the use of the facility to get ideas and input on how to move forward.

Jeff Margolis suggested that as this park becomes more of a community focus and with increased use, that the Department might consider the construction of a wall as a backdrop for a stage for concerts, plays, etc., and also to serve as a wind break for performers.

4. Silver Lake Road and Electrical Improvements – The revised critical areas report was approved with a revision to the upland high water mark. This adjusted the jurisdictional shoreline area and may impact on the shoreline exemption permit for the dry hydrant that the WC Fire Marshall has asked for. Rod stated that he will have a discussion with the Shoreline Administrator to discuss shoreline approval for this project.

5. Birch Bay Community Park – A design contract has been signed and approved for a park plan. Meetings will be held next Friday to discuss planning schedules for site work. Rod will keep the Commission updated. Three public sessions will be held for input from the community.

There was some discussion regarding the Public Works berm project in that it is currently in the permitting process and right-of-way acquisition. Rod shared that it has been decided that this property will not be used as a materials staging area for the berm project.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. LAKE WHATCOM RECONVEYANCE TRAIL PLANNING UPDATE – ROD LAMB – It is anticipated that the final edits to the plan will be completed by the end of June. Once the plan is complete the SEPA check list can be completed and submitted to Planning and Development Services for the threshold determination and move on to final Council approval in September.

Rod provided a trails specific, implementation flow diagram for the trails within the watershed. This does not include proposals for trails elsewhere.

B. DISCUSSION ON PARK ORDINANCES – RULES REVISION - MIKE MCFARLANE

1. Special Events - Mike discussed the criteria for Special Events in that they are usually commercial events, often require more staff time and reduce park availability for general public use. He stated that the reduction in public use is a conversation that will need to be addressed in terms of rules for the amount of space a special event should occupy, and the number of special events that take place in the park in order to keep the impact on public use at a reasonable level.

A copy of the Special Event Permit Application was shared with the Commission. It was discussed that in order to initiate a special event the application must be completed and a \$50.00 handling fee paid. Christ reviewed the type of information that is provided in the application and the internal process for approving a Special Event.

He also discussed the insurance and insurance endorsements that are required by the event promoter and reasoning behind the insurance needs.

He discussed management concerns that need to be addressed such as; staffing needs for both during and after the event, park availability, whether or not the event is compatible with the park's mission, what other activities are scheduled in the park, how does the event impact the casual park user in terms of noise and availability of facilities such as restrooms and parking, and how does it impact park neighbors in terms of traffic, noise and parking.

There was discussion regarding public safety in light of world events, and security questions and requirements that may need to be explored, such a facial recognition, video surveillance, crowd control, etc.

It was discussed that in the context of Special Events, because they are not park sponsored activities, the burden of providing adequate security has been placed with the promotor and in some instances the promotor is required to notify certain local, county and state authorities for additional requirements that they may need to meet, and that the promotor would work with those agencies directly to meet those requirements. The Department would not provide specifics on a security plan because of the increased liability to the county if that plan were not implemented.

Mike did acknowledge that the security points raised are well taken and that in larger events promoters are aware of that concern in that some were procuring "terrorist insurance".

There was a discussion on the Department's liability. Mike stated that the Department makes sure that the event has adequate insurance coverage and that they are fulfilling the requirements

of their particular event, in terms of traffic control and event logistics. There is also a risk assessment of the event that takes place at the Department level.

There was a request to invite a Whatcom County Sheriff's Department to the July Commission meeting to speak to this issue. Christ stated he will contact the Sheriff's Department.

ACTION: Christ to contact the Sheriff's Department to invite them to speak to security measures at Special Events.

It was shared that most Special Events are relatively small. The largest are the Highland Games and Sea to Ski. The attendance of the upcoming Hovander Park Bluegrass Festival is unknown as this is a first year event. Mike stated that this is a continuous topic to consider but that the County does not consider event insurance because they are not in the business of event planning. The venue is provided by the County, the County makes sure that the event provider has the proper insurance for their activities and identifies problem areas that may warrant additional concern. Additionally, the local, county and state law enforcement authorities are aware of any local or national security alerts that are in place at any given time.

Mike discussed that the Special Event policy has evolved from 15-20 years ago when the Department did not have a policy and sometimes events were taking place without the Department knowing even the basic information on who was conducting the event or if there was adequate insurance, etc. These concerns have since been addressed but that currently a more formal and detailed policy is needed to address such items as fees, insurance requirements, risk assessment, community impact and security.

Mike asked that if Commission members have any input to please email him.

C. LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR THE COLUMBIA VALLEY PARK AND RECREATION DISTRICT – The Chair read the letter for the Commission and asked if there was a motion to approve the letter.

MOTION: Richard Sturgill moved to approve the letter of support as written. Ken Kiesner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. 2017-18 BUDGET PRIORITIES – Mike stated the Department budget is being prepared and will be relatively completed by next month's Commission meeting. He explained that the Executive will review the Department's budget and decide what to include in the budget that he will present to Council later in the fall.

Mike discussed that this year a major priority for review is full-time staffing levels (FTEs). This is going to be a very difficult year because the initial instructions are that the budget is maintenance of effort, which means it basically stays the same. However, given the growth that the Department has had with programs, the current level of facilities oversight and the substantial number of layoffs that the Department experienced during the economic decline, it is evident that there is a need for more full-time staff positions. The challenge will be identifying the funding and make it more palatable to move forward.

In addition, our extra-help rates are lower than other agencies and internal departments. On initial assessment it appeared that the rates would be sufficient however we do need to remain competitive otherwise we lose our seasonal extra-help staff to a larger rate of pay by other employers. Our extra-help staff is a major component of our summer maintenance and trails needs. Adjusting the rate to remain competitive is a priority.

There was discussion on transferring the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center entirely over to the Parks Department. Mike stated that even though some of the maintenance functions are dealt with through Whatcom County Facilities Department and it makes sense logistically to move in this direction due to building warranties and other issues. This will be a change for the Department and the Opportunity Council. Mike discussed some of the operational aspects of management that would be affected.

Mike was asked how the costs are broken down for this change. Mike stated that the Whatcom County Facilities Department is not a stand-alone department but is part of the Administrative Department and operates somewhat differently than the Parks Department. The Parks Department deals with moving monies and making requests to Council for funds. As it stands now, the assumption is that for tracking purposes the Department will build the funding into the budget and run it as a separate program within the budget.

There is currently a contract in place with the Opportunity Council to operate and maintain the facility. If the second building is added for the food bank, there will now be a situation that would require additional operational expertise and support. In addition, this is a County owned facility, which poses a challenge in that the renter is a service provider, and often their focus is not the infrastructure of the facility but in providing services.

This will put an additional burden on Department Staff to conduct regular maintenance inspections to make sure that items that need to be addressed are, and that the needs are being met. If all remains status quo, this should not prove to be much of a burden on the Department, however if there is a major maintenance problem it could prove to be more burdensome than the budget would support.

Mike discussed that the Department has increased Information Technology (IT) costs with the Computerized Maintenance Management System and the Itinio online reservation system and concession sales.

The ER&R equity account is where the costs for the Department vehicles and equipment are kept. The Operations and Maintenance Departments are working on making sure that they have the right equipment to meet the Department's needs. There may be some adjustments that need to be made to the ER&R account.

Training has become a focus in light of new staff and training requirements that need to be met for both legal and practical purposes.

The Plantation Rifle Range revenue is currently down between 13-30%, depending on the comparative year. While we can survive with this reduction it does effect the budget across the board and will require a balance from another area. There was some discussion on the reason for the decline. Mike stated that there does not seem to be a clear indication, but research continues to identify the reasons for the decline and ways to mitigate them. Some tools will be to identify the user demographics, improving the facility aesthetics and increasing public awareness of the services available.

Mike stated that these are some of the challenges that the Department is facing when putting the budget together.

Mike provided an abbreviated copy of the Six-Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) For Whatcom County Facilities 2017-2022 which identifies upcoming major Department projects. Currently, these projects are not approved. This will be addressed and identified in the budget process.

He also provided the Whatcom County 20-Year Capital Facilities Plan for the Parks Department, which identifies the challenges that the Department will be experiencing in the future in terms of levels of service, but does not provide the same level of financial detail.

Both of these documents have yet to be approved by Council.

The Department will continue to update the Commission in terms of the budget progress and revenue status.

Moving forward, Mike will be asking for Commission input in the next few meetings as he will be meeting with the County Executive and sharing Department details in order to get a better picture of the budget in the fall.

There was a brief discussion regarding the data that is used to formulate the budget figures, such as the increase in attendance and the impact on the facilities and staffing needs to meet the increased maintenance, changes in facilities and acquisitions.

Mike will update the Commission as the process moves forward.

B. IMPACT OF ZIKA VIRUS – In response to a request from Jeff Margolis for more information on the Zika Virus, Mike provided the a printout from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) titled, About ESTIMATED Range of Aedes aegypti and Aedes albopictus in the Unites States, 2016 Maps, for Commission review.

The maps show the CDC's best estimate of the potential range of the Zika Virus in the United States. The maps include the areas where mosquitoes are or have been previously found.

It was discussed that the maps show that the mosquitoes are out of our zone.

Mike asked Jeff if this information covers his request. Jeff stated that yes it did, but that efforts should continue to stay up to date with the most current information and make sure that the parks do not harbor potential mosquito breeding areas.

It was discussed that the Whatcom County Health Department is tasked with alerting the County of current health risks. The Health Department also reports on any alerts, etc., at the Department Head Meetings.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS - NONE

IX. NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION

The July 21, 2016 Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Commission will be held at the Van Zandt Community Hall, 4106 State Route 9, Deming, Washington at 6:00 PM.

X. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: It was moved by Jeff Margolis and seconded by Vern Yadon to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:51 PM.

Transcribed by: Pat Fisher, Clerk III

Approved by: Mike McFarlane, Parks Department Director