

DRAFT
MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, October 20, 2016

East Whatcom Regional Resource Center
8251 Kendall Road
Maple Falls, WA 98266

Jessica Bee, East Whatcom Regional Resource Center Coordinator provided a tour of the facility prior to the meeting.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Jeff Margolis, Vice-Chair at 6:00 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Commissioners: Jeff Margolis, Kenneth Kiesner, Richard Sturgill, Theresa Sygitowicz, Kenneth Kiesner and Vern Yadon

Staff: Mike McFarlane, Christ Thomsen and Rodney Lamb

Guest: Jessica Bee, East Whatcom Regional Resource Center

EXCUSED

Janet Boyhan and Paul Woodcock

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS / COMMUNICATIONS

A. COMMENTS – The Vice-Chair recognized Vesla Kazimer, Play and Learn Facilitator for the Mount Baker School District, and Kendall resident. Ms. Kazimer would like to have a conversation with the Columbia Valley Park and Recreation District regarding the idea of a park activity called adventure playgrounds. She briefly explained that an adventure playground invites risky play and involves many loose parts, such as nails, saws, fires and other open ended play ideas for kids to experience, and that the science behind the activity is that if younger children engage in risky play they learn boundaries, and are less likely to engage in riskier behavior later in life.

Vern Yadon responded to Ms. Kazimer as he is currently running for one of the commissioner positions for the ballot proposed Columbia Valley Park and Recreation District. He stated that the actual business of the District is quite a ways in the future but invited Ms. Kazimer to attend a meeting once the District is established, and present the idea at that time.

B. COMMUNICATIONS – NONE

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Vern Yadon shared that he recently attended a charrette concerning the Welcome Center that the Foothills Chamber Of Commerce is proposing to build on a nine acre plot on the Mt. Baker

Highway, close to the Kendall round-a-bout. The deadline date to complete this project is 2018. There is currently a full set of site plans but development funds have not been identified. The concern for the Chamber is that time will run out before funds can be raised.

V. AGENDA

A. October 20, 2016 Agenda

MOTION: It was moved by Theresa Sygitowicz and seconded by Vern Yadon to accept the October 20, 2016 Agenda as presented. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VI. MINUTES

A. September 15, 2016 Minutes

MOTION: It was moved by Theresa Sygitowicz and seconded by Vern Yadon to table the approval of the September 15, 2016 minutes until the next Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. DIRECTOR'S REPORT – MIKE MCFARLANE

1. Galbraith Mountain Acquisition Proposal – A proposal was returned from the property owner. The offer was presented in a closed session to County Council for direction. The County Executive sent a letter to the City of Bellingham Mayor that the County would be willing to support up to \$2,000,000.00 in Conservation Futures over a four year period with the City of Bellingham supporting the remainder of the funding and a willingness to operate the property as a City of Bellingham park.

Mike discussed that there are other organizations who indicated that they would be willing to provide some support for the acquisition of either an easement or the property itself. He discussed that greater than half of the property is in the Lake Whatcom watershed which makes it of high interest to the City of Bellingham and that it is quite popular with the mountain bike community.

Also discussed was the need to perfect public access onto Galbraith Lane, and address some 15 year easements and limited road access issues.

There was a discussion on what mountain bike activities would or would not be allowed due to County and City risk policies, and what types of structures would be acceptable. If the County were to acquire the property it would be utilized for trail based activities, to develop a skills area, and a central area to host events. The acquisition, development and road extension costs are estimated to be around \$14,000,000.00, depending on what level it would be built.

There was some discussion regarding the current mountain biking activity, the lack of possible timber and tourist revenue, as well as the history of acquisition interest in this property by the County and City of Bellingham.

2. Senior Services Contract – The contracts are in the final stages of being developed for the next two years. There are minor insurance requirement adjustments that need to be determined.

The Blaine and Lynden contracts will be sent out early next week and the Council on Aging and Jet Oldsters Association will be developed for Ferndale. The County is currently offering a 2.25% increase in those contracts.

Arrangements are being made through contracted services to cover the Bellingham Senior Center maintenance and janitorial duties. This need is the result of a park employee who is currently on long term leave.

B. OPERATIONS' REPORT – CHRIST THOMSEN

1. Staffing

Lead Ranger Recruitment – An offer for the West Region Lead Ranger position was made to and accepted by Don Hunger. Don's background is with the US Forest Service and the Student Conservation Association, and is experienced in working with a wide variety of agencies, organizations and training programs. His educational background is in recreation and social sciences.

Bellingham Senior Center Coverage – The Department is recruiting an individual to perform part-time janitorial and light maintenance services. Five applications have been received and are currently being reviewed.

Seasonal Employees – Fall and winter seasonal staffing recruitment is underway. Several individuals have been selected and are on board. The goal is to backfill staffing requirement to cover the remainder of 2016.

2. Weather Events

Christ reported that in last week's storm event Hovander Homestead Park sustained damage to a portion of a roof on the Gitz Barn. Fortunately there were no other damages or injuries sustained. Christ provided pictures of the damage. This building was scheduled to be demolished in 2017 and this damage accelerated the demolition timeline to the present.

3. Projects

Plantation Rifle Range HVAC – The Department has received 90% design drawings. These can be shared them with the Commission upon request. The contracting process required changes that resulted in the need to request an extension from the Recreation Conservation Office (RCO) through the end of 2017. RCO contacted the Department to relay that the extension is being process and will most likely be approved. The project completion date is set for August 2017.

Semiahmoo Park Trash Receptacles – It is anticipated that these will be installed by the end of this year.

C. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT – ROD LAMB

1. South Fork Park Trailhead Development – Dirt Works continues with the construction of the trailhead. There have been some weather delays although work continues where possible. The completion date for this project is set for fall 2017.

It appears that the Department is very close to obtaining an approved trail easement from Department of Natural Resources (DNR) that will connect Galbraith Farm to Nessel Farm. It is

anticipated that the final easement language will be returned from DNR in the very near future and subsequently approved through Whatcom County's legal department by fall 2017.

2. Silver Lake Road & Electrical Improvements – The project is being re-scoped as the campground improvements are beyond the level of available funding. As a result, the campground improvements will be shelved for the next budget cycle, and instead smaller projects that will benefit to the overall park user's experience will be identified and completed.

3. Lighthouse Marine Park Dock Renovation – The docks were removed for the season on September 25th. Removal went smoothly and although they were largely left intact, one piling hoop was damaged and will be repaired. It is not surprising that the system sustained some damage given the challenging site conditions. Rod will have a conversation with engineer about re-designing the hoop to withstand future damage.

4. Lake Whatcom Reconveyance Planning – Final edits to the plan are complete and SEPA threshold determination has been upheld and a Determination of Non-Significance (DNS) has been issued and upheld through the comment period. The plan has gone before Council for discussion and at that time they indicated support. The plan will now go before Council for approval next Tuesday, October 25, 2016.

5. Lighthouse Marine Park Boardwalk Renovation – Progress has been made on the renovation design for the boardwalk approach. This project could be completed by the Whatcom County Parks maintenance crew but because of the other demands on that department the project will be contracted. There was some discussion the final plan will consist of a smaller footprint than was originally planned, will be constructed mostly of composite decking but that concrete paving will replace some portions of the boardwalk. The design should be completed by early 2017, the project permitted by spring 2017 and construction finished by fall 2017. There was additional discussion regarding the materials.

6. Birch Bay Community Park – The third and final community meeting was held on October 18, 2016. Rod provided a copy of the final Preferred Master Plan for Commission review. The Preferred Master Plan is a refined version of the plan that was selected and revised in previous community meetings. The community members engaged in discussions regarding the details of the Preferred Master plan, and that the next steps will be to identify the costs and complete the final planning efforts for submission to County Council for approval by early 2017.

There was some discussion regarding maximizing parking. Several equations for the parking area were reviewed and the final and most efficient parking space configuration is reflected in the Preferred Master plan. Also discussed were the location of the bicycle racks, lighting types and locations, water spigots and power outlets/lighting installation timelines.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - NONE

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review 2017-2018 Budget – Mike provided a copy of the Parks & Recreation 2017-2018 budget summary for Commission Review and shared that all budget information is available on the County website.

The Executive provided an overview of the budget to the departments, and will present his budget as a whole to County Council this Tuesday. The Parks and Recreation Department will present the parks budget to Council next Thursday.

The Executive's direction for the budget was that this would be a maintenance of effort cycle and that even though the revenues look good and the budget and economy were headed in the right direction there are a lot of demands for these funds, the largest being labor and employee cost.

Mike discussed the budget from a departmental standpoint and the priorities that need to be included. These consisted of; equipment costs and replacements that had been put aside during leaner years, labor and employee increases to recover what was lost during the recession, a new Park Attendant position, and a request for an increase in seasonal staff rates in order to remain competitive in the job market. Otherwise the budget remained status quo.

Additional items include the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center costs that were previously not included in the Parks budget, an increase in operation and maintenance costs at the senior centers and a 2.25% increase in the Bellingham and Ferndale senior center contracts.

Mike discussed the Parks Capital section of the summary, in that this category lists the larger projects and shows what was requested and what was approved. He spoke to each project in some detail and the reasoning for the request.

Mike concluded with an invitation to contact the Department if there are any questions or comments that the Commission members would like to have addressed or noted.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Jeff Margolis announced that the South Fork Valley Community Association has been conducting "Friday Night Flicks and Movies" at the VanZandt Community Hall. Admission is \$5.00 per person and \$10.00 per family. This Friday night is Harold and Maude and Halloween night is Rocky Horror Picture Show. He spoke to the recent improvements/additions to the audio/visual equipment at the Hall.

Theresa Sygitowicz announced that Mt. Baker is third in the State 1A championship and that the games will be played at Sedro Woolley as the Mt. Baker athletic field is currently non-functional.

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION

The next Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Commission meeting will be held on November 17, 2016 at 6:00 PM at Samish Park Day Lodge, 673 N Lake Samish Drive, Bellingham, Washington.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: It was moved by Kenneth Kiesner and seconded by Vern Yadon to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned.

Transcribed by: Pat Fisher, Clerk III

Approved by: Mike McFarlane, Parks Department Director