

DRAFT
MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, May 18, 2017

Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Administrative Office
3373 Mt. Baker Highway
Bellingham, Washington

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by, Chair at 6:07 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Commissioners: Paul Woodcock, Jeff Margolis, Theresa Sygitowicz, Susan McClendon,
Sonja Max, Richard Sturgill

Staff: Mike McFarlane, Rod Lamb

EXCUSED Kenneth Kiesner

GUESTS Daniel Probst

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS / COMMUNICATIONS

A. COMMENTS – Daniel Probst, President, Cascade Runners – Daniel reported that the Mount Baker Ultra Marathon will take place on June 4, 2017. He discussed the route, the number of miles, the number of participants and the running time.

Daniel discussed that the race proceeds will assist in funding the Bellingham/Mt. Baker Trail. He provided an update on the trail development.

B. COMMUNICATIONS – NONE

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS - NONE

V. AGENDA

A. May 18, 2017 Agenda

MOTION: Jeff Margolis moved to approve the May 18, 2017 Agenda. Sonja Max seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

VI. MINUTES

A. March 16, 2017 Minutes

MOTION - Jeff Margolis moved to approve the March 16, 2017 minutes. Sonja Max seconded the motion. Motion carried with one abstention, Richard Sturgill was not present at the meeting.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. DIRECTOR'S REPORT – MIKE MCFARLANE

Personnel – Mike reported that after 18 years Lawson Curtis, Maintenance Worker III has retired and Pat Fisher, Clerk III will be retiring on June 16, 2017.

The Department received the resignation of the West Regional Park Supervisor, Don Hunger who has accepted an executive director position with a local non-profit. His last day will be in June but has agreed to work on a part-time basis until the position is filled.

The Department hired a new East Region Park Ranger – Karen Beringer. She has previous employment in parks and was previously employed with Whatcom County Planning and Development Services.

Permanent positions will be advertised first internally, and then if not filled will be advertised to the public.

There are still a few extra-help seasonal vacancies to be filled. Recruitment will continue until all positions are filled.

Silver Lake Park Main Lodge and Shower Facility – There is currently a septic problem at the main lodge involving root disturbance that will require the facility to be closed for a day.

The shower building is currently closed due to solenoid valve switches that failed. It is hoped that the showers will be back in service by the weekend.

The septic repairs will be completed by a contractor and the shower repairs will be handled internally.

Semiahmoo Park – A pump failed causing the restrooms to be closed for the several days that it took to get replacement parts.

Bay Horizon Park Break-in – There was a break-in in the newly remodeled kitchen this past week involving malicious vandalism. This is the second incident in approximately a six week period. Insurance coverage is provided by the lessee.

Pickle-ball – Bay Horizon Park – The Department is currently in the process of transferring one of the parking lots from Camp Horizon to the Blaine-Birch Bay Park and Recreation district to be used as a pickle-ball court. Agreements will be generated and existing agreements modified to accommodate the transfer.

Lookout Mountain / American Tower Communication – American Tower Communications recently notified the Department they will be ending their lease in August. Rather than dismantle and remove the tower they are working with Skagit

County 911 to sell the tower. If the transaction is completed Skagit 911 will lease the location from the Department. The lease amount will be reduced for government services however it is possible that the County may realize an additional benefit in using the tower for emergency operations, offsetting the revenue loss with the benefit to Whatcom County. It is expected that the agreement will be completed relatively soon otherwise the tower will need to be dismantled and removed from the property by August, 2017.

East Whatcom Regional Resource Center - The Department sent a letter to the Executive in support of a feasibility study being conducted by Western Washington University to determine the potential and cost effectiveness of using wood to fuel the boilers at the Center. The Department's concerns are air quality, fuel storage and the long term, operational life cycle of the equipment.

Maple Falls Community Park – The Friends of Maple Falls Community Parks is working on procuring liability and/or event insurance. They have signed a contract with the Timber Framers Guild to design a new picnic shelter at the park.

Lake Whatcom Park Volunteer Work Parties – An on-line registration page has been added to the Parks and Recreation website to register for work parties at the park. For management purposes the number of volunteers is limited to 30-35 for each work session. The work parties will begin when the watershed work window opens.

Lake Whatcom Watershed Noxious Weed Removal – Shuksan Middle School volunteers are working in the watershed to remove invasive noxious weeds. They are currently working on a five-day service schedule.

Whatcom County Council Natural Resources Committee Department Presentation – On May 30th the Department will be providing a presentation to the Council Natural Resources Committee to update them on current projects, storm damage and summer projects. This will full fill an initiative by the County Executive to have all County departments appear before Council to provide an exchange of information on departmental activities. It is thought that this will be especially helpful during budget time. The next scheduled appearance for the Department will be this coming October.

Stimpson Nature Reserve Garbage Dumping – Last week there was a rather large unauthorized dumping of garbage at the park. The Department was able to respond quickly due to the number of calls received from the public. Information was extracted from the dumped material and turned over the County Sheriff's Department for investigation.

B. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT – ROD LAMB

South Fork Park Trailhead Development – The initial preparation work has been completed on the segment of trail that connects to the hiking trail head and the equestrian trail head. There will be a soft service trail mowed around the field to provide a recreational trail experience until the connecting trail to Nessel is completed. There will be signage to direct the public from straying off the trail.

The Department continues to coordinate with Department of Natural Resource on an alternate route to the Overby Farm.

The contractor paved the parking lot and will be completing the finishing work this week. There was a discussion regarding parking lot materials in terms of water treatment and maintenance.

Additional work by the Department's trail crew is delayed until the weather improves and the subgrade dries out.

Silver Lake Road & Electrical Improvements – This project has been re-scoped to include improvements to the main road from the entry to the lodge.

The project will be completed in segments due to the complexities with shoreline jurisdiction.

The first segment will include the main road up to the shower facility that will be completed in 2017.

The second segment will be from the shower facility up to the main lodge. The Department is working with County Planning and Development Services (PDS) to develop a permitting path to complete the second segment that will provide the parameters for the contracted engineer to complete the scope of work. The second segment will be completed in 2018.

Rod discussed that the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has issued the HPA permit for the dry-hydrant installation.

Lighthouse Boardwalk Renovation – The shoreline permit and land disturbance permits are at PDS for review. The project site has been reviewed by the tribes and the Department of Archaeological and Historical Preservation. Once approval has been returned by all agencies the building permit will be submitted.

Hovander Homestead Park Maintenance Complex – The Department is beginning the planning process for a maintenance shop at Hovander Homestead Park. The project site selected is off the main park road and was selected because it is above the flood plain.

Lake Whatcom Trail Development – One of the critical path items on this project is permitting and the Department has received word that PDS will issue the permit on June 1, 2017 when the water window opens. The hydraulic project approval has been submitted and by law must be issued within 40 days of submittal.

There was discussion regarding the parking lots and run-off treatment. Rod stated that this has not been determined by the engineer to date but it will meet the highest restrictions for water quality because it is in the watershed.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - NONE

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Lookout Mountain Forest Preserve-USACE Road Use Permit – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has requested a road use permit to access their communication tower. The easement will expire 2022 and the cost of the permit is \$1,000.00. This has been reviewed by Whatcom County Legal Department.

Mike asked for a recommendation from the Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Commission for approval prior to moving forward to Council.

There was discussion regarding road maintenance costs and cost sharing amongst the users, the fee schedules that determine each users share and the amount of the share per user.

It was asked if the fee schedules need to be renewed for an increase to exceed the current costs for road maintenance and the excess used to offset the cost of other needs throughout the County's parks and reducing the amount collected from the tax payers. Mike stated that currently the fees meet the costs of the road maintenance, and that if there is a catastrophic event that the repair costs will be shared by all users.

The fee schedules used for existing tower leases was discussed. It was suggested that when the new leases come up for renewal that the fees be re-examined to make sure they cover the maintenance costs. Mike stated that the Department is currently looking at this.

There was a brief discussion regarding fire control in the area. The Department of Natural Resources and the local fire districts provide fire control.

MOTION - Theresa Sygitowicz moved to support the Lookout Mountain Forest Preserve-USACE Road Use Permit. Richard Sturgill seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Review First Quarter Departmental Metrics – Mike provided documents showing current Department project metrics. These are completed quarterly. Attendance metrics are completed annually and are posted on the Park's Planning and Development website page. All County-wide metrics are posted on the County's main webpage.

Mike walked through the project metrics document, discussing each section and the information provided in that section.

There was a discussion regarding the future impacts on tax assessment revenue that the recent Hurst decision will have and that any result in revenue, either up or down will be adjusted accordingly in the upcoming 2019-2020 budget process.

C. Lake Whatcom Mission – Jeff Margolis – The Commission members were provided three handouts; an article "Disaster leads to chance for giant park in Whatcom County", Crosscut.com, Bob Simmons, author; the City of Bellingham 2015 Water Quality Report; and a letter from Jeff Margolis 04/19/17, to the Commission Members and the Department, in which he provided some background of past history on Lake Whatcom water quality, to where we are today.

Jeff Margolis discussed that with all considered, the City of Bellingham Water Quality Report, that Parks and Recreation are stewards of property within the Lake Whatcom watershed and that the City of Bellingham is not regulating the use of pesticides and herbicides, should the Parks and Recreation Commission make a recommendation to the City of Bellingham to regulate the use of pesticides and herbicides around the lake.

After some discussion it was the consensus that although there should be such restrictions on chemical use that affects the quality of the lake it is not the charge of the Parks and Recreation Commission, but rather the charge of the individual citizen to make this recommendation.

D. Hovander Homestead Park – Animal Exhibit – The Park and Recreation Foundation has expressed an interest in raising funds to upgrade the animal contact yard. A design plan was created and provided to the Commission for review.

Mike discussed the issues and challenges with this area in that it is old and outdated and is not conducive to efficient animal containment and care or public use.

The improvements being considered include double fencing to provide better animal protection, improving the efficiency of animal care and feeding, providing better public inter-activity with the animals, a new handwashing station and better traffic flow. Also being considered is an agricultural educational component and establishing regular supervised hours of operation with the area closed and gated outside of those hours.

The Department is looking for feedback and discussion on the design plan from the Commission prior to providing anticipated maintenance and operations costs.

There was a brief discussion regarding the possibility of a farm plan, ground water pollution and some of the required regulations and drawbacks associated with animal display. There was a brief discussion regarding the types of animals on-site and whether they will be loaned or owned.

It was suggested that the Department continue to research the project until it can be determined if the yard can be updated or needs to be scrapped if it becomes either too top heavy with required regulations or proves to be cost prohibitive.

E. Adopted General Business Rules Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission 3/16/17 – Mike provided the Commission with copies of the final revised General Business Rules.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. May 25, 2017 South Fork Valley Community Association – 5th and Final “Know your Neighbor Forum” at the VanZandt Community Hall. The event will include a guest panel discussion on art and artisans in the Valley and a catered meal.

B. Braham’s German Requiem Concert – June 4, 2017, 3:00 PM at the Bellingham High School. Admission is \$15.00 for Seniors, \$20.00 for Adults.

C. Deming Log Show – June 10-11, 2017, Deming Log Show Grounds.

D. Lynden Fair – August, 2017. For information regarding booth rental contact the Lynden Fair Grounds.

E. The South Fork Valley ongoing tribal meetings regarding water. For information on dates and times contact Theresa Sygitowicz.

F. The Mount Baker Scholarship Foundation is awarding over \$88,000.00 in scholarships.

G. The Mt. Baker School District has two vacancies on the school board.

H. Paul Woodcock announced that his new home will not be located in the 4th district and will therefore need to resign his position on the Commission.

I. Richard Sturgill announced that they are making progress on the sister ship to the boat on display at the Semiahmoo APA Museum and when complete will provide on-water experiences at a cost to earn its keep.

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION

The next Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Commission meeting will be held on June 15, 2017 at 6:00 PM at Samish Park Day Lodge, 673 N Lake Samish Drive, Bellingham, WA.

XII. ADJOURNMENT – The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 PM.

Transcribed by: Pat Fisher, Clerk III

Approved by: Mike McFarlane, Parks Department Director