

**MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, June 15, 2017**

**Bellingham Senior Activity Center
315 Halleck St
Bellingham, Washington**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair, Jeff Margolis at 6:15 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Commissioners: Jeff Margolis, Susan McClendon, Sonja Max, Richard Sturgill, Kenneth Kiesner and Theresa Sygitowicz

Staff: Mike McFarlane, Christ Thomsen

Guest: Daniel Probst

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS / COMMUNICATIONS

A. COMMENTS

Daniel Probst, President, Cascade Runners – Daniel reported that on June 4th for the first time in over a 100 years there was an ultra-marathon race to the top of Mount Baker. Seventeen runners from, Florida, California, Montana and Washington State began the marathon, but only 14 runners were successful in making it to the summit and back. This year's race proceeds were \$10,000. Daniel sees the possibility of the race growing with each year. Commissioner Margolis offered his congratulations and thanks to Mr. Probst on his work with the ultra-marathon race.

Jeff Margolis has acknowledged that Theresa Sygitowicz has arrived.

B. COMMUNICATIONS – NONE

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Margolis congratulated the Parks Department on the article in the Bellingham Herald in regards to the volunteer efforts at Lake Whatcom Park on June 3rd.

Commissioner Margolis stated for the record that he has written a letter to the County Executive and the County Sheriff, with a copy to Mike at the Parks Department about continued signage along Potter Road Bridge. The signage pertains to river use in regards to bathers, paddlers and tubers that has been in place for the past 3 years during bridge construction. Mike stated that it has been forwarded to the County Public Works.

V. AGENDA

A. June 15, 2017 Agenda

MOTION: Commissioner Sturgill moved to add to the Agenda the election of the Chair and Vice Chair. Commissioner Sygitowicz moved to approve the Revised Agenda for June 15, 2017 and seconded by Kenneth Kiesner. Motion carried unanimously.

VI. MINUTES

A. May 18, 2017 Minutes

MOTION: Sonja Max moved to approve the May 18, 2017 minutes. Richard Sturgill seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. DIRECTOR'S REPORT – MIKE MCFARLANE

1. **Drones in the Park** – The Parks Department office has received several calls regarding flying drones in county parks. This proposes a challenge to the 5-mile no-fly zone radius that exists within the Bellingham International Airport. The FAA is in the process of mapping this area. Most of the county parks fall within the no-fly zones. At this time, the Parks Department is not making any referrals until FAA has completed their mapping and we know the FAA regulations. It is an issue that will have to be addressed. A discussion ensued regarding the challenges for allowing both hobby and commercial drones in public areas.
2. **Dittrich Park Community Garden** – A community group from Lake Samish area wanted permission to have a community garden on park property. This property is undeveloped, located on the east side of Lake Samish, slated for a future waterfront park, is within the watershed and also, there are 2 tenants to consider. Mike offered that they could put a proposal together, but suggested that it probably wasn't the best spot for it. Once a community garden is established it's hard to move.
3. **Birch Bay Warning Signal** – A warning signal for tsunami and emergencies was dedicated on June 5th. A new pole was installed right in front of the park. A public address (PA) system is also included.
4. **Lighthouse Marine Park** – A group of men proposed using an existing silo for a lighthouse at Lighthouse Marine Park. Mike suggested that there would be some issues structurally and engineering-wise. This is an aged silo that is difficult to take apart without ruining pieces. Mike asked them to make a proposal and he would present it to the Park Commission. A discussion followed regarding the history of a proposed lighthouse at Lighthouse Marine Park by the Lighthouse Society at Point Roberts.
5. **Lookout Mountain Tower Lease & Sale** – There has been some back and forth between American Tower and Skagit 911 (Skagit County) for the purchase of this tower. American Tower has some concerns about the release and some of the

terms and wants Skagit 911 to assume more of the liability. The County will not absolve American Tower from any liability from past claims. Mike has drafted a lease to Skagit County for input in the event that the sale goes through. The tower has to be removed from the site in August if not sold.

6. **Canyon Lake Community Forest Access** – Whatcom Land Trust is working with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to see if they can come up with a resolution for public access to the park.
7. **South Fork Park Access** – County Parks will be looking at some easement changes going across Department of Natural Resource lands.
8. **Bellingham International Airport Trails** – The airport is working with Whatcom Parks and Recreation Foundation on trail routes to and around the airport. During National Trail Days the airport opened some roads for public trail use. Bellingham Parks has some property that adjoins the airport property. The Whatcom County Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) may be having some further discussions with County Public Works and the Airport about making some bike routes through there. Whatcom County Parks does not own any land adjacent to the airport property.
9. **Semiahmoo Park Signs** – The new interpretive signs are up. They are made from a product called dibond.
10. **Plantation Rifle Range HVAC** – The work to replace the Roof and HVAC system is on hold until the Washington State budget is approved. The HVAC system is being funded by a WA State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) FARR grant.

Commissioner Margolis brought up the concept of static firing or “shoot and move” and whether we offered this kind of training to the public? Mike said that the law enforcement has this training for their personnel, but that we did not offer it to the public. Mike commented that it would have to be in a very controlled environment and under very special conditions.

11. **Whatcom Council on Aging (WCOA) Building Use Agreement** – We will be contacting WCOA during the next few months to update the building use agreement and bring it forward to a full County Council. The agreement is outdated and needs to be revised. It was written in the early 1990's and some of the services referenced in lieu of payment are no longer provided. The parking lot lease is up-to-date. A discussion followed regarding possible future parking issues.
12. **Little Squalicum Park Estuary Project** – This is a project that the City of Bellingham is working on. The County Parks has a small role in it as it is being constructed on county property that is leased to the city. There is a bit of contamination. Most of it has been cleaned up through the Oser superfund site. The estuary is located closer to the shore. A diagram of the project and attachments were provided. A hard copy of the attachments can be viewed at the County Parks office or at the City of Bellingham.

13. **Open Commission Position** – There is still an open Commission position in District 4. A map outlining District 4 was provided.
14. **Whatcom County Parks and Trails Use** – Mike handed out a report that was presented to the County Council at the June 13th meeting. The report shows the County Parks and Trails attendance use for the last 7 years.

B. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT – MICHAEL MCFARLANE

1. **South Fork Park Trailhead Development** – The trail crews have been preparing trail subgrades between the 2 parking areas on both the equestrian trailhead and the hiking trailhead at South Fork Park. They will continue to work on compacting a base and adding another lift. Signage is being installed and the contractor has completed the landscaping and hydro seeding.
2. **Silver Lake Road & Electrical Improvements** – There has been no progress on the Silver Lake Road and Electrical Improvement project. We continue to look at this project in terms of what can be done this season.
3. **Lighthouse Marine Park Boardwalk Renovation** – The boardwalk bids will be advertised on June 14-21st and due on June 27th. The bid is for decking and relocation of the playground if there are sufficient funds.
4. **Hovander Homestead Park Maintenance Building** – The flood elevation survey has been completed and a site has been selected. There will be a final survey before we start with an engineer to assist with bid & building drawings.

C. OPERATIONS REPORT – CHRIST THOMSEN

1. **Paddleboard Rental Program** – We've implemented our paddleboard and boat rental program this season. At Samish Park it's been a rough start, but at Silver Lake the rentals are going much smoother and we have return users.
2. **Lighthouse Marine Park**
 - **Shower Building** – During a windstorm on May 23rd there was some damage done to the shower building and we will have to replace the roof.
 - **Boat Dock** – The dock was reinstalled on May 25th. Last year we rented a tractor to maintain the ramp for clearing debris throughout the season. This year, we were able to purchase a new tractor through ER&R funds that was sent to Silver Lake Park and in turn, the older tractor was sent to Lighthouse Marine Park for ramp maintenance.
3. **Semiahmoo Park Iron Chink** – The interpretive signs are in the shelter for the Iron Chink. We have all of our permits in hand, except we continue to work with the Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation to complete the land disturbance for the final sign off.
4. **Bellingham Parks & Recreation Operation Manager** – Steve Janiszewski is the new Operations Manager for Bellingham Parks and Recreation. The City of

Bellingham and Whatcom County share some of the same boundaries and challenges of managing facilities. We are looking to build a relationship that will be beneficial to both agencies and possibly provide some cross-training.

5. **Lake Whatcom Park Trail Construction** – The land disturbance permit was received and on June 3rd we held a National Trails Day Volunteer Event. We had a lot of public and partnership involvement. Some of our key partners are Whatcom Mountain Bike Coalition (WMBC), Washington Trails Association, Whatcom Land Trust, and sponsors; REI and Fidalgo Coffee. There were 65 volunteers and we plan to have many more volunteer opportunities throughout the summer.

Our approach to this particular trail is a combination of volunteers, contracted work and force account staff. Our folks went in along with WMBC and dropped trees, etc., then our volunteers went in and cleared all the woody debris and started grubbing the trail. The contractor, Northwest Trails Incorporated, was able to move fast because of the pre-work done and then volunteers and staff will follow up behind to finish the trail work. The estimated cost for the construction of this 2-mile section is \$60,000.

A discussion followed regarding Lake Whatcom use, i.e., swimming, diving and bathing.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - NONE

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. **Chair and Vice-Chair Election** – Richard Sturgill nominated Jeff Margolis for Chair, and Theresa Sygitowicz for Vice-Chair. The nominations were accepted by Jeff and Theresa.

MOTION: It was moved by Richard Sturgill and seconded by Kenneth Kiesner to close and approve the nominations. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- A. **Whatcom in Bloom** – A discussion ensued about the possibilities of bringing back Whatcom in Bloom. It was decided that this subject would be put on the agenda for next month.
- B. **Water Fountains** – Jeff Margolis raised the subject of installing more up-to-date drinking fountains. A discussion followed about the new units that have bottle fillers and dog waterer options. Drinking fountains in general are problematic and hard to keep functional. At this time, there are no plans to add or replace any drinking fountains.
- C. **Semiahmoo Park** – Richard Sturgill mentioned how very active Semiahmoo has been with graduation parties and school kids. He mentioned that the parking lot was full and that on day he called the County Parks office because the toilets had run out of toilet paper.

D. Mount Baker Community – Theresa Sygitowicz reported that the Mount Baker Scholarship Fund facilitated \$107,000 in scholarships. The Mount Baker community has also been working to raise money for two cancer patients.

E. No Acme Parade – There will be no Acme Parade this year due to the cost of insurance.

F. South Fork Valley Community – Jeff Margolis reported that he is producing a classical music program on KAVZ, 102.5 FM.

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION

The next Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Commission meeting will be held on July 20, 2017 at 6:00 PM at Silver Lake Park, 9006 Silver Lake Rd., Maple Falls, WA.

XII. ADJOURNMENT – The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Transcribed by: Daisy C. Hansen, Clerk III

Approved by: Mike McFarlane, Parks Department Director