

MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, September 21, 2017

Semiahmoo Park – Cannery Lodge
9261 Semiahmoo Parkway
Blaine, Washington

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Jeff Margolis Committee Chair at 6:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Commissioners: Susan McClendon, Chad Perrin, Richard Sturgill, Jeff Margolis, Sonja Max

Staff: Michael McFarlane, Rod Lamb, Christ Thomsen

EXCUSED

Commissioners: Kenneth Kiesner, Theresa Sygitowicz

GUEST(S)

None

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

None

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Jeff Margolis wanted to recognize Richard Sturgill for his commitment to the exhibit at the APA Museum. The Commission went on a tour of the museum and the exhibit is exquisite. Richard advised it couldn't happen without the volunteers that staff the building.

V. AGENDA

A. September 21, 2017

MOTION: Richard Sturgill moved to approve the September 21, 2017 Agenda as presented. Chad Perrin seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VI. MINUTES

A. July 20, 2017

MOTION: Sonja Max moved to approve the July 20, 2017 Minutes as written. Richard Sturgill seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. Director's Report – Michael McFarlane

- i. **Special Event Permits** – Staff will be meeting in October with the Sheriff's Office, Planning & Development Services/Fire Marshal, and the Health Department to discuss streamlining the application process of special events. Each entity plays a different role in the permit process and has some sort of authority over each special event (safety, health, complying with L&I, security, etc.), but there is no coordination between these groups. This year the Fire Marshal's office was at an event in a Whatcom County Park and found that the organizing group did not have a liquor license, even though the event was predicated on having liquor as a revenue source. The Fire Marshal contacted Parks with this concern, but it is not the responsibility of Parks to be sure the organizing group has a liquor license. The hope is to put all information on the Parks Special Event application so that when organizers of special events/music festivals apply to use a Whatcom County Park, they will be made aware of the requirements/timelines/permits/applications/etc. required by all of these entities. One challenge is that festivals are regulated based on attendance by County Code or RCW and the requirements for each are different. These differences will affect how the Bluegrass Festival, Highland Games, Ski to Sea, and 2-3 events at Birch Bay Community Park are handled. Reservations for special events in Whatcom County Parks begin in November and then are open to the public December 1st. Parks will also be looking to get a conditional use permit (between now and spring 2018) to allow camping at Hovander Park.
- ii. **Point Roberts Community Advisory Meeting – September 12** –The meeting went well and there were some good questions about what was being done and questions about the Lighthouse project. The group understands that they have a sizable donation/commitment to fund the project, but what was being asked for is much more expensive (more than twice as much) than the funds committed. Parks received a request to cut some trees at the east end of the campground (this is the end of a runway). This request has been going back and forth for several months between Public Works and the person in charge of the airfield. The trees are short pines that won't get much higher than 20-30 feet when they are mature and provide shade in the campground. Mike had a response typed up that Parks was not inclined to do any tree removals on park property, but then received an email asking about trees on the north side of the airfield. Mike has asked for clarification as to whether it's the north side or south side of the airfield that the individual is asking about. The park was there before the airfield and there aren't any records indicating any easements or agreements between the airfield and the park. The use

of this airfield is very minimal at this point, but may increase in the future if they bring small commercial airlines into Point Roberts.

- iii. **State Capital Budget** – Has not been approved and as a result, the trail projects, the Range HVAC, and the Food Bank at the Whatcom Regional Resource Center are not moving forward.
- iv. **Council Meeting** – The Wildlife Committee is working on the County's Comprehensive Plan and has released a 2017 Eco System Report. The committee is pushing hard to have some broader jurisdiction on properties and how they are developed in association with other properties in the immediate area. The Council had indicated that they will probably reauthorize the Wildlife Committee. At this point, the Eco System Report has no impact on Parks, but it's clear that there is a desire to have Public Works and Parks projects incorporated in this plan, which would mean additional cost, effort, time, etc. for Parks.
- v. **East Whatcom Regional Resource Center** – A wood heating feasibility study was completed and a pellet furnace is being considered to heat the boiler. This study is being funded by a non-profit organization working on a grant to expand the use of forest products, so there are still a lot of questions that need to be answered as to how the system would be monitored and who would pay for pellets/upkeep/etc. If a pellet furnace were to be purchased, the existing propane system would become the backup system. At some point, this would need to go to the Council and the Executive for approval.

B. Operations Report (Christ Thomsen)

- i. **Vacancies** – One of the Repair Maintenance Specialists retired in June 2017 with very short notice. A candidate from Public Works who has 23 years with the County was hired and has worked out very well. Another Repair Maintenance III employee (a carpenter) gave notice yesterday and will be transferring to Public Works as an Engineering Technician. The Park Attendant position was posted internally, but no applications were received, so that position has been posted for external recruitment and closes on October 3rd. The West Regional Park Supervisor position (that's been vacant since June 2017) is being posted again because none of the candidates for the original posting were a good fit for the department. The part-time extra help hired for the boat rentals at Samish and Silver Lake worked very well and the crews felt that the rentals ran better than years past because they were well-staffed. A survey system was implemented this year and a lot of feedback has been received from visitors. Surveys are available online, emailed to each person who has made a reservation in one of the parks, and handed out in the parks (at Silver Lake, the staff

puts one on each reservation tag when visitors arrive). Surveys should be processed in about a month.

- ii. **Lighthouse Marine Park** – The dock got a lot of use this summer and will be removed September 25th or 26th. It's a seasonal dock that is put in just before Memorial Day and taken out as soon as possible after Labor Day. The dock replacement was a very long and drawn out process with lots of complications. It started in 2012 and did not get completed until summer 2016 because of engineering, permitting, and construction requirements. The first dock self-destructed and had to be redesigned. This is the second season for this dock (the first full season, as it was only in the water for a short time in 2016) and it looks to be in good shape. This is a horrible location for a dock and Aaron Johnson has been doing a great job of taking care of it. Aaron receives lots of compliments on the work that he's done at Lighthouse Marine Park and has even reclaimed park property from the blackberries. Aaron and Rod will be getting together to look at other areas of the park to expand camping opportunities (maybe setting up some sites for bikers and kayakers).
- iii. **Fragrance Garden** – The Fragrance Garden is getting new walkways. The existing walkways (silo staves) are being removed and recycled. Additional conduit is being put in to allow for the expansion and enhancement of an irrigation system in the future. There will be sidewalks going up to the front of the house, along the parking lot, and near the tower. This project should be done by the third week of October.
- iv. **Iron Chink Shelter** – Everything is ready to go.
- v. **Water System Replacement at Headquarters** – The current water system has had seven leaks in the last 3.5 years. An engineer came out last week to provide a cost estimate for replacement of the water system. The job will go out to local contractors for quotes.
- vi. **Silver Lake Shower Building** – The shower stalls have some structural challenges which are making it difficult to make them look clean (rust/stains/etc.). The plan this winter is to figure out how to address the shower stall issue.
- vii. **Lake Whatcom Park/Chanterelle Trail and Overlook** – Construction is almost complete. There's a volunteer work party September 30th (sponsored by REI) to finish the trail and overlook. The trail will most likely be open to the public later in October after the soil has had a chance to stabilize and any problems that may arise can be addressed.
- viii. **Washington Conservation Corps Contract** – The WCC Contract is going to Council on Tuesday, September 26, 2017 and is for next year's trail construction. Whatcom County Public Works/Stormwater and the City of Bellingham partner to hire WCC every year, as it's a very cost effective way to get work done. The WCC contributes to the community because of

the work ethics instilled in Corp Members and is a great source for quality extra-help.

- ix. **Plantation Rifle Range (Michael McFarlane reported)** – There was a suicide at the Plantation Rifle Range over the past weekend (probably the fourth or fifth in the history of the range). This is not an unusual occurrence at rifle ranges and is unfortunate, but the staff handled it exceptionally well. Each time this happens, the question comes up as to whether or not handguns should be rented and the staff reassesses policies and procedures. The staff is working through that process right now.

C. Planning & Development Report (Rodney Lamb)

- i. **South Fork Park** – The Park had a “soft opening” on August 25th. The Park has three parcels; two parcels (Overby Farm and Nessel Farm) connect and the third parcel (Galbraith Farm) is separated by DNR land. Parks is working on a trail easement with DNR to connect the third parcel. The trailhead is located at Galbraith Farm. There is a twenty car parking lot for hikers/bikers and a separate parking area for equestrians (with room for ten equestrian trailer/truck combos). A trail connects the two parking areas and there is a “soft surface” mowed trail around the perimeter of the existing agricultural field. The field is still harvested and is put out as an AG license for harvesters to compete to purchase the hay. This helps because Parks doesn’t have to maintain the field and yet the field adds a wonderful experience for park users. Nessel Farm is a historic homestead that still has structures on it. South Fork Construction is restoring the farmhouse and machine shed and has done a great job. South Fork Construction is run by Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt, a descendant of Tom Nessel. Russ is very passionate about this project and the county is very fortunate to have him on the job. Jeff Margolis would like to be sure that there is some sort of announcement to newspapers/weekly’s/periodicals/etc. about the opening of South Fork Park. Staff advised the website needs to be updated and the turf area in front of the restroom building needs to be seeded before this can be done. It was also noted that there isn’t a road sign at the intersection of Mosquito Lake Road and Highway 9 designating the road as Mosquito Lake Road.
- ii. **Silver Lake Road Improvements** – Money was requested to make improvements to Silver Lake Park to correct some of the deficiencies of a park that was developed in the 1960’s (\$880,000 was approved). Originally the plan was to improve the utilities (electricity and water) and pave the roads in the Maple Creek Campground, but the cost was too high. Three other projects were identified: widening the road, paving the auxiliary parking lot near the bathhouse, and repaving the main lodge

parking area. The plan is to widen the main road (from the intersection at Silver Lake Road to the intersection where the bathhouse is) and then pave the parking area near the bathhouse and group picnic shelter. The roads will be widened using Rasar State Park as a guide. The roads in Rasar State Park are 22 feet wide (two 11 foot lanes with 2 foot shoulders). These projects will be permitted over the next couple of months and put out to bid so that construction can happen between the first day of fishing season (end of April 2018) and June 15, 2018. The third project identified was the repaving of the main lodge parking lot, but the parking lot is actually in great shape. The primary issues with the parking lot are the edge restraints of the asphalt. Currently there are creosote treated logs edging the asphalt paving. These log curbs are decaying and should be replaced with a concrete curb. This is a project that can probably be completed by our maintenance crew using extruded concrete curbs.

- iii. **Maple Creek Bridge Replacement** – Maple Creek Park is just to the south of Silver Lake Park in the town of Maple Falls. There's a log stringer bridge in this park that was damaged two years ago in a windstorm. The goal of this project was to get it done before the end of 2017, but the design and permitting didn't allow for this to happen. The plan now is to have the County purchase the bridge and as much material as possible in 2017 and then install it in 2018 when the permit is approved. The bridge is sixty feet long by six feet wide and is made of weathering steel; ipe, a tropical hardwood, is being considered for the decking.
- iv. **Hovander Maintenance Building** – The base mapping and draft floor plans have been completed.
- v. **Neset Farm House** – Rod had a slideshow, but didn't have the power cord for the projector, so he couldn't show it.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. **Whatcom in Bloom** – Jeff Margolis tried to get a hold of the President of the Flower Society and got nowhere. He has enough to do and is not going to try to chase this project down if it's not going to be done in-house.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. **Littering** – Jeff Margolis had an acquaintance write something about the world's worst beach at the south end of Lake Whatcom at Blue Canyon. Not only was it a mess, but people were deliberately throwing their stuff in the brush and making a mess. There was some confusion as to whether the property Jeff was speaking of was Park owned. Jeff advised he would get further clarification on the location of this trash problem. If the location is Park property and there is

something for the public to do there (beach access, boat launching, etc.), then a “pack it in, pack it out” type of sign would be considered.

B. Whisper Lake Sewer Proposal (Bay Horizon Park) – There is a pending request to the National Park Service and Development Services Administration from a developer who has gotten approval for a subdivision. The subdivision needs sanitary sewer and the sanitary district, Birch Bay Water & Sewer, has approved the developer tying in to the main sewer line on Alderson. There isn’t a drawback to having this done, as there is a long section of sewer line that the developer will bring up to code. The sanitary district will then take this over as a part of their infrastructure. The challenge is getting the approval from the National Park Service and GSA. They will probably condition it with an easement on these properties. Ultimately, there will be a trail connection that will go through the park and continue all the way down on the Bay Crest Trail (the trail will go right over the sewer line). The Council still needs to approve this.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Jeff Margolis announced that the Van Zandt Community Hall completed a weatherization project this summer. Part of the development was a mini movie theater with professional sound, screen, and projector. He invited everyone to the showing of The Big Lebowski at 7:00 p.m. tomorrow. Entry is \$5 per person or \$10 for a family (with free popcorn).

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION

The next Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission meeting will be held on October 19, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. at the Ferndale Senior Activity Center, 1999 Cherry Street, Ferndale, Washington.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

Transcribed by: Kristin Lunderville, Clerk III
Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director