

MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, December 16, 2021

Virtual Meeting

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Commissioners: Joe Hashmall, Terry Terry, Pete Coy, Brian Estes,
Sonja Max, Brad VanderWerff, Kristen Fagan

Staff: Michael McFarlane, Christ Thomsen

EXCUSED

None

GUESTS

None

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

None

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Brian Estes mentioned the recent flooding and expressed his sympathy to the residents of Everson, Nooksack, and Sumas.

V. AGENDA

A. December 16, 2021

MOTION: Pete Coy moved to approve the December 16, 2021 agenda as written. Joe Hashmall seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VI. MINUTES

A. November 18, 2021

MOTION: Brian Estes moved to approve the November 18, 2021 minutes as written. Pete Coy seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. Director's Report – Michael McFarlane

- i. **Staffing** – Recruitment is ongoing for the Construction & Maintenance Supervisor and the Design & Development Supervisor.

- ii. **Whatcom Million Trees Project** – Mike met with Michael Feerer from the Whatcom Million Trees Project to identify park sites for trees to be planted. Hovander Homestead Park was noted as a potential site. If Hovander were to be chosen, staff would prep the site in 2022 for volunteers to plant in the spring of 2023. Other park sites that may benefit from plantings are Bay Horizon Park and Birch Bay Beach Park.
- iii. **2022 Reservations** – 2022 Reservations opened December 1st and brought in \$130,000.
- iv. **Van Zandt Hall** – WC Parks sent an amendment to the South Fork Valley Community Association for renewal of their agreement for use of the Community Hall. The agreement was for a five-year period, but the Association President asked to change it to five one-year renewals. Once the new amendment is signed and returned, it will go to the council for approval.
- v. **Canyon Lake Community Forest** – Mike sent a letter to Sierra Pacific Industries requesting they meet with the County Executive and stakeholders regarding vehicle access to Canyon Lake Community Forest. Mike also had a phone conversation with John Gold regarding the department’s interest in opening the road to vehicle traffic in 2022.
- vi. **Capital Projects** – WC Parks staff will begin discussions on Capital Projects in January. February and March will be spent creating a tentative list of projects. March will be the last opportunity for commission members to weigh in on projects, ask questions, or add additional projects. The list will then be submitted to the County Executive to be put in a plan that will be presented to the County Council in October for approval.
- vii. **Parks Commission Update** – Brad VanderWerff is not applying for a second term on the Parks Commission. This will create a vacancy in District 3 when his term expires at the end of January. Interested individuals should contact the County Executive’s office or website for application instructions.

B. Operations Report & Design and Development Report – Christ Thomsen

- i. **Raptor Ridge Trail** – Joe Hashmall asked about the status of the Raptor Ridge Trail enhancement. Christ advised the route has been flagged and discussions have been underway with Washington Trails Association.
- ii. **Glacier Restroom** – The Glacier Restroom reopened to the public December 10th.
- iii. **Staffing** – Daniel Kaufman was hired as the Park Ranger for the South Region. Daniel previously worked for Washington State Parks and is doing very well in his new position.
- iv. **Flood Event** – The flood event is still open. Hovander and Tennant Lake were the hardest hit parks with extensive damage to trail systems, roads, fencing, buildings, and turf. Interim road repairs have been made to the

Lookout Mountain Road and will be completed by Wednesday, December 22nd. This road provides access to a number of communication towers and was washed out in two places.

- v. **Maple Creek Shower and Restroom Facility** – Construction of the Maple Creek Shower and Restroom Facility was delayed about a week due to weather, but is still on track because it had been ahead of schedule. The roof is going on this week, which will allow the contractor to warm and dry the inside so that interior work can be completed.
- vi. **Plantation Rifle Range HVAC & Roof Replacement** – The rough carpentry is done for the roof replacement. The earthwork for the concrete slab where the HVAC unit will sit is complete and the contractor will be ready to pour the slab by the end of the week.
- vii. **Nugent's Corner** – The Nugent's Corner demolition contract has been signed by the contractor and is going through internal processes to get final signature. Work is scheduled to begin in February.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. **November Flood Damage in the Parks System** – Brian Estes voiced his concerns about not reopening Hovander because it's such a popular park. Mike agreed with Brian that Hovander is a very popular park, but said that the issues at Hovander are life safety issues. Mike said that Christ and his crews have done an outstanding job on flood response. He said that Christ has done a great job processing the FEMA paperwork and gave kudos to the entire park staff for all of their work. The target date for reopening the park is Mother's Day weekend. WC Parks needs to find the funds to complete the restorations because any potential money from FEMA would not come until a much later date. Administrative staff plan to request a budget supplemental when the total cost of restoration is calculated. This will most likely be around March 2022. Christ presented the FEMA document he submitted to the Washington State Department of Military, the state's emergency response team and liaison between WC Parks and FEMA. Brian asked to interrupt and said that while he thought the photos of the flood damage were really interesting, he thought the issue for the commission was the dredging of the rivers in Everson and Nooksack and the impact that would have on Ferndale and Hovander Park. Christ said that he wasn't the best person to address the policy issue of dredging the river. Brian said he didn't agree and respectfully suggested that the parks department weigh in on the issue. Sonja agreed with Brian, but thought the commission might need more information before an informed discussion could be had about dredging. Sonja would like to put it on the agenda for January. Brian

would like to invite the Public Works director to brief the commission on the downstream effects of dredging. Brian would also like to have a representative from Lummi at the meeting to discuss the downstream effects of dredging. Pete asked if there had been any talk about raising the level of the Interpretive Center so that it's less impacted by future floods. Christ advised the construction of the Interpretive Center poses challenges because part of it's on a concrete slab. Christ said the preliminary damage assessment estimate is \$998,000.00 for department properties county wide. Pete thanked Christ for all of the work he's done to put things back together. Christ said he would pass that along to the staff because they are the ones getting dirty and getting the job done. He advised it's hard for staff to not be able to get things fixed right away; they want to be able to open the parks and provide that service to the public. Sonja thanked the staff for doing all of the extra work on top of the full-time jobs they already have maintaining everything.

B. Preliminary Trailhead Locations – Lake Whatcom Park – Mike shared the Lake Whatcom Park Trailhead Improvements Site Analysis Map from MacLeod Reckord LLC. Currently, there are two parking areas at Lake Whatcom Park. Access #1 has one small parking area and Access #2 has two parking areas and a restroom. MacLeod Reckord was asked to provide a parking area that would accommodate 100 – 150 vehicles. They came up with three potential areas; one large area on the other side of Northshore Road and the two current access areas. They indicated they could provide the requested amount of parking by adding on to the two existing parking areas. Staff asked for a budget estimate for the two parking areas so that the project can be worked into the capital improvement plan.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION

The next Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission meeting will be held virtually on January 20, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

Transcribed by: Kristin Lunderville, Clerk IV

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director