

## **Agenda Item #1 for July 21, 2022 Commission Meeting:**

### **Identification of Funding Opportunities to Support the County Parks System.**

**Background:** The Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Commission is assigned the responsibility of advising the Director of Parks and Recreation on proposals for “acquisitions, plans, programs, policies and **funding** for parks and open space.” The proposed capital budget presented by the Parks Director to the Commission on May 19, 2022 reflects a situation in which only critical repair and maintenance needs can be met. As the County’s population grows demand for more parks, recreation, and open space is likely to greatly outpace the capacity of the capital budget to meet it.

**Proposal:** Other parks systems have responded to this situation in a number of ways. As a first step, the Commission identify options and opportunities for increased funding in order to support a discussion with the Director. To form a basis for this discussion, the Chair name a subcommittee to identify options for expanded funding opportunities. These options are to be identified in a report submitted to the Chair for inclusion in the October Commission Meeting as an agenda item to be discussed with the new Director.

To support work of the subcommittee, the Chair request that Parks Staff provide Commissioner Boteler with a report identifying projected parks capital needs over the next five to ten years and capital projects which have been completed over the last five years with associated sources of funding. The report would include data-supported trend lines in funding for repair, renovation, new construction and operations.

The subcommittee’s report would serve as the basis for an agenda item which would be scheduled for the October Commission Meeting. The agenda item would include presentation of the subcommittee report (which had been approved by the Chair) and discussion with the Parks Director. During the meeting Commissioners would provide insights and input to the Director on the potential for each funding option. It is very unlikely that programs will be identified that parks staff aren’t already familiar with. The purpose of the report is to support a discussion on the issue between the Commission and the Director.

Development of this report and discussion by the Commission is not intended in any way to detract from the Executive’s or County Council’s priorities for funding. The Commission recognizes that agency staff usually cannot pursue funding initiatives. Typically, these initiatives are conducted by concerned citizens and user groups. The discussion would include an identification of first steps in how these citizen groups can best coordinate with the Department.

**Action Items:**

The Chair name and charge a Subcommittee with developing a report identifying options and opportunities for funding the County Parks System. The report is to be presented and discussed at the October Commission Meeting.

Parks Staff prepare a report identifying projected parks capital needs over the next five to ten years and identifying capital projects which have been completed over the last five years with associated sources of funding. The report would include data-supported trend lines in funding for repair, renovation, new construction and operations. This report should be routed to Commissioner Boteler by August 19, 2022.

Respectfully submitted:

Franklin E. Boteler  
Commissioner

## **Agenda Item #2 for July 21, 2022 Commission Meeting:**

**Commission discussion on how to best advise the new Parks Director of parks, recreation, and senior service issues in a proactive fashion.**

### **Background:**

The Whatcom County Council prescribes that “the purpose of the Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission is to advise the Parks & Recreation Director on parks, recreation, and senior services issues.” The current Commission Meeting format is predominately used by Commissioners to inform the Director of these issues by Commissioners asking questions about contracts, memoranda of agreement, and other legal documents before they proceed to County Council for approval. This reactive format has served the Parks Director well as he has had many years of experience and has been very knowledgeable about parks, recreation, and senior services issues. In short, the Commission (and its meeting format) has fallen into a pattern of working with a very experienced and informed Director.

However, a new Parks Director will soon begin who is new to the community. It would serve this Director well, and better fulfill the Commission’s fundamental responsibility, if the Commission revised its meeting format to facilitate advising the Parks & Recreation Director on parks, recreation, and senior services issues in a proactive fashion. This could be achieved by all Commissioners participating in a roundtable during the “Commissioner Comments” section of the agenda. Commissioners would conduct this roundtable in the vernacular of providing pertinent information to the Director. He would not be expected to provide answers or resolve issues on the spot. Informing the new Director of these issues in a proactive manner would better enable the Director to lead the agency in fulfilling the needs of County residents.

### **Proposal:**

At the beginning of each Commission Meeting, as an addendum to the “Commissioner Comments” Section, each Commissioner take up to five minutes to inform the Parks Director (and fellow Commissioners) on “parks, recreation, and senior services issues.” This could include items such as a reflection on a recent county park visit, pertinent items of concern in the districts/stakeholder groups that Commissioners represent, items that traveling Commissioners have seen in other park systems they would like this system to consider, major parks system maintenance/repair concerns, grant opportunities for the agency to consider, items in their community Commissioners believe the Director should be aware of, emerging needs for recreational opportunities, expanded regulations for park use, and pertinent items Commissioners have read that they would like to bring to the attention of the Director. These roundtable items would not have to be (and in most circumstances would not be) major items. For instance, a statement by a Commissioner that he/she/they recently visited a park facility, had a wonderful

time, and thought all of the other visitors enjoyed the park is an important item for the Director to hear. It helps to balance the Director's perspective with other inputs he has.

All of the Commissioners would take a turn in roundtable fashion so that the broad interest of the County is represented during this roundtable. In his daily meetings the new Director is likely to be primarily exposed to individuals who have complaints and/or the leaders of special interest groups. Hearing from the Commission in a roundtable fashion would give the Director a unique opportunity to be exposed to the broad interests of County residents.

**Action Item:**

Motion: The current ongoing Commission Agenda Item entitled "Commissioner Comments" be amended to read "Commissioner Comments—Roundtable."

Respectfully submitted:

Franklin E. Boteler  
Commissioner

### **Agenda Item #3 for July 21, 2022 Commission Meeting:**

**Commission discussion on how to best advise the new Parks Director of parks, recreation, and senior service issues when reviewing proposals for “acquisitions, plans, programs, policies and funding for parks and open space.”**

#### **Background:**

The Whatcom County Council prescribes that “the purpose of the Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission is to “...provide recommendations in the development and review of acquisitions, plans, programs, policies and funding for parks and open space.” Some past practices have done this by providing the Commission the opportunity to comment upon legal documents (contracts, memoranda of agreement, cooperative agreements, ...) which have been signed and approved by the County Executive. Approval by the County Executive prior to Parks and Recreation Commission input could be perceived as finalization of the document before input has been received.

#### **Proposal:**

Where feasible and acceptable to the County Executive, Commission input into the development and review of “acquisitions, plans, programs, policies and funding for parks and open space” should occur before the County Executive has approved them. Doing this would provide the Commission a fuller opportunity to have input on these items.

It is understood that there are some circumstances in which these “acquisitions, plans, programs, policies and funding for parks and open space” must be held draft/confidential until the County Executive has approved them. For instance, some legal matters (out of necessity, and in the interest of protecting the County’s resources) must be held confidential until they have received full review and approval by the Executive’s legal advisors. Some land acquisition plans must be held draft/confidential to avoid unnecessary speculation. And, the County Executive, like many elected officials, may prefer to keep agency budget submittals draft/confidential until they are ready for Council (and therefore public) review in the interest of maintaining the orderly business of government.

However, the majority of legal documents submitted to the Parks and Recreation Commission reflect the ongoing normal business of an agency working to achieve its mission. In order to provide a full opportunity for the Commission to provide input into this ongoing business, as a matter of normal operating business these documents should be submitted to the Commission before they have been approved by the County Executive.

**Action Item:**

Motion: Where feasible and acceptable to the County Executive, “acquisitions, plans, programs, policies and funding for parks and open space” should be submitted to the Parks and Recreation Commission for input before they are approved by the County Executive.

Respectfully submitted:

Franklin E. Boteler  
Commissioner