

MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, February 15, 2018

Bellingham Senior Activity Center
315 Halleck Street
Bellingham, 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: Chad Perrin, Kenneth Kiesner, Richard Sturgill, Sonja Max, Brad VanderWerff, Jeff Margolis

Staff: Michael McFarlane, Christ Thomsen, Rod Lamb

EXCUSED

Commissioners: Susan McClendon

GUEST(S)

Chris Navarre, Daniel Probst

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

Chris Navarre wanted to request that the Parks Commission, if they have any influence on the County Council, reject the DNR's zoning amendment proposal. This amendment was drafted by DNR in between meetings and was never given an opportunity for discussion among the committee or the public. The amendment is very premature and if it were to be placed on the docket for 2018, it would circumvent the purpose of the committee itself.

Daniel Probst presented a new letter about the Bellingham to Mount Baker trail. He hopes the Parks Commission will continue to support the building of this trail by helping guide it through DNR's final planning phase.

Michael McFarlane shared a letter from Heather Swanson pertaining to DNR's proposed Zoning Amendment.

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

None

V. AGENDA

A. February 15, 2018

MOTION: Sonja Max moved to modify the agenda to add Daniel Probst and the Bellingham to Baker Trail under New Business. Kenneth Kiesner seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

MOTION: Kenneth Kiesner moved to accept the February 15, 2018 Agenda as amended. Chad Perrin seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VI. MINUTES

A. December 21, 2017

MOTION: Sonja Max moved to approve the December 21, 2017 Minutes as written. Kenneth Kiesner seconded. Brad VanderWerff, Richard Sturgill, and Chad Perrin abstained.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. Planning & Development Report (Rodney Lamb)

- i. **Silver Lake Road Improvements** – The SEPA determination of non-significance was amended and is now complete. Rod emailed for a status update on February 13th, but has not heard back. The bid package is being assembled and will be advertised for competitive bid on February 28th or March 7th. Both of these dates will allow the bid to open no later than March 20th. The plan is to have the contractor mobilized and begin construction following opening day of fishing season (April 29th).
- ii. **Lighthouse Boardwalk Renovation** – HB Hansen completed the \$23,000 change order to fix the structural deficiencies in the deck structure before the end of 2017. Rod visited the site on January 31st and the new deck framing was being installed. The framing passed inspection on February 6th and now the Trex composite decking is being installed. Whatcom County Parks' electrician is running new conduit so that electrical cable can be pulled once the decking is complete. The contractor is on schedule to complete work by March 21st.
- iii. **Maple Creek Bridge Replacement** – Big R submitted shop drawings at the end of December 2017, but the project doesn't have final permit approval. This does not affect the manufacture of the bridge, but affects the ability to install it. Rod is waiting for the staff at PDS to work through the planning and permitting processes (mitigation plan, shoreline approval, building permit, etc.).
- iv. **Lummi Island Stairs** – The wooden stairs that provide access to the shoreline are being replaced with premanufactured aluminum stairs beginning February 19th. The deck on the overlook is being replaced with lpe, a tropical hardwood. This project should be completed in about four weeks.

- v. **Hovander Maintenance Shop** – The 20' by 20' building located in the central portion of Hovander Park is being removed. This building houses trucks and tractors for Whatcom County Parks. A pole building is going to be built on a new site that is out of the flood plain and provides better access throughout the park. The wetlands survey and critical areas report are complete and the building site will be laid out to minimize impacts to the wetland buffers. A contractor will be hired to perform the site work, install utilities, and build the shell, and then Whatcom County Park employees will complete the interior improvements. The intent is to have this project completed by the end of 2018.
- vi. **Semiahmoo Restroom/Concession Building** – KingWorks Consulting Engineers were hired to provide a structural upgrade proposal to remove some interior walls and open up the space. These improvements will hopefully increase flexibility of the building and make it more attractive to a concessionaire. Whatcom County Park employees will perform the work once permits are approved (probably in the fall).
- vii. **Project Quarterly Reports** – Project Quarterly Reports are on the County's website and provide updates to the County Council and the public on current projects (description, permits required, project status, estimated completion date, funding sources, budget status).

B. Operations Report – Christ Thomsen

- i. **Staffing Update** – An offer was made for the Regional Park Supervisor position at the end of 2017, but the individual declined. The job was reposted and the first group of applications has been received. The Repair Maintenance III position (carpenter) was filled with an applicant who works for the National Park Service. He is a journeyman preservation carpenter and starts on February 26. Seasonal extra help recruitment has opened so that employees will be on board in April and May (at least six employees want to return from last year).
- ii. **Residential Rental Program** – Whatcom County Parks & Recreation has a residential rental program made up of thirteen properties with houses that the county either acquired or had donated. Currently, there are two vacant rental properties (Dittrich Park and Sunset Farm).
- iii. **Winter storms** – Winter storms have caused more trees to fall than usual. A crew was hired to take some trees down on park property because they were around houses. There was a minor landslide on the Hertz Trail in January. It is in the same location as the landslide from last year and as a result, the permit allowing cleanup was reinitiated (it's a five year permit) and made the process much faster. There was a slope failure in Lookout Mountain Park on one of the forest roads managed by Whatcom County Parks. Unfortunately, it was right above a house in Sudden Valley.

Contractors were able to stabilize the area and now a long term fix is being sought.

- iv. **Fragrance Garden** – The installation of the floor in the garden is complete. The benches are still being worked on and there is a piece of concrete work by the water tower that will be done later in the season. Left over funds allowed for the purchase and installation of new doors to the public restrooms at the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center.
- v. **Water System Replacement at Headquarters** – A portion of the water distribution system at Whatcom County Parks Headquarters was replaced because of consistent failures. The work is essentially complete and will be finalized after a walkthrough with the contractor.
- vi. **Samish Deck** – The deck on the day lodge was scheduled to be replaced in 2017, but wasn't. The materials have been purchased and installation will begin this spring.
- vii. **Iron Chink Shelter** – The necessary permits are in place and the schedule is being set for archaeologists to monitor the site while the earth disturbance occurs.
- viii. **Plantation Rifle Range HVAC Replacement** – The State passed their capital budget, so the Plantation Rifle Range HVAC Replacement project will be restarted. The term expired on the funds for this project, so Whatcom County Parks will have to go back to the County Council and articulate the need for the project again. Costs have increased substantially and will affect the project's budget.
- ix. **Lake Whatcom Trails project** – A 2018 construction plan is being developed by Whatcom County Parks, stakeholders, trail user groups, and the City of Bellingham.
- x. **South Fork Park** – The current fence at South Fork Park will be extended to include the equestrian trailhead because vehicles are being driven in the agriculture field, on sections of the trail, and down to the river. These trespassing incidents have been reported to the Sheriff's Office. Vehicle trespassing is also occurring at Hovander Park, so additional fencing will be put in there as well. This will total about 2500 feet of fence being installed this spring.

C. Director's Report – Michael McFarlane

- i. **Everson/Sumas Senior Centers** – The coordinators at the Everson and Sumas Senior Centers have been given permission to work an additional hour on Monday and Friday.
- ii. **Council on Aging** – The Council on Aging has indicated that they may be interested in taking over the Sumas, Everson, and Welcome Senior Centers, but not the Point Roberts Senior Center. The Council on Aging delivers the meal program to these centers and is better equipped than Whatcom County Parks to provide programming. The contracts for the

2019-2020 budget could be written to include payment from Whatcom County Parks to the Council on Aging for the retention of the seasonal extra help assistants at these centers.

- iii. **Whisper Lake Development** – The Sanitary District turned down the sewer upgrade through Bay Horizon Park because they did not like the required Federal language.
- iv. **Blaine/Birch Bay Park & Rec District** – The Blaine/Birch Bay Park & Rec District is exploring the use of the open areas at Bay Horizon Park for athletic fields.
- v. **NRPA** – The NRPA information was updated, so all Commissioners should receive their magazines.
- vi. **Maple Falls Park Group** – The letter of agreement with the Maple Falls Park Group was signed at the end of the year.
- vii. **Administrative Assistant** – Shannon Batdorf was hired to replace Darla Smith. Shannon previously worked in the Whatcom County Finance Department.
- viii. **Towers** – Whatcom County legal staff is working on a new template for the tower lease agreements. Two other tower leases are expiring in a couple of years and one of the tower companies is interested in renewing. Whatcom County Parks is working with Skagit County and the Sheriff's Office on an agreement with another tower company that is planning on installing a 90-foot tower when the ATC tower is removed.
- ix. **2017 Budget** – The 2017 budget was closed out this week.
- x. **Electric bicycles** – The Washington State House approved a bill regarding electric assist bicycles. The bill does not require these bicycles to be allowed on trails; but as time goes on there will be more and more requests to use them. Motorized vehicles are currently not allowed on any county park trails.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. **Capital Improvement Project List (Draft)** – Parks staff is reviewing the 20-year list of Capital Improvement Projects to develop a 6-year plan and a list of projects for funding in the 2019-2020 operating budget. This list will be submitted to the Executive and then forwarded to the council for approval as part of the budget process. Projects are chosen based on necessity and funding sources. Some projects are completed in phases; the design/engineering/permitting may be funded in one 2-year budget cycle and then the construction phase will be funded in a second 2-year budget cycle.

B. DNR Baker to Bellingham Recreation Planning – The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has been meeting since January 2016 to create a recreation plan for state-managed land between Mount Baker and Bellingham. DNR put together a 17 member planning committee of stakeholders to formulate proposals and is currently down to two proposals (proposals D and E). There is a meeting February 20 at the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center for public comment and another one at the Bellingham Cruise Terminal on February 21 (both from 6:00pm – 8:30pm). DNR will evaluate what they hear at these community meetings and submit a draft recreation plan in the summer or fall of 2018. Issues arising from these proposals include connectivity with county park properties, off road vehicle access, and preservation. DNR also requested a zoning amendment in December 2017 to allow ATF and off road vehicle parks in commercial forest zones. If the county council docket this request, it would be the first step in terms of allowing off road vehicles on these lands. Chris Navarre believes DNR is premature in requesting to docket this, as it was requested without any public input or issues of enforcement. Conversation ensued on the docketing of this request.

MOTION: Richard Sturgill moved to “Recommend to the Executive that he conveys to the County Council not to docket DNR’s zoning amendment request (file:PLN 2018-0004 pertaining to allowing motorized trail systems and trailheads in the Commercial Forestry (CF) District) at this time due to potential impact on county, county park lands and lack of information on DNR’s Baker to Bay plan.” Sonja Max seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

C. 2017 Visitation and Use – Park visitation counts for the past year were passed out.

D. Elections for Chair and Vice Chair –

MOTION: Richard Sturgill motioned to nominate Jeffrey Margolis as chair. Sonja Max seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

MOTION: Kenneth Kiesner motioned to nominate Sonja Max as vice chair. Chad Perrin seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

E. Daniel Probst – Daniel Probst presented a letter about a new route for the Bellingham to Mount Baker trail in hopes the Parks Commission will continue to support the building of this trail by helping guide it through DNR’s planning phase

MOTION: Richard Sturgill motioned to send a letter to the Executive regarding trail planning. Chad Perrin seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- A. Jeff Margolis** announced that on March 8th & 9th, the Van Zandt Community Hall will be getting \$10,000 worth of windows. The old windows will be recycled.
- B. Jeff Margolis** announced that on February 16th, the theater at the Van Zandt Community Hall will be showing Singing in the Rain.
- C. Jeff Margolis** announced that on March 15th (6:00 - 8:00 p.m.) the Van Zandt Community Hall is collaborating with the Whatcom Family Network and the EWRRRC to present a dinner forum. Dinner will be provided and the subject of the forum will be Substance Abuse in the Foothills: Fact versus Fiction. Guest speakers are: Sheriff Bill Elfo, School Superintendent Charlie Burleigh, the Health Department Program Director, and someone from the Whatcom Community Family Network.
- D. Jeff Margolis** announced that on March 17th, there is a forum sponsored by the South Fork Valley Watershed Education Committee at Acme Elementary from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. Professor Mitchell from the Western Washington University and Sue Blake from Washington State University Whatcom County Extension will be doing a presentation on water quality and quantity in the South Fork Valley.
- E. Sonja Max** announced that on February 23rd & 24th, Recreation Northwest is doing their Outdoor Recreation Summit & Expo. The Summit is on February 23rd at the Bellingham Technical College and the Expo is on February 24th at the Bellingham Cruise Terminal.
- F. Jeff Margolis** announced that on March 18th, he is singing Haydn's music called Seasons and a bunch of Robert Frost poetry.

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION

The next Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission meeting will be held on March 15, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. at the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center in Ferndale, Washington with a tour of Fragrance Garden at 5:30 p.m. to see the new walkways.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:39 p.m.

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