

WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, February 16, 2017

Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Administrative Office
3373 Mt. Baker Highway
Bellingham, Washington

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Jeff Margolis, Vice-Chair at 6:07 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

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

Staff: Mike McFarlane, Christ Thomsen and Rod Lamb

EXCUSED

Paul Woodcock

GUESTS

Daniel Probst

Mary Carlson

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS / COMMUNICATIONS

A. COMMENTS – Daniel Probst, President, Cascade Runners. Daniel provided an update on the Bellingham / Mt. Baker Trail. He shared that the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail administrators are in the process of re-routing the trail to obtain permanent easements and are interested in incorporating portions of the Bellingham / Mt. Baker trail.

Daniel announced that there is a race from Concrete to Mt. Baker and provided a promotional presentation on the race.

B. COMMUNICATIONS – NONE

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS - NONE

V. AGENDA

A. February 16, 2017 Agenda

MOTION: It was moved by Richard Sturgill and seconded by Theresa Sygitowicz to accept the February 16, 2017 agenda as presented. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VI. MINUTES

A. December 15, 2016 Minutes

MOTION: It was moved by Ken Kiesner and seconded by Jeff Margolis to accept the December 15, 2016 minutes as written. The motion carried with three abstentions, Richard Sturgill, Theresa Sygitowicz and Susan McClendon who were not present at the meeting.

B. January 19, 2017 Minutes

MOTION: It was moved by Ken Kiesner and seconded by Susan McClendon to accept the January 19, 2017 minutes as written. The motion carried with two abstentions, Richard Sturgill and Theresa Sygitowicz who were not present at the meeting.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. DIRECTOR'S REPORT – MIKE MCFARLANE

1. Funding Request for State Capital Budget Requests – The Department has submitted two projects for the State Capital Budget. They are as follows: 1. Silver Lake Park Improvements for \$1,500,000 and Birch Bay Beach Park for \$2,500,000.

The County on a whole has submitted a total of five projects. The Department's requests are on the lower end of the priority, and are not likely to be funded. These funds are appropriated by the Legislature.

2. Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) Plan Funding Requests.

The Department has requested that the following requests be added to the CEDs Plan;
South Fork Park Trail Development - \$1,145,000
Plantation Rifle Range- \$729,327
Lake Whatcom Trails- \$443,000.00
Lummi Island Overlook- \$100,000

Mike explained that it is a requirement to be included on the CED list for public works and capital projects to be eligible for economic development funds, a number of grant programs and other funding sources.

The plan is county-wide and is compiled by Council on Governments (GOG) based on project information gathered from the agencies and municipalities. The plan is available on-line.

3. House Bill (HB) 1820 – HB 1820 will raise the percentage cap on conservation futures used for maintenance and operations from 15% to 25%. The Department is recommending support for this change. These funds cannot be used for development. The Department has over 13,000 acres that are eligible for Conservation Futures, and the additional funds would give the County the flexibility of using them if needed for a major event such as a slide or fire.

The bill is currently with the House in Finance Committee. There is an avenue on-line where support can be expressed.

4. Lookout Mountain - American Tower Discontinued Use – American Tower has notified the Department that they will discontinue the Lookout Mt. lease in August. This will mean a loss to the Department of an annual payment of \$11,000.00 with a 3% annual escalator, their rental fee of 30% of the net rental and \$700.00 annually for road maintenance.

The tower is for sale. If another vendor purchases the tower a new lease agreement would be developed with the new vendor. Mike discussed that the cellular industry is changing transmission avenues from towers to utility poles, and therefore it may not be likely that another vendor would purchase the tower.

The availability of the tower has also been shared the County Emergency Operations Center as they are currently looking for one.

5. Camp Horizon Contract – Mike met with the Camp Horizon's Executive Director and relevant staff to discuss exercising the 25 year contract renewal clause early by approximately 3-4 years to assist with funding for required fire code changes and other improvements. Mike has contacted the National Park Service because they have authority under the government surplus property program and the 25 year renewal clause is in the original lease agreement that they approved.

Camp Horizon has also given notification that they will vacate the hostel building because the roof is leaking and it is cost prohibitive for them to bring the building up to fire code. The Department is exploring demolition because they have not been able to identify a use for the building, the building contains a great deal of asbestos and would not meet building and code requirements, and that the open space would be useful for Camp Horizon activities.

The Department is currently waiting for a letter of request from Camp Horizon to exercise the early option clause.

6. Little Squalicum Park – COB Estuary Project. – The City of Bellingham leases this property from the County. They will be conducting soil tests to determine that there is no contamination moving off site that would affect their estuary project. At the time of remediation and cleanup there was no contamination detected in that area.

7. Anchorage Museum Request For Loan of Iron Chink – The Anchorage Museum has been building a new addition and exhibit at their facility and has requested a permanent/long term loan of one of the two salmon processing machines that we currently have in storage for their exhibit.

A request will be prepared for Council action and will be placed on the Park Commission agenda next month in order to place it with Council by May, 2017.

The Department has agreed to power wash and crate the item and the Anchorage Museum will pay for shipping.

8. Senior Services Round Table – The Northwest Regional Council will host a round table meeting to discuss senior services and referrals. The meeting will be held at the Park Administrative offices on Thursday, March 2nd

All of the center's staff members have been invited to share information on senior center operations, changes and budgets. Anyone that is interested in coming is welcome.

9. Canyon Lake Access / Sierra Pacific Industries – The Department has received a response from Sierra Pacific Industries that they are not willing to grant the requested 3,000 foot easement that would provide access through North Fork Road near Racehorse Creek.

Mike will meet with the County Executive to discuss a response, however up to now Sierra Pacific has been relatively non-responsive and it is expected that overall they are not willing to grant public access to the park by this route.

He discussed the difficulty in restoring the stream crossing coming off of Mosquito Lake Road as historically the area continues to experience major blow outs that could happen during any major storm event, and therefore present challenges from both a financial and engineering standpoint.

Mike discussed the history behind the current easement and previous maintenance cost sharing agreements that were originally held with Crown Pacific. He discussed that when Crown Pacific went into bankruptcy Sierra Pacific Industries took over their holdings.

The County will continue to monitor the situation and will formulate a response. Once this is complete if no progress is made all public inquiries will be referred to Sierra Pacific. The Commission will be updated as information becomes available.

10. Parks Commission Vacancy – Three applications have been received for the vacant Parks Commission position. The Executive is currently away and it is assumed that he will make a decision when he returns next week.

B. OPERATIONS' REPORT – CHRIST THOMSEN –

1. Staffing

Park Attendant – The position has been filled. The new hire will begin February 26, 2017.

Park Ranger - Internal recruitment will begin on or around Feb 27 or 28, 2017.

Seasonal / Extra Help – All seasonal staff for trails and grounds maintenance are open for application. The job notice will close in the next couple of days. Once closed, interviews will follow.

There was some discussion on the County's hiring practices in terms of veteran's preference and that the County does not provide for this practice. There was some discussion on whether the Commission should make a recommendation to make this a practice. Theresa Sygitowicz agreed to do some research into this matter.

2. Projects

Firearms and Archery Range Recreation (Farr) Grant Presentation – A presentation was provided to the grant board on 1/13/16 for the Plantation Rifle Range roof and HVAC replacements. The grant request is for \$149,000.00 and is matched with \$125,000.00 in County REET I funds. The presentation was received well with positive feedback from Recreation and Conservation Office. It is expected that the Department will be notified tomorrow whether or not the funding was awarded, where the project scored, and if we are in the running for the funding.

Iron Chink Shelter – The project required a shoreline development permit from the City of Blaine. The Department staff presented the project to the Planning Commission on 2/9/17, and the permit was approved with some conditions relating to cultural resources. Once the actual permit is received the Department will address these conditions.

Ferndale Senior Activity Center Roof Replacement – This project was completed last year however when the permit was issued there were two ancillary permit requirements identified. One was to install a backflow prevention device and a food, oil and grease interceptor on the kitchen sinks.

After additional research it was determined that the original request would have cost between \$10-15,000.00 and that because the water distribution system at the Center is part of a shared water system all the work would have to take place in the middle of the parking lot, which is the City of Ferndale's property, and would pose many difficulties in installation. A site visit was scheduled with the City of Ferndale who determined that they will address the backflow prevention issue and that instead of requiring a full tap interceptor there was an option to install an under-sink device that will bring the price to around \$800.00. Quotes for the project were received this week and once the ancillary issues are completed the permit for the roof replacement will be closed.

There was some discussion regarding the function and installation of a backflow device.

Samish Bridge – Rod Lamb, Don Hunger, West Region Lead Ranger, and Christ attended a public meeting last month and a follow-up meeting has been held with Whatcom County Public Works to discuss the bridge concept and construction. Christ announced that there will be another public meeting on 2/23/17 at 6:00 PM at the Samish Fire Hall.

Bridge materials and alternate traffic routes were discussed. It was discussed that a pedestrian walkway is not currently a design requirement, but it is felt that this is desirable and efforts to justify including it and identify funding continue.

3. Power Point Presentation – Trails / Weather Events

Trails

Christ provided a slide show on the work that has been completed on the trails over the last year. The presentation was developed by the Park Conservation Steward for the maintenance stakeholder groups.

The presentation included pictures of the volunteers installing new signage, a new bridge that was built in the Chuckanuts and Pine and Cedar Lakes, the re-decking of a number of bridges, the stabilization of a number of stringers in the Stimpson Family Nature Reserve, and a waterfall overlook at Lookout Mt. Forest Preserve. Christ identified the stakeholders that participated, the materials used and the project funding sources.

Also discussed was the ECHO system that has been implemented on our web site and how it has been cooperatively implemented with Larrabee State Park and Department of Natural Resources lands, providing for an emergency management system for trail injuries throughout the Chuckanut Mountain trail systems.

Additional slides provided views of the planned White Chanterelle overlook trail, brushwork that was completed in the Canyon Lake Community Forest, the re-routing of the Chuckanut Falls trail to reduce tight switchbacks, the installation of a geotextile fabric to reduce slip hazard on a Lake Whatcom Park boardwalk trail and three weather related landslides that are currently being addressed.

Also included were views of the new Lake Whatcom Park proposed trail that was approved by Council in the Lookout Mountain Forest Preserve Trail Plan. Discussions included project timelines and funding. Slides included trail route maps identifying the route that would be completed in 2017 and future segments of the project.

The 2017 portion of the project will be a pedestrian and bicycle ascending only trail that is roughly two miles and will lead up to the recently built waterfall overlook. It will be built using some existing user built trails and some features of the original trail.

Other items discussed were the construction constraints such as the topography slopes greater than 70%, stream buffer zones, and wetland complexes that were taken into account in determining the trail route.

Weather Events

East Region - A set of slides showed the snow event at Silver Lake Park that resulted in a blanketing of 32 inches of snow in a 24 hour period and resulted in a power outage that required the campgrounds to be closed and campers rescheduled.

West Region – Slides of Hovander, Semiahmoo and Bay Horizon were provided. During the snow event the West region experienced freezing doors and locks at a number of our facilities.

Once staff was able to get out into the parks they found many instances of fallen trees and increased woody debris that needed to be cleaned up.

It was discussed that many parks such as Canyon Lake Community Forest, Stimpson Reserve and many properties in the watershed do not receive active maintenance unless it poses a public hazard but that all areas that are touched by the public are cleaned up and maintained for safety reasons.

It was discussed that the Department does not have monitoring stations in the parks that record benchmarks and ongoing weather changes over time but that the Whatcom Land

Trust does, and conducts annual inspections to monitor changes over time, and provides written reports on properties that are jointly owned and/or managed with the Department.

C. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT – ROD LAMB

1. South Fork Park Trailhead Development – Work on this project continues to be on hold due to weather.

The trail easement with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to connect Galbraith Farm to Overby Farm and will allow for a connection to Nessel Farm has been finalized. The Department does have a meeting this week with DNR and tribal members to discuss trail alignment and the proposed trail and bridge location.

2. Silver Lake Road & Electrical Improvements – Work continues to re-scope the project to identify alternative that will fit within the current budget.

One project that has been identified is the installation of dry hydrant that is required by the County Fire Marshall. Rod met with the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFD) to determine water velocity near the inlet so that no fish will be harmed when the fire engines hook up to the hydrant. It was determined through meetings with biologists that removing some of the Yellow Flag Iris should be removed to mitigate the impact of the proposed dry hydrant. The Whatcom County Noxious Weed Board was contacted to provide best management practice to accomplish this and their suggestion was to remove the iris through mechanical process.

3. Lighthouse Boardwalk Renovation – Structural drawings are approximately 90% complete and the design is being moved forward with the play area. Several playground manufacturers are developing alternative designs. It is anticipated that the designs will be completed in the next two to three weeks. The timeline is to have the designs completed by March, permitting completed by spring and construction to begin next summer/fall.

4. Birch Bay Community Park –The consultant has made some edits to correct minor typos and complete some additional requested figures regarding the cost estimates and maintenance costs by phase to the designs that were presented to the Commission last month. Once the plans are completed they will move forward to a Council work session in early March to provide them with an update prior to being presented for approval at the next full Council meeting.

There was some discussion regarding the public process that was followed to develop the plan. Rod stated that the landscape architect was very sensitive to understanding and incorporating the wishes of the public when drafting the design.

5. Lake Whatcom Trails – On-site meeting were held with the Planning and Development Services Natural Resources' supervisor to identify critical areas that are going to be part of the permitting review, and is a good example of work that will be done when incorporating existing user built trails and realigning sections that need improvement. This will be the test case for a programmatic permitting approach that will improve and reduce the time required for this phase of any project. Rod discussed the

steps to the approach and how it will benefit the future timeline of the project in terms of permitting and implementing future projects.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - NONE

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair – Mike discussed deferring the elections to the next meeting with Paul Woodcock who is agreeable with this plan. It was also the consensus of those present to table the election of Chair and Vice-Chair until the March meeting.

B. Requested Recommendation of approval of the Resolution Authorizing The Use of Parks Property for Road Purposes – Mike provided the resolution for Commission comment and discussed the nexus behind the resolution in that this is for the Birch Bay berm project that runs parallel to Birch Bay Drive, and that he would be looking for a recommendation for approval from the Park Commission prior to it moving forward to County Council next week.

Jeff Margolis stated that he will recommend approval of the resolution out of respect for the desires of the community but wanted to state for the record that based on a report that he has submitted to the Director and the Chair from the U.S. Navy pertaining to the shoreline rise in this area, it is his concern that the berm is going to fail.

MOTION: It was moved by Theresa Sygitowicz and seconded by Richard Sturgill to recommend the approval for the Resolution Authorizing the Use of Parks Property for Road Purposes. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Request Recommendation of approval for an easement request by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to facilitate hatchery improvements on Brannian Creek – Lake Whatcom – Mike discussed that this item will be on Council agenda meeting after next. The easement has passed through County legal, will not have any impact on future development on the park, and will allow WDFW access to stage and conduct work in a small area on the Park side of the stream.

The request is to recommend approval of the easement and if passed by Council the Department will see that the document is recorded and distributed.

MOTION: It was moved by Theresa Sygitowicz and seconded by Jeff Margolis to recommend the approval of the WDFW easement request to stage and conduct work on the park side of Brannian Creek to facilitate hatchery improvements. The motion passed unanimously.

D. Request recommendation of approval for the contract for services agreement with Whatcom Council on Aging for the Senior Activity Program at the Bellingham Senior Activity Center. – See discussion below.

E. Request recommendation of approval for the contract for services agreement with the Jet Oldsters for the Senior Activity Program at the Ferndale Senior Activity Center. – See discussion below.

F. Request recommendation of approval for the Inter-local Agreement with the City of Blaine for the operation of the Senior Activity Program at the Blaine Senior Center. –
See discussion below.

G. Request recommendation of approval for the Inter-local Agreement with the City of Lynden for the operation of the Senior Activity Program at the Lynden Senior Center. –
See discussion below.

H. Request recommendation of approval for the scheduling agreement with the Jet Oldsters for the Ferndale Senior Activity Center. – See discussion below.

Discussion of Agenda Items D – H - Mike stated that all the contracts referenced in Agenda Items D-H were sent in a packet for the Council Agenda, with the exception of the Birch Bay Senior Center / City of Blaine Inter-local Agreement, which had not yet been signed. This contract has been forwarded the Executive's office and Council but it is not clear at this time if the item was received in time to be place on Council agenda for the upcoming meeting.

It was discussed that there are not any substantial changes other than a minor modification in the language pertaining to the required insurance and the budget increase of 2.25% that was previously approved by County. Each contract was discussed in terms of services and the agencies that provide them, building ownership and the contracts that involve cost sharing.

Mike asked that he would recommend a motion on each contract separately as listed on the agenda as council will need to approve them at their next one to two meetings, depending on scheduling.

There was additional discussion that other than the above referenced changes, the contract are not substantially different from past years, and that they have been the same basic format for the past three budget cycles.

Also discussed was the history of the programs and the reasons for the format change from a Department managed model to a contracted management model.

MOTION: It was moved by Ken Kiesner and seconded by Richard Sturgill to recommend the approval for the following:

1. The contract for services agreement with Whatcom Council on Aging for the Senior Activity Program at the Bellingham Senior Activity Center;
 2. The contract for services agreement with the Jet Oldsters for the Senior Activity Program at the Ferndale Senior Activity Center;
 3. The inter-local Agreement with the City of Blaine for the operation of the Senior Activity Program at the Blaine Senior Center;
 4. The inter-local Agreement with the City of Lynden for the operation of the Senior Activity Program at the Lynden Senior Center;
 5. The scheduling agreement with the Jet Oldsters for the Ferndale Senior Activity Center.
- The motion passed unanimously.

I. Request recommendation of approval for the Birch Bay Community Park Plan –
Mike discussed that the plan will be moving forward to a Council work session and it would be appropriate, if the Park Commission wishes to make a motion this evening supporting the plan as presented or with modifications so it can move forward to the Council.

MOTION: It was moved by Theresa Sygitowicz and seconded by Richard Sturgill to accept the Birch Bay Community Plan as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Jeff stated that he wanted to thank Rod for eradicating the Yellow Flag Iris at Silver Lake Park manually and that he appreciates that that effort will be taken. Rod stated that this is the recommendation of the Whatcom County Noxious Weed Board.

Theresa announced that the Whatcom Cattleman's Association is having a benefit auction and dinner at the Log Show Grounds on Sat 2/25/17. The tickets are \$10.00.

Theresa announced that the Conservation District is having their elections on 3/14/17, and that if you have not signed up for an absentee ballot the deadline has passed and you will have to physically go to their office to vote.

Theresa discussed the agricultural advancements in manure nutrient management and that Whatcom County is on the leading edge of the efforts involved in these changes.

Richard Sturgill announced that progress is continuing on the sail boat that is the sister to the one that's in the Semiahmoo APA Canary museum, and that it is expected that it will be completed this year. He discussed that over \$120,000.00 has been donated to the project and that the coast guard has inspected the vessel and blessed the work that has been completed to date. The vessel will be used to teach sailing, to conduct interpretive sailings and will be the water-born sister to the one in the museum. He stated that it's a labor of love and is going to be an amazing addition to the County's museum.

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION

The next Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Commission meeting will be held on March 16, 2017 at 6:00 PM at the Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Administrative Office, 3373 Mt. Baker Highway, Bellingham.

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

Transcribed by: Pat Fisher, Clerk III

Approved by: Mike McFarlane, Parks Department Director