

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION**  
**Thursday, February 21, 2019**

**Semiahmoo Cannery Lodge**  
**9261 Semiahmoo Parkway**  
**Blaine, Washington**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Jeff Margolis Committee Chair at 6:04 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT**

Commissioners: Brad VanderWerff, Richard Sturgill, Sonja Max, Jeff Margolis

Staff: Michael McFarlane, Christ Thomsen

**EXCUSED**

Commissioners: Susan McClendon

**GUEST(S)**

None

**III. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS**

None

**IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

Jeff Margolis thought South Fork Park would be a good place for the citizens of Whatcom County to cross country ski when it snows. He suggested adding this information to the website.

Sonja Max wanted to thank whoever has been clearing the sidewalks in front of the Roeder Home. She walks her mom by there every day and it was one of the only clear sidewalks in town.

**V. AGENDA**

**A. February 21, 2019**

**MOTION:** Sonja Max moved to approve the February 21, 2019 agenda as written. Richard Sturgill seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

**VI. MINUTES**

**A. January 17, 2019**

**MOTION:** Brad VanderWerff moved to approve the January 17, 2019 Minutes as written. Sonja Max seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

## **VII. STAFF REPORTS**

### **A. Planning & Development Report (presented by Michael McFarlane)**

- i. Lighthouse Marine Park Playground** – The playground equipment was delivered and the crew is scheduled to install it later this spring. The crew will also be finishing up paving around the picnic shelters and installing the site furnishings.
- ii. Maple Creek Campground Renovation at Silver Lake Park** – The necessary permits have been acquired. Atterbury Consultants was hired earlier this year to appraise and evaluate the trees that will be removed. The timber sale was advertised this week and will be awarded in early March. Tree removal is scheduled to be completed by April 12<sup>th</sup>. The engineer for the campground renovation project has completed 90% of the drawings for the bid documents and Parks will provide comments by February 26<sup>th</sup>. The project will be bid in March and awarded by April 1<sup>st</sup>; construction will begin as soon as the trees have been removed. The contractor will then have 60 work days to complete the improvements. The targeted completion date is mid-July depending on the start date and weather delays.
- iii. South Fork Park** – The final grant application has been submitted and Rod will give a presentation in Olympia on February 26<sup>th</sup>. This grant is for trail development and a bridge across Hutchinson Creek to connect the trailhead at South Fork Park to the Nessett Farm.
- iv. Lighthouse Marine Park Dock** – Rod gave a presentation to the County Council regarding the challenges with the Lighthouse Marine Park Dock. A budget supplemental in the amount of \$50,000 will be put forth to the Council to repair the current dock. The Council will decide whether or not to repair the dock, and if it is repaired, whether or not it will be returned to Lighthouse Marine Park or put in a different park. Christ and Rod went to Point Roberts last night to update the Point Roberts Citizens Advisory Committee on this issue.
- v. Whatcom Parks & Recreation Foundation Trail Summit** – Rod will be presenting a trail overview at the Whatcom Parks & Recreation Foundation Trail Summit next Thursday.

### **B. Operations Report – Christ Thomsen**

- i. Staff** – The Parks Department has been fully staffed the last two months. The Maintenance Worker II who works predominantly at the Bellingham Senior Activity Center providing janitorial services and building/grounds maintenance is retiring at the end of February. That job was posted

internally, but no applications were received; it is now being posted externally. The Outdoor Program Coordinator who takes out of custody work crews from the Jail Work Center into the parks for maintenance is retiring at the end of May. That position will be posted internally before the employee's retirement date. The first round of applications for seasonal employment was received yesterday and will be reviewed right away. There are quite a number of returning staff, which is really nice, as they are familiar with the jobs and the parks.

- ii. Storm and Snow Response** – Since the December storm, WC Parks Employees have been very busy with storm response. A lot of trees fell at Silver Lake during that storm which created hazard trees and snags that need to be addressed. The recent snow storm caused even more trees to fall; including trees that fell on three buildings. Fortunately, there was no damage to the buildings. There are another 20 trees that need to be taken out so that they don't fall on structures or people. This work is necessary, but affects other work that should be getting done. It's good to receive positive feedback about the snow response in WC Parks. When snow falls, the top priority is to get to the offices and parking lots cleared so that everyone can get to work. The Range is next because of the public and contract access to that location. After that, the Senior Centers, Roeder Home, Hovander, and other satellite properties are taken care of. WC Parks Employees have shoveled a lot of snow in the last couple of weeks to keep our facilities open and safe. There's at least two more weeks' worth of work cutting trees, from Point Roberts to Silver Lake. It won't be until summer that the damage at Canyon Lake Community Forest can be evaluated and addressed.
- iii. Whatcom Humane Society at Nugent's Corner** – The amendment to extend the Whatcom Humane Society's lease at Nugent's Corner for one year was sent to them today. Once it's signed and returned to WC Parks, it will be sent to the Executive's Office. Christ did a site visit and found that the building is probably not in any better condition than it was when it was originally leased to the Whatcom Humane Society. WC Parks will look at all options for that property prior to the Whatcom Humane Society vacating so that it doesn't sit too long once it's empty.
- iv. Puget Sound Energy** – A couple of Puget Sound Energy power poles broke at Lake Samish Park during the December storm. WC Parks has been working with PSE to insure access through their easement to repair the poles, some of which had to be flown in. That work was done yesterday, so PSE should be done with most of the work out there. There was some impact to visitors because PSE vehicles and equipment were in the parking lot, but WC Parks employees were able to maintain safe public access the entire time.

- v. **Plantation Rifle Range HVAC Replacement** – Christ submitted a budget supplemental to reallocate the funds for the replacement of the Plantation Rifle Range HVAC system from 2019 to 2020. That will go to the Council next month.
- vi. **Lake Whatcom Park Trail Construction** – Staff is working on the trail construction plan for Lake Whatcom Park this coming summer.
- vii. **Jet Oldsters** – The Jet Oldsters are funding the replacement of the entrance door of the Ferndale Senior Center. That should be installed this coming month.
- viii. **Iron Chink** – The Iron Chink is currently being sandblasted and powder coated. Once that work is finished, it will be placed back on site so the structure to hold it can be built. Hopefully that will happen before the installation of the playground at Lighthouse Marine Park begins.

**C. Director's Report – Michael McFarlane**

- i. **Whatcom County Information Technology** – The County is experiencing some pretty severe issues with malware. IT has really cracked down on any email that looks suspicious, as some of the malware that is coming in is an email that looks like it is coming from a legitimate County Employee with an invoice attached. Staff is being encouraged to delete any emails that look suspicious. There was one employee in our office that got infected and the CPU had to be unplugged and sent downtown to get cleaned. It takes two or three weeks for this process to be completed, so it is really disruptive to services.
- ii. **Open Government Training** – There is Open Government Training being offered by one Whatcom County's Attorneys at 9:00am on Thursday, February 28<sup>th</sup> in the Council Chambers of the Whatcom County Courthouse. This training is required for all members of volunteer boards and committees.
- iii. **Whatcom County Council on Aging** – Mary Carlson, the Director for the Whatcom County Council on Aging, is retiring at the end of the month. Two candidates are being interviewed today, so they should have a new Director shortly. WC Parks has a number of contracts with the Council on Aging. Their business offices are located in the Bellingham Senior Activity Center where they run a number of programs, as well as the extended meal programs to the smaller senior centers.
- iv. **Birch Bay Tideland Parcels** – There are two tideland parcels in Birch Bay that were tax foreclosures that will be transferred to WC Parks. WC Parks will become the custodian and owner of these tidelands so that they remain open for public access (the land parcels associated with them will remain private). This will go to Council two or three meetings from now.
- v. **Meals on Wheels** – Mike is working on a contract with the Whatcom Council on Aging regarding the meals and handling of money associated

with the meal program. Whatcom County has issues with employees collecting money for a non-County agency and is working with County Finance and Legal staff to hopefully find a solution.

- vi. **Cornwall Center** – The large parking lot in front of the Bellingham Senior Activity Center is leased from Cornwall Center by WC Parks, the City of Bellingham, and the Whatcom Council on Aging. The lease with Cornwall Center expires at the end of June 2019 and WC Parks is asking to extend the contract for at least five years.
- vii. **Bay Horizon Park** – There was a break in at Camp Horizon. Fortunately, the two high schoolers from Blaine responsible for the vandalism to the buildings were apprehended. They also smashed the windows out of the caretaker's truck. This is not the vandalism that happened last summer where three girls that lived in the neighborhood tried to start a fire on one of the roofs.
- viii. **Blaine School District** – The Blaine School District is exploring an elementary school in Birch Bay. Mike has meetings with the Superintendent to talk about the possibility of Bay Horizon Park being a site.
- ix. **Opportunity Council** – The Opportunity Council has obtained funding for the Food Bank at the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center, so that project is moving forward.
- x. **2018 Budget** – WC Parks finished the 2018 budget in the black, which was very fortunate, as it was a tough year.
- xi. **Puget Sound Energy** – Mike is working with Puget Sound Energy on a trail easement for the use of some of their property. The easement expired about four years ago and PSE is just now getting around to writing up the agreement. PSE has had a lot of staff changes and WC Parks has been able to use the easement in the interim.

## VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. **Proposal to register the Van Zandt Community Hall on the Washington Heritage Register** – Jeff Margolis reported the South Fork Community Association researched the details of registering the Van Zandt Community Hall on the Washington Heritage Register and found that it was too restrictive, so they will not be pursuing it. They also found that there is nothing that the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) had an interest in that matched what the Association is doing, so they are back at square one with a plan and no funding.

## IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. **Potential impact of House Bill 1591**

<http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2019-20/Pdf/Bills/House%20Bills/1591.pdf> –

House Bill 1591 is a piece of legislation that is essentially a bill of rights for the homeless. It's quite broad and would basically prohibit law enforcement, security, or staff from harassing the homeless. If harassment is interpreted by the homeless (for example, by trying to move them out a park, public building, greenspace, sidewalk, road, etc.), they would have the funding and support to civilly sue whoever is violating their rights. Right now, this bill is in committee. The Governor's Office, the Washington Association of Counties, the Washington Association of Cities, and the Washington Business Association are opposed to it because it basically prohibits anyone that has public property or lands from being able to manage them properly.

**B. Potential sponsorship of a summit for 2020 that would address seasonal Aquatic resources and uses in the South Fork Valley (Margolis)** – Jeff Margolis would like WC Parks to consider sponsoring a summit in 2020 that would address seasonal aquatic resources and uses in the South Fork Valley. Mike has a meeting with the Administration next week, but has not yet spoken with them regarding this proposal. Jeff sees a need for the tribes, DNR, Public Works, the WC Health Department, the Corp. of Engineers, private property owners, and tubers to come together to find a solution to the chaos that comes from not having established drop in and take out points on the South Fork of the Nooksack River with parking and restroom facilities. Jeff feels like it is WC Parks responsibility as an agency with standing to do this. Suggestions were made for Jeff to contact DNR with his concern, as they own the river and WC Parks does not have property on the river that is suitable for drop in or take out locations. Sonja Max suggested DNR is currently creating a recreation plan and is working with advocates from different communities (mountain biking/moto/horseback/etc.) to represent these different interests. There is potential for Jeff's concern to become a part the next Parks Comprehensive Plan, but there would need to be strong advocacy and support from Council Members.

**C. Recreational Assets of Statewide Significance (RASS) Study and recommendations** – The Recreation and Conservation Office is conducting a study to help fulfill the goals of the 2018 Washington State Recreation and Conservation Plan 2018-2022. The study will identify recreational assets of statewide significance, where gaps in recreational assets exist, and investment strategies and options for addressing those gaps and future needs. They're using a GIS based database and will have the first report out by the end of June. This study is significant because it is inventorying both public and private recreational opportunities and may be used to determine the types of projects that receive future funding and appropriations from the State.

## **X. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Jeff Margolis announced that Citizen Kane will be shown this Friday at 7:00pm at the Zandt Community Hall. On Friday, March 1<sup>st</sup> at 7:00pm, the movie Seeds will

be shown and the following day, there will be a seed swap. Jeff is also singing with the Whatcom Chorale on Sunday, March 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday at the St. Paul's Episcopal.

**XI. NEXT MEETING DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION**

The next Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission meeting will be held on March 21, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. at the Roeder Home, 2600 Sunset Drive, Bellingham, Washington.

**XII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

Transcribed by: Kristin Lunderville, Clerk III

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director