

MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, May 19, 2022

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, Kristen Fagen, Frank Boteler, Brian
Estes, Terry Terry, Pete Coy, Sonja Max

Staff: Christ Thomsen, Michael McFarlane

EXCUSED

None

GUESTS

None

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

None

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

- A.** Pete Coy inquired about putting a bocce ball court in at the Bellingham Activity Center. Pete will contact Chris Orr, the Director of the Council on Aging, to follow up.
- B.** Sonja Max introduced Frank Boteler. Frank shared his background with the commission.
- C.** Pete Coy congratulated Sonja Max on the letter she wrote supporting the Stewart Mountain Community Forest.

V. AGENDA

A. May 19, 2022

MOTION: Pete Coy moved to approve the May 19, 2022 agenda as written. Brian Estes seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VI. MINUTES

A. April 21, 2022

MOTION: Joe Hashmall moved to approve the April 21, 2022 minutes as written. Pete Coy seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. Director's Report – Michael McFarlane

- i. **Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife Cooperative Agreement –**
The Cooperative Agreement between Whatcom County and the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife will be on the agenda for the next commission meeting. The agreement expired in 2018 and a new one was delayed because of COVID and retirements at WDFW. The agreement includes the management and maintenance of the boat launch at Hovander, the Pine and Cedar Lakes Trail, and the small boat ramp at Tennant Lake.
- ii. **Staffing –** Recruitment for a new Parks Director is moving on to second interviews. The Park Ranger position at Point Roberts is still open; an applicant was found, but they declined the job. Recruitment continues for a Design and Development Supervisor.
- iii. **Lake Whatcom Trailhead Improvements –** The Lake Whatcom Trailhead Improvements project will be on hold until funds are available. MacLeod Reckord will perform a survey on the marbled murrelet, a federally protected bird, during the summers of 2022 and 2023. This survey is a permitting requirement for trailhead improvements.

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

- i. **Staffing –** The Park Ranger position at Point Roberts is still open and recruitment closes June 5. Seasonal staff recruitment is complete, but will reopen so that extra staff can be hired to cover current full-time staff shortages and in anticipation of seasonal staff leaving early at the end of the season. Recruitment is also open for three part-time year-round positions and extra help at the Plantation Rifle Range.
- ii. **Operations Update –** Hovander Homestead Park opened by the anticipated opening date of May 6th and was received with a lot of fanfare and appreciation from the public. The public has really acknowledged and appreciated the efforts and hard work of our staff to get the park open. The playgrounds are not yet open, as there have been challenges in securing the fall protection. The fall protection should be in place by the end of next week. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife finished their repair work on the boardwalk. WC Parks has a volunteer work party tomorrow to place new gravel surfacing on the access trail so the Boardwalk Trail at Tennant Lake can reopen. Staff is still working with FEMA to document all damage and work toward securing reimbursement funding for repairs and potential mitigation work. The boats were put in the water at Samish Park today in preparation for the rental season.
- iii. **Maple Creek Shower and Restroom Facility –** The Maple Creek Shower and Restroom Facility is substantially complete. The septic pumps are

supposed to be delivered at the beginning of June and then will take several weeks to be installed. Puget Sound Energy and the contractor are working to upgrade the transformer, but found a problem with the existing conduit that will need to be investigated, excavated, and repaired. Well pump upgrades are also being worked on.

- iv. **Plantation Rifle Range HVAC and Roof Replacement** – The air handling unit was delivered and installed, but cannot be tested until the contractor for the HVAC and roof replacement reconnects the electrical service. Christ expects to have a project completion date in the next day or two.
- v. **Nugent’s Corner Building Demolition** – Abatement work was scheduled to begin this week.
- vi. **Birch Bay Beach Park** – Christ had a prework meeting with staff. There are some things needed to finish layout on the site. Asphalt cutting will be contracted so that park staff can begin installation.
- vii. **Chanterelle Trail and Surf-N-Turf Trail** – Mike McFarlane reported that there was a letter writing campaign by the Whatcom Mountain Bike Coalition to the county council and WC Parks Department regarding the Chanterelle and Surf-N-Turf trails in the Lake Whatcom watershed. The Chanterelle Trail is being extended to connect down to the Hertz Trail with construction beginning in June when the watershed window opens. This hiking only trail was identified in the 2016 Trails Plan after interested parties, the public, and different user groups came together and provided feedback on what trails they wanted. As construction begins on this last segment of the Chanterelle Trail, any remnants of the Surf-N-Turf trail will be removed (segments of the new hiking trail cross back and forth on portions of the mountain bike trail). The Surf-N-Turf is a very steep, technical, unsanctioned mountain bike trail that was built in the watershed that WC Parks would not have been permitted to build. Sonja Max asked if a conversation was needed about the level of service Whatcom County is providing for these types of trails in the community (but not in the watershed). Mike said that the 2016 Trails Plan is very generous for mountain biking, but not focused on technical trails. However, the 2016 Trails Plan went hand-in-hand with Galbraith Mountain and virtually all negotiation with the property owner and the template for laying out the trails on Galbraith Mountain was a county effort. Once the property was sold to Janicki, those documents were transferred to the City of Bellingham Parks and Recreation Department and the thought was that the technical trails and more challenging trails would be on Galbraith. Sonja thinks there could be considerable conversation around this topic and levels of service, and would like to revisit it when a Design and Development Supervisor is hired and work begins again on the

Comprehensive Park and Recreation Open Space Plan. Mike advised that if a replacement for the Design and Development Supervisor is not found in the next several months, WC Parks should consider contracting for the CPROSP, as it should be presented to council in December 2023 for approval.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Whatcom Transportation Authority Trail Service** – Brian Estes spoke with Mary Anderson, a planner at Whatcom Transit Authority, about WTA providing bus service to trailheads. Mary advised they have considered this (they call it “transit to trails), but that WTA has many other special projects they’re working on right now. Brian thinks WTA would be amenable to taking a look at it again next year. Mary Anderson suggested that she and someone from the WTA planning department could come to the June commission meeting for a brief discussion if the commission thought it would be worthwhile. The commission agreed that it would be worth pursuing and invited Mary and her coworker to the June commission meeting. Mike reminded the commission that there is bus service to the Lookout Mountain Trailhead.
- B. County District Boundary Changes & Commission Terms** – Brian Estes is no longer in the district he was originally representing as a result of the new district boundaries established by the 2021 Whatcom County Districting Committee. The code allows for Brian to serve out his term, but when his term expires, he will either have to move into the district or give up the position.
- C. Draft Priorities for 2025 Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Update** – Mike presented the draft for establishing priorities for Whatcom County’s 2025 Comprehensive Plan update and asked for feedback.
- D. Draft Camp Horizon Agreement for Use of Bay Horizon Park** – Mike presented the draft agreement between Whatcom County and the Camp Horizon Foundation for the use and operation of Bay Horizon Park. The draft has been sent to the National Park Service for approval.
- E. Update on Senior Activity Centers Recovery Efforts and 2023-2024 Contracts** – The Sumas Senior Center won’t be fully repaired and available until the end of July. The Point Roberts Senior Center has resumed two-day per week meals at the community center. The Everson Senior Center is doing a mix of hot meals and frozen meal pick-ups. The Council on Aging has expanded the meal programs at the centers they deal with. WC Parks continues to work with the City of Everson to find a new location for that senior program. The Bellingham Senior Center has expanded its hours and resumed the coffee bar service. The Seniors Picnic in the Park is August 3rd at Hovander; there will be a Senior Resource Fair there as well. Mike will follow up on

bocce ball at the senior centers. Two pool tables rescued from the Sumas center in the flood will be repaired and used again.

F. Executive's Request to Sierra Pacific Industries for an Easement Connection to Canyon Lake Community Forest – Mike presented the letter the Executive sent to Sierra Pacific Industries requesting an easement connection to Canyon Lake Community Forest. If Sierra Pacific does not respond, the letter sets the stage for the Executive and county council to acquire an easement through the court system.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION

The next Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m. on June 16, 2022 at the Bellingham Senior Activity Center, 315 Halleck Street, Bellingham, WA.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Transcribed by: Kristin Lunderville, Clerk IV

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director