

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION**  
**Thursday, July 15, 2021**

**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, Terry Terry, Kristen Fagan, Pete Coy,  
Sonja Max

Staff: Michael McFarlane, Christ Thomsen, Rod Lamb

**EXCUSED**

Brad VanderWerff, Brian Estes

**GUESTS**

None

**III. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS**

None

**IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

None

**V. AGENDA**

**A. July 15, 2021**

**MOTION:** Sonja Max asked to move the discussions of Monetizing Opportunities and Labor Options (New Business, Items A and B) to next month. Pete Coy moved to approve the July 15, 2021 agenda as amended. Kristen Fagan seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

**VI. MINUTES**

**A. June 17, 2021**

**MOTION:** Pete Coy moved to approve the June 17, 2021 minutes as written. Joe Hashmall seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

**VII. STAFF REPORTS**

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

- i. **Squires Lake Park** – The council approved funding for the acquisition of the 5.9-acre property abutting Squires Lake Park. The County Executive has the purchase and sale agreement and Mike will order the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment once the purchase order is issued. The acquisition should close in August.
- ii. **Maple Creek Shower and Restroom Facility** – The budget supplemental submitted to the council for additional funding for the Maple Creek Shower and Restroom Facility was approved.
- iii. **Lake Whatcom Forest Management Plan** – The Lake Whatcom Forest Management Plan request for proposal (RFP) has been submitted to Finance and should be advertised in August.
- iv. **Blue Canyon Encroachment** – Whatcom County legal staff are continuing to work on the encroachment of two property owners on park property located on Blue Canyon Road. One property owner is planning to request the installment of a septic system on park property. If received, the proposal will need to be reviewed by county legal staff, the county council, the county executive, and the county's property management committee.
- v. **East Whatcom Regional Resource Center** – The Opportunity Council received a grant from Puget Sound Energy to install an electric vehicle charging station for their electric bus. When not in use, the charging station will be available for the public to use.

**B. Planning & Development Report – Rod Lamb**

- i. **Red Mountain Shower and Restroom Facility** – Tiger Construction met the conditions for substantial completion and the Red Mountain Restroom and Shower Facility opened to the public June 16<sup>th</sup>. The contractor is still working on getting the correct coin operated units for the showers and waiting on the delivery of the baby changing stations. Since the last commission meeting, it was discovered that one of the shower stalls was broken into. Park staff was able to determine the most likely point of entry was the lock. Staff took a video of how they were able to open the lock. The video was forwarded to the contractor, who forwarded it to the supplier, who then forwarded it to the manufacturer. Temporary locks will be installed until the deficient locks can be replaced.
- ii. **Maple Creek Campground Shower and Restroom Facility** – Tiger Construction was the only bidder for the Maple Creek Campground Shower and Restroom Facility. The bid was higher than available funding and Rod submitted a budget supplemental to the council for consideration. The council approved the additional funding and Tiger Construction will mobilize onsite August 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- iii. **Birch Bay Beach Park** – The substantial shoreline exemption permit was approved for the Birch Bay Beach Park. Rod is still waiting for additional

permit approval from the county and state. A magnetometer survey was completed July 1<sup>st</sup> and Rod received the results July 13<sup>th</sup>. The survey shows the location of septic tanks, utility lines, and water lines on the property that will need to be excavated and filled in.

- iv. **Lake Whatcom Trailhead Improvements** – WC Parks finalized the scope and fee negotiation with MacLeod Reckord LLC, the design team selected for the preliminary design and engineering services for trailhead improvements at Lake Whatcom Park. The improvements include expanded parking capacity, new flush restroom facilities (septic and well), a picnic shelter, security lighting, signage, pedestrian and circulation improvements, and site furnishings.

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

- i. **Staffing** – The Maintenance Worker II position for the Bellingham Senior Activity Center was filled by a seasonal employee and as a result, there is one vacant seasonal position. Authorization was received to fill a position that had been frozen since September 2020 because of the fiscal impacts of the pandemic. That position is for a full-time Park Ranger and was posted for internal recruitment yesterday.
- ii. **Operations** – Yesterday was the first all staff meeting for WC Parks staff in over a year and a half. Mike brought the staff up to speed on various topics. Christ reflected on the last year and a half and the challenges staff have had to overcome. Priorities for the remainder of the year include keeping bathrooms, garbage, and grounds clean and maintained, preventative maintenance and repairs, reducing work backlog, and supporting capital projects.
- iii. **Plantation Rifle Range** – A pre-construction meeting was held with Tiger Construction for the Plantation Rifle Range HVAC/Roof replacement project. There are a number of challenges associated with this project due to the impacts of the pandemic. Christ hopes to present a schedule of work at the next commission meeting.
- iv. **Lake Whatcom Trail Development** – The bid for construction of the EH1 Trail that connects the upper end of the Chanterelle Trail to the Hertz Trail came in over budget. Fortunately, the way it was bid allows for some flexibility to change things, which the contractor is open to. Construction of the trail will take place over the course of the next two years.
- v. **Nugent's Corner** – The Whatcom Humane Society is vacating the building located at Nugent's Corner. Once vacated, the building will be razed and the area will be restored as open space.

## **VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- A. 2022 Comprehensive Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan – Capital Projects List 6-20 Year** – Rod asked if the commission had any questions or comments on the Capital Projects List. There were no questions or comments.
- MOTION:** Joe Hashmall moved to approve the Capital Projects List as written. Kristen Fagan seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.
- B. COVID-19 Reopening Updates** – Shower facilities, indoor facilities, and the campground at Lighthouse Marine Park all opened, bringing WC Parks to fully open. The Governor’s Office did not lift the open meeting restrictions June 30<sup>th</sup>. As a result, the parks commission will not be able to meet in person because of the required virtual component.
- C. Visitation 2021** – Mike presented 2021 Trail and Park Visitation through May 2021. Staff is working to get park attendance posted to the website on a monthly basis.
- D. 2019 Hovander Park Shelter Use** – Mike presented the Hovander Park Shelter Use for 2017, 2018, and 2019 and associated revenue. Christ pointed out that the Water Tower Picnic Area and the Group Picnic Shelter are covered areas and that the Blue and Red Picnic Areas are not.
- E. PR Draft Climate Action Plan Review** – Mike provided a press release from the Whatcom County Climate Impact Advisory Committee with a link to their draft Climate Action Plan. The release is being shared advisory committees and comments are due July 30<sup>th</sup>.
- F. Bellingham Herald Grant Article** – Mike shared the Bellingham Herald’s article regarding grants bringing changes to Whatcom County parks and recreation areas. Mike clarified that the grants are funded by different programs and were awarded to numerous agencies.

**IX. NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Monetizing Opportunities** – moved to July 15, 2021 agenda
- B. Labor Options** – moved to July 15, 2021 agenda
- C. Unauthorized Trail Building** – Unauthorized trail building is a statewide problem for land managers, private property owners, and timber companies. WC Parks saw an increase in unauthorized trail building at the beginning of the pandemic. Trails ranged from small trails in Jensen Family Forest Park built by neighborhood kids to extensive, illicit trails in Lake Whatcom Park, Lookout Mountain Forest Preserve, and Chuckanut Mountain Park built by more skilled riders. These unauthorized trails damage resources, do not meet county standards, and are a liability for the county. WC Parks staff monitor for illegal trails and document the trails with an incident report. Cameras or signs are then installed to help identify or deter the people involved. If a person can be identified, staff will attempt to make contact and educate. If necessary, enforcement action is taken and the trails are obliterated. WC Parks is fortunate

to have a very active trail user community and oftentimes, peer pressure works better to stop illegal trail building rather than a land manager talking to the offender. The Whatcom Land Trust actively advocates against illegal trail building. Last Tuesday, a meeting was held with land managers from the City of Bellingham Parks & Recreation, WC Parks & Recreation, the US Forest Service, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Washington State Parks, and the Whatcom Mountain Bike Coalition to discuss the issues and potential solutions to illegal trail construction. Pete Coy mentioned that it would be nice to identify individuals involved in the building of these trails so that their energies could be channeled in accordance with particular sites. Christ advised that was a solution that was discussed. Mike shared that Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism is considering an app called Tread, an interactive comprehensive recreation mapping app for trail users. The app allows land managers to mark and identify illegal trails, post hazards, and share trail conditions in real time. The app breaks Washington State into 11 regions and Mike hopes to receive funding from the state to be one of the earlier regions to be added, possibly in spring 2022. Mike will keep the commission updated.

**X. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None

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

The next Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission meeting will be held virtually on August 19, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

**XII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

Transcribed by: Kristin Lunderville, Clerk III

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director