

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**  
**January 17, 2013**  
**Bellingham Senior Activity Center**  
**315 Halleck St.**  
**Bellingham, WA 98225**

**Present: Commissioners: Walt Lockwood, Jr., Paul Woodcock, Kenn Kiesner, Jeffrey Margolis and Janet Boyhan**

**Staff: Michael McFarlane, Erik Axelson, and Rod Lamb**

**Absent: Gordon Rogers, David Wright and Theresa Sygitowicz**

**Guests: Tom Mitchell**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Commission Vice Chair, Lockwood at 6:07 p.m.

**I. AGENDA**

**A. January 17, 2013 Agenda Approval:** A motion was made to approve the agenda by Commissioner Woodcock, seconded by Commissioner Kiesner and passed unanimously.

**II. MINUTES**

**A. December 20, 2012 Meeting Minutes Approval:** A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes by Commissioner Woodcock, seconded by Commissioner Kiesner and passed unanimously.

**III. PUBLIC INPUT/COMMUNICATIONS**

**A.** Executive Louws presented the new Park Commission appointments to the Council at the January 15<sup>th</sup> meeting. Janet Boyhan and Jeffrey Margolis were approved effective February 1, 2013. The Commission has one vacancy in District 3 which is in the Blaine-Ferndale area.

**IV. DIRECTORS REPORT – Michael McFarlane**

**A. South Fork Projects:** The County Parks has been approached by the Tulalip Tribe (Tribe) and Western Washington University (WWU) on projects that are of mutual concern and benefit to both. The Tulalip Tribe would like to get some hard data on the elk herd in South Fork by running live traps and collaring them at the Nessel Farm. The Tribe would then track their movements in the valley and make some management decisions based upon the data they receive. The Tribe is working to line up all their permits so that they can start up in March. The project will continue through 2013 and into next winter.

Professor Wallen from WWU is interested in using drones with cameras to observe and track elk herds to see if it is practical. WWU will need to go through the Federal Aviation Administration to get clearance.

The Tribe is also interested in working with Whatcom County to provide the elk with high-quality forage on Park property. They want the elk to stay at South Fork Park. We have also offered Deming Eagle Park because the elk bed down in the area. The Tribe wants

to provide some alternative food plots that may hold the animals away from crop areas. The Tribe will need to coordinate with a number of parties on both issues.

- B. Dorothy Copp Property Encroachment at Glacier:** The County has offered to sell Dorothy Copp the strip of land she built on for \$12,487 (\$2.50 sq. foot). She has tentatively agreed to the offer.
- C. Little Squalicum Park EPA Report:** Michael McFarlane handed out a report from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on Little Squalicum Park. The City of Bellingham (City) also had a landfill at the site that was backed up to a very steep cliff. Some of that was removed but not all because of the potential to destabilize the bluff. The landfill is monitored to be sure nothing migrates out of that site. The City and Whatcom County both own portions of the property; however EPA had full jurisdiction over the project. The Commission proposed transferring the County property to the City. Michael McFarlane has been unable to contact the City Parks Director for the Mayor's response.

**V. OPERATIONS REPORT – Erik Axelson**

- A. Silver Lake Park Transition:** New Lead Park Ranger Erika Miranda will start Sunday, January 20<sup>th</sup>. She previously worked for 5 years as a Park Ranger at Snohomish County Parks and before that at Custer State Park in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Our maintenance crew is completing renovations at the Ranger residence at Silver Lake Park in time for Erika and her family to move in this weekend.
- B. Silver Lake Capital Projects:** Silver Lake took in about \$12,000 in camping revenue the first two days of 2013. This year, we will be upgrading some of the cabins and moving ahead with the playground replacement and in 2014, we have major infrastructure improvements scheduled.
- C. Dog Leash Signage:** We showed a sign design focusing on canine rules (leash and clean-up) and water quality. These signs are ready to be produced and will be installed over the next several weeks. We expect to do outreach in February and March letting people know we are serious about the dog leash rules. A key part of that is to ramp up enforcement by having our Rangers re-trained and making sure that if citations are issued they will stand up in court. Our experience is that word gets around very quickly after initial enforcement, compliance goes way up and then it is a maintenance effort.
- D. Plantation Rifle Range:** The Range had a big year in spite of losing two Border Patrol training contracts in 2012 (Border Patrol units are based in Blaine and moved their training to Custer because it is closer and cheaper). The Range exceeded the 2011 gross revenue by \$14,000 in 2012, even without nine months of federal contracts and continues to attract increased patronage and revenue from the public.

We are re-evaluating the rules and regulations at the Plantation Range and anticipate having the updates completed in the near future, with a goal of improved clarity and reducing liability.

- E. Youth Rifle Shooting Program:** This 12-week program began January 12<sup>th</sup> at the Plantation Rifle Range. The sponsors are: Yeager's Sporting Goods (Bellingham), Kesselring's Gun Shop (Burlington), Skagit Shooting Sports (Burlington) and Wholesale Sports and Outdoor Outfitters (Burlington). It is a popular program that covers its costs

with the help of the sponsors. Erik Axelson will provide additional information about the program at the next meeting.

- F. **Advertisements and Requests for Proposals:** We are getting ready to advertise for Campground Hosts at Silver Lake and Lighthouse Marine Park. We will provide limited tenancy in exchange for about 20 hours per week of cleaning and maintenance. Many state and county park systems have campground host programs.

In the next few weeks, we will be advertising Request for Proposal (RFP) for food and beverage service at selected parks such as Semiahmoo, Silver Lake, Hovander, Lighthouse Marine and Samish. This could be an opportunity to provide additional service to the community and to park visitors, and increase revenues. We will also put out an RFP for agricultural haying licenses at several locations including Hovander and Silver Lake.

- G. **Signage for Park Properties:** Erik Axelson showed a sign prototype promoting events at Roeder Home. The sign prepared by Rod Lamb uses an arts & crafts font in keeping the style of the house. It will be posted near the front door of the residence where it will be visible and elegant. We will do similar marketing for other County park properties that have rental possibilities.

## VI. **DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT REPORT – Rod Lamb**

- A. **Lookout Mountain Forest Reserve:** Lookout Mountain Forest Reserve was fully permitted in 2010, but the Council voted against entering into a contract with the low bidder so the project was put on hold. The permits have expired and will have to be renewed. The project will provide a new trailhead with a 29-car parking lot and restroom facility that will connect to the existing trails. The project will go out to bid in the next month or so. The project cannot start until the watershed window opens in June.
- B. **Lily Point Signage:** The trail marker signage is in. We still have a number of interpretive signs that need to be produced like the cannery and cultural history of the site. At the southern viewpoint there will be a sign on the geology of Point Roberts and Lily Point which will describe the view, identify the mountain peaks and the San Juan Islands.

Rod Lamb noted that an eagle's nest that was located in a snag is gone. He thinks that it may have blown down in a recent storm and will inform the US Fish and Wildlife.

- C. **Samish Docks:** Our manufacturer continues to build the docks which we should get in the spring. They can then be staged and installed after June.
- D. **Lighthouse Boat Dock:** We are assembling the bid package for this project. We received all of the state, federal and local permits and will begin construction probably in July. The in-water work will happen towards the end of July when the permit allows.
- E. **Hovander Trail:** We put in a budget supplemental to the Council for approval on the segment of the trail from the boat launch south to the setback levy. The Council will vote on it at the Council meeting on January 29<sup>th</sup>. If it is approved we will put together a bid package and have a contractor do the rough grading. Our crews will do the mitigation planting in conjunction with the Outside Worker crew. The contractor will do the rough grading and finish trail surfacing.

- F. **Silver Lake Playground:** We are in the initial stage of this project. It is going to be constructed spring or early summer. If Planning and Development Services (PDS) determines that the project qualifies for a shoreline exemption because of the current structure the permitting process will be much shorter. However, if the project does not qualify we may need a Substantial Shoreline Development Permit which requires going before the Hearing Examiner.
- G. **Silver Lake Electrical and Road Upgrade:** Project funding for the electrical and road upgrades were approved for the 2014 budget year. We will be completing some initial groundwork in 2013 to identify specific improvements and upgrades that are needed.
- H. **South Fork Park:** We have money approved for access improvements in the 2014 budget year. The access improvement will include a new vehicular access drive and a small parking lot. In 2013, we will get the project ready to submit for the next grant funding cycle, identify the required permitting, work on some of the existing trails at Nessel Farm, and locate a final crossing location over Hutchinson Creek. The conceptual design is located on the County Parks website at: [www.co.whatcom.wa.us/parks/development/southfork](http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/parks/development/southfork).

**VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

- A. **None.**

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS - Presented by Michael McFarlane**

- A. **Review of the Lake Whatcom Reconveyance Proposal for Recreational Use:** Michael McFarlane made an abbreviated presentation to the Commission of the Tuesday, January 15<sup>th</sup> Council presentation. This was the first of three presentations scheduled for the Council. The Lake Whatcom Reconveyance Proposal can be found on the County website at [www.co.whatcom.wa.us/parks/development/reconveyance](http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/parks/development/reconveyance).
- B. **2012 Activity Reports:** A preliminary revenue spreadsheet was passed out. Overall revenues did well this year, however the spreadsheet showed total revenue is a little short because we have not yet received reimbursement for labor from Conservation Futures and because Lake Whatcom Reconveyance was not approved we did not transfer funds from the Parks Improvement Fund into the Parks general budget.

Group Picnic Shelter rental revenue is down from what it has been historically. We think this change has to do with the current economy and have adjusted the (2014 & 2015) budget. The Semiahmoo Cannery Day Lodge revenue has increased from previous years. A third of the Department budget is funded through revenues.

- C. **Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Open Space Plan:** \$40,000 was approved in the 2013/2014 budget to update the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Open Space Plan. The plan flags projects, acquisitions, outlines a 6-year Capital Improvement Plan and a 20-year outlook on Whatcom County Parks and Recreation. It is a planning document required to remain grant eligible and is used for a number of purposes by both private developers, as well as federal and state agencies. It must be approved by the County Council and certified by the Recreation Conservation Office (RCO) in Olympia. To remain eligible for the next grant cycle it needs to be completed by March 3, 2014.

The process includes a community involvement survey, community meetings and updating inventory of existing lands and parks. We have better inventory data than we did in 2006 and that has not changed substantially. We will have to determine if we want to recalculate the Levels of Service or let them roll over into the new plan. We will have to do a SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act) review. The Planning Commission will review the plan when we are done and give their recommendations.

The Park Commission will act as an advisory committee for the process. The Park Commission will need to decide if they want to work in a smaller workgroup to review all the information, the public input, surveys, goals and objectives. At each Park Commission meeting time will be set apart to review the information, giving input to staff. A consultant will be hired to do specific tasks like the survey or running the public meetings.

Michael McFarlane would like to see the project completed by December 2013 for the Planning Commission and County Council approval in January 2014. The approved plan would then be certified in February 2014.

At the next meeting we will bring the goals and objective and strategies to the next meeting to start the process. He will have them sent out early so the Commission has time to review them before the meeting.

The plan can be found on the County website at:  
[www.whatcomcounty.us/parks/development/comprehensive](http://www.whatcomcounty.us/parks/development/comprehensive).

**D. General Discussion Items:**

1. **Boulevard Park:** Commissioner Kiesner asked if the County still maintained Boulevard Park. Michael McFarlane explained that Boulevard Park was owned by both the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County. The lease between the City and the County expires this year and there is a 30-day period that either party can make changes to the lease or it automatically renews for another 30 years.
2. **Fallen Trees at VanderYacht Park:** Commissioner Margolis voiced concern about some fallen trees at the Josh VanderYacht Memorial Park. Trees were uprooted near a stream last fall. At the time, nothing was done because there was concern about the root wads damming the ditch. Erik Axelson commented that it was brought to the attention of senior management at Public Works recently.
3. **Deming Eagle Park:** Commissioner Margolis commented that he would like to see a portable ladder installed that will make it easier for visitors to get down onto the river bar. Erik Axelson mentioned that there is some liability and risk management that we would need to consider. Michael McFarlane added that the State has jurisdiction on the shore, but that we can look at other areas that are not as steep for access.
4. **Sanican for Stimson Reserve:** Commissioner Margolis asked why there was not a toilet at Stimson Reserve. Michael McFarlane mentioned that it is on the agenda for the summer. The Land Trust is holding funds for a restroom building. We also have plans to build a restroom at the Lake Louise trailhead later this summer.
5. **The Boy Scout Camp:** Commissioner Kiesner brought up that the Boy Scouts of America are closing their camp that is located on the north side of Silver Lake and

asked if the County would be interested in purchasing it. Michael McFarlane said they have not been approached about it, although it does fit the parameters for acquisition and it would keep the property from becoming residential.

- E. Commission Member Acknowledgment:** Michael McFarlane acknowledged Commissioner Lockwood's service to the Commission. He was presented with a mug acknowledging his 7½ year of service.

**IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- A. Next Meeting:** February 21, 2013  
**Location:** Parks and Recreation Administrative Office  
3373 Mt. Baker Highway  
Bellingham, WA 98226  
**Time:** 6:00 p.m.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:01 p.m. by Commission Vice Chair, Lockwood.

Transcribed by: Daisy C. Hansen, WC Clerk III

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, WC Parks & Recreation Director