

**MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, November 21, 2013**

**VanZandt Community Hall
4106 Valley Highway (State Route 9)
Deming, WA**

PRESENT: Commissioners: Gordon Rogers, Paul Woodcock, Jeffrey Margolis, Janet Boyhan, Theresa Sygitowicz, Richard Sturgill

Staff: Erik Axelson, Rodney Lamb

ABSENT: Kenneth Kiesner

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Commission Chair, Gordon Rogers at 6:36.

I. AGENDA

A. November 21, 2013 Agenda Approval – A request was made by Jeff Margolis to add the discussion of hand drying methods in terms of hygiene and cost to the November Agenda. After some discussion it was the consensus of the Commission that this discussion would be added to the January 2014 agenda.

MOTION: It was moved by Theresa Sygitowicz and seconded by Paul Woodcock to approve the November 21, 2013 Agenda as written. The motion passed unanimously.

II. MINUTES

A. October 17, 2013 Minutes Approval – A request to correct an unfinished sentence in the

MOTION: It was moved by Janet Boyhan and seconded by Jeff Margolis to approve the October 17, 2013 Minutes with the following corrections: Director's Report, Item C.2. Membership, second sentence to read: With increased use of facilities the cost of utilities will increase accordingly. The motion passed unanimously.

III. PUBLIC INPUT/COMMUNICATIONS

A. Silver Lake Park – Raccoons – Gordon stated that he received a call from an individual who camped at Silver Lake Park on Labor Day weekend with her family and family dog and experienced an altercation with several raccoons. The individual and the dog were bitten by one or more of the raccoons; her bite resulting in a hospital visit

The individual explained to Gordon that they are experienced campers in that their food was sealed and stored properly and that the park was immaculate and did not provide a food source for the animals. In addition, they wanted to say that the on-site Ranger was extremely helpful and responsive.

The individual did wish to express concern that even though a trapper had been retained and some animals subsequently removed, that the reaction time between the incident and animal removal was too long, and that the public notices that were posted were inadequate. The individual requested that Gordon relay her conversation to the Commission for discussion but to assure the Commission that it was not to be perceived as a threat.

Erik spoke to the incident, the investigation and the agency's response to the incident.

He informed the Commission that staff was notified of the incident on Saturday August 31st, at approximately 3:00 PM, some 14 hours after the incident occurred earlier that morning. At that time staff took a complete report, and referred information to the necessary State officials.

The immediate investigation revealed that the campsite location is in Loop 1 which is NW to the Cabins and immediately adjacent to private homes located just off the northern park boundary. The analysis suggests that there is a readily available food source close by the campsite.

In the following days Erik spoke with the State and County Health departments to brief them on the incident and the Parks Department's response which included notifying other campers in the immediate area, posting notices in all public places in the park, and informing new guests as they arrived.

The notice was based on information taken from the State of Washington's recommendations on wild animal contact, specifically raccoons. Erik stated that he would provide copies of the notices for the Commission.

Within the week several Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife certified trappers were contacted for quotes, a trapper was later retained, and nine raccoons have since been removed from the park.

As a point of interest, there have been no reports of attacks by raccoons at Silver Lake Park in the past prior to this incident on August 31, or since this incident.

IV. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

There was no Director's Report for November as Michael McFarlane is on vacation

V. PARK OPERATIONS REPORT – ERIK AXELSON

Erik provided the Commission with a handout of the Park Operations Report for their review.

A. Equipment and Vehicles (ER&R) – Erik discuss the recent changes in the Parks' maintenance fleet, the justification for the changes and the costs involved.

B. Plantation Range Paving – The project is complete. The project came in under budget and the remaining funds are being used to purchase gravel for shouldering, wheel stops, signage and striping.

C. Lighthouse Marine Park Paving Repairs – The project is complete and came in under budget. Remaining funds will be used to replace deteriorated edging along parts of the parking lot and install wheel stops.

D. Senior Center Fire Alarms Bids – The low bidder for this project is Guardian Security. A request has been submitted to Whatcom County Council to accept the bid. It is anticipated that a contract will be executed by the mid-December and the design and permitting process completed in order to begin the project in February 2014.

E. Bellingham Senior Activity Center – Parks is improving building security by increasing lighting and educating clients who are in the building after hours. Renters are being instructed to lock and monitor doors during their event to reduce the possibility of unauthorized access. We have also reworked the closing checklist to better secure the building prior to leaving.

Maintenance staff will be installing sound baffling wall panels on the upper walls in the auditorium to reduce the noise level for those renters that may be using other rooms in the building, and to improve acoustics in the auditorium.

Glen Hallman, a much loved volunteer for the Whatcom County Council on Aging (WCCOA) recently passed away. There will be an award presented to his family from Executive Louws at the 11/26/13 County Council Meeting for his extensive community involvement.

MOTION: It was moved by Theresa Sygitowicz that a plant be planted at the Bellingham Senior Center in honor of Glen Hallman. The funds for the purchase of the plant could be raised through donations. The motion was seconded by Janet Boyhan. The motion passed unanimously.

Erik also noted that the WCCOA is considering other ways to commemorate Mr. Hallman's service to the community, but that he would pass on the Commission's recommendation.

F. Trails – Erik provided an update on the improvements and maintenance that were completed during the extra-help season.

A list of trail projects that are currently in progress was provided for Commission review.

G. Small M&O Projects – Erik spoke to the current maintenance and operations projects in progress. A list was provided for Commission review.

H. Special Events – Because there was a considerable increase in large events in our parks in 2013 there will be a few changes in the Special Event Application and administrative process for 2014. There will be a \$50.00, non-refundable application fee established as a way to recover some processing costs and an extra-help position will be added to provide additional staff coverage during the events with costs recouped with a \$14 per hour fee.

Applications for 2014 Special Events have been sent out to those organizations that conducted major events in our parks in 2013, and some of these have begun to be returned. It is the goal to have events locked in with a reservation, insurance requirements documented and a permit letter sent to event planners indicating event logistics, costs, etc., by mid-December.

A copy of the new 2014 Special Event Application was provided for Commission review.

I. Rental Properties – Erik provided a list of current Whatcom County Parks' residential rental properties. He discussed that there will be a 3% increase in rents for most properties, effective January 2014, to bring them more in line with the current rental market.

Building inspections were conducted on all properties this year. The smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms and fire extinguishers were all inspected to insure their proper working order. Buildings were also inspected for mold and mildew, certifying the presence or absence of such and noting if there were any concerns or special considerations for each unit.

Special efforts were made to educate tenants on the proper working condition of the smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms and fire extinguishers and what precautions to take to reduce the chances of mold or mildew in the home. Tenants were also instructed of their responsibility to report any equipment that is not working correctly or if there are leaks or the presence of mold or mildew in the home so that Parks can fulfill their responsibility to replace faulty equipment or eradicate mold or mildew or repair leaks.

As a point of interest, a recently vacated rental house in North Lake Whatcom Park adjacent to the Hertz Trail was secured immediately by our staff. There is a 2014 capital project (ASR 5035) that is designed to remove the structures and prepare the site for future public use (to be determined).

VI. DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT REPORT – RODNEY LAMB

A. 2013 Capital Projects - 2013 Capital projects are currently winding down for the year. Rod reported on the following projects.

1. Lighthouse Marine Park Dock Renovation – This project is underway. As previously mentioned there was a slight scheduling delay in the pile driving activities. The previously planned date for instillation coincided with the first big wind storm in October that prevented the subcontractor from accessing the site. As a result it will be necessary to install the piles in mid-July, 2014 after the fish window is no longer a factor.

The contractor has completed the majority of the upland work. A significant section of the parking lot needed to be repaved because the sub-base needed to be stabilized. The sub-base was stabilized by adding approximately 10 inches of compacted base rock prior to paving. Rod noted that access to the new boarding float will include an ADA accessible ramp. The contractor will be vacating the site soon and returning when they are to complete the in-water work.

In the mean-time Parks will continue secure a dock manufacturer to construct the boarding floats. There are currently two vendors being considered. Both vendors are comparable in work and costs however it has not been determined which one best meets the required specifications and can provide the optimal system.

2. Hovander Park River Trail – The contractor and sub-contractor have completed their work on the trail. The contractor's bid was originally well under the original budget, however due to unknown field conditions the contractor has exceeded the original bid amount. The project has since closed over this amount. The change in project costs was largely due to the fact that in order to conduct the topographical survey blackberries needed to be removed from the trail but in order to meet code the blackberries could not simply be mowed down, there needed to be a cross section cut every 50 feet. This required a great deal of work on a mile and a half trail and increased our base rock quantities more than was anticipated.

The overage did not exceed the amount of funds that the County budgeted for the project. Parks has submitted a request to the Council to approve additional funding to cover the

contractor's overage as well as pay for additional surfacing material. The additional surfacing material will reduce long-term maintenance and improve overall durability. The additional surfacing if approved will be installed in the spring of 2014.

At that time mitigation planting of riparian vegetation will be completed along the trail as well as reseeding. Due to weather delays the area was seeded late in the season and needs to be reseeded.

There was a great deal of discussion regarding the shoreline permit requirements, what riparian vegetation consisted of, and what would or could be planted within those requirements. Jeff Margolis suggested that rhododendrons be planted on the east side of the trail and in that these shrubs are native they would be in accord with the landscaping doctrine. He suggested that these flowering plants would contribute to the ambiance, creating a sense of a promenade which would make it that much more a draw for the public. He suggested that if Whatcom County Parks and Recreation was not in a position to afford these plants he suggested that we take some initiative to have a civic group carry the ball. Let the record show that no action was taken on this suggestion. Rod provided a current list of vegetation that was included in the mitigation plan.

3. Lookout Mountain – This project is complete from the contractor's stand point. All the site improvements have been completed and the utilities that stubbed into the restroom and the connection pipe into the Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District water main have been installed. After the instillation was completed it was determined that the one inch waterline that was installed was inadequate to flush the toilets and that it requires a one and a half inch main. This was not only unknown to Rod but also the Civil Engineer. In order to rectify this problem a pressure tank will need to be installed in order to boost the pressure. A pressure tank has been purchased and will be installed by the maintenance crew before the Thanksgiving holiday.

There was an additional snag in this project. The grinder pump alarm was tripped the weekend after it was turned on. Unfortunately the Park staff was not aware that the alarm was tripped until Monday morning when it was discovered that the Sheriff and the pump manufacturer had been called. This has since been corrected by disconnecting the audible alarm and contacting the manufacturer to investigate the reason for the alarm. The manufacturer sent a service tech to the site that discovered a faulty electrical contactor in the control panel. The contactor was replaced and the system appears to be operating properly.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Bay to Baker Trail / BNSF Parcels – Included in the November Commission Meeting packet was a letter from Jones Lang LaSalle Americas, Inc., representative for BNSF Railway Company. The letter explained that their sale application would need to be completed and returned along with a tax map, FSA map or survey map of the property. The letter indicated that when this sale application was received the status of the property would be determined and the interested party contacted and that this process could take up to a year.

Gordon stated that based on this letter there is a question as to whether the property exists and if so, is it available to purchase.

Gordon stated that Mike McFarlane discussed the letter with Executive Louws. It was discussed that more specific information is required prior to moving forward and that without additional information this issue would seem to be at a standstill.

It was the consensus of the Commission that this topic be moved forward as an agenda item for further discussion in December.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS – NONE

IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. NEXT MEETING: Thursday, December 19, 2013, 6:00 PM. The meeting will be held at Roeder Home, 2600 Sunset Drive, Bellingham. The December meeting will include elections for Chair/Vice Chair for 2014.

X. ADJOURNMENT – The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 PM.

Transcribed by: Pat Fisher, Clerk III

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director