

MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, September 20, 2018

Van Zandt Community Hall
4106 Valley Highway
Deming, Washington

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Jeff Margolis Committee Chair at 6:02 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

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

Staff: Michael McFarlane, Christ Thomsen, Rod Lamb

EXCUSED

Commissioners: None

GUEST(S)

None

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

None

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Jeff Margolis welcomed everyone to the Van Zandt Community Hall and explained that the hall is administered on behalf of the Parks Department by the South Fork Valley Community Association (which he is the President of). The Association does everything it can to continually restore the building and recently installed new windows and a new roof. The Park was built at the turn of the century, so it's about 20 years old. It includes a handball court, basketball court, pickle ball court, gazebo, horseshoes, and recreational stuff for kids. The Park and Hall have invigorated the community in the South Fork Valley and the Association is creating a Fundraising Committee to raise funds for an addition to the Hall. This addition will double the capacity of the building and create a sound studio for the radio station that operates 24/7. A sliding door or large picture window will be installed that will bring more light and better ventilation into the building. The expected cost is not less than \$100,000.

V. AGENDA

A. September 20, 2018

MOTION: Richard Sturgill moved to approve the September 20, 2018 agenda as presented. Sonja Max seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VI. MINUTES

A. July 19, 2018

MOTION: Sonja Max moved to approve the July 19, 2018 Minutes as written. Brad VanderWerff seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. Director's Report – Michael McFarlane

- i. **Budget** – The 2019-20 Budget was submitted August 1st and WC Parks has met with the Executive's Budget Team. A new Six-Year Capital Improvement Program was approved by the Whatcom County Planning Commission. The Executive's Budget will be released October 18th and goes to Council for approval on November 20th. WC Parks' priorities in the 2019-20 Budget include additional staffing, new vehicles, and various capital projects.
- ii. **Executive's Tour of Projects 8/3/18** – Mike and Christ took the County Executive on a tour of Silver Lake Park, Maple Creek Bridge, and Lookout Mountain projects.
- iii. **Blaine Senior Center 50-years 8/11/8** – The Blaine Senior Center celebrated 50 years on August 11, 2018 with a small ceremony and a barbecue dinner in the parking lot.
- iv. **Council Approved \$54,000 to fund the playground at Lighthouse Marine Park.** – Funds approved prior were used in the renovation of the deck. These new funds will complete some shelter improvements and the new playground which will be ready for the 2019 season.
- v. **Hovander Homestead Bluegrass Festival was held September 1st & 2nd** – Results from the Parks & Recreation Foundation will be available in the next several weeks. Attendance this year appears to be similar to last year.
- vi. **RCO Grants –Maple Falls Park, Birch Bay Beach Park, Lake Whatcom Trailhead/trails and Lookout Mountain** – The preliminary rankings for 2019 grants were released last week by the Recreation and Conservation Office. Unfortunately, none of Whatcom County Parks and Recreation projects scored in the upper percent. As a result, it is unlikely WC Parks will receive grant funding for these projects next year. There are funds programmed in the 2019-2020 budget request for some of these projects.
- vii. **Executive's Customer Service Initiative** – Executive Louws has renewed his commitment to customer service excellence by adopting a

strategy that will focus on achieving customer service excellence. That strategy was developed by a group of Whatcom County employees who created a mission statement to “achieve customer solutions that work for our Whatcom County community” by committing to provide accurate, timely, consistent information and excellent service with integrity, and respect. Four departments (Public Works, Planning and Development Services, Parks and Recreation, Health) were chosen to provide input and ideas about how to achieve this. Many of the WC Parks employees will be attending a leadership training retreat on October 12th to help Re-Craft Customer Service at Whatcom County.

viii. Silver Lake Flowering Rush Treatment – The north end of the lake was treated with herbicide the last week of August for the invasive plant Flowering Rush. This is not a Parks Department project and is done under a Department of Ecology permit. The program has been very successful in eradicating this plant. Since this program started, there has not been an outbreak of “swimmers itch”. The chair expressed his dissatisfaction with the use of herbicide.

ix. Agreements/ Contracts – We have a number of contracts and agreements we are currently working on including:

1. WSU-Extension and Master Gardener Foundation
2. Lookout Tower Lease and an amendment
3. WTA bus shelter on Lake Louise Road at the Lookout Mountain trailhead
4. Senior Center Program Agreements for Blaine, Lynden, Bellingham, and Ferndale

B. Operations Report – Christ Thomsen

- i. Staff** – Daniel Murphy was hired for the Maintenance and Construction Supervisor position. Interviews are being held for the Regional Park Supervisor position.
- ii. Silver Lake Park** – Visitation for Silver Lake Park increased from approximately 27,000 visitors in July 2017 to approximately 52,000 visitors in July 2018. Staff did an amazing job of handling this dramatic increase. Plans are being made on how better to serve these numbers based on issues that arose this year (more garbage pickup, cleaning, etc.).
- iii. Projects Updates** – The Samish Park deck project is complete. A tree service was hired to remove a portion of a tree at Samish and during removal, a strap broke, and dropped a branch through the roof of the building. Fortunately, nobody was hurt and the portion of the building that was damaged was the office area, so it hasn't affected any of the group rentals. The tree company is in the process of hiring a roofing company to repair the roof, as the damage is structural as well as cosmetic. The WC crew will begin work on the Semiahmoo Restroom/Concession Building

October 1st to make the space more flexible for a concessionaire. The renovated building will contain about 1500 square feet of usable area for concessions. The adjacent outdoor deck area between the buildings is about 800 square feet. The Bellingham Senior Activity Center is getting some new landscaping. Work on the fence at South Fork Park is set to begin October 1st. This will extend the current fence to include the equestrian trailhead (about 2500 feet) and prevent vehicles trespassing in the agricultural field.

- iv. **Bluegrass Festival** – The Hovander Homestead Bluegrass Festival lost about \$10,000 in 2017. Organizers will be deciding whether or not to continue the event in 2019.
- v. **Special Events Webpage** – The Special Events Webpage has been updated to include information on what makes an event a special event, the application process, insurance requirements, fees, and other required permits.

C. Planning & Development Report (Rodney Lamb)

- i. **Hovander River Trail Mitigation** – The Hovander River Trail was completed in 2014. A part of the permit approval required installation of riparian planting that would enhance the existing native riparian vegetation along the left bank of the Nooksack River. The plants were installed as part of a Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association volunteer planting that occurred on Earth Day (4/19/14), but the “As-built” documentation was not followed up on. The documentation has now been completed and submitted to Whatcom County Planning & Development Services.
- ii. **Hovander Maintenance Shop** – Supporting documentation to assist Whatcom County Planning & Development Services (PDS) in understanding the scope of the Hovander Maintenance Shop project has been submitted and a pre-application meeting has been scheduled for October 11 to review the permit approval requirements. The proposed maintenance building location is not within the shoreline jurisdiction, which should simplify permitting.
- iii. **Maple Creek Bridge** – Whatcom Land Trust (WLT) has been contacted to schedule a volunteer planting effort to install the mitigation planting at the Maple Creek Bridge site. WLT is checking with volunteers to identify a date that will work for the group; most likely the second or third week of October. The final wayfinding signage plan has been completed by the Special Projects staff and a price quote has been submitted by the signage manufacturer. Because of budget limitations, the signs will not be installed immediately, but will hopefully be installed later this year once there is a better understanding of what funds remain in 2018.
- iv. **Silver Lake Road & Electrical Improvements** – The contract work has been completed at Silver Lake. WC Parks is working to close out the

project and release retainage, but still needs final project closeout paperwork from the contractor.

- v. **2019-20 Draft Capital Project** – Rod is looking at what projects can be completed in the final months of 2018 so that the 2019-20 Capital Projects can be started as soon as funding is approved.

VIII. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- A. **Update on the Lighthouse Marine Park Dock** – The dock at Lighthouse Marine Park was removed earlier this summer because of damage that was observed between the grounding feet of the dock and the dock frame. After removal, the dock was inspected by the engineer and damage was found in nearly every float. The engineer has provided a field report, a possible repair approach, and a cost estimate to make the proposed repairs. The cost estimate will be presented once a final repair strategy has been identified. The contractor suggested that the floats be taken to a repair facility in Blaine or Bellingham, and offered to ship them if WC Parks could load the floats on his trailer. The contractor has also reached out to the float manufacturer for assistance, but has not yet received a response.
- B. **Update on the Lighthouse Marine Park Playground/Deck** – The Whatcom County Council approved additional funding to complete the deck and playground at Lighthouse Marine Park. The funding will cover the cost of installing new concrete paving/walkways, playground equipment, and benches. WC Parks also applied for and was awarded a grant from a playground manufacturer that matches approximately 45% of the local funding. This manufacturer hasn't yet been used in any Whatcom County Facilities, but is quite common in City of Bellingham Parks facilities. According to the COB Parks design staff, the equipment from this manufacturer is very durable.

IX. **NEW BUSINESS**

- A. **“Meals on Wheels and More”** – Mike McFarlane distributed a handout showing the costs and funding sources of the Meals on Wheels program. WC Parks is not directly involved in the meals program, but does provide over \$90,000 in in-kind support for the program and the Whatcom Council on Aging's business operations. The Council on Aging will be seeking funding from the County again in the upcoming budget cycle.
- B. **Request by Gary D'Haese regarding Hovander Blacksmith Shop** – Mike McFarlane distributed correspondence addressed to the current Parks Commission Members that was received from Mr. D'Haese regarding the static seasonal blacksmith display at Hovander Park. Some of the blacksmith items belong to Whatcom County and some of them are on loan from the US Forest Service and the Lynden Pioneer Museum per written agreements. Mr. D'Haese would like to see demonstrations again and recognition for several items. The

WC Parks Department would gladly work with a nonprofit to make the forge area available if there was a group that would like to do public demonstrations again. To date, there has not been any interest from outside groups to hold demonstrations and WC Parks does not have the funding or staff to do so. Some of the blacksmith items are currently off display, but recognition is given to the Lynden Museum and US Forest Service per the agreements. Mike McFarlane will respond back to the Mr. D’Haese with this information.

C. Pedestrian Safety SR-9 & Josh VanderYacht Park – Jeff Margolis presented a letter addressed to the Washington State Department of Transportation regarding the safety of pedestrians walking from the Van Zandt Community Hall and Josh VanderYacht Memorial Park to the local grocery store and the South Fork of the Nooksack River for recreation. He wanted the Commission to support the concept of crosswalks and whatever other mechanisms may be available to promote pedestrian safety at this intersection.

MOTION: Richard Sturgill moved to approve the Commission supporting Jeff Margolis’ letter. Brad VanderWerff seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair invited everyone out to the hall for several upcoming events.

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION

The next Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission meeting will be held on November 1, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. at the Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Administrative Office, 3373 Mount Baker Highway, Bellingham, Washington. The October 18, 2018 is cancelled. The November 15, 2018 meeting is cancelled.

MOTION: Sonja Max moved to approve the Commission meeting schedule changes. Brad VanderWerff seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Transcribed by: Kristin Lunderville, Clerk III
Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director