

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 Brenner stated she would like to see a prioritized list and the associated
2 costs. McFarlane stated the cost part will come up when they break down the
3 projects further. They haven't done prioritization yet, but will need to put together
4 the six-year capital improvement program. If someone really wants the staff to
5 focus on one of the projects, he needs to hear it.

6
7 Nelson stated that if they are going to look at a six-year capital improvement
8 plan, he needs to see costs. He assumes Mr. McFarlane's seen requests for
9 additional services through the public process. He asked if there are cost
10 estimates. McFarlane stated he has some estimates. The priorities depend on who
11 they talk to and location. Sometimes prioritization is not based on cost, but is
12 based on grant availability. Trails may be tied into the six-year road plan. The
13 department will identify those projects that it is already working on or they have
14 things they know they will do because funds and permitting are committed.

15
16 Nelson asked if the community process included data collection on areas
17 where services are lacking and areas where service is in abundance. McFarlane
18 stated every community asked for something. Residents in the less populated
19 areas of the county want the kinds of amenities available to the more densely
20 populated areas. The City of Bellingham identified its priorities. Some projects
21 have been identified as things that they want to happen, but will take longer than
22 six years. The Bay to Baker Trail is an example. A priority area of the Bay to Baker
23 Trail would be the section from Hovander to Marine Drive. It's a third of the way
24 done. They are in negotiations with the State Department of Fish and Wildlife
25 (WDFW). There may be a bridge connecting Pioneer Park with Hovander Park.
26 Funding elements will be available to make that happen. It's hard to identify a list
27 by community.

28
29 Brenner stated this information is overwhelming to her. Times are not going
30 to get better financially. People who are moving here won't add a lot to the tax
31 base.

32
33 Also, the County shouldn't develop any parks on Lake Whatcom or Lake
34 Samish. The Council has already determined that it doesn't want to go forward
35 with developments on Lake Whatcom. The County will make a lot of people angry
36 by not allowing people to develop on the lake while the County develops park
37 facilities.

38
39 Roy asked if there was a survey where people prioritized what they wanted in
40 the county. McFarlane stated staff listed the major issues the communities said
41 were priorities. Each community wants their park facilities developed differently.

42
43 There are policy decisions to be made about the significant number of park
44 holdings in the watershed. The public expects that they be developed for public
45 use. In previous plans, property was purchased to accommodate recreational
46 needs. The public is expecting more water access, but that is directly in conflict
47 with watershed issues. Those are tough decisions to make. One of the complaints

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 is that the County owns a lot of property in the watershed, and the public wants it
2 developed.

3
4 Project eight on the list came up often during the community meetings.
5 Skagit County is very concerned about the Interstate 5 corridor. Whatcom County
6 is concerned about development because of the Plantation Rifle Range. There will
7 be multiple use conflicts. This project would be a significant multi-agency project.

8
9 Project nine is important to people in the County. They've documented a
10 number of the scenic overlooks to protect. They are small areas, but important to
11 the quality of life.

12
13 The regional park areas are the large mega-parks. The Lake Whatcom north
14 and Lake Whatcom south areas are included because they were identified as major
15 park developments. Prior plans have talked about acquisition. In these areas, they
16 must be sensitive to development if they are going to proceed with additional
17 recreation in the watershed.

18
19 Projects five, six, and seven are new regional parks. Having two large areas
20 with a focus on the river for access would be appropriate. Cherry Point is a major
21 saltwater regional park, which is consistent with prior plans.

22
23 The Lummi Island project is day use, compatible with beach and saltwater
24 access and is low impact. The Lighthouse Park project is to acquire additional
25 property because the park is small. There will be an opportunity in the near future
26 to acquire adjoining properties. It would help the revenue flow and to correct
27 problems at the park.

28
29 For Hovander Park, they need to develop a site plan to accommodate all the
30 uses desired.

31
32 Dittrich Park is another waterfront area with beach access. The existing Lake
33 Samish Park has very limited parking. It can't accommodate the groups out there.
34 The Dittrich park area will take up the overflow demand.

35
36 The category of trails and accesses needs to be broken down further by
37 Nooksack River Trail, Coast Millennium Trail, and Bay to Baker Trail. Next,
38 determine which segments of those trails they can complete in the six-year plan.
39 There may be additional elements for rest areas. They are still working on the
40 route for the Coast Millennium Trail. There are shared areas between the Nooksack
41 River Trail and the Bay to Baker Trail.

42
43 They are depending on the Bike/Pedestrian Plan to take up appropriate
44 elements from the plan. The latest revisions of that plan haven't come forward yet.
45 The Birch Bay waterfront is a high priority issue.'

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 The final category is the special use facilities and areas of concern. Included
2 are the senior centers. These projects will be tied to population projections. There
3 is room for expansion at the Plantation Rifle Range, but the County doesn't own the
4 property. It may be prudent to move that project ahead of schedule to secure the
5 land, given the demand for development in the area. There may be additional area
6 similar to the soccer complex at the intersection of Smith Road and Northwest
7 Road.

8
9 Brenner asked if they will plan for more playfields at Smith and Northwest.
10 McFarlane stated they will if there is room for it. The association hasn't asked for
11 it, but they must project more than 20 years.

12
13 Crawford stated his priority is to continue to look at items three and six in
14 the conservancy category. For regional parks, items three and four should include
15 a motorboat launch area. He is not sure how item six is related to the purchase of
16 11 acres that the Council recently approved. If there is potential for expansion into
17 a regional park, it should be a priority to provide access to the public as soon as
18 possible, including handicap fishing access. Because of its central location, it is
19 ideal for a wildlife recovery center. An organization is interested in that concept.
20 Expand on the possibility of public viewing of the recovering animals.

21
22 Regarding item 12, there are some citizen concerns regarding the
23 appearance of the Black Mountain Forestry side of the park. There needs to be a
24 clear long-term plan for that facility in terms of use and aesthetics of the facility
25 and how it interacts with the Silver Lake Park complex.

26
27 Regarding trails and accesses, a high priority for item one is to acquire
28 property at the south end of Lake Whatcom to finish the Hertz trail complex and a
29 bicycle access all the way around the lake. Regarding item three, include
30 handicapped fishing access. Regarding item five, expand the project to include a
31 bicycle trail. Using the Mt. Baker Highway as a bike trail is not ideal. Pursue
32 corridors through there to create a bicycle path. The same recommendation applies
33 to item eight. The City of Bellingham has developed a great bike trail system. It
34 would be great to expand the system to the east county. The same
35 recommendation goes for item 16. Add two items, 19 and 20, the Stimson and
36 Olson projects. Trails are important for those conservancy areas. Add the Toad
37 Lake fishing access at the north end of Toad Lake Road as item 21. There is a
38 small dock and a steep gravel road. Some day, improve that area.

39
40 Unidentified speaker said that belongs to the State Department of Fish and
41 Wildlife.

42
43 Crawford stated add an item ten to the special use category to develop
44 handicap fishing access. He is not convinced they should not designate an off-road
45 vehicle (ORV) area.

46
47 Brenner asked if Crawford would support an ORV area right by his house.

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1
2 Crawford stated he would. There are certain areas that are already de facto
3 ORV areas. Acknowledge the existing use and develop facilities to enhance the
4 area rather than letting people damage and destroy the area.
5

6 Brenner stated don't develop regional park area items three and four at all.
7 Develop trails, but not parks with access to the lake. Don't make it more than what
8 it is. She asked if they've thought about doing property with cabins for item eight.
9 She asked why the project is to develop it only as a day use facility. McFarlane
10 stated there was a proposal once for a recreational vehicle (RV) park, but it was
11 opposed. Something with cabins would work. This was the priority of the
12 community that wanted a small public area for the existing residents.
13

14 Brenner stated a tent camping area would be fun. She doesn't support an
15 RV park. It would be nice if there were overnight camping spots.
16

17 McFarlane stated he would be glad to meet with the councilmembers
18 individually to hear their ideas. Now, he's trying to just give the councilmembers
19 an idea of the scope.
20

21 Fleetwood asked if the plan is mandated or voluntary. McFarlane stated a
22 plan is required by many grants. The last update to the plan was done in 1989.
23 The plan should be updated every six years. He hopes to be back with the plan in
24 October or November.
25

26 Fleetwood stated item nine on page one is a neat idea. McFarlane stated he
27 has a list of overlook locations. The list doesn't cover everything that exists in the
28 county. The locations are in a mix of all zoning area.
29

30 Fleetwood stated he would like a list of all the ideas that various folks have
31 provided.
32

33 Nelson stated a concern is the Lake Whatcom issue and all watersheds. All
34 efforts should be to focus on preserving the quality of the environment and the
35 quality of life. Lake Whatcom is a recreational lake in addition to a drinking water
36 source. There must be access to recreational activity. Get the maximum effect to
37 allow the recreational aspect as well as the environmental concerns.
38

39 Roy stated in the broad sense, she assumes they're considering impacts to
40 the environment and habitat. This Council is interested in environment and habitat
41 being major considerations on whatever they plan.
42

43 McShane stated it's an overwhelming list. Funding is his biggest concern.
44 One opportunity for funding is getting easements through the Secure Schools Fund
45 Act. Keep that source of funding in mind.
46

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 Also, Councilmember Crawford made a comment about leaving this meeting
2 early because his work is busy. He is busy with work as well. This has been going
3 on, and he's starting to resent it a little bit. The councilmembers do get paid for
4 this job. There is an expectation they put effort into the job. The councilmembers
5 are at meetings to hear everyone's opinion, not just cut and run. Councilmember
6 Crawford's leaving is not appropriate.

7
8 Caskey-Schreiber stated she agrees. They all put in many extra hours to
9 address the issue the county faces. They do start to resent the attitude that one
10 councilmember is busier than another. They are all giving up their pay by choosing
11 to be here. It's a job they all took on voluntarily. She appreciates that the
12 councilmembers have committed extra time to work on the Lake Whatcom issue.

13
14 Brenner stated she is involved with the Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee. She's
15 excited about its efforts. During the last meeting, a person from Clallam County
16 provided extremely good insight on how to focus and get bike trails done. He felt
17 Whatcom County focuses on pieces of trails instead of one whole trail from start to
18 finish. He believes the County should focus on one project at a time and stick with
19 it until it's accomplished.

20
21 Caskey-Schreiber stated that was the point of doing this plan. Mr. McFarlane
22 was asking that the Council come up with a 20-year comprehensive plan.

23
24 *(Clerk's Note: End of tape one, side A.)*

25
26 Caskey-Schreiber stated they are all frustrated with random, piecemeal
27 funding.

28
29 Fleetwood asked if regional trails throughout the county require a lot of
30 private, voluntary willingness to make trails through private property. He asked if
31 there is a way to do a reality check on the property owners to find out if they are
32 willing to participate. If they are not willing to participate, the policy discussion is
33 whether the County should acquire the property. McFarlane stated they must first
34 identify the corridor. How they get from point A to point B sometimes isn't clear.
35 It's not unusual for community corridor trails to divert around areas until ownership
36 patterns change. The process for the three main trails is good, it's just that they're
37 massive trails. The Bay to Baker Trail is 73 miles, all of it private property. The
38 Public Works Department is looking at a staff position to deal with real estate and
39 right-of-way acquisition. There are problems with condemnation.

40
41 Fleetwood stated he wants a reality check on whether the regional trails are
42 unrealistic dreams or can be made a reality.

43
44 Nelson stated he foresees an annual park planning process happening.

45

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 Caskey-Schreiber stated the Council might need to get a list of the
2 community's priorities. At some point, Mr. McFarlane will need an idea of what the
3 Council is willing to support.
4

5 Fleetwood stated having a list to prioritize, with projects that rely on private
6 property, doesn't work. Implementing an overall parks plan is mostly opportunity-
7 based. That's the reality. McFarlane stated they haven't fully developed the
8 opportunities they have now on the trails.
9

10 Roy stated some of the proposed bicycle trails in her area would require
11 cooperation with adjoining cities. She asked if that is part of the process.
12 McFarlane stated it is.
13

14 Brenner stated that regarding item seven in the category areas of concern,
15 follow what the cities want specifically in the urban growth areas (UGA's). Leave it
16 to the cities to decide what they want in the UGA's. McFarlane stated that is what
17 he is doing, especially with the City of Bellingham.
18

19 Tom Beckwith, Beckwith Consulting, stated this is an update on the tools and
20 concepts used to finance park facilities. Some of the tools are new concepts. The
21 question is if they make much difference. He will talk about recreational modeling
22 and pricing. This update is background discussion. They can come back with more
23 detail later. He explained what they would talk about.
24

25 Lee Springgate, Point Wilson Group, submitted information on park financing
26 (*on file, exhibit B*). They are not ready to present a financing strategy yet. The
27 Council should let them know if some of the options are off the table for
28 consideration.
29

30 Most communities are having park funding problems. It's coming at a time
31 when recreational demands are increasing. Most of the counties are relying less on
32 general fund revenues and more on alternative sources of revenue, including voter-
33 approved sources.
34

35 A number of communities have married capital improvement bonds with a
36 voter-approved levy to take care of the operating expenses. Passing one and not
37 the other is risky. Historically, communities approve bond issues to buy and
38 develop parkland. Afterward, the community would create a maintenance and
39 operations (M&O) obligation. Mostly, communities didn't have the capacity to take
40 care of maintenance after that was done. Communities began to put out a levy for
41 operations at the same time and the bond issue.
42

43 King County's operating budget was reduced from \$18 million to \$2 million,
44 generated by user fee income, a levy, and divesting of expenses. They are doing
45 research on a 50 percent plus one vote levy and will present that option in the
46 future.
47

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 Fleetwood asked what kind of bond is used. Springgate stated a general
2 obligation bond is used.

3
4 He continued to read from the handout the list of earmarked taxes available.

5
6 Caskey-Schreiber asked if real estate excise tax (REET) three can be used for
7 parks. Beckwith stated it is available for capital facilities, not operating costs.

8
9 Caskey-Schreiber asked if they can acquire parkland with REET 3. Beckwith
10 stated they can.

11
12 Springgate stated more counties and cities are issuing bonds against capital
13 funds, and are paying off bonds with the income streams.

14
15 Beckwith stated REET and the Conservation Futures fund gives a projected
16 income each year. Instead, issue a bond against that income to take the money up
17 front. King County bought its open space now, with future conservation futures and
18 REET money.

19
20 Brenner stated that would tie up the fund. Beckwith stated that is correct.

21
22 Springgate stated communities generally bond some of that money, and
23 leave some available.

24
25 McShane stated REET can be applied to maintenance.

26
27 Springgate read the list of traditional public grant resources. It is something
28 to keep in mind. They are not a long term, secured source of funds.

29
30 Brenner asked if the County is exploring these grants.

31
32 Troy Holbrook, Senior Planner, stated the County is exploring a number of
33 the grants.

34
35 Springgate stated the research on the grant sources is new. He read the list
36 of other traditional funding sources. Some communities resist those funding
37 sources, and other communities think it's their fair share.

38
39 Caskey-Schreiber stated she thought the County was limited in what it could
40 charge impact fees for, and that it could only be used for anticipated growth.
41 Beckwith stated user fees are a growth-impact fee. In this case, they are based on
42 park fees or portions of transportation fees for trails. It is based on existing assets
43 and seeks to maintain the same level of standard for the new house as the existing
44 house. User fees are imposed on the unincorporated portion of the county, usually
45 posed against houses under construction, based on the number of anticipated
46 occupants. The issue is the true cost of the new house on the park system, and the
47 true and fair charge. They've done 24 plans since the Growth Management Act was

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 adopted. Only one city did not do park user fees, because there was not enough
2 anticipated population growth in that city. Most jurisdictions pass a 25 percent to
3 65 percent of the cost of the new park. They came up with the percentage from
4 surveying the community. In areas with lots of population growth, it is worth the
5 administrative cost to impose and collect the fee.

6
7 Springgate stated revenue bonds are used occasionally if there are
8 anticipated user fees to pay the bonds back. A revenue bond costs more money
9 because it is not secured by the full faith and credit of the governmental
10 jurisdiction. It's not as cheap as issuing their own bonds.

11
12 Program pricing policies are extremely important. With more aggressive
13 pricing of recreational programs, they can generate more revenue. Enterprise
14 funds are being established in many parks departments. For example, one
15 program generates so much income that it's used to support other programs.

16
17 Beckwith stated enterprise funds are the equivalent of a business. User fees
18 go back to operations. It's a self-sustaining operation.

19
20 Springgate stated sponsorships from corporations can be very lucrative if
21 they choose to be aggressive and know how commercial they want to make the
22 park system.

23
24 Brenner asked who solicits the sponsors. Springgate stated the Parks
25 Department lines up the sponsors. The County doesn't incur a cost to do that, or
26 as much as if they put on the event without the sponsor. How aggressive they
27 want to be is a policy decision.

28
29 Challenge grants are a method where the government provides money that it
30 will only spend if it gets partners who must also contribute a certain amount of
31 money. That device should be used more often.

32
33 Cause marketing is a charitable cause identified by a corporation, and a
34 portion of their profits is given to the cause. That is not something public agencies
35 use very often.

36
37 The turnkey method is a way to entice donations by allowing the private
38 sector to develop the park the way they want, without interference. When the park
39 is developed the way the private sector wants, it is turned back over to the public
40 agency.

41
42 He continued to read the list of entrepreneurial funding sources and
43 donations. There is a lot of potential for generating revenue by using partners.

44
45 *(Clerk's Note: End of tape one, side B.)*
46

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 Fleetwood asked if the Council would get recommendations on sources of
2 funding. Beckwith stated it would. He would forecast the most effective tools
3 available, what they will produce, and the cost.
4

5 Fleetwood asked the maximum amount the County can collect for
6 Conservation Futures. Springgate stated the maximum is \$.62 per \$1,000 of
7 assessed value.
8

9 Springgate stated there are governance options to consider, including the
10 Park Service Area. The County has authority to establish a Park Service Area in the
11 county, and ask people in the area to tax themselves for parks and recreation.
12

13 Roy stated the County has some park districts now that don't collect any
14 money. That should be on the Council's list of options. McFarlane stated that is
15 correct.
16

17 Springgate stated the governments can create and run the Park Service
18 Area. A park district is a separate governmental taxing district. The metropolitan
19 park district rules have been liberalized in the last few years. Recent legislation
20 allows any governmental unit to create the district. They operate like service
21 areas. In this case, they can collect up to \$.75 per \$1,000 of assessed value. They
22 can raise more money than park service areas and park districts. A metropolitan
23 park district must have only 50 percent plus one votes to be established. They can
24 exist in perpetuity instead of having to be renewed every six years. In addition,
25 they no longer have to be managed by a separately elected board. The County
26 Council could be the governing authority, collect the revenue, and distribute the
27 revenue to the service district. The metropolitan park districts exist in Washington
28 State. They are being considered in a number of other places.
29

30 Brenner asked if the metropolitan park district has to be near or in cities.
31 Springgate stated it does not.
32

33 Caskey-Schreiber asked if the district can be countywide. Beckwith stated it
34 can go countywide. It cannot overlap with another metropolitan park district.
35

36 Beckwith stated there are varying ways of setting up park services. He
37 presented information (*on file, Exhibits D and E*). Use other sources of funding, but
38 if they over-privatize, the public interest in the facility drops off. They have to have
39 both private and public funding. The higher the private contribution, the less the
40 public interest. On the other hand, if the private contribution is too low, public
41 support for funding drops. The trick is to figure out the balance where public
42 support stays consistent.
43

44 All these techniques are ways to find funding, but they won't be enough to
45 fund the list of projects and allow the County to stay in the park business.
46 Therefore, the County is confronted with three choices. First, the County can cut its
47 scope and limit its vision for park facilities. That's not a popular choice. Second,

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 the County can raise as much money as it can, but that's not feasible. Third, the
2 County can get strategic about what it provides or what it wants others to do in the
3 County's name. This is the only viable option.
4

5 There is a way that option three won't work. One example is King County,
6 which had to do away with its Parks Department to fund a \$30 million shortfall in
7 the County budget. On the other hand, the Parks Department should have
8 foreseen that problem. The County gave away its program services, but private
9 agencies did want some of those programs, which ended up dying. The public
10 wasn't prepared for the crisis and to shift its thinking. Now, the problem is what
11 King County is left with. It's left with rural parks and trail proposals that the public
12 doesn't want to fund. The County lost its positioning.
13

14 Springgate stated the voters did pass an operating levy of \$8 million per year
15 to maintain the natural areas, regional trail system, and rural parks. They became
16 confused about who is supposed to take care of the regional parks in King County.
17

18 McShane stated that for King County, \$8 million is a very low amount of
19 money. They supported \$.05 per \$1,000 of assessed value to maintain existing
20 trails and parks.
21

22 Beckwith stated another bad example is Pierce County, which always has
23 been hampered by the Tacoma Metropolitan Park District. The bulk of the
24 population is in Tacoma. The County retracted into open space, conservation, and
25 trail proposals. They had some signature parks that gave them an identity, but not
26 inside the Metropolitan Park District boundaries. Last year, one of the signature,
27 regional parks went into the Metropolitan Park District. Now, the County has a
28 difficult time proposing a funding mechanism because the residents don't identify
29 with the county parks. The County has to get ahead of what the other jurisdictions
30 are going to do, or none will be viable.
31

32 The third bad example is Snohomish County, which has been the more
33 entrepreneurial of the three. They participated in many joint ventures with the
34 cities. However, the County doesn't have any signature parks of its own, and has
35 been unable to get approved any major bond or funding proposals. Another
36 problem is that the bulk of the costs have grown in the program area, which aren't
37 countywide. Traditionally, programs don't pay for themselves. They kept their
38 programs too long, and didn't realize there was not enough broad interest in the
39 programs that they could be funded by countywide funds. They should have
40 segmented those programs so they were paid locally, using service areas or other
41 devices to pay for the programs locally.
42

43 Brenner asked for an example of programs that were and were not
44 countywide. Beckwith stated it's difficult to have a program that is countywide.
45 The County provided the bulk of its programs in the unincorporated areas, and the
46 city residents didn't use them. The operating subsidies for the program became so
47 high that its eating the department's budget.

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1
2 Provide programs, but transfer them into local service areas, and figure out
3 how those service areas will pay for them.

4
5 Springgate stated focus on capital expenses, and use local agencies for
6 operations.

7
8 Beckwith stated the County must still maintain a presence.

9
10 Nelson stated the County does that somewhat right now. He asked if there is
11 a mechanism to use interlocal agreements so participation is based upon input from
12 all participants. Beckwith stated there is. In the urban growth area, the County is
13 the stand-in until the city gets there. Interlocal agreements can also be done with
14 private agencies. Presence is everything. It's marketing.

15
16 Caskey-Schreiber stated the Land Trust is skilled at that. There are a lot of
17 County properties that the Land Trust markets as their project.

18
19 Beckwith stated it's hard to get the public dollar if the system is invisible.

20
21 Springgate stated retain control and responsibility for the large, regional
22 sites, but get creative with how they are operated. Enter into an interlocal
23 agreement for operations, but keep the County's name on the park.

24
25 Nelson stated there are probably not many examples of counties doing this
26 with the larger municipalities. He asked for recommendations on establishing a
27 relationship with a large municipality that has an ability, but may not realize the
28 benefit. Beckwith stated he finished Bellingham's plan two years ago. He projected
29 out its six- and 20-year project list, maintenance cost, and staffing costs. He
30 looked at the revenue and the one percent limitation. He put a shrinking growth
31 rate on what the City gets from the general fund, but there were no devices to
32 offset it. They need a dedicated tool for financing, which means a metropolitan
33 park district. The City Council will be the governing body.

34
35 To establish a role with such an agency, figure out what the County can do
36 best and what the City can do best. The City wants open space and trails, but not
37 just inside the city limits. The City wants the Bay to Baker Trail. That's what the
38 County can offer. The County has the ability to provide open space. The City's
39 greenways money will run out because it has to go to the metropolitan park district.
40 The County doesn't own signature parks in the city limits. The regional system
41 includes Lake Whatcom, Lake Samish, and Chuckanut Mountain. There aren't any
42 signature parks in Bellingham anymore, other than Lake Padden and Cornwall Park.
43 They are not what the system could be.

44
45 Fleetwood asked the definition of a signature park. Springgate stated a
46 signature, regional park meets the needs of everyone in the county. Everyone will

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 have an interest in accessing the site for one reason or another. Usually they are
2 very large sites or have unique resources.

3
4 Caskey-Schreiber stated Hovander Park is an example. Beckwith agreed.
5 Silver Lake is also a regional park.

6
7 Brenner stated the County has a perfect opportunity to do a metropolitan
8 park district because all the amenities are in the county. Beckwith stated the issue
9 is to make Bellingham the County's complement, not competitor. The County
10 should appeal to every county resident, including the Bellingham residents.

11
12 Brenner asked if people in Bellingham will want to be part of a countywide
13 metropolitan park district.

14
15 Nelson stated the County can charge the Bellingham Metropolitan Park
16 District for access to county facilities.

17
18 Beckwith stated the County can set it up however it wants. The County must
19 have a presence that everyone in the county recognizes. The County must have a
20 phase-in strategy the public understands. That takes time. People have to be
21 prepared for the change.

22
23 The County could pursue a tiered approach by dividing up its roles into three
24 levels: what the County does countywide, what the County does to cooperate with
25 entities that are willing to carry their own load, and what the County does that is
26 based on a local area. The first level, which is regional, has to be something
27 everyone in the county can enjoy paying for. That means some form of property
28 tax.

29
30 Caskey-Schreiber asked if the tiered approach means bonding for funds, then
31 building the park system, then advocating for the long-term maintenance.
32 Beckwith stated that's part of it. They must first identify what areas are original,
33 which means the open space. Key open spaces are inside and outside the cities.

34
35 Second, everyone wants across-county trails that run through the
36 unincorporated areas and through the cities. Third, everyone wants regional parks.
37 They need more regional parks in appropriate places, including near saltwater, the
38 Nooksack River, Lummi Island, and Lake Whatcom. Once the County identifies this
39 tier, it can begin to talk about funding devices that would be most useful. They
40 don't necessarily have to have a metropolitan park district.

41
42 The second tier is the self-help tier. One example is the gun range. Add to
43 that tier all the athletic fields. The County must own the land. The County must
44 decide where those sites are most appropriate. Those sites would be run via a joint
45 venture.

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 Beckwith stated the last tier is the local tier. The most flexible device is the
2 recreation service area. A program is run as long as it's viable. It doesn't create
3 another entity.
4

5 Springgate stated a metropolitan park district operates the same as a service
6 area. The County could do a service area or a mini-metropolitan park district to
7 deal with the small local areas.
8

9 Beckwith stated every community has a different vision of what it wants from
10 the County. Service areas can create those different visions if the local community
11 is willing to pay for it.
12

13 Nelson stated this is similar to what the County did for the Blaine community
14 dock.
15

16 Beckwith stated that the beauty of this tiered approach is that the County
17 never says no. The County allows the local area to decide whether it can commit to
18 its vision.
19

20 McShane asked if this list of park projects should help the Council rank the
21 projects by defining what is regional. Beckwith stated that is correct. They can
22 also define what is self-help and what is local. There will still be a big bill to pay.
23 That's how they decide what device to use to pay for the service.
24

25 One option is for the citizens to indicate on the survey whether or not it is
26 willing to pay for certain services.
27

28 Fleetwood asked when the Council will hear from Mr. Beckwith next.
29 Beckwith stated they will refine the project list, attach costs, and project revenue
30 trends. He will come back with a financing strategy and expenditure list. If the
31 Council is comfortable with the draft, he will design the telephone survey.
32

33 Caskey-Schreiber stated the County will not have to acquire all 148 acres to
34 protect the beautiful part of Lily Point. She asked for options to do certain projects
35 differently. Beckwith stated he will bring forward alternatives to acquisition.
36

37 Springgate stated King County did survey the residents about a levy versus a
38 metropolitan park district. If the County is going to accept this strategy, there
39 needs to be communication to the public about it.
40

41 Roy stated it sounds like the consultants will provide the Council more
42 information on funding mechanisms, after the Council prioritizes. She asked if the
43 consultants will provide information on how to inform the public. That is critical.
44 There are comments all the time about why the County buys a lot of land and then
45 does nothing else with it. People don't know where the Council is at on this issue.
46 They want park improvements and public access. She is interested in hearing
47 suggestions and ideas from jurisdictions that have provided public information

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 successfully. Beckwith stated he will provide that information at the next meeting.
2 He'll also bring a draft of the telephone survey questions.
3

4 Brenner asked if the telephone survey will educate the population about the
5 options. Beckwith stated it will. The survey will include a mailed packet to the
6 survey participants. The survey process will be to call people randomly and ask
7 them if they want to participate in the survey. If the people want to participate,
8 the consultants mails them the survey with all the background information.
9

10 Brenner stated they won't get a random idea by using that approach. Only
11 certain kinds of people will respond.
12

13 *(Clerk's Note: End of tape two, side A.)*
14

15 Brenner continued to state that a certain kind of people won't care.
16

17 Beckwith stated they use two words that get people to participate, which are
18 "parks" and "taxes." People like to participate in park surveys. They enjoy parks.
19 When combined with taxes, they get everyone to participate.
20

21 Nelson asked the pool of survey participants. Beckwith stated they would
22 survey participants countywide.
23

24 Nelson stated they would need 400 survey participants for accuracy.
25

26 Caskey-Schreiber stated she will trust the consultants to know what they are
27 doing.
28

29
30 **OTHER BUSINESS**
31

32 There was no other business.
33
34

35 **ADJOURN**
36

37 The meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.
38
39
40

41 Jill Nixon, Minutes Transcription
42

43 The Council approved these minutes on May 24, 2005.
44

45 ATTEST:
46
47

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1
2
3
4
5
6

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Laurie Caskey-Schreiber, Council Chair