

**MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, November, 20 2014**

**Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Administrative Office
3373 Mount Baker Highway
Bellingham, WA**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Paul Woodcock, Chair at 5:30 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Commissioners: Paul Woodcock, Gordon Rogers, Janet Boyhan, Richard Sturgill, Theresa Sygitowicz and Jeff Margolis

Staff: Mike McFarlane, Christ Thomsen, Rodney Lamb, Darla Smith

GUESTS

Matt Aamot, Senior Planner, Whatcom County Planning and Development Services. (PDS)

EXCUSED

Kenneth Kiesner

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS / COMMUNICATIONS

A. COMMENTS: The Chair recognized Karen Brown, citizen. Ms. Brown stated she was unable to attend last week's, County Council Planning and Development Committee Meeting regarding Levels of Service (LOS) and the rewrite of Chapter 9 – Recreation, Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan (WCCP) and would like to request an update.

Matt stated that the Council introduced an ordinance leaving the LOS for parks, trails and activity centers status quo.

Ms. Brown asked if they removed regional parks. Matt stated that it is currently 9.6 acres per thousand people.

B. COMMUNICATIONS: None.

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

A. COMMENTS: The Chair recognized Jeff Margolis. Jeff stated that he hiked the Maple Falls Park trail. He stated that he had a difficult time locating the park and that it could benefit from better signage/visibility. He also commented that signage for the future Maple Falls Community Park would be advisable for local community consideration.

Mike stated that the comment will be passed on to the Operations Department for consideration.

There was discussion regarding signage and signage locations.

The Chair recognized Theresa Sygitowicz. Theresa asked Mike if he would like to comment on the County Council Planning and Development Committee discussion regarding regional parks. Mike stated that those terms are referenced in the County's Comprehensive Plan and are standard classifications.

V. AGENDA

A. NOVEMBER 20, 2014 AGENDA APPROVAL

MOTION: It was moved by Gordon Rogers, seconded by Theresa Sygitowicz and passed unanimously to approve the agenda with the following revisions: Move Agenda Item IX., B. Itinio Demonstration to follow Item V. Agenda.

VI. MINUTES

A. OCTOBER 16, 2014 MINUTES APPROVAL

MOTION: It was moved by Gordon Rogers, seconded by Richard Sturgill and passed unanimously to approve the October 16, 2014 Minutes as written.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. DIRECTOR'S REPORT – MIKE MCFARLANE

1. Birch Bay Community Park – The acquisition for this property purchase has closed. Building windows have been boarded up and keys have exchanged hands. The request has been submitted to the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to remain grant eligible for the reimbursement on the acquisition and other than some internal documents on inventory, the acquisition process is complete.

2. Maple Falls Community Park – Phase 1 of the environmental assessment has begun. Documentation has been returned to the contractor and the Department expects a final report prior to closing. It is anticipated that this property will close by the December, 2014 Commission Meeting.

3. Parks and Recreation Foundation Invite – The Foundation has extended an invitation for a December 2nd function they are hosting. The Foundation asks that Commission members RSVP as soon as possible.

Some members stated that they have not received the invite. Mike will relay this information to the Foundation.

4. Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Website – Mike stated that the County is in the process of transitioning to a new website. It is currently under development but as of December 5th the Department will be updating as much information as possible to provide a smooth transition.

Mike invited the Commission to review the website and if some items are noted as no longer available, etc., please notify the Department.

5. County Planning and Development Services Meeting – Levels Of Service (LOS) – At the meeting the Council discussed the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Levels Of Service (LOS) definitions, etc. in terms of what would be accomplished in the end if any changes were made, and after lengthy discussions decided to leave the LOS status quo.

B. OPERATIONS REPORT – CHRIST THOMSEN

1. Staffing

- a. Retirement** - The Department will experience four staff retirements this year, two maintenance staff members in the spring the Maintenance Supervisor, whose last working day is tomorrow and one Lead Ranger, Dennis Conner at the end of the year.

This will present some challenges with staffing in terms of completing routine duties and other unanticipated events that happen in our parks.

- b. Extra Help** – The two positions that were recently hired have proved quite valuable in terms of completing projects where the public touches the parks. The main accomplishment has been the renovation of all the Silver Lake Park picnic tables. In the renovation it was found that over 75 boards were severely in need of replacement.

Additional focus will be spent on painting and hardware repairs.

2. Maintenance Activities

- a. Park Winterization** – The winterization of the park system is substantially complete. There are a few minor problems that were found in the process and are being addressed.
- b. Hovander Walkway** – This project is substantially complete; site stabilization is still in process. It was one of the larger concrete projects that have been completed in recent times and it came out beautifully. Christ provided pictures of the project for Commission review and an overview of the project construction.

- 3. Slide Damage and Repair** – There were two recent slides that needed attention, one on the Hertz Trail that was a relatively small slide and a quick clean-up, and a larger slide on the Interurban Trail that required a more significant clean-up, some reinforcement and a great deal of materials to be removed from the site.

4. Incidents

- a.** There were two minor staff injuries. And two minor visitor injuries; none of which required more than on-site first aid.

- 5. Bellingham Senior Center Furnace Replacement** – The furnace at the Bellingham Senior Activity Center has failed and will require replacement. This will be completed this week.

C. DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT REPORT – ROD LAMB

- 1. Lighthouse Dock Renovation** – Authorization from the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has been received to extend the in-water work window until January 31, 2015. Pile driving strategies have been discussed with HB Hansen. As discussed last month, tides in the fall and winter are significantly higher during daylight hours than those during the summer which challenges efforts for the contractor to drive all eight piles. It may require mobilizing two pieces of equipment, one barge based pile driver and one land based pile driver. This will likely cause a significant increase in costs.

Alternatively, the Department is considering another approach. Rod stated that he has contacted USACE indicating current conditions and challenges and requested modifications to permit

conditions that would allow us to drive piles outside of the permitted work window (i.e. after January 31st).

This request may trigger formal consultation with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). There has been no word yet from USACE, NOAA or USFWS to date. If there is no word in the interim they will be contacted the week following the Thanksgiving holidays.

There was a discussion regarding the community reaction to the delays and the efforts that are being taken through the local media to update the community on the progress and background of the project timeline and delays.

Rod stated that an additional challenge is that the funding window for the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grant ends June 30, 2015. There is the possibility of an extension but best practice would be to avoid that request if possible as it would then require RCO Board involvement that could create more delays.

There was additional discussion regarding the possible alternative outcomes.

2. South Fork Park – Preliminary engineering is nearly complete. The additional field survey has been completed and incorporated into the design documents. It is expected that there will be a 50% plan submittal by December 1, 2014.

Work with the trail designer continues on trail routes and design through the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) properties that separates Galbraith and Overby farms. Meetings are scheduled on 11/24/14 with the designer in the field to trace the proposed route. At that time the trail alignment will be documented with a handheld Global Positioning System (GPS) unit, converted into a geographic information system (GIS) shape file and provided to DNR for review.

Meetings were held with DNR last week to discuss the proposed trail easement and the fact that it has been stalled for a number of years. It was agreed that the Department will provide DNR with a desired route in GIS format. They will then walk the route with the Department after the shape file has been received and reviewed. It is anticipated that DNR will agree with the requested route.

3. Nessel Farm Building Restoration – There has not been much change in the project from last month's report. The building permits have been issued but bid documents need to be finalized and published for bid.

4. Silver Lake Road & Electrical Improvements – The field survey has been completed to include contracting a private utility locate. The consultant is building the base map for the design effort. It is expected that this will be received before Thanksgiving.

5. Reconveyance Planning – The draft layout for a portion of the main trail routes has been developed. A meeting will be held with core user groups on December 11, 2014 for a work session to review the draft and also identify secondary and single use trails as well as key points of interest along the route.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. WHATCOM COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (WCCP) – CHAPTER 9 REVIEW & RECOMMENDATION – Matt Aamott introduced himself and explained that he was filling in for Erin Osborn. He reviewed the goals and objectives for reviewing this chapter of the WCCP.

There was a great deal of discussion as Commission reviewed, commented and made suggestions on each page of the chapter. Matt took notes on these suggestions as they were discussed in order to incorporate them into the chapter.

In addition, Mike will rewrite the Background Summary and Matt will check with County Legal Staff regarding landowner liability in Paragraph 2 on page 9- 8.

Once all the changes, the re-writes and research completed and have been completed and incorporated, a final draft will be presented at the December 18, 2014 Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting for approval.

MOTION: Jeff Margolis moved that recreational programs be included as a goal in the comprehensive plan. The motion was not seconded. Motion failed.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. BUDGET REVIEW – Mike provided the Press Release on the Whatcom County Executive’s 2015-2016 Recommended Budgets and 2015-2016 Whatcom County Requested Budget Narratives for Commission review.

Mike discussed that there are no major changes from previously discussed issued and that it is a solid budget that the Executive believes will put the county on solid financial footing coming out of the recent economic situation.

In terms of the Parks and Recreation budget, Council Member Brenner had discussed increasing the funding for the Senior Centers Meals on Wheels program. The funding for the program has been increased by \$30,000.00 annually bringing it from \$10,000.00 to \$40,000.00. In addition there have been several substantial park budget funded improvements to the centers, to include finishing the floor at the Bellingham Center, replacing the furnace, the Executive’s office is replacing one of the automatic doors and in the next couple of years the roof at the Ferndale Center is slotted to be replaced.

In conclusion the budget remains relatively status quo to previous years. Mike stated that if the Commission members have questions after reviewing the budget to feel free to call or email him. He stated that if he is not available Darla Smith, Administrative Assistant is knowledgeable and can be of assistance.

B. ITINIO DEMONSTRATION – Darla Smith, Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Administrative Assistant – Darla provided an update on the on-line reservation project. The projected date of roll-out is December 1, 2014. Currently staff is testing the payment system with the payment provider to identify any problems prior to roll-out.

Darla provided a presentation of the internal reservation system which is very similar to what the customer will see when making an online camping reservation.

She explained in detail what the customer would see, which includes a description of the site, a picture, site fees, any distinguishing features the site may have and what those features could include.

Darla explained the process that the customer would go through to complete the reservation and what the payment receipt would look like.

She showed what the customer would see on the site maps.

Darla provided the on-line campground reservation presentation for both Lighthouse Marine Park and Silver Lake Park.

The shelter reservations process and status of this portion of the project was discussed. It was explained how this process is different from campgrounds in that the shelter reservations cannot be made or paid for on-line, how that process works and why there needs to be staff involvement in this process.

There was time provided for questions and discussion. Suggested improvements were:

1. Provide the ability to distinguish a tent camping site versus RV camping.
2. Provide public Wi-Fi capabilities within the parks.

Mike commented on the enormity and complexity of the project and commended Darla on a job well done. Commission consensus was in agreement.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. MESSIAH CONCERT, DECEMBER 14, 2014 3:00 PM – UNIVERSITY PAC – Jeff Margolis invited the Commission and staff to attend this concert.

B. HOLIDAY POTLUCK – VAN ZANDT COMMUNITY HALL – DECEMBER 20, 2014, 6:30 PM – Jeff Margolis invited the Commission and staff to attend a potluck at the Van Zandt Community Hall.

C. DECEMBER MEETING DATE, TIME AND LOCATION - The December 18, 2014, will be held at 6:00 PM at the Roeder Home. This will be a snack potluck, libations allowed.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:06 PM.

Transcribed by: Pat Fisher, Clerk III

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director