

**MEETING MINUTES  
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION  
Thursday, December 19, 2013**

**Roeder Home  
2600 Sunset Drive  
Bellingham, Washington**

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

**Staff:** Michael McFarlane, Erik Axelson

**ABSENT:** Theresa Sygitowicz, Kenneth Kiesner

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Commission Chair, Gordon Rogers at 6:15 PM.

**I. AGENDA**

**A. December 19, 2013 Agenda Approval**

**MOTION:** It was moved by Paul Woodcock, seconded by Jeff Margolis and passed unanimously to approve the December 19, 2013 Agenda as written.

**II. MINUTES**

**A. November 21, 2013 Minutes Approval**

**MOTION:** It was moved by Jeff Margolis, seconded by Richard Sturgill and passed unanimously that the November 21, 2013 Minutes be approved with the following changes:

1. Item # VI. Design and Development Report, A. 2013 Capital Projects, 2. Hovander Park River Trails final paragraph is amended to read: "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 the planting of rhododendrons on the east side of the trail. In that these shrubs are native then they would be in accord with 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."

Item # V. Park Operations Report, E. Bellingham Senior Activity Center, "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".

At this time there was discussion regarding whether or not a decision has been made on how Mr. Hallman was going to be honored. There were suggestions that a plant, a

bench or a piece of sculpture could be appropriate. Mike pointed out that a plant or sculpture could get lost in the existing, established landscaping and that there are currently several benches around the Bellingham Senior Center.

Mike explained that Mr. Hallman was involved with many different agencies through Whatcom County and that there have been a number of discussions sponsored by the Council on Aging on the best way to Honor Mr. Hallman. The idea of installing a plaque at the Bellingham Senior Center has been favored as the most appropriate venue.

It was the consensus of the Commission that donations could be made by Commission members on a personal level to the Council on Aging or to the charity that Mr. Hallman's family listed in his obituary. Mike stated that he would keep the Commission informed on final decision for honoring Mr. Hallman.

Item VII Unfinished Business, A. Bay to Baker Trail / BNSF Parcels, second sentence is amended to remove the word "in" at the end of the sentence.

### **III. PUBLIC INPUT/COMMUNICATIONS**

**A. Margolis – Bellingham Herald, Kailey Burchard Dog Concern** – Jeff provided a letter to the Commission members via email that was printed in the Bellingham Herald expressing concern about where hikers would be able to bring dogs on the new addition to the Chuckanut trail system.

Mike stated that in general the Chuckanut Mountain trails are open to dogs unless it is an area that is closed. It was not clear which part of Chuckanut Mountain the writer was referring to as there are also City and State properties in that area. Mike stated that it is not policy to respond to comments that do not solicit a response but are simply a comment or opinion.

There was discussion regarding trail signage, posting trail rules which include whether or not dogs are prohibited and if allowed, leashed or off leash. There was further discussion on various signage and public notification venues that could be considered concerning multi-use trail etiquette and safety.

It was suggested that public education could include inviting various organizations that represent individual multi-use trail users, such as horsemen, bicyclists, dog walkers, etc. to attend a meeting to discuss this issue and share/pass on information by word-of-mouth amongst their groups.

It was the consensus of the group to add the topic of multi-use trail etiquette and safety to the February 20<sup>th</sup>, Agenda.

**ACTION:** Add the topic of multi-use trail etiquette and safety to the February 20<sup>th</sup>, Agenda.

**B. Williams' Washington Expansion Project Update** – Mike provided the Commission member with information from Williams regarding their Washington State Project Expansion. See Director's Report for discussion.

**C. Washington State Parks and Recreation – Larrabee State Park Long Term Stewardship** – Gordon received a letter from Washington State Parks and Recreation regarding a planning project for long-term stewardship of Larrabee Park to invite Commission members to participate in this planning effort. This is the first of many

scheduled workshops and will be held on Thursday, January 16, 2014, 6:30 – 8:30 PM at Fairhaven Public Library.

After a great deal of discussion and clarification on the number of meetings, etc., it was decided that it is important for the Commission members to attend these meetings, most especially the first meeting.

**MOTION:** It was moved by Paul Woodcock and seconded by Janet Boyhan to change the January meeting date from January 16, 2014 to January 23, 2014 in order to attend the Washington State Parks and Recreation planning session. The motion passed unanimously.

**ACTION:** Gordon stated that he would contact WA State Parks and Recreation to inform them that the Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Commission is interested in participating in their planning sessions and request that each Commission member is placed on their mailing list.

**D. Bloedel Donovan Reconveyance Celebration** – On January 25, 2014 at 2:00 PM there will be a Reconveyance celebration at Bloedel Donovan Park.

**ACTION:** Mike stated that he would forward any additional information to Commission members as received.

#### **IV. DIRECTOR'S REPORT – MICHAEL MCFARLANE**

**A. Williams Pipeline – Project Expansion** – Mike stated that there was a conference call with Williams Pipeline organization that he and Rod Lamb attended to clarify the impact of the expansion on Whatcom County parks, most particularly South Fork Park.

The main concern was whether or not the expansion would be confined within the existing easement. This was a concern due to the WCPR planned spring and summer park development in South Fork Park. It seems that in the South Fork Park area Williams Pipeline will not be requesting any variance to the existing easement.

There was some discussion regarding the negotiations involved in the existing easement agreement and whether or not additional negotiations will be required.

Mike stated that the Williams Pipeline work is in the very early stages but in the conference call they assured him that the work would have minimal impact on the park and that there would be no need for additional negotiations as any changes to the pipeline will be confined to the current easement agreement.

It was discussed that there could be some impact to the riparian areas and in order to minimize impact there would need to be buffers established or possibly some replacement plantings of disturbed areas.

**B. Tennant Lake Interpretive Center** – Mike informed the Commission that WCPR is renewing the inter-local agreement for the joint operation of Tennant Lake, Pine and Cedar Lakes and Hovander Boat Launch with the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

The agreement expired some years ago and WCPR brought this to the attention of WDFW before the end of 2011 when it expired. When no response was received it was discovered that WDFW had it recorded as expiring in 2018.

A renewal to the agreement was drawn up, approved by County Legal Staff and sent to WDFW for their approval.

Mike stated that as a point of interest, WDFW has also approved the stretch between Marine Drive and Slater Road to be used for a trail again. WCPR is in the process of assisting WDFW to bring it back to usable condition. Opening this area is a priority for the County Executive, and the Mayors of Ferndale and Bellingham.

This area will not be brought up to the same standard as the section through Hovander Park. Pot-holes will be filled, brush removed and a regular maintenance schedule established.

**C. Reconveyance Update** – On December 30, 2013 the Board of Natural Resources met to correct a discrepancy in acreage numbers. The Board unanimously approved the inclusion of the missed parcels.

Mike received the completed packet electronically that included real estate documents, the draft deed and all pertinent information regarding the transfer. The County Executive will need to approve the items and the packet will then be routed back to the State. This will be completed by the 12/22/13 deadline.

DNR is completing the survey on the East side of the lake. There may be a small section on the South end that will not be surveyed in the immediate future, depending on available funds.

It was requested that a trip to the Reconveyance area be planned for a summer meeting.

It is expected the County Executive will be appointing a steering committee in early February/March to begin the planning process for the park.

**D. Bay Horizon Hostel** – Mike updated the Commission that the planned closure of the Bay Horizon Hostel will be moving forward and that their last day on site will be 12/31/13.

Mike stated that he received a call from an individual wanting to submit a proposal for a new hostel. Mike responded that WCP&R does not have complete decision making authority over this property as it is also under the auspice of the Federal Surplus Property Program and that given the number of years of experience that WCP&R has had with hostels, there has not been a viable business plan.

The Camp Horizon Foundation had been considering the possibility of taking over that building. Mike recently sent an email requesting an update on their intentions as this would seem to be a good fit and would assist in covering the utilities. Mike has not heard back but will update the Commission as information is received.

As a point of record, there are a number of outstanding leasehold tax amounts that are in discussion for remedy.

**E. Plantation Rifle Range Manager** – The position for Plantation Rifle Range Lead Ranger has been posted. The title of this position was originally one of Park Manager. When Gary Rasmussen assumed the position the title was changed to Range Master but we are now returning the title to Lead Ranger. This will allow for flexibility in staff coverage and allow individuals to move into that position for unexpected absences or leaves.

This is a union position. It will be posted in-house first and if not filled the position will be advertised to the public.

**F. National Recreation Park Association** – The National Recreation Park Association has partnered with Macy's Department Store to participate as a local representative in a national park-promo campaign. Samish Park has been selected by as a potential recipient site for a shopper / company matching donation program. Shoppers will be asked if they wish to donate \$1.00 to the campaign and Macys will match dollar for dollar with proceeds to be used at Samish Park.

Mike will share information as received.

**G. Commission Vacancies** – Commission vacancies were discussed. Theresa Sygitowicz has currently completed her first term and is eligible to serve a second term. If she chooses not to apply one position will be available in District 1.

There are no other Commission terms up for renewal in 2014.

## **V. PARK OPERATIONS REPORT – ERIK AXELSON**

Erik thanked the maintenance staff for all their hard work this year. He discussed a video that was produced by one of our extra help employees that documents the various stages of projects throughout our parks that the maintenance staff completed in 2013. He stated that he will email the video to each of the Commission members.

WCPR administrative staff are currently working to complete purchase orders for the remaining 2013 budget to purchase tools and supplies for both Small Capital projects and M&O projects that are currently in works.

**A. 2013 Projects Update** – Erik provided a recap of the year for the following projects. In addition to discussion, a slide presentation was included.

### **Small Capital Projects**

**1. Plantation Rifle Range Parking Lot** – Repaving the parking lot and driveway at the Range has been completed. The total project came in under the budgeted amount of \$69,000.00 at \$54,000.00. In addition, we purchased gravel for shouldering the lot and driveway as well as wheel stops for the parking spaces.

In addition, Erik discussed the following; transition in staff at the Range in light of the current Range Master's Retirement, the Range firearm rental program and several marketing ideas that are under consideration to increase revenue.

He also stated that a budget supplemental was submitted to Council that included the projected increases in revenue and a request to increase expenditures to purchase new firearms to augment rental inventory.

The Range has an excellent firearm rental program as it provides an opportunity for the public to try different types of firearms and to participate in the shooting classes without having to purchase a firearm.

Range staff and Park administrative staff have been brainstorming marketing ideas for 2014. One target area that has been suggested is the Canadian market because there are very few affordable indoor ranges in the surrounding Canadian border communities.

Further, that it has become near to impossible to transport firearms across the border. Therefore, promoting the opportunity for Canadian citizens to be able to rent firearms while in the U.S would allow them to attend many of the offered classes and use the Range for target practice. This could be an excellent avenue to further increase revenue at the Range.

Another avenue for consideration is the out-of-county market and the attractiveness, safety and accessibility of the Whatcom County Plantation Rifle Range.

**2. Lighthouse Paving** – The Paving Repair Project at Lighthouse was completed 11/12/13. There were funds available from this project to purchase concrete blocks that will be used by Parks' maintenance staff to replace several rotted logs around the border of the lot.

**3. Senior Center Fire Alarms** – The fire alarms at the Bellingham and Ferndale Senior Centers will be replaced. The bid to design and install these was awarded to Guardian Security and the contract will be executed this month. Project design and permitting will commence in January, with installation at Bellingham in February/March 2014. Ferndale alarms will be installed immediately thereafter.

**4. Silver Lake Cabin Renovation** – The cabins were insulated, weatherized and new cedar siding installed. Several steps were taken to mitigate rodent infestation which had been an issue prior to the renovation.

#### **Maintenance and Operations (M&O) Project**

**1. Hovander Group Picnic Shelter Apron** – The Park maintenance staff installed a concrete apron around the shelter to improve drainage away from building and to address existing trip hazards. That was completed prior to Senior-Day-In-the-Park last August and was well received.

**2. Silver Lake Park Overnight Lodge Facelift**– The Outside Worker crew provided a facelift to the Overnight Lodge.

**3. Bellingham Senior Activity Center Drainage** – Through a partnership with the City of Bellingham, Whatcom County Outside Worker and Park Maintenance crews, a long standing drainage issue was resolved. Our thanks to the City of Bellingham Parks and Recreation.

**B. Equipment** – Parks has acquired a tractor & attachments, and three trucks are on order to replace older fleet models. In 2014 a transfer to Park fleet of a Public Works surplus heavy duty tractor with a boom arm mower is planned.

There was some discussion regarding the ER&R program and how repairs and equipment acquisition are obtained through a monthly transfer of funds to accumulate an account credit to cover these issues.

**C. 2014 Special Events** – Ten to twelve special event applications have been received for processing. The approval turn-around goal is 10 days.

There is an increased focus on verifying that the insurance coverage provided by the event coordinator is appropriate for the event activity. The Washington Counties' Risk Pool provided a seminar on December 4<sup>th</sup> that Mike and Erik attended that focused on the required documents, policy endorsements, etc.

**D. Parks Rental Properties** – Erik revisited the rental rates increase of about 3%, and that recent inspections of all fire safety equipment such as fire and carbon monoxide alarms and extinguishers had been completed by staff.

**E. Roeder Home Updates** – A new address sign was fabricated and hung by Parks' maintenance staff and the dining room gas log in the dining room was replaced.

**F. 2014 Goals**

**1. Personnel Retirement and Succession Planning** – Parks is anticipating the retirement of several maintenance staff in the next 2-3 years. Administration is currently working to document information that may not be written down but stored “in memory”.

Maintenance is also sharing information and mapping to record missing information such as water and electrical systems, etc.

**2. Safety** – Consideration is being given to all around safety in our parks to include our staff, the public that use our parks and senior centers and the special considerations that need to be taken into account for our multi-use trails.

As was discussed earlier, these are excellent topics for future Commission meetings and information sharing amongst the various multi-use trail user groups.

**3. North Lake Whatcom Beach** – 2014 budget has an appropriation to begin removing structures and preparing this area at the recently vacated rental location along Hertz Trail.

**VI. DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT REPORT – MICHAEL MCFARLANE**

**A. Lookout Mountain Trailhead** – The signage has been completed and installed. Other than some minor fine tuning the site is complete.

A generator is being purchased to protect the pipes from freezing in a power outage. Because this area is mostly shaded the temperatures are lower making pipes more susceptible to freezing. A generator will maintain the power during outages.

These restrooms are being heavily used as they are the only Park restrooms in the area and with the new parking lot at that site the trail is being more heavily used.

**B. Hovander Park River Trail** – Mike pointed out that a great deal of effort was extended by Rod to carry over the unused 2013 budgeted Hovander River Trail funds into 2014. The County has very rigid standards in terms of how a department can carry funds over from budget year to budget year. Rod drafted a change order requesting that funds carry over because of additional materials and an additional 2” lift. Council approved the change order unanimously and work will be completed in the spring.

There was some discussion regarding the trail dedication. Mike anticipated that it could be considered after the first of the year. He stated that the trail is being heavily used and is a great success.

**VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**A. Discussion Bay to Baker Trail / BNSF Parcels** – Gordon stated that there seems to be some difference in what was relayed to Mike McFarlane and what Janet Boyhan understood

from Tim Wall, regarding the availability and acquisition of these parcels. Gordon opened the item for discussion.

There was a great deal of discussion regarding this issue and whether or not to proceed.

Jeff stated that he is in a conversation with BNSF regarding a separate issue and if possible he will bring up this parcel issue for information purposes only and will update the Commission if additional information is brought to light.

Mike stated that he did not believe it was a closed issue as BNSF has supplied the application that needs to be completed if there was indeed intention and interest to acquire properties from them. The accompanying letter stated that once the application is received the process could involve approximately a year to complete.

It was discussed that because Mike has received no direction from the county executive that this acquisition is not a County priority. Janet asked if perusing this issue may now be a non-conversation from a Parks Department standpoint. Mike stated that unless the County Executive chooses to precede that is correct.

Mike stated that if the Commission would like to move forward with a recommendation for acquisition there would need to be further investigation into ownership of the parcels availability and price.

There was additional discussion regarding steps that may need to be taken prior to expressing interest to the County Executive.

**B. Comprehensive Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan (CPROSP)** – Mike provided the first draft of the CPROSP for Commission review.

Mike pointed out that there are some items that have not been included such as page numbers, references, etc., and additional formatting needs to be completed.

It was the goal to provide the core document to the Commission as it will be moving forward fairly quickly to the Planning Commission. The planning process will be moving forward and both entities will have the opportunity to weigh in prior to Council review/approval.

Mike stated that it is the intent to stay true to the original plan and use current information to update and reflect survey results. When the surveys were tabulated it was discovered that there was not a great deal of change in the County residents' priorities from 2007 to 2013. This verified that the information that was used was valid even though it has been six or seven years since residents were originally surveyed.

Mike stated that the Plan has not yet been published on-line as there are still a series of park maps and a list of capital projects that needs to be included. It was discussed that the list of capital projects has not changed since last provided the Commission and changes will be provided to the Commission. Janet asked if those could be re-sent and Mike stated that he would do that when formatting and inclusion is complete.

Mike discussed the continuing process and offered his accessibility to questions or suggestions from the Commission after they have had an opportunity to review the plan.

Gordon asked if the previous plan had ever been adopted by the Council. Mike stated that it was adopted as a department planning document otherwise the County Comprehensive plan

would have needed to be modified as the levels of service were much higher than what the County had the capacity to provide.

There was discussion regarding the levels of service, the types of parks and definitions and the importance of Commission input on the CPROSP.

## **VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Discussion Park Acquisition Priorities** –The County Executive requested that the Commission have a discussion regarding Park acquisition priorities in order to update and confirm that the projects that have been identified over the years by the Parks Commission are still priorities.

Mike discussed that as property acquisition opportunities arise they may or may not make the list depending on several factors such as relevance to the park plan, funding and/or interest. The list is subject to a departmental and executive review and at some point in the process the list is provided to the Parks Commission for their review and recommendations.

Mike provided an acquisition information packet that included a flow chart of acquisition process, a list of Acquisition Evaluation Criteria to provide information on how properties are scored during the process and a list of Parks and Recreation Department Potential Acquisitions – 2014 - 2020.

Each document was discussed with a question and answer period. Mike explained that the Potential Acquisition List provided is not in any priority order. Mike discussed each property on the list, the purpose of each acquisition and what properties were active projects. There was a question and answer period for each property.

Gordon asked Mike if there was a desired date to have the results returned. Mike stated that it would be very helpful to have them returned by mid-January in time for the January 28, 2014 council meeting.

There was additional discussion, questions and comments regarding the process, how this list fits into the CPROSP in terms of the public survey results, and potential additions to the acquisition list and why if a property were not listed, the varying reasons that a property may not have been included.

It was also discussed that being able to visit these properties throughout the year could provide the Commission with valuable information.

Mike explained that this is the Commission's opportunity to add their comments, priorities and insight regarding acquisitions.

The question was asked how the Commission results would be compiled. Mike stated that was entirely up to the Commission but suggested that one way would be for each Commission member to submit their results, with each property having a numeric rating and do an average.

There was a great deal of additional discussion and various suggestions on how to rate properties, what to consider when rating and how to compile the results.

It was suggested that the Commission members could meet at a mutual location to discuss this topic further. Gordon pointed out that it would be fine to meet to discuss and clarify the properties in terms of location, whether or not a property would be an asset to the park

system, etc., but if there was a quorum present and any action was taken, then it becomes a Commission Meeting and protocol would need to be adhered to.

Gordon also discussed that his feeling is that if the Commission's input is to have impact on the County Executive and Council, it should be one vote and one set of scores and not that everyone agrees but that an average result as a body is noted.

After all the discussion it was the consensus of the Commission that:

**ACTION:** Mike will provide the acquisition list in a Word document format to the Commission members via email that can be edited and returned via email.

**ACTION:** Commission members will review the Potential Acquisitions (Parks & Recreation Department 2014-2020) list and place a priority rating to each, return their results by mid-January and vote on the results at the January 23, 2014 Commission Meeting.

#### **B. Election of 2014 Commission Chair and Vice Chair**

**MOTION:** Gordon Rogers moved to nominate Paul Woodcock for the position of Chair, seconded by Jeff Margolis. Paul Woodcock accepted the nomination. Vote was called. Motion passed unanimously.

**MOTION:** Richard Sturgill moved to nominate Jeff Margolis for the position of Vice-Chair, seconded by Paul Woodcock. Jeff Margolis accepted the nomination. Vote was called. Motion passed unanimously.

Gordon thanked the Commission for the opportunity of holding the position of Chair and offered his availability for questions, etc., to the incoming Chair. The Commission thanked Gordon for a job well done.

### **IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**A. NEXT MEETING:** Thursday, January 23, 2014 6:00 PM. The meeting will be held at the Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Administrative Office.

### **X. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** It was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 10:12 PM.

Transcribed by: Pat Fisher, Clerk III

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director