

MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, May 20, 2021

Virtual Meeting

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Sonja Max at 6:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Commissioners: Brian Estes, Terry Terry, Sonja Max, Kristen Fagan
Pete Coy, Joe Hashmall

Staff: Michael McFarlane, Christ Thomsen, Rod Lamb

EXCUSED

Commissioners: Brad VanderWerff

GUESTS

None

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

None

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

None

V. AGENDA

A. May 20, 2021

MOTION: Pete Coy moved to approve the May 20, 2021 agenda as written. Kristen Fagan seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VI. MINUTES

A. April 15, 2021

MOTION: Pete Coy moved to approve the April 15, 2021 Minutes as written. Joe Hashmall seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. Director's Report – Michael McFarlane

- i. **Indoor Facility Reservations** – Based upon the Governor's announcement that Washington State will be fully open by June 30th,

reservations for indoor facilities will open June 16th for events and activities starting July 1st. Group sizes will be subject to facility capacity.

- ii. **Glenning Park** – The City of Lynden requested the county’s participation in the acquisition of Glenning Park, a park located within the city limits of Lynden. Glenning Park is a four-acre parcel with basketball courts and ball diamonds that was owned by the school district. The city and neighborhoods wanted to protect the park and keep it for park and open space purposes. The county council approved \$250,000 of conservation futures fund for that acquisition and an open space easement will be presented to the county council for approval on June 1st.
- iii. **Lighthouse Marine Park** – WC Parks needs one more full-time seasonal employee in order to be able to open the Lighthouse Marine Park campground.
- iv. **East Whatcom Regional Resource Center** – There is a hazardous waste collection event happening on June 19th at the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center. The event is being sponsored by the Fire District, the Whatcom County Health Department, and the Opportunity Council.
- v. **Little Squalicum Park** – The City of Bellingham has asked WC Parks to transfer the County portion of Little Squalicum Park to the City. City and county legal staff are currently discussing liability associated with the property. If the transfer does not go through, the property would remain county property and the city would continue to lease and manage it.

B. Planning & Development Report – Rod Lamb

- i. **Red Mountain Shower and Restroom Facility** – L&I inspected the electrical work and upgraded wellhouse and both passed. Tiger Construction is making very good progress completing the building. The plumbing and electrical is almost finished and the exterior is painted. The interior finishes are being completed and the fixtures and toilet accessories are being installed. There was a small glitch last week with the septic system. The contractor installed the septic as specified and designed, but when the system was tested, the pump did not function as needed. It was found that the pump specified by the septic designer was not correct. The septic designer identified the problem and ordered a new pump that should be delivered on Friday. The septic designer is a licensed septic installer and will work with Tiger Construction to address the situation. WC Parks hopes to maintain substantial completion by May 26th. WC Parks crew has finished installing a new entrance sign and gate.
- ii. **Maple Creek Campground Shower and Restroom Facility** – The building permit for the Maple Creek Campground Shower and Restroom Facility is being issued this week. The project was advertised for bid on May 19th with a bid opening of June 9th. This project does not need to go

to Council because it was approved by ordinance. The project is scheduled to start in July and be completed early 2022. The building will open for use at the beginning of the camping season in April 2022.

- iii. **Birch Bay Beach Park** – Permit applications were submitted April 9th for frontage improvements at Birch Bay Beach Park. Those were published to the public today and if approved, should be issued by the end of August. Rod applied to the State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation for an excavation permit and hopes to have that permit approval by the end of August. The project will be bid before permit approval with the intent of getting the contractor on site mid-September and having the work completed by the end of the year.
- iv. **Lake Whatcom Park** – Funding was approved for preliminary design and engineering services for trailhead improvements at Lake Whatcom Park. The improvements include expanded parking capacity, new flush restroom facilities (septic and well), a picnic shelter, security lighting, signage, pedestrian and circulation improvements, and site furnishings. A Request for Qualifications was solicited for architecture and engineering services and four submissions were received. Those were reviewed by Mike McFarlane, Christ Thomsen, and Rod Lamb, and MacLeod Reckord LLC, a firm with a long resume of similar projects in sensitive watersheds, was selected. Contract negotiations have been initiated and it is expected that they will be in contract within the next month.

C. Operations Report – Christ Thomsen

- i. **Staffing** – WC Parks is diligently working to fill the seasonal positions. Point Roberts has been particularly challenging with the border restrictions. Christ is hopeful that the rest of the seasonal positions will be filled from the interviews that were completed today and that those positions will remain filled through the season. Paul D’Agnolo, the Maintenance Worker II who works at the Bellingham Senior Activity Center, has been promoted to fill the Accountant I position. Internal recruitment for the Maintenance Worker II position opened today. Recruitment for the Park Attendant position was completed and Tanner Krynski, a seasonal employee who has worked three seasons for WC Parks, starts on Monday.
- ii. **Operations** – Staff has been working hard to prepare for the season and has done a fantastic job in getting the parks in good shape. Christ recommended that the commissioners visit Hovander Homestead Park, Tennant Lake, Samish Park, and Silver Lake Park. The Plantation Rifle Range HVAC/Roof Replacement and the Lake Whatcom Park EH1 Trail Development projects are currently out to bid. Wilson Engineering has been selected to do the design and engineering work for the replacement of the Point Whitehorn stairway.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Whatcom Land Trust Skookum II Property Acquisition Proposal – Whatcom County has a Conservation Futures Fund which is a tax supported fund used for conservation projects primarily focused on preservation and protection of agricultural lands and natural areas open space. The county has used that fund to make some significant acquisitions and has a long history of working with the Whatcom Land Trust. Mike shared the presentation that the Whatcom Land Trust gave to the Natural Resources Committee last week.

B. Review Capital Improvements 2022 Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan – The Capital Improvements Plan is the part of the Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan that captures all Capital Projects regardless of when they're going to occur and the cost. In January, the commission will be using this list to decide which projects will be prioritized for the next two years. Those projects will then be presented to the council and the Executive for approval and funding. Joe Hashmall wanted to add the creation of a place for senior citizens to gather that is climate controlled to be safe from smoke and excess heat. Discussion ensued on what input the commission was expected to give and if there was enough information provided to them to give that input.

MOTION: Brian Estes made a motion to defer the discussion of individual projects to the June meeting. He requested that Council Districts be added to the existing spreadsheet and also that a summary of the categorical types of projects and time frames be added. There was no second and the motion failed.

Rod explained the projects planned for 2022. Discussion ensued as to how much of the list needed to be reviewed. Rod advised that after he receives input from the Regional Park Supervisors, he will edit the list and send it to the commissioners so that they can review it before the next meeting. The list needs to be completed by July.

MOTION: Pete Coy made a motion to continue the discussion of the Capital Projects at the June meeting. Joe Hashmall seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Brian Estes would like additional summary information sent to the commissioners at least a week before the next meeting. He would also like pie charts representing the project descriptions (maintenance, new, expansion of existing, etc.).

C. COVID-19 Phase Update – The Governor announced that the state will follow the CDC guidelines regarding mask use. The Governor also announced that the

state will reopen June 30th (sooner if 70% of 16-year-old and older get vaccinated). WC Parks reservations for indoor facilities open June 16th for events and activities starting July 1st. Group sizes will be subject to facility capacity. Commission meetings will continue to be held virtually, as they still need to be streamed and the department does not have the technology to do that. Mike is optimistic that the commission will be able to meet in person within the next couple of months. Shower facilities remain closed and will not open until the State Department of Health and the local Health Department advise it is okay to do so. The State has not provided guidance on opening senior centers. The senior centers are starting to look at programs and WC Parks staff will be coordinating with the senior centers in the next couple of weeks to see where they are with reopening. The Council on Aging will be a key player in that conversation, as they deliver and provide congregate meals.

D. Lake Whatcom Forest Management Plan Goals and Objectives – Mike is working on a request for proposal (RFP) to hire a firm to create a plan to manage Lookout Mountain Forest Preserve and Lake Whatcom Park. Mike presented a document of the planning process for the Lake Whatcom Forest Management Plan, as well as primary goals. Mike asked the commission for input on what they would like incorporated in the RFP. The commission wanted climate change and reducing the potential for “fire” events to be added to the proposal. The commission will have the opportunity to confirm the goals, objectives, and various elements of the plan once a firm is selected. Mike advised that King County and the City of Anacortes have their forest management plans online if the commissioners would like to view them.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION

The next Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission meeting will be held virtually on June 17, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

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