

MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, January 17, 2019

Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Administrative Office
3373 Mount Baker Highway
Bellingham, Washington

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Commissioners: Richard Sturgill, Susan McClendon, Brad
VanderWerff, Sonja Max, Jeff Margolis
Staff: Michael McFarlane, Christ Thomsen, Rod Lamb

EXCUSED

Commissioners: None

GUEST(S)

Jane Stein (Van Zandt Community Hall Association) and Susan Willhoft
(Square One Maps)

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

A. Alan McEwen regarding Bellingham Senior Activity Center membership –

Jeff Margolis was not aware that there were membership fees at the Senior Centers. There isn't a charge for people to get into the centers because the meals are free, but sometimes there are small fees for certain activities. The large centers have membership fees that are charged to offset the cost of instructors and some of the programming they do at the centers. There are scholarship and volunteer programs to help anyone who may not be able to pay the fee.

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Jeff Margolis wanted to extend his sincere compliments and admiration for the exquisite job of installing the fence at South Fork Park. He inquired as to whether or not there were dog poop bag dispensers at the park, of which there are not. Those are typically restricted to the two watershed properties where there is a heightened sense of water quality and impact. Jeff also shared that the parking lot at Lake Whatcom Park is worse than Everybody's Store. It was very crowded and needs gravel and grading. He is concerned about cougar sightings in the South Fork Valley and was hoping that someone from WC Parks could contact Fish & Wildlife to see if they have done a cougar census recently. Jeff also would like to see WC Parks

sponsor a summit in 2020 regarding the use of the South Fork and Nooksack Rivers during the summer as an aquatic resource. He would like all of the pertinent agencies and parties to come forth with their take on the situation and how they might contribute to a solution, as the situation is only going to get worse over time as population expands in the region.

V. AGENDA

A. January 17, 2019

MOTION: Richard Sturgill moved to approve the January 17, 2019 agenda as amended with moving Jane Stein's presentation to the first thing in new business. Brad VanderWerff seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VI. MINUTES

A. November 1, 2018

MOTION: Susan McClendon moved to approve the November 1, 2018 Minutes as written. Richard Sturgill seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. Director's Report – Michael McFarlane

- i. **Master Gardeners and WSU Whatcom County Extension** – The agreement with the Master Gardeners Foundation was completed. They are hoping to put up a new greenhouse at Hovander (not one that the public sees) and will begin paying the water bill for both of the greenhouses. The Master Gardeners Foundation have their annual plant sale at Hovander and provide the plants and labor for the gardens around the house and in the children's garden. They also provide the maintenance and upkeep for the landscape at the Roeder Home, which is a huge benefit for WC Parks. The WSU agreement still needs to be sent over to the WSU Whatcom County Extension.
- ii. **Hovander Bluegrass Festival** – The Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Foundation thought Whatcom County Parks prices were too high this year and as a result will be moving their Bluegrass Festival to the Deming Logging Grounds. Whatcom County Parks spent about \$12,000 in in-kind to help facilitate the festival and received about \$1,000. If those facilities would have been rented, WC Parks would have received about \$6,000. This change will make Hovander available to the public during the long Labor Day weekend.
- iii. **The Point Roberts Lighthouse Society** – The Point Roberts Lighthouse Society has dissolved. They were disappointed that Whatcom County did not come up with the extra funds to be able to build the proposal as they

had asked. The Lighthouse Society had pledged \$500,000 to the project, but after consulting with Whatcom County Planning & Development Services, it looked like the project would cost closer to \$1,000,000 and \$1,500,000. The Point Roberts Lighthouse Society chose to donate the funds they had raised to the Point Roberts Historical Society.

- iv. **2019-2020 Budget** – The budget was approved. It is a good budget with quite a few Capital Projects and a lot of Capital Maintenance. The 2019 Park Attendant position is close to being filled and then there will be an additional Park Attendant added in 2020. These two positions were a very high priority to help keep facilities cleaned and maintained. The budget also includes a pay increase for seasonal extra help which will hopefully help with recruitment and retention of these very essential employees.
- v. **Wildlife Rehab Center at Nugent’s Corner Landing** – The Wildlife Rehab Center at Nugent’s Corner Landing was a building that WC Parks acquired and were ready to tear down, but then a nonprofit asked about using it as a wildlife rehab center. Conditional use permits and zoning changes allowed for the rehab center and when the nonprofit dissolved, the Whatcom County Humane Society took over. The Humane Society has been in a capital campaign to build a new facility next to their existing facility on Division Street and will most likely be moving out of the center at Nugent’s Corner Landing within a year or so. After that, the building will be demolished and the area will remain open space.
- vi. **Senior Centers** – Mary Carlson, the Director for the Whatcom County Council on Aging, will be retiring at the end of the month. WC Parks is working to get some resolution on the four smaller senior centers where part-time staff is helping to facilitate the meal programs, as WC Parks has issues with County staff collecting money for a non-County agency.
- vii. **Shoreline regulations and zoning** – Rod’s putting together a draft to Whatcom County Planning & Development Services to hopefully allow WC Parks to maintain park properties and the shoreline areas within the park properties. This would include the ability to remove hazardous trees, install picnic tables and grills, mowing, maintaining beaches, etc.
- viii. **Board Vacancies** – There are still two vacancies on the Park Commission (District 1 and District 4).
- ix. **Whatcom County Council Legislative Information Center** – The Whatcom County Council Legislative Information Center has been added to the County Council’s webpage. This gives the public the ability to watch Council meetings live and also has the postings of all agendas, minutes, video, audio, action taken, etc.

B. Operations Report – Christ Thomsen

- i. **Staff** – Interviews for the two Park Attendant positions were held this past week and references are now being checked. It’s anticipated that those

positions will be filled in the next couple of weeks. Seasonal employee recruitment starts in February.

- ii. **Semiahmoo Multipurpose Building Remodel** – This project is taking longer than anticipated because there was enough money in the budget to do a complete remodel of the bathrooms. This building will be available for public rental when completed.
- iii. **Iron Chink Shelter** – The pad for the Iron Chink Shelter was poured on Monday.
- iv. **2019 Projects** – Christ will have a schedule to present to the Commission in February or March to show the projects that WC Parks will be working on for the year.
- v. **Storm Damage** – Park’s property damage originally had been estimated to have been about \$392,000, but is now closer to \$450,000. Christ shared photos of damage at Silver Lake Park, Nessel Farm, Lookout Mountain, Plantation Rifle Range, Samish Park, Squires Lake, Semiahmoo, Lily Point, Point Whitehorn, and Birch Bay.

C. Planning & Development Report (Rodney Lamb)

- i. **Shoreline Management Program** – Planning & Development Services is beginning an update on the Shoreline Management Program. This gives WC Parks an opportunity to review it and make some changes that could make managing our facilities within shoreline jurisdictions a little bit easier.
- ii. **Lighthouse Marine Park Playground** – The playground equipment was delivered in December. The target is to have it installed by the end of April.
- iii. **South Fork Park** – Rod has been working on the grant application for the trail that connects the trailhead to the Nessel Farm. The deadline has been extended to the end of the month because of the government shutdown and evaluations will begin at the end of February. The grant will be awarded in June.
- iv. **Maple Creek Campground Renovation at Silver Lake Park** – The timber crew is scheduled to come to Silver Lake Park to establish how much value is in the trees that will be removed for this project. That will go out to bid in February and the trees will be removed in March. The engineer for the campground renovation project will be done with the bid documents in February, the project will be bid in March, and start in April. The targeted completion date is July. A bid is currently being advertised for site furnishings (picnic tables, fire rings, and grills) with bid opening on January 29th.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. **Lighthouse Marine Park Dock** – The dock was removed in August 2018 because of failing structural components. The dock is in a very exposed site and

even though it is only in the water for part of the year, it still sees some very rough conditions. This will be the second time the dock has been repaired. The County Executive asked WC Parks to come up with options for the Council to consider. The first option is to authorize a budget supplemental for \$50,000 to repair the floats and get the dock in the water May 2019. There is no guarantee that the dock will not sustain damage in the future. The second option is to permanently remove the float and possibly relocate it to another park. The concrete launch would remain in place and the choice could be made as to whether or not to maintain it. If this were the case, boaters could choose to use one of three other launches. Discussion ensued.

MOTION: Richard Sturgill moved to recommend maintaining public water access and appropriate funds to repair the dock at Lighthouse Marine Park. Brad VanderWerff seconded. Jeff Margolis and Susan McClendon opposed. Sonja Max abstained.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Proposal by Jane Stein regarding registering the Van Zandt Community Hall for State historical purposes** – Jane Stein would like permission to register the Van Zandt Hall with the Washington Heritage Registry. This registry is run by the Department of Archaeological & Historic Preservation and would allow the Van Zandt Community Hall Association to apply for grants to fix the hall. Discussion ensued as to what kind of restrictions may be placed on improvements if the hall were added to this registry. It was suggested that the Van Zandt Association look further into these details prior to applying for this registration. Jeff Margolis recommended that the discussion be tabled until they gather more information. Permission was granted for Jane Stein to send photos to the Heritage Registry to see if the hall qualifies.
- B. Stimpson Trail** – Jeff Margolis was contacted by a Phil Damon, a regular user of the Stimpson Trail, who is concerned that there are places on the trail that are washing away. Christ has been in contact with Phil and hopes to walk the trail with Phil and talk with him about his concerns.
- C. Initiative Measure No. 1639 (Public Safety & Firearms)** – There is a training component as part of Initiative Measure No. 1639 that requires gun purchasers to attend a particular training. The training will cover a number of topics, including basic firearms safety rules, firearms and children, secure gun storage, suicide prevention, secure storage, and laws. Once the requirements of the training are clearly defined, WC Parks will modify programs to provide this training to the citizens of Whatcom County.
- D. Ideas for 2019 Parks Guide** – The Whatcom County Parks Guide is being updated. The overall format will remain the same, but Mike is looking for ideas and suggestions from the Commission. Some suggestions included making the

website more prominent (where more detailed maps are available) and adding site addresses.

- E. Review of 2018 Capital Projects** – Rod Lamb presented a slide show of the projects completed in 2018.
- F. Van Zandt Community Hall bench** – At the end of December, a drunk driver ran into the \$2,000 bench at the Van Zandt Community Hall. The bench is owned by the Van Zandt/South Fork Community Association. There is a \$500 deductible and hopefully the Association’s insurance will cover the rest so that it can be replaced.
- G. Little Squalicum Park** – This is a Superfund Site that was cleaned up and capped five years ago because the Oeser Company’s wood-treating operations. The United States Environmental Protection Agency is trying to get a restrictive covenant on the site so that the cap is not disturbed. This park is currently leased to the City of Bellingham for park purposes. The City of Bellingham has been slowing making improvements with trails and would also like to build an estuary. Ultimately this park area will be annexed into the City of Bellingham, so WC Parks is in the early stages of discussing transferring it back to the city for park purposes. This would make permitting less cumbersome for the city and would give them an opportunity to use non-contaminated areas for other uses. Ultimately, the City Council and the County Council will have to approve this exchange.
- H. Birch Bay Drive Pedestrian Facility 4(f) De Minimis Impact on Birch Bay Beach Park** – This is a Whatcom County Public Works project to construct a berm and pedestrian path along Birch Bay Drive. Because this project affects Whatcom County Parks tidelands and parcels, Whatcom County Public Works needs a recommendation from Whatcom County Parks that the project will have little impact on park properties. To the contrary, this project will be a huge enhancement to the Whatcom County Park properties in this area. The beach will be restored to a natural state and there will be a pedestrian trail to improve access in and out of the park once it is developed. The De Minimis Impact Determination and a copy of the minutes from this meeting are required for Public Works to acquire the funding for this project.
- MOTION:** Susan McClendon moved to recommend approval of 4(f) De Minimis Impact Determination for Birch Bay Shore parcels impacted by the proposed construction of the Birch Bay Drive and Pedestrian Facility. Brad VanderWerff seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.
- I. Election of Chair and Vice Chair** –
- MOTION:** Brad VanderWerff moved to elect Jeff Margolis as the Chair. Richard Sturgill seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.
- MOTION:** Susan McClendon moved to elect Sonja Max as the Vice Chair. Richard Sturgill seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Richard Sturgill mentioned that he was with someone who appreciated the trees that had been trimmed at Semiahmoo Park.

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION

The next Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission meeting will be held on February 21, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. at the Semiahmoo Cannery Lodge, 9261 Semiahmoo Parkway, Blaine, Washington.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:24 p.m.

Transcribed by: Kristin Lunderville, Clerk III

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director