

MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, December 17, 2020

Virtual Meeting

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Commissioners: Sonja Max, Brad VanderWerff, Pete Coy, Richard Sturgill

Staff: Michael McFarlane, Christ Thomsen, Rod Lamb

EXCUSED

Commissioners: None

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

None

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

None

V. AGENDA

A. December 17, 2020

MOTION: Richard Sturgill moved to approve the December 17, 2020 agenda as written. Brad VanderWerff seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VI. MINUTES

A. October 15, 2020

MOTION: Pete Coy moved to approve the October 15, 2020 Minutes as written. Richard Sturgill seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. Director's Report – Michael McFarlane

- i. **General Updates** – Border restrictions have been extended through January 21, 2021 and will likely be extended beyond that. Campground reservations for Lighthouse Marine Park will open as soon as the border opens back up. Reservations for 2021 opened December 1st and WC

Parks took in about \$58,000; just \$31 less than last year when all facilities and shelters were available for reservations. Reservations for special events will open once restrictions are lifted and clearer guidelines are received from the Governor's Office. The Senior Centers are still closed, but meal distribution continues.

- ii. **Budget Impacts** – It's estimated that WC Parks will be about \$150,000 short in revenue in 2020 due to closures. Park use is projected to remain at 2020 levels for 2021, even with facilities and shelters closed.
- iii. **Pacific Northwest Seismic Network** – The Pacific Northwest Seismic Network will be installing an earthquake sensor at Nessel Farm near the caretaker's residence in the spring of 2021. There is no cost to the county for the installation or maintenance of the sensor, just \$10-\$20 per year for power.
- iv. **Commission Vacancies** – There has been a good response to the park commission vacancies. One application was received for District 1 and six applications were received for the At-Large vacancy (all applicants are from Districts 2 and 3). District 4 is still vacant and no applications have been received. Richard Sturgill will not be renewing his position in District 5, so that position will be vacant in February.

B. Operations Report – Christ Thomsen

- i. **Trail Updates** –Rock was added to most of the Hertz Trail to increase accessibility and keep it in good condition for the winter. There was a rock lift on the accessible trail at Point Whitehorn from the parking lot to the overlook. This was the first full rock lift on the entire length of the trail since it was established. A short segment of trail in the Jensen Family Nature Reserve also received a rock lift and a portion of the trail at Squires Lake was rerouted because it was located on private property.
- ii. **Plantation Rifle Range** – Two law enforcement agencies that historically use the range chose not to renew their contracts for 2021 due to budget constraints. Despite these losses, the contract amounts for the range are only about \$17,000 lower than 2020. This amount is above the projected revenue for law enforcement, but will still present some revenue challenges in 2021.
- iii. **Staffing** – The Regional Park Supervisor for the South Region resigned earlier this year and because of the hiring freeze, that position probably won't be filled for at least two years. WC Parks staff has done a great job of managing, operating, and supervising the properties in the south region during this time, but the system put in place is not sustainable for the long term. After looking at a number of options, the decision has been made to consolidate the south and central regions into a single region.

C. Planning & Development Report – Rod Lamb

- i. **Red Mountain Shower and Restroom Facility** – King Architecture designed the new Red Mountain shower and restroom facility. The approximately 1,300 square foot facility houses two buildings under a single roof with the men’s restroom in one building and the women’s restroom in the other. The buildings are separated by an open breezeway with exterior entrances to five unisex showers, one of which is family friendly and includes a toilet and sink. The design allows for the restrooms to remain open while the showers are being cleaned and vice versa. It also allows for operational flexibility; during peak use, all units can be open and during shoulder seasons, some units can be closed, while some remain open, offering a higher level of service. Bid opening for the project was on October 13th and seven local contractors submitted bids, ranging between about \$1,152,000 and \$1,500,000. The project was awarded to Tiger Construction with a low base bid of \$1,152,270. The project has some add alternates that allow aspects of the project to be removed in order to insure the construction of the building. Notice to proceed was given on November 30th and Tiger Construction has been actively working on the project since then. The foundation was poured last Friday and stem walls are being poured tomorrow.
- ii. **Silver Lake Park Dry Hydrant** – Williamson Construction completed installation of the dry hydrant at Silver Lake Park. This was the last required component in the Maple Creek Campground permit conditions.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. **2021 – 2022 Budget – Parks & Recreation Department** – Mike McFarlane presented the 2021 – 2022 budget. It is the same as the 2020 budget and was approved on November 24th without any modifications. The Executive requested a 10% budget reduction from each department and has the authority to implement that reduction at any point. WC Parks was able to keep all staffed positions with the exception of the frozen Regional Park Supervisor position. WC Parks was also able to keep a good level of seasonal extra help. The Council would like WC Parks to get departmental projects started to help small businesses.
- B. **2021 – 2022 Senior Services Contracts** – All Senior Service Contracts were approved at the same rates as 2020. Those include two interlocal agreements with the City of Blaine and the City of Lynden and two interagency agreements with the Jet Oldsters (Ferndale) and the Whatcom Council on Aging (Bellingham).

- C. Review 2022 Comprehensive Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan Work Plan** – WC Parks is updating the Department’s Comprehensive Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan for 2022. This plan is updated every six years and is a guidance document used to meet the recreational demand of county residents. It is also a requirement from the State Recreation & Conservation Office (RCO) in order to be grant eligible. Some of the plan elements include articulating goals and objectives, inventorying existing facilities, including/providing public involvement, analyzing demand and need, and including a capital improvement program. Mike presented a timeline for developing this plan and requested the commission look at the current plan on the County’s website between now and the next meeting. The goal is to get the new plan completed by the end of 2021, so that it can be approved by the County Council early 2022.
- D. Update on Agricultural Advisory Committee Recommendations Regarding Trails and Trailheads** – Mike will be attending the Agricultural Advisory Committee’s virtual meeting on January 13th to recommend against removing trails, trailheads, restroom facilities and associated parking areas for nor more than 30 vehicles from permitted uses to permitting that requires administrative approval. WC Parks does not see any added value to this change and is concerned that it will add extra time to the permitting process and about \$1,500 in fees.
- E. Plantation Rifle Range** – The Plantation Rifle Range HVAC system and roof replacement at the indoor range went out to bid October 20th. The engineer’s cost estimate for the project was \$646,957 and the low base bid received was \$958,000. The project has been delayed while staff seeks additional funding.
- F. Report on Point Roberts Parks District Kayak Program** – Point Roberts Park & Recreation District contacted WC Parks regarding a kayaking program. The Park District owns kayaks and a kayak trailer and wanted to house them at Lighthouse Marine Park for district members to use free of charge. A three-year interlocal agreement was signed and the program ran from August 7th to mid-September. The district registered 32 people with 19 reservations and one group session on kayaking basics. The Park District thought it was a success and are already making plans for 2021.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mike McFarlane told the commission members that they were welcome to come to the park office to review the applications that have been received for the commissioner openings.

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION

The next Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission meeting will be held virtually on January 21, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

Transcribed by: Kristin Lunderville, Clerk III

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director