

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION**  
**Thursday, September 16, 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: Joe Hashmall, Terry Terry, Sonja Max, Brad VanderWerff, Brian Estes, Kristen Fagan

Staff: Michael McFarlane, Christ Thomsen

**EXCUSED**

Pete Coy

**GUESTS**

Annelle Norman, Katherine Smith, Mark Robbins, Bill Zidel

**III. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS**

- A. Annelle Norman** – Annelle Norman, a delegate from the Point Roberts Taxpayers Association (PRTA) to the Point Roberts Community Advisory Committee (PRCAC), submitted the proposal for a dog park in Point Roberts.
- B. Katherine Smith** – Katherine Smith, a member of the PRCAC and the author of the proposal for a dog park in Point Roberts, advised the location of the proposed half acre dog park at Lighthouse Marine Park is literally the only suitable location in Point Roberts.
- C. Mark Robbins** – Mark Robbins, the President of the PRTA, submitted a letter in support of the proposal for a dog park on behalf of the PRTA.
- D. Bill Zidel** – Bill Zidel, a member of the PRCAC, also supports the proposal for a dog park.
- E. Kevin Ryan Email** – Michael McFarlane received an email from Kevin Ryan, the Sehome High School Cross Country and Track & Field coach in support of the changes to the Raptor Ridge Trail to make it more accessible.
- F. Jackie Yereance Email** – Michael McFarlane received a follow-up email from Jackie Yereance on the multi-use trail proposal, including how it would be funded and who would construct it.
- G. Frances Rozyskie Email** – Michael McFarlane received an email from Frances Rozyskie supporting the proposal for a dog park in Point Roberts.

**IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

None

V. **AGENDA**

A. **September 16, 2021**

**MOTION:** Brian Estes moved to approve the September 16, 2021 agenda as written. Joe Hashmall seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VI. **MINUTES**

A. **August 19, 2021**

**MOTION:** Brian Estes moved to approve the August 19, 2021 minutes as written. Joe Hashmall seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VII. **STAFF REPORTS**

A. **Director's Report – Michael McFarlane**

- i. **Mid-Biennium Adjustment** – Staff continues to work on mid-biennium budget adjustments. Most adjustments are for utilities and increased costs resulting from record park use. Staff will be seeking a \$2.00 per hour wage increase for seasonal extra help staff to keep up with minimum wage and the tight labor market. Staff is also requesting an adjustment for a three-year contract to service the new septic systems at Silver Lake Park. The Department of Revenue contacted WC Parks to advise \$35,000.00 in lodging tax is owed for the past three years. Staff is adding that cost to the mid-biennium budget adjustment and will collect the tax moving forward. The mid-biennium adjustment requests will be reviewed by the Executive's budget team and the Executive will decide which adjustments will move forward and where they will be funded from. The mid-biennium adjustment will be presented to the county council in November. If the adjustments are not approved, the costs will need to be covered by existing budgeted funds.
- ii. **Staffing Update** – WC Parks is continuing to recruit for the Design & Development Supervisor position because there were no qualified applicants from the first recruitment. The vacancy of this position severely impacts the department's ability to begin new projects and continue current projects. Active projects have been divided between Christ Thomsen, Ben Houpt, and Mike McFarlane and some projects have been set aside until the position can be filled. Mike anticipates the position will not be filled until the beginning of 2022.
- iii. **Squires Lake Park** – The Squires Lake property purchase has a tentative closing date of September 30<sup>th</sup>.

B. **Operations Report & Design and Development Report – Christ Thomsen**

- i. **Staffing** – The Park Ranger position was posted externally. Christ received the applications from HR and will review them so that interviews can be scheduled in the next few weeks.
- ii. **Operations** – The parks continue to be busy as summer turns to fall. The campgrounds at Silver Lake Park are booked on weekends through mid-October.
- iii. **Maple Creek Campground Shower and Restroom Facility** – Tiger Construction started work on the Maple Creek Campground Shower and Restroom Facility right after Labor Day. Clearing has been completed and structural fill is being placed. Construction of the footing forms will happen next week with the first concrete pour on Friday. Tiger Construction hopes to get the facility closed in before the winter weather arrives.
- iv. **Birch Bay Beach Park** – The archaeology fieldwork report has been submitted for review and WC Parks staff will begin work by the end of September.
- v. **Plantation Rifle Range** – The range project is underway and the contractor has been ordering materials and supplies. Christ hasn't received the schedule from the contractor yet, but will update the commission when he receives it. Ben Houpt will be responsible for the field implementation of the range project.
- vi. **Lake Whatcom EH1 Trail Construction** – The contract for the Lake Whatcom EH1 Trail Construction was sent to the contractor for signature, but has not yet been returned. Christ is trying to maintain contact with the contractor so that the project can move forward.
- vii. **Nugent's Corner** – The bid package to demolish the building at Nugent's Corner and restore the site to open space for public use is going out to bid in October.
- viii. **Cabin Remodel** – The Shuksan cabin remodel bid package is going out to bid in October.

## VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. **Raptor Ridge Trail** – Sonja Max, Joe Hashmall, and Terry Terry took a tour of the Raptor Ridge Trail with Jackie Yereance. The proposed trail changes are to bypass a steep stone staircase and a bridge, so that horses and bikers can navigate the trail. A cross country coach emailed Sonja Max and Mike McFarlane stating that he thought modifications would make the trail safer for runners and was in support of it, as long as it did not degrade the character of the trail.

**MOTION:** Brian Estes made a motion to recommend support of the Raptor Ridge Trail upgrade. Terry Terry seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

**IX. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Proposal for Dog Park at Lighthouse Marine Park – Annelle Norman –**

Katherine Smith presented “A Proposal to Address the Problem of Off-leash and Out-of-Owner’s Control Dogs in Whatcom County Parks in Point Roberts, WA”. She advised that most of the properties in Point Roberts do not have fenced yards and an off-leash dog park would be utilized by both Point Roberts residents and visitors. She advised Lighthouse Marine Park is literally the only piece of public land that seems suitable for a dog enclosure. Katherine believes an off-leash dog park will help create well behaved and well socialized dogs. Brad VanderWerff asked how close the nearest dog park in Canada was and if there was opposition to the proposal. Katherine said the closest dog park was 4.5 miles away in Canada and that a local solution was needed for a local problem. Katherine advised there is no group opposition of any kind of the letters received. She said there were a couple of comments that dog parks weren’t clean places and that people should fence their yards and keep their pets at home, but that most people were supportive. Katherine advised the rough estimate for the cost of the dog park is \$30,000 and \$5,000 for additional amenities. Brian asked what Christ and Mike thought of the cost estimate and they both thought the estimate was on the low end. Mike said the area is meant to be open space for park users and brought up concerns about the location of the dog park and it limiting restroom access for campers. Katherine advised she could provide drone footage showing that the half acre does not overlap any of the major trail routes and welcomed the commission members to come walk the site.

**MOTION:** Brian Estes made a motion to table further discussion. Joe Hashmall seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

**X. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Brian Estes asked Mike McFarlane and Christ Thomsen if they had heard anything about a meeting in Maple Falls regarding the Opportunity Council and the use of the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center; that maybe the Opportunity Council shouldn’t continue to operate it. Brian said that Barry Buchanan and Carol Frazey met out there. Mike advised the Opportunity Council and the community meets regularly, but that he had not heard anything about this specifically. Mike will follow up to see if he can find out further details.

**XI. NEXT MEETING DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION**

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

**XII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director