

MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, November 18, 2021

Virtual Meeting

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Commissioners: Pete Coy, Kristen Fagan, Terry Terry, Joe Hashmall

Staff: Michael McFarlane, Christ Thomsen

EXCUSED

Sonja Max, Brian Estes, Brad VanderWerff

GUESTS

None

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

None

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

None

V. AGENDA

A. November 18, 2021

MOTION: Joe Hashmall moved to approve the November 18, 2021 agenda as written. Kristen Fagan seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VI. MINUTES

A. October 21, 2021

MOTION: Joe Hashmall moved to approve the October 21, 2021 minutes as written. Kristen Fagan seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. Director's Report – Michael McFarlane

- i. **Flood Event** – The department is in the early stages of flood assessment. City Hall in the City of Everson flooded, but should be ready for Monday's meal distribution. It is unknown if the community center in the City of Sumas will be able to host Monday's meal distribution.

- ii. **North Lake Samish Bridge Replacement Project** – The North Lake Samish bridge replacement project has been postponed for a year. Samish Park will be open for 2022 and instead will close May 2023 through July 2024 to provide a staging area for the project.
- iii. **Bellingham Senior Activity Center** – The Whatcom Council on Aging is going to mandate vaccinations for their employees and program participants at the Bellingham Senior Activity Center.
- iv. **Parks Commission Update** – Brad VanderWerff is not applying for a second term on the Parks Commission. This will create a vacancy in District 3 when his term expires at the end of January. Interested individuals should contact the County Executive’s office or website for application instructions.
- v. **ShakeAlert Earthquake Early Warning System** – The Pacific Northwest Seismic Network installed an earthquake sensor at Nessel Farm and the system is now live.
- vi. **Pacific Rim Tonewoods** – Pacific Rim Tonewoods is a company that provides wood for making musical instruments. They contacted Mike about collecting the stems of several large maple trees located in the Point Whitehorn Marine Reserve. Their plan is to clone them to see if the characteristics they are looking for are genetic. The collection of these stems has little to no impact to the trees or the marine reserve.
- vii. **Whatcom Million Trees Project** – The Whatcom Million Trees Project is an initiative to plant one million trees in Whatcom County over five years. WC Parks administrative staff plan to identify and provide sites in county parks for the trees to be planted. WC Parks staff will prep the sites late summer/early fall for a late fall/early spring planting by project volunteers.
- viii. **2022 Reservations** – December 1st is the opening day for facility and campground reservations for 2022.
- ix. **Staffing** – Recruitment is ongoing for the Design & Development Supervisor.

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

- i. **Staffing** – Recruitment is ongoing for the Maintenance and Construction Supervisor.
- ii. **Glacier Restroom** – The Glacier Restroom closed October 2nd because of septic system problems. While it was being repaired someone dumped used motor oil in it and then a cottonwood tree fell and hit the building, damaging a corner of the roof. The roof damage should not prohibit the restroom from being reopened once the septic system repairs are complete.
- iii. **Operations** – Staff have been winterizing the parks and preparing for windstorms and rain events by making sure drainages are open and culverts are flowing.

- iv. **Flood Event** – The east region parks fared the best in the flood event. The road near the boat launch in Silver Lake Park and the pumphouse at Red Mountain flooded. Damage to the electrical components in the pumphouse will be assessed once the water recedes. The Interurban Trail and the Hertz Trail both had downed trees, but no major slides. The Hertz Trail is currently closed so that the downed trees and unstable trees can be removed. The Lookout Mountain Road was washed out in two places and is closed until repairs can be made. The road provides access to a number of communication towers. Hovander received significant flood waters with water levels exceeding 23.78 feet. Floodwaters inundated the shop, barn, office, and bathrooms at Hovander and reached above the windowsills in the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center. The Hovander House stayed dry, but the crawl space is full of water. The river walk trail lost most of its surfacing, but the levy appears to be in good shape. Christ is still waiting to hear back about Birch Bay and Point Whitehorn. The Bellingham Senior Activity Center had seepage entering the basement and some drainage problems, but staff were able to control both issues before they caused damage. One residential rental unit had floodwaters rise high enough to damage the furnace duct work. Staff started removing the sheetrock and wet insulation from the Hovander office and the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center. Once that is removed, staff will work to clear culverts and ditches to prevent further damage from the next rain event. Then staff will continue to work on cleanup. Pete Coy asked if WC Parks has insurance and Christ advised the county self-insured. Pete asked if staff had been to Squires Lake. Christ said staff had been there and there were a few trees down, but that was it. The Geneva Dam, monitored by WC Parks and the City of Bellingham, functioned well during the rain event.
- v. **Maple Creek Shower and Restroom Facility** – The Maple Creek Shower and Restroom Facility is moving along beautifully. The masonry work is complete and the framing work started Wednesday. The contractor expects to have the building dried in within three weeks. PSE has already inspected it and power can be pulled as soon as it's dried in.
- vi. **Plantation Rifle Range** – The contractor is beginning civil work on the Plantation Rifle Range next week.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. **Senior Service Building Agreement – City of Everson** – Mike presented the Senior Service Building Agreement between WC Parks and the City of Everson.

The agreement is for use of the multi-purpose room at City Hall for the senior program and expires December 31, 2022. The agreement has been approved by the County Council and signed by the County Executive. Administrative staff will begin looking for other locations for the senior program to be held after the first of the year.

B. Senior Service Building Agreement – Point Roberts Park & Recreation

District No. 1 – Mike presented the Senior Service Building Agreement between WC Parks and the Point Roberts Park & Recreation District No. 1. The agreement is for use of the community hall for the senior program and expires December 31, 2027. The agreement has been approved by the County Council and signed by the County Executive.

C. 2021 Rates and Fees Increase – Camping & Cabins – Executive Order –

Mike presented the memo he submitted to Executive Sidhu proposing an amendment to the Unified Fee Schedule to increase campsite fees by \$1.00 per night. This increase covers a 2% lodging tax that is required to be paid by campsite and cabin users. This increase will also allow WC Parks to provide showers to campers at Lighthouse Marine Park and Silver Lake Park at no additional cost. The coin operated showers are very expensive to maintain and have been the target of recent vandalism. In addition, the amount of time and effort it takes staff to process the coinage through to deposit is not cost effective. WC Parks was notified by the Department of Revenue that the Tourism Promotion Area (TPA) lodging charge rate was increasing. The rate change was requested by the motels/hotels and would be a \$3.00 per night increase to campsites. This fee only applies to hotels/motels and will not be paid by WC Parks. The department also received a transfer of about \$30,000.00 to pay 2020's L&I tax.

D. 2021-2022 Mid-Biennium Adjustment – Mike presented the 2021-2022 Mid-Biennium Adjustment submitted to the county council by the county executive. These adjustments include funds to cover the increased cost of supplies, the fees and maintenance of new buildings, and hourly wage increases for extra help staff. One increase that was not approved by the executive was the cost to cover increased fuel costs for vehicles. The Mid-Biennium Adjustment goes before the county council next Tuesday. Pete Coy asked about co-funding a forester with the city. Mike advised that position would be a part of the 2023-2024 budget that will be put together beginning May/June of 2022.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION

The next Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission meeting will be held virtually on December 16, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Transcribed by: Kristin Lunderville, Clerk IV

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director