

MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, April 18, 2019

Silver Lake Park
9006 Silver Lake Road
Maple Falls, 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: Brad VanderWerff, Sonja Max, Susan McClendon,
Jeff Margolis

Staff: Michael McFarlane, Christ Thomsen, Rod Lamb

EXCUSED

Commissioners: Richard Sturgill

GUEST(S)

Chris Orr, Executive Director Whatcom Council on Aging

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

Chris Orr, the new Executive Director for the Whatcom Council on Aging introduced himself and said that he is very appreciative of the partnership between the WCOA and WC Parks in serving seniors in the community.

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Jeff Margolis suggested that there be better signage at Maple Creek Park (on the road and on the trails). Christ advised trail markers, signage, and maps have been ordered and should be installed by the end of June. Jeff suggested markers that go higher in the trees to mark the trails for cross country skiers.

V. AGENDA

A. April 18, 2019

MOTION: Sonja Max moved to approve the April 18, 2019 agenda as written. Brad VanderWerff seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VI. MINUTES

A. February 21, 2019

MOTION: Sonja Max moved to approve the February 21, 2019 Minutes as written. Brad VanderWerff seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. Director's Report – Michael McFarlane

- i. **Lighthouse Marine Park Dock** – The dock at Lighthouse Marine Park is going to be removed and repurposed elsewhere in the Park system. Installation of the new playground will begin at the end of April and new picnic tables and fire rings should be in by the early part of summer. The County Executive, Public Works, and WC Parks went to Point Roberts April 4th to meet with the Point Roberts Taxpayers Association. The PRTA is disappointed that the dock is being removed and are unhappy about other issues at Lighthouse Marine Park.
- ii. **DNR Baker to Bellingham Non-motorized Recreation Plan** – The DNR Baker to Bellingham Non-motorized Recreation Plan is available on DNR's website. It is a conceptual plan for recreational areas on DNR trust lands within the county.
- iii. **Tower Leases** – The communication tower lease for Lookout Mountain is out for final review. There are two more tower companies asking for renewals on their leases that expire in 2-3 years. Mike asked the Commission if they wanted to see an entire lease agreement at the next meeting or just get a report from Mike as the leases are approved. The Commission was fine with a report. Jeff would like to be assured that the amount the users of the roads are paying for maintenance is equitable to the cost of the maintenance. Mike will get that information to Jeff.
- iv. **Canyon Lake Community Forest** – Mike is working on getting an easement/agreement with DNR and Sierra Pacific for access to the Canyon Lake Community Forest.
- v. **Bellingham Senior Activity Center Parking Lot** – The lease for the large parking lot in front of the Bellingham Senior Activity Center (Cornwall Center) expires at the end of June. The expenses for this parking lot are shared by WC Parks, the City of Bellingham, and the Whatcom Council on Aging.
- vi. **Welcome Senior Activity Center** – Ted Olson, the coordinator for the Welcome Senior Activity Center, is retiring after 25 years. Ted will still participate at the center and is willing to work as much as he is needed, so he will remain on payroll.
- vii. **Black Mountain Forestry Center** – The Black Mountain Forestry Center is the display located in the field across the road from Silver Lake Park. It is run by a group of passionate volunteers, but is seeing a downturn in

active members. WC Parks is going to have to assess the future of this program from a risk management standpoint.

B. Operations Report – Christ Thomsen

- i. **Staffing** – The Maintenance Worker II position at the Bellingham Senior Activity Center was filled by an employee who worked part time for Whatcom County Facilities. All but two of the seasonal positions have been filled; interviews will be held next Tuesday for the remaining two positions. Recruitment is open until May 2nd for the Maintenance III position. The Outdoor Program Coordinator who performs a large portion of maintenance is retiring at the end of May.
- ii. **Operations** – The Department is currently dewinterizing parks and performing spring cleanup in preparation for peak season. The installation of the Lighthouse Marine Park playground will begin next Tuesday. The Lighthouse Marine Park dock will be removed and stored at the main office until it can be repurposed for another location. Staff is working on permitting for the Cedar Point Trail at Lily Point, obtaining quotes for the Hovander Paintworks Project, pulling together specifications for the Gerdrum Home Roof & Sealing project, and finalizing plans for the Lake Whatcom 2019 trail construction.
- iii. **Larrabee State Park** – Washington State Parks initiated a trail planning process for Larrabee State Park and held a public meeting last month. WC Parks staff went to the meeting to observe how other agencies run public meetings.

C. Planning & Development Report – Rod Lamb

- i. **South Fork Park** – Rod submitted a grant application for South Fork Park in 2018 and expects to receive the funding results in the next couple of weeks. WC Parks has a DNR easement to connect the South Fork Park trailhead to the Nessel Farm. Rod will meet with the Lummi Tribe to confirm the proposed route is acceptable.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Review 2018 Senior Services Survey** – The Senior Services Survey is completed annually. Most users are pretty satisfied with the programs and activities offered at the Senior Centers. There are four full time (Bellingham, Blaine, Ferndale, Lynden) and four part-time facilities (Sumas, Point Roberts, Everson, Welcome). Blaine has seen huge growth and celebrated fifty years last summer. Mike will be sharing the survey with the County Council at the May meeting.

- B. Plantation Rifle Range Budget Supplemental** – WC Parks submitted a budget supplemental for the replacement of the HVAC system and Roof at the Plantation Rifle Range. The Council had a number of questions about the operational costs of the range and pulled the budget supplemental request. The supplemental will be back in front of Council next Tuesday. This delay has caused some project scheduling challenges, as the grant expires with the Recreation Conservation Office (RCO) at the end of June. WC Parks will have to ask the RCO funding board for an extension.
- C. Update on Silver Lake Park Maple Creek Campground Renovation** – Harkness Contracting finished the tree harvesting. Harkness elected to take a considerable number of the trees with root wads, as the company does stream restoration throughout Whatcom and Skagit Counties. Rod doesn't know the revenue amount from the harvesting, but whatever revenue is generated will be used to help offset the loss in revenue from the campground being closed. Eight bids were received for the campground improvement project and the contract was awarded to Williamson Construction, a local contractor in Kendall. Williamson dropped off their first piece of equipment today and plan to have the job completed by Labor Day. WC Parks is working with Puget Sound Energy to get the new electrical services to the renovated campground. New picnic tables, grills, and fire rings were purchased in bulk for the campground project and also to replace aging tables/grills/fire rings throughout the park system. Jeff Margolis requested that in the future the Commission be better informed of the magnitude of a project so that they are better prepared to respond to public inquiry.
- D. Silver Lake Water Levels and Beaver Activity** – There are at least four beaver dams at Silver Lake that are causing high water levels. The boat launch and the lagoon bridge within Silver Lake Park are being inundated, the water is approaching the foundation of the Lodge, and property owners around the lake are also experiencing problems because of the high levels. Property owners are looking to WC Parks to do something about the water level because the beaver dams are located on park property. WC Parks does not see its role as setting a high water level for the lake, but does have an interest in protecting park infrastructure. WC Parks has submitted permit applications to the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife and Whatcom County Planning and Development Services for permits to take sections of beaver dam until the water level is acceptable. This is just an interim fix; a long term maintenance plan with a wildlife management component will need to be created. A suggestion has been made to property owners around the lake to form a lake association to deal with beaver management, water levels, and other issues that may arise.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION

The next Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission meeting will be held on May 16, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. at the Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Administrative Offices, 3373 Mount Baker Highway, Bellingham, Washington, with a tour of the Shop Area at 5:30 p.m.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

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