

MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, April 21, 2022

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: Sonja Max, Terry Terry, Brian Estes, Pete Coy, Joe Hashmall

Staff: Christ Thomsen, Michael McFarlane

EXCUSED

Kristen Fagen

GUESTS

Alex Jeffers (Whatcom Land Trust), Franklin Boteler, Mitch Overton

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

None

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

- A.** Joe Hashmall thinks the Lummi Island Public Dock is very important and needs to be done, but is unsure if the Parks Department should be the primary movers for it.
- B.** Terry Terry advised the Lummi Island Public Dock Advisory Committee contacted Jon Hutchings, the Director of Public Works, who was very positive about the dock, but realistic about it taking time. The committee also sent their presentation to County Executive Satpal Sidhu. More community members are becoming involved in the endeavor and research is ongoing for possible funding streams.
- C.** Brian Estes would not support the Parks Department advocating for the dock. Brian expressed concern with groups giving 30-45-minute presentations to the commission about things that are not actionable by the commission.

V. AGENDA

A. April 21, 2022

MOTION: Joe Hashmall moved to approve the April 21, 2022 agenda as written. Pete Coy seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VI. MINUTES

A. March 17, 2022

MOTION: Pete Coy moved to approve the March 17, 2022 minutes as written. Brian Estes seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. Director's Report – Michael McFarlane

- i. Staffing** – Recruitment continues for a Design and Development Supervisor. A well-qualified candidate was found, but he declined the position. Recruitment for a new Parks Director closed on Monday and the Executive will be working to fill that position. Mike recommended that the commission be engaged in the hiring process. Applications are being reviewed for the Park Ranger position at Point Roberts. Seasonal extra help positions are currently being filled.
- ii. Commission Vacancy** – Franklin Boteler has applied for the vacant District 3 commission vacancy. The Executive will be sending his appointment to the County Council on May 10th for approval.
- iii. Camp Horizon** – The Camp Horizon use agreement is back with Whatcom County legal staff and will be presented to the commission for approval when it is completed.
- iv. Bay Horizon Park** – There's a proposal at Bay Horizon Park to add fencing around the pickleball courts and potentially add two more courts. The Blaine Birch Bay Parks and Recreation District is working with the players to determine if they can move forward with the project and who would fund it.
- v. Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism** – Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism is moving forward with an app called Tread. The app is an interactive comprehensive recreation mapping app for trail users. It allows land managers to mark and identify illegal trails, post hazards, and share trail conditions in real time.
- vi. Senior Services** – The Council on Aging is still providing limited services for congregate meals. The Sumas Senior Center is looking to reopen in early summer.
- vii. Lummi Island Public Dock** – Mike spoke with Jon Hutchings, the Director of Public Works, who advised the new ferry landing on Lummi Island will have an emergency dock for fire, rescue, and ambulance transfers. Mike advised the Lummi Island Public Dock is a project beyond the scope of the parks department, but that it can be put into the Comprehensive Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan as a community desire.
- viii. Cascadia Daily Article** – Mike mentioned the article in the Cascadia Daily talking about smash and grabs at trailheads

[\(https://www.cascadiadaily.com/news/2022/apr/20/fed-up-with-trailhead-smashgrabs/\)](https://www.cascadiadaily.com/news/2022/apr/20/fed-up-with-trailhead-smashgrabs/).

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

- i. **Staffing** – The Maintenance and Construction Supervisor started at the end of March and is doing great work. Applications for the Ranger position in Point Roberts are being reviewed. Seasonal staff recruitment is going well and all positions are being filled. There are seven returning seasonal employees.
- ii. **Operations Update** – Flood repairs continue at Hovander. The campgrounds at Lighthouse Marine Park and Silver Lake Park opened on April 8 with the weekend going really well, aside from some water issues at the Red Mountain shower and restroom facility. The upcoming weekend is opening fishing at Silver Lake Park and the campgrounds are completely full, including Group Camp. Rental boats are in the water.
- iii. **Maple Creek Shower and Restroom Facility** – The Maple Creek Shower and Restroom Facility is nearing completion. The contractor has done a great job on the facility and only has a small list of items to take care of. The opening of the facility is still delayed because of the supply chain issue with the septic pumps. Once the pumps are received, they will be put in place, tested, inspected and then backfilled. The final information packet for the small water system management plan has been submitted to the Department of Health.
- iv. **Project Updates** – The delivery of the air handling unit for the Plantation HVAC and Roof Replacement was delayed, so the completion of the project is delayed several more weeks. The Birch Bay Beach Park project will begin soon, as will the demolition of the Nugent’s Corner building. The Lake Whatcom EH1 Trail Construction is on schedule and will begin as soon as the construction season opens.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. **6-Year Capital Improvement Projects Schedule** – Mike presented the first draft of the 2023 – 2028 Parks Capital Projects list.
- B. **Plantation Rifle Range Lead Recovery and Stormwater** – The Department of Ecology and Whatcom County have decided to enter into an agreed order to allow for lead cleanup at the range that will meet state requirements. The range has been in operation since 1971 and lead has never been removed. There is a considerable amount that will need to be removed from the soil and recycled. A decision will then need to be made to either remove this contaminated soil from the range or put it back.

Storm runoff ultimately flows into Lake Samish. Consultants and engineers will be brought in to create a plan to treat future stormwater.

C. Update on Flood Recovery Efforts – WC Parks requested and was awarded a \$345,000 budget supplemental in March to effect repairs at Hovander Homestead Park. Those funds were used to repairs roads, trails, parking lots, playgrounds, fencing, grounds, turf, and utilities. The Nooksack River Trail, off-leash dog area, and boat launch parking lot opened April 20th. The goal is to have the park reopened by May 6th for Mother’s Day weekend and the Master Gardener’s Plant Sale. Christ attended the FEMA recovery scoping meeting March 16th which started the 60-day regulatory timeframe for WC Parks to identify and report flood damage. Once the 60 days are up, further damages cannot be added. FEMA will then schedule site visits to determine what will be funded for repairs. The onsite visits will also provide an opportunity to discuss possible mitigation efforts to help prevent future flood damage. WC Parks requested \$100,000 to assess design and engineering issues of the LM-2000 Road system at Lookout Mountain. This road provides access to communication towers and washed out in several places this past winter.

D. Stewart Community Forest (<https://stewartmountaincf.org/about/>) – Alex Jeffers, the Conservation Manager at Whatcom Land Trust, gave a presentation on the proposed Stewart Mountain Community Forest.

MOTION: Pete Coy made a motion to do a letter of support for the Stewart Mountain Community Forest. Joe Hashmall seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION

The next Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission meeting will be held virtually on May 19, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Transcribed by: Kristin Lunderville, Clerk IV

Approved by: Michael McFarlane, Parks Department Director