

MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, November 1, 2018

Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Administrative Office
3373 Mount Baker Highway
Bellingham, 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: Jeff Margolis, Sonja Max, Susan McClendon, Brad VanderWerff, Richard Sturgill

Staff: Michael McFarlane, Christ Thomsen, Rod Lamb

EXCUSED

Commissioners: None

GUEST(S)

None

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

None

IV. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Jeff Margolis reported that a South Fork resident shared complimentary remarks about the training and consideration she received at the Plantation Rifle Range. He wanted to be sure this praise was passed along to the crew at the Range.

V. AGENDA

A. November 1, 2018

MOTION: Sonja Max moved to approve the November 1, 2018 agenda as presented. Richard Sturgill seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VI. MINUTES

A. September 20, 2018

MOTION: Richard Sturgill moved to approve the September 20, 2018 Minutes as written. Sonja Max seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. Director's Report – Michael McFarlane

- i. Master Gardeners and WSU Whatcom County Extension** – The interagency agreement and the memorandum of agreement drafts for the Master Gardener's Foundation and WSU Whatcom County Extension are being reviewed by each group and should be on the agenda for the Commission's December meeting. The agreements are pretty typical of past agreements with a couple of exceptions for the Master Gardeners. The Master Gardeners are hoping to put up a new greenhouse at Hovander (not one that the public sees) and will begin paying the water bill for both of the greenhouses.
- ii. Birch Bay Beach Park** – Whatcom County Public Works has requested an agenda item be added to the Commission's January 2019 meeting allowing for public comment on Birch Bay Beach Park. WC Public Works is working on the Birch Bay Beach Park berm and trail and because the project is federally funded and crosses park property, Public Works needs to compensate for the removal of any recreational attributes and any damage caused to the property. The reality of this project is that Public Works will be enhancing the shoreline and making improvements that will be beneficial for recreation. The Commission will make a recommendation at the January meeting and a copy of the minutes will be forwarded to Public Works for their files.
- iii. Board Vacancies** – There have not been any applicants for the Board Vacancies in District 1 or District 4.
- iv. Birch Bay Park Acquisition** – Conservation Futures funds were used to purchase this property. Whatcom County Parks & Recreation got a letter of retroactivity from the Recreation and Conservation Office to apply for a grant to fund this acquisition and was awarded \$1,000,000 out of the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account. The deed restriction for the property has been sent to the Recreation and Conservation Office so that the grant money can be collected. The money will be placed in the Park's Special Revenue Fund and earmarked for developments at the Birch Bay Park. A small portion may be used to replace the fence at the front of the property, but otherwise it will sit there until there are sufficient funds for the \$3.5 - \$4 million project.
- v. Letters of Support** – A number of agencies apply for additional funding through the Recreation and Conservation Office at this time of year. The Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Department wrote two letters of support; one for State Parks for funding to maintain the Sno-Parks and one for the Nordic Ski Club for funding to clear and groom cross country ski trails.
- vi. Festival of Trees** – The Council on Aging is having a Festival of Trees on December 1st at the Leopold. Tickets are \$50.

- vii. **Natural Resources Committee Presentation** – Michael McFarlane will be giving a presentation on the general operations of the Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Department to the County Council’s Natural Resources Committee on Wednesday, November 7th at 9:30 a.m.
- viii. **Little Squalicum Park** – The United States Environmental Protection Agency is trying to get a restrictive covenant on Little Squalicum Park so that the cap is not disturbed. This is a Superfund Site that was cleaned up and capped five years ago because the Oeser Company operated a wood-treating facility on the property.

B. Operations Report – Christ Thomsen

- i. **Staff** – The Regional Park Supervisor position was filled last month by Jill Jacoby through an internal promotion. The Park Ranger position that became vacant from that promotion was filled by Kevin Nansel. Kevin Nansel was hired last year as a Park Attendant after working for Whatcom County Parks & Recreation for three years as a seasonal employee. Kevin has been able to work in every region in the department and as a result, is bringing experience and knowledge that many of our full time employees never have the opportunity to get.
- ii. **General Updates** – The crew is currently working on routine maintenance activities and the winterizing of park properties. The first flood warning happened today, so flood preparations are being readied for the rainy season. Work on the fence at South Fork Park has required a lot of staff time, but is coming along well and looking really good. The remodel/renovation has begun at Semiahmoo.

C. Planning & Development Report (Rodney Lamb)

- i. **Hovander River Trail Mitigation** – Rod submitted the “As-built” documentation last month to Whatcom County Planning & Development Services for the planting that was done for the Hovander River Trail Mitigation project in 2014. The planting is performing to expectations and the case is now closed.
- ii. **Hovander Maintenance Shop** – There was a pre-application meeting with Whatcom County Planning & Development Services on October 11th for the Hovander Maintenance Shop. It was an informal meeting to review the permit approval and code requirements, as well as paint a general picture of what to anticipate with the project. Rod received the staff report from PDS today, but hasn’t had a chance to look at it. Rod will distribute it to the WC Parks staff working on that project.
- iii. **Maple Creek Bridge** –Whatcom Land Trust (WLT) assisted WC Parks with the installation of the required mitigation plants at the Maple Creek Bridge site on October 19th. It was a beautiful, warm October day with blue sky and amazing fall color. WLT had one project lead, three interns, and seven volunteers that helped install the three hundred plants.

- iv. **Lighthouse Marine Park Playground** – Rod submitted a grant application in August to GameTime, the manufacturer of the playground equipment for Lighthouse Marine Park. GameTime approved a grant that equals about a 33% discount on the playground equipment. The playground chosen for Lighthouse Marine Park is a bit larger than the one previously shown to the Commission; it accommodates more children with additional slides and climbing structures. GameTime is already in the manufacturing process; the playground will ship after Thanksgiving and arrive on site sometime in December.
- v. **2019 – 2020 Capital Projects** – Rod is continuing to work on 2019 – 2020 Capital Projects. In particular, preparing for the Silver Lake campground improvement project, that can start after the approval of the budget by the County Council.
- vi. **Lighthouse Marine Park Dock** – Rod received an engineer's estimate of about \$9,000 per float to repair the dock up at Lighthouse Marine Park; this is about the cost of the dock when it was first installed. Rod has reached out to a couple of local metal fabricators to get additional quotes. Both manufacturers have had some very good insight on repairing the dock and have raised some concerns about the structural components of the dock. This project will require a budget supplemental and depending on the cost, may fall into a Public Works category.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review 2019 – 2020 Parks & Recreation Department Budget – The Executive released the budget in October and now the County Council is reviewing it. The Council will vote on the budget on November 20th. WC Parks staff presented the Parks & Recreation Budget to the Council on Tuesday. A couple of the Council Members brought up the concept of having a private entity operate the Plantation Rifle Range. There didn't seem to be a lot of support from the other Council Members. Some major pieces of the budget include staffing increases (one Park Attendant in 2019 and one in 2020), a pay increase for part-time and seasonal staff to aid in recruitment and retention (\$1.00 in 2019 and \$0.75 in 2020), a 3% increase for the Senior Centers to help fund increasing labor costs, and funds to repair some of the historic buildings throughout the parks. Other pieces of the budget include funding for a major renovation at Silver Lake Park, funds to cover the costs associated with increased utilities, waste removal, water and sewer, and funds to replace picnic tables, fire rings, and grills throughout the park system. Boats and small equipment are being transferred out of the ER&R fund managed by Public Works to the WC Parks budget. There are some increased

fees in the Unified Fee Schedule for camping at Hovander Park, mowing at various sites, Special Event applications, and background checks for tenants. There is funding proposed in the Capital Project for design and planning for parking and restrooms for the trailhead at Lake Whatcom Park and for trail development in the watershed. A conversation ensued about creating more “trekking” trails in Whatcom County. There are a lot of really beautiful areas to connect and it would be a huge draw for people who want to spend an entire day recreating. Mike advised that there has been talk of trying to get Park Commissions, Park Districts, and other groups/organizations working on these trails together this next year to share information and potentially begin working together to make these types of trail connections happen. Mike also advised that the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Space Plan is coming up in 2021 and these connections could be emphasized in that. Susan suggested creating maps of these trails (with mileage) in a printable format for users. Jeff asked for an update on Canyon Lake. Mike is putting together a draft easement for the Land Trust to present to DNR. Then DNR, the Land Trust, Western, and WC Parks will go to Sierra Pacific and try to get the last little segment of the road. Mike also said he would follow-up with WSDOT on signage for South Fork Park on Highway 9. In the spring WSDOT agreed to the signage and made notes on where it needed to be placed, but nothing has been done.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Van Zandt Community Hall has a film series running on Friday nights. The Post is being shown Friday, November 2nd at 7:30 p.m. Jeff Margolis is singing in a holiday concert with the Whatcom Chorale on Sunday, December 9th at 3:00 p.m. at Assumption Catholic Church.

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION

The November 15, 2018 meeting is cancelled. The next Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission meeting will be held on December 20, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. at the Roeder Home, 2600 Sunset Drive, Bellingham, Washington.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

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