

MEETING MINUTES
WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, June 20, 2024 – 6:00PM
Lighthouse Marine Park
811 Marine Drive, Point Roberts, WA

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Frank Boteler at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Joe Hashmall, Kristen Fagan, Frank Boteler, Carl Weimer, Geoff Klise

Commissioners Absent: Sonja Max, Sheli Moore

Staff Present: Bennett Knox and Rod Lamb

Guests/Public: Pauli Dehaan and Shelley Damewood – Historical Society.

2. Approval of Agenda and Previous Meeting Minutes

Joe Hashmall moved to approve the May 16, 2024 Agenda as written. Carl Weimer seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Carl Weimer moved to approve the April 18, 2024 minutes as written, Joe Hashmall seconded. The Motion carried with a unanimous vote.

3. Public Comments/Communication: Shelley Damewood read on the record her letter to the commission and park staff. Pauli Dehaan from the Historical Center – Pauli gave a history of the History Trail at the Lighthouse Marine Park. Discussion ensued around the history of previous points of interest and tourist activities at Lighthouse Marine Park, specifically the need for a flag pole.

4. Director Items

a. Governors Point – Bennett shared that there is a development on Governors Point and a portion of the land was donated to the Whatcom Land Trust. (WLT) WLT is in the process of constructing a trail on the property. There is ongoing discussion between WC Parks and WLT to partner for parks to acquire the property and construct trailhead facilities. Parks is currently working on an intent letter with WLT to outline respective responsibilities. Parks is nearing the point of submitting a budget request for funding to undertake initial engineering analysis for the trailhead facilities. Bennett shared that the trail will be about 2.6 miles. Discussion ensued around where trail will start and access to the trail.

b. Van Tour – Bay to Baker/Nooksack Loop – Bennett shared that the tour started at Cornwall park and drove to Glacier via Mount Baker Highway. Returning, the tour went down Bay to Baker route through Sumas and Everson

looking at the rail trail corridor possibility. The tour continued through Lynden and Ferndale looking at potential routes. In the van there were representatives from the Bay to Baker committee, a representative from WASHDOT, representatives of the parks commission and the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee. Bennett shared that they are trying to lay the groundwork for when the Parks gets the multi-mobile planner hired later this year.

- c. **Forest Management Plan** – Bennett shared that previously he had shared that the Parks was negotiating and almost ready to award the contract. Bennett gave the update that because of addition of City of Bellingham Properties to the project scope, it was necessary to put the amended RFP out for bid. Will have an update next meeting.
- d. **Pt. Roberts Marina–Potential Boat Ramp** – Bennett shared that the Parks is looking at and communicating with the Marina about the possibility of creating a boat ramp at the Marina. This would involve purchase of some of the Marina property. There is a grant opportunity in October which could fund acquisition and development. The Parks staff feel that they would score very well for that grant. The first step is obviously communication with the Marina about the possibility of purchase. Bennett shared that initial conversations with the marina have been positive. There is currently no formal agreement, still in the preliminary stages of conversation.
- e. **Acme Valley Coordination** – Bennett shared that there was previous communication with the Parks Commission about Acme Valley and the history of South Fork Park and the Parks desire to connect the northern and southern areas of the South Fork Park complex (northern trailhead to Nessel Farm). Bennett shared that the issues are somewhat complex and there is a need to develop relationships and engage in various groups. There are a variety of opinions on what the recreation might look like in this area. The process involves communication with the Tribes, DNR, and the community members. To help facilitate County engagement, a committee has been formed involving WC Parks and Public Works staff to meet regularly and discuss where there is overlap of County agencies responsibilities to improve internal communication and planning. In addition, both Rod and Bennett had a conversation with the National Park Service about the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, and there may be an opportunity to engage through that program.

5. **Operations Manager Update – Christ attending Plantation Rifle Range Public Mtg.**

- a. **Plantation Rifle Range** – Bennett shared that the Parks has moved forward with the consultant Kane Environmental to perform additional site characterization work required at the Plantation Rifle Range. Initial investigation by Kane Environmental indicated the edge of contamination extended beyond initially - defined limits. Subsequent examination determined the area of impact with contamination is more substantial than initially expected, actually double in terms

of area, although not necessarily in terms of the concentration of contamination. This information applies both to the small range and the high-power range. This information will be presented tonight at a community meeting. The consultant will be completing the report in the next 3 to 4 weeks. Getting close to potentially understanding what the cost will be and what the clean up will involve.

- b. **Staffing Update** – Bennett shared that temporary extra help positions have been filled. Unfortunately, one position not filled is a slot for Point Roberts. Historically that position has been a tough one to get filled. All other regions, at present, are fully staffed on seasonal extra help. The department is working with HR to update the full-time positions; Land Management Supervisor and Multi-Modal Trail Planner.
- c. **Land Management Supervisor Update** – Bennett shared that the department is expecting HR to move forward to complete the job description for the Land Management Supervisor next month and still on track for the fall for the Multi-Modal Trail Planner.

6. **Parks Design & Development Manager Update**

- a. **Capital Improvement Program Update** – Rod shared that the Whatcom County Council passed a modified Capital Improvements Program. The modification included adding several projects that were not previously anticipated. The program is a 6-year projection, allowing the department to plan future improvement projects that will need to be addressed over the planning period. The program also includes detailed information related to anticipated funding sources that will be dedicated to complete identified projects. The department anticipates that the Capital Improvement Program will be updated again once more this year with the upcoming 2025-2026 biennium budget in November.
- b. **Capital Projects Update – Bay Horizon:** The Hostel Building demolition – Whatcom Council approved funding to demolish a building that is no longer used and has become an attractive nuisance. Once Removed the area will be reclaimed for park and recreational day-use purposes. **Hovander Homestead Park:** The department is finalizing a request for qualifications (RFQ) for planning services for Hovander Homestead Park Vision plan. Rod shared that Hovander hasn't undergone a planning effort for more than 15 years, and over that time some important changes have happened within the park and surrounding community. The goal of planning effort is to develop an actionable Park Vision Plan that will guide current and future development over the next 20-year period. Also happening concurrently at Hovander Homestead Park is planning and design for a new maintenance facility. The Facility is planned to not only service Hovander but the entire West region, serving as a regional maintenance facility. **WC Parks Headquarters:** Design and engineering for HVAC and tenant improvements for the Administration Building and Annex at park headquarters are underway. Currently, both facilities have heat, but neither has air

conditioning. The buildings were built in the 1960's, and the planned improvements will be the first substantial upgrade done to them. **Lighthouse Marine Park:** The contractor has finished the roof and siding project of the Parks managers office and rental residence. Other improvements that were part of the project scope included painting both the concession building and the restroom facility. The restroom facility also had the skylights replaced. **Lookout Mountain:** Project Engineer is finish up the final road repair design work for LM 2000, which was damaged during a storm event in 2021. The road has a long history of repairs that were needed after significant storm events. The planned approach and design solution currently being developed is intended to be a more robust and therefore more permanent fix. Project permitting is anticipated to occur in the Fall, with road construction occurring in the Spring of 2025. **Silver Lake Park:** The department is wrapping up design drawings for a new shower and restroom facility. This will be the third facility for the park and is located near the cabin rental area and Cedar campground. Currently those areas are served by vault toilets. Rod shared that this facility will probably be the last restroom upgrade that will be needed at the park for a while. The project has been delayed primarily due to changes int the facility program, which created additional work for the consultant team. One of those changes was the provision of adding a back-up electrical power to run the new shower building and the park's water distribution system. Power outages are a chronic problem at Silver Lake Park throughout the year. Each time the power goes out the water distribution system depressurizes, and once power is restored the system must be completely sanitized and tested to ensure that the water is safe to drink. During these events, park users camping in the park are advised to boil their water until the test results demonstrate the system is safely back online. The proposed backup generator will allow continual operations during power outage events, and provide better customer service. **Stimpson Family Nature Reserve:** The bid advertisement for the parking improvement project at Stimpson Family Nature Reserve has been published. The parking project paving, striping, and improved stormwater treatment. Because of work restrictions in the Lake Whatcom Watershed, all earth disturbing activities associated with the project must be completed by October 1, 2024. **Plantation Rifle Range:** Rod shared that he did not have any update on the project. Rod has been working with Tiger construction on getting them back on the project after significant delays. Rod said he is hopeful to have a more to report next month. **Lighthouse Marine Park:** Rod shared that the department is planning on getting started with a master planning effort for Lighthouse Marine Park early next year and is currently drafting the request for qualifications for a consultant team. **Van Zandt Community Hall:** Rod shared that this facility is located at Josh VanderYacht Memorial Park which is in the community of Van Zandt. The facility is volunteer run by the South Fork Valley Community Association. The Association was successful in getting a state grant for about

\$500,000 to do some interior improvements that will allow them to add an entrance and exit which increases their allowable occupancy. The County partnered with them with the grant application and is also providing additional funding to help support the project. The association has completed initial programming, design, and cost estimating with private funding. The initial work has set the project up for success, and now the department will take over the primary project management responsibility to complete final design, permitting, and construction. Discussion ensued around alternative power options at Silver Lake.

- c. **Grant Applications:** Rod shared that the department has submitted three grant applications to the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) for a variety of projects. One of the projects is the **Birch Bay Beach Park**; a day use area planned to include off street parking and public restrooms. The park facility will also have open play areas for picnicking and community events. A second grant submitted for a covered sport court at the **East Whatcom Reginal Resource Center (EWRRRC)**: The original proposal for the WERRC included an outdoor sports court, but it was ultimately eliminated due to escalating project costs. This grant opportunity, if successful, will add an important element to the facility and give community members a safe and accessible place to recreate. Finally, a third application was submitted for reimbursement of the purchase price for **Carrasco Property** located in Acme. The property was a critical acquisition because it will allow trail access to Nessel and Overby Farm.

7. **Old Business – None**

8. **New Business**

- a. **Facility/Park Naming Ordinance Discussion:** Bennett shared that Whatcom County Council drafted an ordinance for naming of public buildings, properties, parks and facilities. Bennett shared that the WC Parks was not involved in the early drafting of the draft ordinance. The department did submit comments following introduction. It was suggested to give the Parks Advisory Commission an opportunity to provide input and bring before council continues their consideration in July. Relevant documents were shared with the commission to facilitate discussion and Bennett indicated it would good to have recommendations from the Commission regarding the matter. Commissioner comments included that they felt it made sense to come up with a plan on how to name things and they thought it was a good idea to include the Parks Commission on the decisions when it's naming something in WC Parks. Further discussion ensued around some history of facilities being named and issues that arouse around the naming. Discussion ensued that allowing cooperation's to put names on facilities and parks is one way to receive funding. Bennett asked the commissioners if they had an opinion about the range of things that should be named? Bennett said in the ordinance there was some ambiguity on naming of minor amenities. Bennett said that the department needs its own internal policy on naming. Commissioner suggested that the commissioners testify to the

Whatcom County Council regarding naming policies. Discussion ensued on the need for clarity on the ordinance. Parks will put together a draft response back to Whatcom County Council for the commission to review at the next Parks commission meeting. Also, the department will need to draft an internal policy for the commission to review at the next Parks commission meeting.

9. Open Discussion

Commissioner Frank Boteler handed out a flyer regarding dog parks from the perspective on what's best for the dog. Discussion ensued around dogs' behaviors in dog parks.

10. Commissioner Engagement Opportunities

- a. Plantation Rifle Range Public Mtg. June 20, 2024, 6:00pm – 8:00pm, Wade King Elementary School, 2155 Yew Street Road, Bellingham, WA

11. Meeting Input/Evaluation

Bennett shared that perhaps the meeting was not advertised as well as it could have been. Members of the public in attendance indicated they were able to find out about the meeting through regular avenues.

12. Next Meeting: July 18, 2024, 6:00 PM, Silver Lake Day Lodge, 9006 Silver Lake Road, Maple Falls, WA

13. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Transcribed by: Erica Kulm, Clerk IV

Approved by: Bennett Knox, Parks Department Director