

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**WHATCOM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION**  
**Thursday, August 15, 2024**  
**Tennant Lake Interpretive Center (Outside)**  
**5236 Nielsen Road, Ferndale, WA**

**1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Sonja Max at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Joe Hashmall, Kristen Fagan, Sheli Moore, Frank Boteler, Carl Weimer, Sonja Max, Geoff Klise

Staff Present: Bennett Knox, Christ Thomsen, Rod Lamb

Guests/Public Present: Daniel Probst, Roger Brock (Free Flight Community)

**2. Approval of Agenda and Previous Meeting Minutes**

Joe Hashmall moved to approve August 15, 2024 Agenda as written. Carl Weimer seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Carl Weimer moved to approve the July 18, 2024 minutes as written. Kristen Fagan seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

**3. Public Comments/Communication:** Roger Brock from the Free Flight Community of Whatcom County talked about areas that the Free Flight Community uses in Whatcom County. Roger shared that the community uses Sierra Pacific Industries for launches from the Canyon Lake road. Roger shared that the gate at the Canyon Lake Road that was put up by DNR has stopped access for group in that area. Roger wanted to bring awareness to the Commission on how the gate is affecting the Free Flight Community. Discussion ensued about the gate and access to the area by different organizations.

Daniel Probst shared a map of the Bellingham - Mount Baker trail. Daniel shared City of Bellingham's update on not approving part of the trail at Agate Creek preserve. Discussion ensued around why the trail was not approved.

**4. Director Items**

- a. **Outreach Efforts Review** – Bennett shared that the Parks had a booth at the Maple Falls Big Foot Festival to solicit community input regarding the Bay to Baker Trail. Rod, Bennett and Sonja were all present at the festival. Bennett shared that had good turnout at the booth and made note of a number of new community contacts. The second effort for outreach was Senior Day in the Park at Hovander Park to solicit preliminary community feedback that may inform community outreach strategy for the Hovander Homestead Park vision plan. Bennett said it was an excellent useful event with constant flow of people coming

to the WC Parks booth. There was over 1500 people in attendance. Discussion ensued around the staffing of future Senior Day booths for the Parks.

- b. Bay Horizon Park – Blaine School District** – Bennett shared that the Blaine School district has contacted the Executives office and the Parks about establishing an elementary school at Bay Horizon Park. The WC Parks has entered into an access agreement with the Blaine School District that will allow them to conduct preliminary due diligence including wetland analysis. Discussion ensued on the history of the Bay Horizon Park area. Bennett shared that negotiations started and still early in the process.
- c. Aiston Preserve** – Bennett shared that Aiston Preserve is on Lummi Island and owned by the Lummi Island Heritage Trust (LIHT). A number of years back the WC Parks Department negotiated a conservation easement including public access. The Department and Lummi Island Heritage Trust thus partner on this property. The Lummi Island Heritage Trust since obtained a grant that has resulted in restoration of this former quarry site for public uses. Recently Council approve a Memorandum of Agreement between LIHT and the County which funds certain public access improvements within the preserve using REET funding. Bennett said that the next WC Parks Commission meeting is scheduled to be held on Lummi Island and he would like to reach out to the Heritage Trust to stop by to have a tour of the quarry to look at the restoration.

## 5. **Operations Manager Update**

- a. Operations Manager Update:** Christ shared staffing updates – as mentioned at the last meeting Whatcom County is in a hiring freeze at the moment, the Department did get an exception for the vacant Park Attendant that is assigned to the Bellingham Senior Center. Currently ready to make an offer to candidate now that reference checks are completed. This position will be starting soon because the temporary staff, that is covering the Park Attendant position, last day is tomorrow. The Department is working with the Council on Aging during the staffing transition. The Department is submitting an exception request for approval form tomorrow to fill the Land Management Supervisor position. Seasonal staff have done a great job this season, and have started their exits. A lot of effort is put into hiring temporary seasonal staff, but it's a good investment to help provide a good experience to the Parks users and visitors. Both Operations and Maintenance teams doing a wonderful job. Risk Management Pool: Every year the Washington State County Risk Pool, which the WC Parks is a member of, sends out appraisers who come out and look at a certain percent of our properties. After visiting sites, the appraisers will update appraisals on properties. Last meeting updated on issues with vehicle accidents. The safety stand-down that was mentioned last meeting is scheduled for next Thursday. Currently not much to share with the lead reclamation remediation project, currently in a waiting period for the remedial investigation report. Hoping to have that by this month. Indoor range: Operations is moving on all the things that

operations has to do and have in place for when it reopens. Canyon Lake: Ordering gates, creating and ordering signage so when the Department does have access we can get in there and start installing gates and putting up signage. Commissioners asked Christ to share with the team that takes care of the trails in the Chuckanut area is doing a really good job maintaining the trails.

## 6. Parks Design & Development Manager Update

- a. **Capital Projects Update – Plantation Rifle Range:** Rod shared that there has not much activity at the Range since the last report. The HVAC's equipment manufacture representative has visited the project site to inspect the air handling unit that has been sitting idle for the past two years. The water intrusion issue into the control panel has apparently been resolved by the contractor's electrician. The Department will require the contractor to demonstrate that fix is viable and produces a water-tight seal. The mechanical contractor is scheduled to install the final piece of duct work next week. **Bay Horizon Hostel Demolition:** Bay Horizon Hostel demolition is still out to bid. Along with the demolition of the hostel structure, the bid also includes an alternate to remove and surplus of a large stock pile of crushed concrete that was generated by a previous structure removal effort. Demolition is scheduled to begin in November and be completed by the end of December 2024. **Hovander Homestead Park – Vision Plan:** The Department received 6 Statements of Qualifications last week and selected 4 to interview. **Hovander Homestead Park-Maintenance Facility:** The consultant team has started preliminary design and is also completing some additional surveying on the project site. **Headquarters HVAC:** The Department has a preliminary cost estimate last month and is moving forward with final design. The project scope includes a completed renovation for the HVAC system for both the Administrative Office and Annex Buildings and some tenant improvements to accommodate increased staffing. Rod said that the Department should see permit drawings by the end of this month. The preliminary engineers estimate looks like it may exceed the current budget so the team will be strategic about identifying alternates that may be pulled from the projects to keep within budget expectations. **Lookout Mountain Road Repairs:** The consultant is working on permit level drawings for the road repairs. The tentative project schedule is to complete construction in 2025. A supplement budget request for final design and engineering has been submitted for council consideration. **Stimpson Trailhead Parking Improvements:** The Department is in process of finalizing a construction contract with Ritter Dirt and Asphalt. Ritter will begin work after Labor Day, and plans to complete by September 30, 2024. The public has been alerted of the closure. **RCO Grants –** Rod shared that Bennett was working on the final presentation for the WWRP which is for the reimbursement for the acquisition of the Carrasco property. Rod said he is working on the final presentation for the ALEA Grant for the Birch Bay Beach

Park. The live presentation is scheduled on August 28, 2024. Rod said he reached out to the Birch Bay Chamber of Commerce for assistance in preparing for the presentation, and the Chamber responded by providing great photos taken at multiple community festivals that will help make a compelling presentation. Dave Bramer also submitted the final application for the COAF grant for the covered structure at the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center. Rod also wanted to share that he and Bennett had set up a table at the Senior's-In-The-Park event at Hovander Homestead park to promote awareness and get community feedback on the upcoming Vision plan, and that he and Bennett both received many compliments from participants about the outstanding work of West Region Staff complimenting them for their hard work and dedicated customer service.

## 7. Old Business

- a. **Facility/Park Naming Ordinance Discussion – Detailed review** – Bennett shared that at the last council meeting Council voted to exclude WC Parks from the Naming Ordinance. Now the Parks is looking to develop their own separate ordinance. Bennett shared that the Department is happy to move forward with drafting but wanted to make sure the WC Parks Commission had ample opportunity to provide comment. If the Commissioners have further comments for the Naming Ordinance the Department will take it back and add to the revisions before presenting a finalized draft to the Commission. Bennett shared the draft that was provided at the last meeting. Discussion ensued regarding the WC Parks Naming Ordinance.

## 8. New Business

- a. **6 – year Transportation Improvement Program – Multi-Modal Trails** – Commissioner Sonja Max said she received an email from a WC engineer for feedback on the 6-year Transportation Improvement Program. Sonya explained that the Transportation Improvement Program is what allots funding from the Whatcom County to all the road, bridge, and pedestrian projects for the next six years. She explained that historically there has been very little funding for bike, pedestrian and multi-modal transportation projects. Sonya said that she felt the current document does not reflect enough funding going towards Multi-Modal projects as it could. She said that the Commission has an opportunity to write a letter to Council expressing what they think, funding wise, how it could be better. Sonya asked for input from the Commissioners on thoughts about drafting a letter. Discussion ensued around the Transportation Improvement Program. Sonya said she will draft a letter with points discussed and circulate it to the WC Parks Commissioners for input.
- b. **Bellingham Senior Center Relocation** – Bennett shared that the Bellingham Senior Activity Center is moving to a new location. The new facility is off of the

Guide Meridian in the old WECU call center building. Discussion ensued around what updates will be needed to done to the facility before occupancy. Discussion ensued on how the new building will be funded. Discussion ensued around how the old building will be used after the new facility is operational.

9. **Open Discussion** – The WC Parks staff took commissioners on a tour of the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center. Discussion ensued around the history of the area and the condition of the building after being impacted by flood waters.
10. **Commissioner Engagement Opportunities** - None
11. **Meeting Input/Evaluation** - None
12. **Next Meeting: September 19, 2024, 6:00 p.m.** – Lummi Island Grange Hall, 2215 North Nugent Road, Lummi Island, WA
13. **Adjournment**  
The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Transcribed by: Erica Kulm, Clerk IV  
Approved by: Bennett Knox, Parks Department Director