

**Greenway Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
January 15, 2009**

**Members Present:** John Blethen, Eric Hirst, Steve Walker, Glenn Merrill, Scott Dorough, Kenni Merritt, Edie Norton, Jim Zander, Dan Remsen, Damon Gray

**Board Liaisons Present:** Jim McCabe, Parks & Recreation Advisory Board liaison

**Staff Present:** Leslie Bryson, Tim Wahl, Liz Haveman

**Guests Attending:** Ray Ballweg, South Hill resident

**Review of Previous Meeting Minutes:** Motion made and approved to accept the October 2008 meeting minutes as submitted. Motion made and approved to accept the November 2008 meeting minutes as submitted; Kenni Merritt abstained.

**Agenda Review:** Kenni Merritt added recognition of Edie Norton under New Business, Jim Zander added an update on the Greenway Committee vacancies under New Business, and John Blethen added a Greenstreets update under New Business.

**Public Comment Period:** Ray Ballweg introduced himself as a member of the South Hill neighborhood and stated that he came to the meeting to learn more about the Greenway Committee; he became interested following a meeting of his neighborhood association that he attended earlier in the week where a number of comments were made about the Greenway Strategic Plan.

**Old Business:**

Greenway Chair and Vice Chair 2009: Eric Hirst nominated John Blethen to continue as the Chair of the Greenway Advisory Committee in 2009. Jim Zander seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously. John Blethen nominated Eric Hirst to continue as Vice Chair in 2009. Steve Walker seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

**New Business:**

Recognition of Edie Norton: Edie Norton reported that beginning in February, she will be serving on the Planning Commission, which also meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month, so she is resigning from the Greenway Advisory Committee. Kenni Merritt thanked Edie for her reliability and for taking initiative to volunteer for various sub-committees and advocate for more parks and open spaces in Bellingham during her years of service on the Greenway Committee. Edie was awarded with a certificate of appreciation from Mayor Pike and a letter of thanks as well.

Greenway Advisory Committee vacancy update: Jim Zander asked for an update on the status of the two vacancies on the Greenway Advisory Committee. It was reported that the openings have been advertised on the City's website. Also, each month an email advertising the openings is sent to the Mayor's Neighborhood Association contacts, as well as a group of citizens that signed in at various Greenway public

comment meetings over the past couple of years. There have been no applications submitted. Kenni Merritt reported that in her experience as the Greenway Committee Chair, she found that, in some years, it was necessary for Greenway Committee members to actively recruit members of the community to apply.

2008 Acquisitions: Tim Wahl distributed a spreadsheet of Parks Department land acquisitions since 1991 that includes raw land costs. Tim stated that this spreadsheet will be updated as more land is acquired, and also explained that there are some smaller tracts that are not included on this list that came under ownership at no cost to the City other than staff time. Jim McCabe asked if there is a list on the Greenway Program website that tallies all Greenway levy expenditures. Tim responded that this list is on the website.

Steve Walker asked for an update on a Council of Governments trail project that he heard about in connection with the Fort Bellingham/Marine Drive property. Tim Wahl responded that the Council of Governments applied for and received a Safe Route to School Grant from the Washington Dept. of Transportation with \$200,000 available for a trail project at the Lockwood Property. Leslie Bryson added that unfortunately, the Parks Department was not consulted about the grant during the application process. WSDOT funded project would need to be completed in conjunction with the Public Works Department as the City's Certified Agency and would need to be designed, bid and built to state standards, which involves a large volume of paperwork and reporting. A project of this nature could not be completed for less than twice the amount of the grant, and the Parks Department does not have any funding for it. John Blethen stated that he would contact the Council of Governments to ask if there is a possibility to get additional funding to match the grant.

Greenstreets: John Blethen reported that Kim Brown and Brent Baldwin from the Public Works Department attended the January 14 Parks & Recreation Advisory Board meeting to discuss a map and narrative that were created following the short series of Greenstreets Committee meetings that were held last summer. The map and accompanying narrative identify gaps between trails and bicycle/pedestrian routes in the City where wayfinding signage or crosswalks could be installed to close the gaps. John noted that the map and narrative are not a complete list; the meetings were limited and focused on gaps identified by those who attended the meetings. John also reported that Brent stated that they will not be adding new projects to the Transportation Improvement Program at this time, but this list will be used in future funding considerations in conjunction with other BPAC recommendations. John Blethen asked if there might be funds in the Parks budget for some wayfinding signage. Leslie Bryson responded trail signage is included with new capital projects but Public Works should fund street signage. Eric Hirst asked if any of the projects identified in the narrative would be completed this year in light of the tight budget. Leslie Bryson responded that there are three crosswalks that are planned to go in this year; one on Northwest and Maplewood Drive, one on Lakeway Drive north of the freeway and one on Samish Way near Newell Street.

**Executive Session:** Executive session was held from 7:50 p.m. to 8:40 p.m.

**Vote in Open Meeting following Executive Session:** In open meeting following executive session, Scott Dorough moved to approve Staff efforts to examine parcel 226 for potential acquisition using Greenway III Levy funds allocated for the Whatcom Creek corridor. Eric Hirst seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously. Also, Kenni Merritt moved to recommend that Staff increase the priority of parcel 129 in North Bellingham for potential acquisition. Damon Gray seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

**Sub-Committee Report:**

Chuckanut Ridge Research: Jim Zander inquired about the South Hill Neighborhood Association meeting that took place on Tuesday, January 13. John Blethen reported that he attended the meeting and that Mayor Dan Pike was interviewed and asked about his goals for acquiring Chuckanut Ridge. John reported that the Mayor responded that he would like to wait for the release of the Environmental Impact Statement, and also said that he does not control the expenditure of Greenway Levy funds. John Blethen also reported that he spoke at the meeting and apologized if his comments reflected poorly on the Greenway Advisory Committee; he intended to speak as a private citizen rather than a representative of the Greenway Committee, but felt defensive about comments made about the Committee operating in secrecy. Edie Norton commented that she got the impression that a good deal of the anger expressed at the meeting had to do with the allocation of \$4 million in the Greenway Strategic Plan to Chuckanut Ridge acquisition when many felt that they were promised \$8 million by Mayor Mark Asmundson. Leslie Bryson stated that during the January 12 City Council meeting public comment period, several speakers commented on the late notification regarding the Plan going to Council and concern that Whatcom Creek was being used as the dividing line between North and South Bellingham.

Some Greenway Committee members expressed concern that some acquisition opportunities could be lost in south Bellingham while Council is waiting for the release of the Chuckanut Ridge Environmental Impact Statement. It was generally agreed that the Committee will continue to identify properties that come up on the south side. The Committee also discussed forwarding south side properties of interest to the Parks Advisory Board and Council.

**Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

After the meeting adjourned, Daniel Tepper with the Whatcom Parks & Recreation Foundation came and discussed the Nooksack Loop Trail Project and asked for a volunteer liaison from the Greenway Advisory Committee. Committee members present suggested that this be discussed at the February Greenway Advisory Committee meeting.