

Greenway Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
January 17, 2008

Members Present: John Blethen, Jack Kimmes, Eric Hirst, Tom Chisholm, Kenni Merritt, Glenn Merrill, Dan Remsen, Edie Norton, Steve Walker, Jim Zander

Members Excused: Janie Pemble

Staff Present: Tim Wahl, Leslie Bryson, Liz Haveman

Board Liaisons Attending: Jim McCabe, Park Advisory Board liaison; Marie Kimball, Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee liaison

Guests Attending: Jack Weiss, Bellingham City Councilman; Kim Brown, City of Bellingham Transportation Options Coordinator; Joe Yaver, Responsible Development board member.

Agenda Review: The following items were added under New Business: 1) Role of the GAC Liaison to the Park Board, Edie Norton; 2) New GAC Member Orientation, Leslie Bryson

Review of Previous Meeting Minutes:

Motion made and carried to accept the December 20, 2007 minutes as written.

Public Comment Period:

Joe Yaver distributed copies of a handout summary of Responsible Development's campaign to raise funds to acquire Chuckanut Ridge. Joe stated that he attended the public meeting on the Environmental Impact Statement scoping for Fairhaven Highlands the night before and he distributed copies of the 2005 and the 2008 versions of the proposed Fairhaven Highlands development. Joe also distributed a letter addressing concerns about the stormwater plan for the proposed Fairhaven Highlands development from Pete Willing. Joe stated that Mr. Willing is a hydrologist. Joe shared that Responsible Development has raised funds to hire experts in the various fields that the Environmental Impact Statement will address to do a peer review of the EIS. Eric Hirst commented that he read a document put together by the Coalition of South Side Neighborhoods summarizing the issues that they would like to see addressed by the EIS. John Blethen thanked Joe for his comments and informed him that later in the meeting, Greenway Committee members would be forming sub-committees, one of which will be specifically charged with researching all issues surrounding Chuckanut Ridge.

New Business:

Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee Crosswalk Funding: Kim Brown introduced herself as the Transportation Options Coordinator for the City of Bellingham. She works out of the Engineering Division of the Public Works Department. Kim staffs the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee. She also runs the commute trip reduction

program for City employees and works with the Bellingham School District and the Whatcom County Health Department on safe walking and biking routes. Kim also consults with Public Works Engineering staff on all walking and bicycling related construction projects.

Kim explained that on an annual basis, the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee creates a priority list of recommended crosswalk projects to be funded with a \$50,000 capital grant. The priority list is presented to Public Works staff for approval, and in turn presented to City Council for approval. Kim said that BPAC receives input from neighborhood associations, bicyclists and pedestrians and City staff and creating the priority list can be complicated. Jim McCabe commented that recommendations for the Transportation Improvement Program have come up frequently in Park Advisory Board and Greenway Advisory Committee meetings and suggested that if a recommendation is on multiple lists (lists created by the neighborhood associations, Park Board, GAC and BPAC), it would seem more likely that the recommendation would become part of the Transportation Improvement Program. Kim responded that BPAC does consider each group's list and they try to look at the broad City system to determine the highest priorities. For example, what may be a very high priority for a particular neighborhood may not be a high priority in connectivity to a City-wide system.

Kenni Merritt asked Kim if she uses the Park, Recreation & Open Space Plan in her work. Kim responded that she does; she refers to it to see how parks and trails connect to bicycle and pedestrian projects. Kenni inquired as to whether Kim will be involved in the PRO Plan update process. Leslie Bryson responded that Kim and other Public Works and Planning staff will be part of the process.

Jack Weiss asked if the 2008 crosswalk projects have been selected yet. Marie Kimball responded that they have not been selected yet; they will likely be selected in the spring. Kim stated that there are two upcoming 2007 projects that were not completed in 2007 that will be taking place soon, but the 2008 projects are yet to be determined; Ravyn Whitewolf in Public Works Engineering is still working on the criteria for projects to be funded with the \$50,000 capital grant.

John Blethen asked if all new crosswalks come out of this grant money, or if there is a different funding source for new projects. Kim responded that crossings in new projects are funded as part of the construction cost of the new project; the \$50,000 grant funds are for older streets where crossings were not planned for originally. John asked how crosswalk maintenance happens. Kim stated that Public Works Operations re-stripes crosswalks every summer; the wear and tear on crosswalks depends on traffic, weather conditions, and the material used to create the crosswalk. New crosswalk material is embedded in the street, which lasts longer than the older painted crosswalks.

Edie Norton commented that she has heard discussion in the Columbia Neighborhood of plans to create a long bike trail across the City and inquired about funding for this project. Kim had not heard of this project. John Blethen asked if there is a master plan for bicycle/pedestrian routes in the City. Kim responded that there is not currently a

master plan, but agreed with Committee members that it would be a great addition. Kim stated that BPAC has been working on smaller individual projects, but there is a need to look at the big picture to create City-wide connectivity, particularly between trails and street bike routes.

Leslie Bryson stated that the Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan identifies proposed bike routes. Jack Weiss asked if the bike route connectors in the North Bellingham Trail Plan were coordinated with Public Works. Leslie responded that many of the connectors were already on Public Works' list and those not on their list were reviewed by Public Works. Steve Walker asked how many BPAC bike routes complement the greenway trails system. Marie responded that BPAC has a list of complementary routes created by Tim Wahl, but stated that maps are needed; particularly an overlay map that marks both greenway trails and the bike routes. Leslie observed that it seems as though much of the bicycle route planning has been done by volunteers. Marie and Kim agreed. Kim stated that all new Public Works street construction projects have a bicycle/pedestrian component, but this is a fairly new development.

Greyway Connectors to Greenway Trails: Jack Weiss suggested that a small workgroup be formed to create an integrated plan between greenways and bikeways. Representatives from the Greenway Advisory Committee, the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee, the Park Advisory Board, as well as Kim Brown and a member of Park staff could work together to create an integrated plan that could be adopted as part of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Jack reported that he is the new Chair of the City's Transportation Commission and he sees the need for greyway connectors as a Transportation Commission issue; not just a Parks and/or Public Works issue. Jack stated that one possibility for the Transportation Commission is to combine the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee with the Parking Commission in order to coordinate shared use of the City's roadways between bikes, pedestrians and cars. Jack asked if the Greenway Advisory Committee supports his suggestion of an integrated committee. Committee members responded that they strongly support the committee and Dan Remsen, Steve Walker, Tom Chisholm and Jack Kimmes volunteered to be GAC representatives to the committee. Marie Kimball also responded that she supports the committee as a representative of BPAC. Leslie Bryson responded that Park staff can lend support in the way of GIS mapping overlays to identify gaps in greenway and bikeway systems. Jack Weiss will talk to Dick McKinley to see if Public Works can provide the needed funding to sign greenway/greyway connectors once they are mapped.

Tom Chisholm asked Kim if safe pedestrian routes to public schools are mandated. Kim responded that law requires that safe walking routes to schools be identified. However, for the two new elementary schools under construction in Bellingham, there are no safe walking routes to be identified; children will all be bussed to school. Kim also stated that the current safe routes to school are outdated, but that the Bellingham School District has hired a new transportation coordinator who is working with Kim to

update the routes. Glenn Merrill asked if there are standards for the safe routes. Kim responded that there are standards such as minimal street crossings and to avoid heavy traffic routes. Kim also stated that there is more concern now about children being harmed by people rather than by cars on their routes to school. Part of updating the safe routes to school will need to include plans for children to walk in groups with a parent volunteer.

Role of the GAC Liaison to the Park Advisory Board: Edie Norton reported that as the GAC Liaison to the Park Advisory Board, she is asked for a Greenway update at the monthly Park Board meetings. Edie asked what she should share. John Blethen responded that she should share the various projects that the Committee is currently working on; for example, she should share about the new GAC sub-committees. Leslie Bryson stated that in executive session at the Park Board meetings, she is welcome to share anything about the topic of discussion that was deliberated in Greenway executive sessions.

New GAC Member Orientation: Leslie Bryson reported that a new GAC member orientation has been planned for January 29 at the Park Administration Office at 4 p.m. The orientation is required for new members, but other members are welcome to attend as well.

Old Business:

Formation of Sub-Committees: GAC members volunteered for several sub-committees to help alleviate the workload of the Committee Chair and Vice Chair, and to accomplish tasks outside of the regular monthly meeting time. Sub-Committees formed were:

- Guest Invitations: Inviting officials and other persons of interest to speak at future GAC meetings. Committee members: Kenni Merritt, John Blethen.
- Public Outreach: Providing signage in particular, as well as other activities to inform the public of recent land acquisitions. Committee members: Janie Pemble, Steve Walker, Glenn Merrill, Jim Zander.
- Strategic Planning: Developing priorities for properties, corridors and connections. Committee members: Eric Hirst, Edie Norton, John Blethen, Jim Zander.
- Monthly Walks: Jack Kimmes has been doing a great job and has agreed to continue to plan monthly walks.
- Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Liaison: Edie Norton has agreed to do this.
- Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan: Edie Norton has already been serving as the Greenway liaison to the PRO Plan update committee.
- Boulevard Park Shoreline Design: John Blethen has already been serving as the Greenway liaison on this steering committee.
- Greyway Connectors: Work with the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee on creating greyway connectors to greenway trails. Committee members: Dan Remsen, Steve Walker, Tom Chisholm, Jack Kimmes.
- Northridge Park Phase II Design: Glenn Merrill will consider this; he needs to make sure his schedule will allow him to make the meetings.

- Chuckanut Ridge: Research the various environmental and public concern issues regarding development and acquisition. Committee members: Dan Remsen, Eric Hirst, John Blethen.

Executive Session:

Executive Session was held from 8:35 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. to discuss potential real property acquisition.

February Walk:

Jack Kimmes will email Committee members the time and meeting location for the February walk.

Identification of Topics for Next Meeting:

John Blethen has invited Dewey Desler, Whatcom County Director of Administrative Services, and Mike McFarlane, Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Director, to the February meeting. The new Whatcom County Planning Director may also attend.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.