

## **Greenway Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes February 15, 2007**

**Members Present:** Kenni B. Merritt, Janie Pemble, Steve Walker, Laurel Cook, Jack Kimmes, Edie Norton, Jack Weiss, John Blethen, Tom Chisholm, Eric Hirst

**Members Absent:** John Wilson

**Liaisons Present:** Stan Snapp, Park and Recreation Advisory Board

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

**Guests Attending:** Terry Bornemann, Bellingham City Councilman; John Erickson, Fairhaven resident; Patrick McKee, Sunnyland Neighborhood Association; Joe Yaver, Responsible Development; John Brown, Responsible Development; Iain Davidson, Kim Erickson, Vince Biciunas, President of Fairhaven Neighbors; Christopher Grannis, South Neighborhood resident.

### **Public Comment Period:**

Due to number of guests present and time constraint, each guest was asked to limit their comment to 3 minutes.

Councilman Terry Bornemann introduced himself as the Chair of the Parks subcommittee for the City Council. The subcommittee also consists of Louise Bjornson and Barbara Ryan. Mr. Bornemann is a lifelong, avid park and trail user, as are his wife and two sons.

Patrick McKee introduced himself as a representative of the Sunnyland Neighborhood Association. He came on their behalf to ask the Greenway Advisory Committee to seriously consider acquiring the 4 acres of vacant property owned by the Department of Transportation on E. Sunset Dr. next to St. Sophia Church. Sunnyland Neighbors would like to see that site developed into open space with a soccer field, community gardens, and possibly a ½ acre track. Mr. McKee stated that he understands that the property was awarded in a bid to a developer and will be re-zoned for single family dwellings once the contract is approved. At that point, Sunnyland Neighbors would like the City to make an offer to purchase the property to develop it as a park.

Christopher Grannis introduced himself as an advocate for the preservation of the 100-Acre Wood. He distributed a handout entitled "100-Acre Wood Habitat: The case for preservation". Mr. Grannis requested that the Greenway Advisory Committee accept the help offered by John McLaughlin to develop and adopt ecological criteria for all greenway acquisition decisions. He also urged the GAC to make room for one or two more members on the Committee from the Legacy group.

John Brown introduced himself as a South Bellingham resident and a member of Responsible Development. He requested that \$8 million be allocated to block

development and acquire Chuckanut Ridge. Once that money is allocated, habitat studies and negotiations can begin and Responsible Development can then work to legally block development and lower the price of the property for the City to acquire.

Joe Yaver also introduced himself as a member of Responsible Development and shared a variety of development projects across Bellingham that Responsible Development has worked to block in the past. He stated that Responsible Development has raised \$44,000 from City residents to save Chuckanut Ridge and it is unfortunate that the money had to be spent on lawyer fees. He would like the GAC to interact and work with Responsible Development to lower the cost and acquire Chuckanut Ridge.

Kim Erickson introduced herself as a South Bellingham resident and commented that every time she walks in Chuckanut Ridge she meets citizens from all over Bellingham who also want to save Chuckanut Ridge.

Eric Hirst responded to meeting guests at the end of the public comment period that the Greenway Advisory Committee is not opposed to Chuckanut Ridge, but there is a real monetary constraint.

**Agenda Review:**

No new items were added.

**Review of Previous Meeting Minutes:**

Motion made and carried to accept January 18, 2007 minutes as written.

**Old Business:**

Follow up on Jan 31 Greenway Public Input Meeting:

Laurel Cook reported that 84 citizens signed an attendance sheet at the January 31 Greenway Public Input Meeting at the Squalicum Boathouse, and there were others who came in after the start of the meeting who did not sign in. At the next meeting there will be a sign-in sheet attendant throughout the entire meeting to catch late comers.

The input received at the meeting was typed up and compiled into three categories: philosophical suggestions, generic acquisition recommendations and specific acquisition recommendations. This will be distributed as a handout at the next Greenway Public Input Meeting, which has been scheduled for Tuesday, March 6 at Kulshan Middle School Commons from 7-9 p.m.

Kim Erickson suggested that the meeting format be changed to avoid hostility in small groups. She suggested that public comment be heard as it is in City Council meetings where each individual has 3 uninterrupted minutes to speak. Kenni Merritt reported that she has received feedback from meeting attendees who said they would have preferred a large group format where everyone got to hear everyone else's suggestions. Vince Biciunas reported that her group finished before other groups so people left before re-gathering as a large group and suggested that a different meeting format might hold more attention. John Brown suggested that groups be split up by interest topic, an open

house format with 8-10 focused discussions going on around the room. Christopher Grannis commented that meeting attendees should have been encouraged at different times throughout the meeting to fill out a public input form as quite a few people came in late and were not aware that they were available. He also suggested that the wording of the public input form be changed to specifically ask about acquisition.

**New Business:**

Plan GAC Retreat:

A working retreat has been scheduled for the GAC on Saturday, March 10 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Fireplace Room. Laurel Cook reported that the retreat will be open to the public from 9-10:30 a.m. when the GAC will be reviewing film footage from the March 6, 2006 City Council meeting where Mayor Mark Asmundson commented on the allocation of Greenway levy funds for Chuckanut Ridge. There will also be a discussion led by Jack Weiss on how to set priorities for greenway land acquisition. There will be no time for public comment.

At 10:30 a.m. the GAC will move into Executive Session to compile a prioritized list of recommended properties to acquire for City Council. Park staff will provide maps, all of the public comment that has been received, and as much detail as available on various properties including cost, timeline and other pertinent details.

Recommendation to Council to combine Beyond Greenway & Greenway III Endowment Fund: The language of the Beyond Greenway Levy states that the Endowment Fund may only be used on Beyond Greenway projects. Staff would like to recommend to Council that the Beyond Greenway Endowment Fund be combined with the Greenway III Endowment Fund under the language of the Greenway III Levy that states that the Endowment Fund may be used on any property acquired or developed with current or prior Greenway levy funds.

Laurel Cook asked Terry Bornemann if City Council can combine the Endowment Funds and Terry responded that the City Attorney would have to review it first to make sure it is legally possible. Eric Hirst moved to ask staff to get guidance from the City Attorney as to the legality of combining the Endowment Funds before further action is taken; Jack Kimmes seconded, the motion passed unanimously.

**Staff Report:**

Update on new acquisition position:

Laurel Cook reported that Leslie Bryson expects to be interviewing candidates for the new acquisition position around the first week of March and would like a GAC member to serve on the interview panel. Committee members recommended Eric Hirst and he agreed to do so. John Blethen will serve in the event that Eric is not available.

**Executive Session:**

Executive Session was held from 7:55 p.m. to 9:20 p.m.

**Votes in Open Meeting following Executive Session:**

In open meeting following the Executive Session, Jack Weiss moved, and Jack Kimmes seconded the motion, to recommend that staff proceed with negotiations to purchase land on Samish Hill, the Committee having provided recommendations to staff during Executive Session as to the maximum purchase price and other recommended acquisition terms. The Committee recommends that the acquisition be funded with proceeds from the Greenway III levy as a Project Completion - Samish Crest Hiking Trail line item. To allow the purchase to proceed prior to receipt of Greenway III levy funds, the Committee recommends that Beyond Greenway funds (which the Committee has previously recommended be allocated to the Bay-to-Baker corridor) be applied toward such purchase as a loan against Greenway III levy funds. The Committee further recommends that, upon receipt of Greenway III levy funds, such expenditure be repaid to Beyond Greenway. The motion was approved by a unanimous 10-0 vote of the Committee.

In addition, in open meeting following the Executive Session, Jack Weiss moved, and Jack Kimmes seconded the motion, to recommend that: (1) staff conduct due diligence and commence negotiations to purchase a parcel of land on Aldrich Road as a new Northside property acquisition line item (the Committee requested that staff report back to the Committee with information as to the estimated value of such land for further recommendations by the Committee); and (2) staff conduct due diligence on eight additional Northside parcels of land identified during Executive Session. The motion was approved by a unanimous 10-0 vote of the Committee.

**Identification of Topics for Next Meeting:**

- Discussion on the coordination of the Parks Department, the Planning Department and the Public Works Department on greenway projects
- Discussion/planning of the GAC's annual report to City Council

**Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.