

**Greenway Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
February 21, 2008**

Members Present: John Blethen, Jack Kimmes, Tom Chisholm, Kenni Merritt, Glenn Merrill, Dan Remsen, Edie Norton, Steve Walker, Janie Pemble

Members Excused: Jim Zander, Eric Hirst

Staff Present: Tim Wahl, Liz Haveman

Board Liaisons Attending: Jim McCabe, Park Advisory Board liaison

Guests Attending: Dewey Desler, Whatcom County Director of Administrative Services; Mike McFarlane, Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Director; David Stalheim, Whatcom County Planning Director; Joe Yaver, Responsible Development board member; Pamela Sorensen & Julianna Guy, Guide Meridian/Cordata Neighborhood Association; Anara Thomas, Grateful Dogs Off Leash Association; Ralph Black, Alliance Properties.

Agenda Review: Kenni Merritt added Greenway Advisory Committee Retreat Planning under New Business.

Review of Previous Meeting Minutes:

Motion made and carried to accept the January 17, 2008 minutes as written.

Public Comment Period:

Joe Yaver introduced himself as a Responsible Development board member and stated that he attended the PRO Plan Update public meeting held by the Parks Department on March 6 and felt that it was a productive meeting where good ideas surfaced. Mr. Yaver distributed two handouts entitled, "Successful Infill Development vs. Unsuccessful Infill Development & Sprawl" and "1000 Friends of Chuckanut Ridge & Responsible Development". Mr. Yaver stated that the "1000 Friends of Chuckanut Ridge" is a local fundraising campaign to raise funds to acquire Chuckanut Ridge.

Anara Thomas introduced herself as a member of the Grateful Dogs Off Leash Association and thanked the Greenway Committee for their efforts to provide additional parks and trails in Bellingham. Ms. Thomas stated that she came to request that the City and the County coordinate to provide consistent rules, signage and garbage cans in their dog off leash areas.

Pamela Sorenson introduced herself as the President of the Guide Meridian/Cordata Neighborhood Association and recommended acquisition of 3 parcels of land for parks in North Bellingham: 1) 18 acres on the corner of Bellis Fair Parkway and Cordata that is currently being used as a transient camp; 2) 2.5 acres at the end of Sterling Drive that is currently owned by Bellis Fair Mall that the neighborhood would like to use as a community garden; 3) 20-25 acres in multiple parcels currently for sale on Sterling Drive

that are clearly signed as you drive toward Belleau Woods on Northwest Avenue. Tim Wahl responded that these 3 parcels will be added to the Greenway Committee's north side priority acquisition list.

Julie Guy introduced herself as a member of the Guide Meridian/Cordata Neighborhood Association and passed around some aerial photos of the North Bellingham area to illustrate the dense development and lack of parks and open space. Ms. Guy requested that the City and County work together to pursue additional acquisition of parks and open space in North Bellingham and to develop the 6-7 acre parcel currently owned by the County that is being transferred to the City into an attractive neighborhood park. Ms. Guy reported that this area is currently a transient camp.

Ralph Black introduced himself as the owner of Alliance Properties and stated that he owns approximately 50% of the undeveloped land on King Mountain. Mr. Black offered to meet with the Greenway Committee and take them on a walking tour of the approximate 80 acres that he intends to set aside as a greenway. Mr. Black stated that he has a good amount of aerial photographs, topographic maps, and other data that the Greenway Committee might find useful as they identify needed trail corridors in the area. Mr. Black stated that he intends to be accountable to provide adequate greenway set asides in his development and also pointed out that it will be important for the Parks Department to coordinate with the other land owners in the area to ensure that the needed trail connections are clearly identified and provided as the area is developed.

New Business:

Collaborations and Partnerships with Whatcom County:

Dewey Desler introduced himself as the Deputy Administrator for Pete Kremen, Whatcom County Executive, as well as the Whatcom County Director of Administrative Services. Mr. Desler also introduced Mike McFarlane, Director of Whatcom County Parks & Recreation, and David Stahlheim, the new Whatcom County Planning Director. Mr. Desler stated that John Blethen invited him and his staff to attend the Greenway meeting in order to inform the Committee on their current projects, as well as to answer any questions Committee members may have.

John Blethen stated that the lack of open space and parks in North Bellingham is a major concern of Committee members and that they would like to see increased coordination between the City and County in order to rectify the mistakes made in North Bellingham and to avoid similar situations as other parts of the UGA are developed. Mr. Desler responded that he does not know the complete history of the mistakes that were made in the development of North Bellingham, but that he is aware of the lack of open space and parks. Mr. Desler stated that in looking at a map of the North Bellingham area, there are two key areas; East of the Guide Meridian and West of the Guide Meridian. Mr. Desler observed that the area West of the Guide Meridian is largely developed with housing and services, but that there are still opportunities for large parks and open space areas East of the Guide Meridian. The goal will be to develop small, neighborhood parks on the West side with adequate public access and connections to larger open space areas on the East side of the Guide Meridian, including a way for

pedestrians to safely cross the Guide Meridian. Mike McFarlane reported that the County Parks Department is currently looking at greenway corridors in North Bellingham and that they are talking to property owners in the area about providing trail easements, particularly a large community church that owns a good amount of open space in the area. Mr. Desler also mentioned that the County has a 6.7 acre parcel of open space in the Cordata area adjacent to the new 20 acre parcel purchased by the City that they are interested in trading to the City as a park for North Bellingham.

Mr. Desler stated that the County is in the process of adopting a Parks, Trails and Open Space Plan. Mr. McFarlane reported that the Plan will be brought to the County Council for adoption in March. Mr. Desler asked Mr. McFarlane to share the Plan with the Greenway Advisory Committee for their feedback. Mr. McFarlane reported that the County's Parks, Trails and Open Space Plan will be updated every 6 years like the City's PRO Plan. Jack Kimmes asked if there is a mechanism for dovetailing the County and City Plans. Mr. McFarlane responded that the County's larger trail corridors and how they connect to City trails are identified in this initial draft and that the County will make it a priority to mesh the County and City Plans in the next update, which they will begin in approximately 4 years.

John Blethen asked if there are guidelines that the City and County follow for processing land in the Urban Growth Area. Mr. Desler stated that Section 8 of the Interlocal Agreement between the City and the County executed in 1997 states that the City and the County will make a cooperated effort in advance of the annexation to come to a mutual agreement. Mr. Desler reported that over the past 43 years the County has been developing parks, mostly in cooperation with the City, and he expects that this will continue in perpetuity. Mr. Desler stated that the City ought to take the lead on the planning and development of the Urban Growth Areas with the participation and cooperation of the County. Tom Chisholm asked if this might be problematic in the Urban Growth Areas that the City does not intend to annex. Mr. Desler responded that this will be problematic; David Stalheim responded that those areas of the Urban Growth Area that the City does not intend to annex need to be identified and removed from the Urban Growth Area and other means need to be found to provide services in these areas.

Ralph Black stated that in his experience, the County has been very diligent about requiring open space set asides in developments in the UGA, but there is no one to give the open space to in terms of park development or maintenance. Neither the City nor the County take responsibility for these areas in the UGA and they end up under the jurisdiction of homeowners associations. Mr. Black stated that another problem is that developers usually do not know ahead of development where trail corridors and open space is needed. Mr. Black stated that the North Bellingham Trail Plan is the first time that he as a developer has seen ahead of time where trail corridors and open space is needed in order to create a connected trail system in the area. Mr. Black suggested that the Greenway Advisory Committee coordinate with the Whatcom County Planning Department so that the appropriate set asides to ensure a continuous trail system can be made ahead of development.

Edie Norton asked if there is currently in place an established, cooperative dialogue between the City and the County Planning Departments. David Stalheim responded that prior to his position as the Director of Planning for Whatcom County, he worked as a City Planner for 10 years. He knows Tim Stewart, the City Planning Director, and they do communicate; they have already had 2 joint staff meetings to coordinate the Growth Management Plan update that is due in 2011. Mr. Stalheim stated that the City and County Planning Departments are aware of what each other is working on and that they do work closely together; the intention is for the City to grow into the UGA so the County adopts the plans that are made by the City to ensure coordination.

Mike McFarlane stated that the County's focus on parks is different than that of the City; the County is more spread out and therefore focuses on larger corridors and recreational parks. The County relies on municipalities to create smaller neighborhood parks and trail linkages to the larger County parks and trails. Tim Wahl asked about the status of the development of the County's portion of the Bay to Baker Trail. Mr. McFarlane responded that the County has a priority list of parcel acquisitions necessary to complete the Bay to Baker Trail, but that there is a funding shortfall. He stated that the Bay to Baker Trail is just one of the diverse trail corridor projects in the County; there are a number of citizens equally concerned about the completion of the Coast Millennium Trail in Birch Bay and Blaine, as well as the trail in Ferndale along the Nooksack River. Mr. McFarlane reported that approximately 2 years ago, the Whatcom County Parks Department hired a staff member to work solely on real estate acquisitions and there is no shortage of projects for this staff person to focus on.

Mr. Desler stated that the County recently passed a "REET 2" tax that will help with the funding shortage and reported that Mike McFarlane has been assertive in asking for some of these funds to be allocated to the County Parks system. However, other funding sources will be needed to develop parks and trails as REET 2 funds may only be used for land acquisition. Mr. Desler stated that Pete Kremen desires to make open space acquisitions a hallmark of his administration and negotiations are currently underway with the Department of Natural Resources to preserve 8500 acres of open space in the Lake Whatcom watershed. Doug Sutherland, Commissioner of Public Lands for the Department of Natural Resources will be attending the February 26 County Council meeting at 7 p.m. in the County Council Chambers, 311 Grand Ave, to discuss the transfer of the land from the State to the County.

John Blethen asked if the County has considered a County-wide greenways levy. Mike McFarlane responded that as part of their comprehensive plan survey, they asked survey respondents if they would support a bond, and if so, to what extent. They found that the County is very diverse in terms of priorities, and that it would be difficult to find commonalities that all County voters would support. However, they did find that large trail corridors are a commonality. Mr. McFarlane stated that they estimate that it will cost approximately \$20 million to acquire all of the land necessary to complete the trail corridors identified in their Parks, Trails and Open Space Plan. Mr. Desler stated that while this seems impossible at first glance, it is more realistic once you start factoring in

easements, donations, and grant funds. Mr. Desler stated that the first step, which the County is already working on, is to state these goals and priorities in as many official documents as possible so that they become the background fabric that future generations operate with.

Greenway Advisory Committee Retreat Planning: Kenni Merritt mentioned that the last annual Greenway Advisory Committee retreat took place in March 2007 and that now would be a good time to plan the 2008 retreat. Greenway Committee members polled themselves and found that Saturday, March 8, would be the best date for the retreat. Liz will reserve the Fireplace Room on this date; Tim will check this date with Leslie Bryson when she returns from vacation.

Sub-Committee Reports:

John Blethen asked sub-committees to communicate their progress to the rest of the Committee by email in order to save time at meetings and Liz will include any reports or minutes in the regular meeting packet.

Executive Session:

Executive Session was held from 8:40 p.m. to 9:10 p.m. to discuss potential real property acquisition.

Announcement following Executive Session:

Tom Chisholm announced that he will be resigning from the Greenway Advisory Committee due to personal time constraints. This meeting will be his last. Committee members thanked Tom for his four and a half years of dedicated service.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.