

## **Greenway Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes February 19, 2009**

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

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

**Staff Present:** Tim Wahl

**Guests Attending:** Carol Butz, GAC Applicant; Rod Dean, GAC Applicant; Linda Grant, GAC Applicant; Joe Yaver, Responsible Development

**Review of Previous Meeting Minutes:** Motion made and carried unanimously to approve the January 15, 2009 meeting minutes as submitted.

**Agenda Review:** Eric Hirst added under New Business a discussion of Parks Level of Service between 1991 and 2008. John Blethen added under New Business a discussion of a GAC potluck retreat.

**Public Comment Period:** Joe Yaver introduced himself as a member of Responsible Development committed to preserving Chuckanut Ridge. Mr. Yaver said that Responsible Development wants an opportunity to have a conversation with the GAC; not just a chance to provide input, but for both GAC members and RD members to listen, discuss and learn. Mr. Yaver said that he had recently had a good meeting with Tim Wahl on the complicated Chuckanut Ridge issues and would like to pursue those discussions with GAC members. Mr. Yaver said that there is substantial fear about the proposed development of Chuckanut Ridge. He said that, with 739 units and five-story or higher buildings, RD believes this is a serious development that would remake the south end of the City and would affect everyone. Eric Hirst asked what Mr. Yaver had in mind for a meeting that would be different from the meeting the GAC Chuckanut Ridge Subcommittee already had at Dan Remsen's house with RD members. Mr. Yaver replied that RD wants to discuss the value of the property and acquisition strategies and have a dialog with GAC members, not just for RD to give a presentation. Mr. Yaver distributed to GAC members a letter dated February 16, 2009 from Ann Eissinger, professional wildlife biologist, urging aggressive action to protect Chuckanut Ridge. Mr. Yaver said that RD does not want to impede any other Greenway acquisitions and expressed concerns about recent emails he had seen from the Puget Neighborhood to City Council members. Mr. Yaver also distributed to GAC members additional materials entitled "Preserve Chuckanut Ridge or Develop Fairhaven Highlands?" Mr. Yaver said that RD has asked for peer review by experts retained by RD of the draft Environmental Impact Statement, prior to release of the draft EIS. Jim Zander asked if such peer review by RD would delay the draft EIS release. Mr. Yaver replied that it should not delay the draft EIS very much. Mr. Zander said that he was concerned that the EIS might be delayed and, in the meantime, other southside acquisitions would be on hold. John Blethen said that all of this is in the hands of City Council and that the GAC has been taken out of the loop by City Council.

## **Old Business:**

Nooksack Loop Trail Project: John Blethen inquired as to whether any GAC members wanted to participate in this project as a liaison from the GAC. There were no volunteers. Jim McCabe reported that the group organizing the project is taking a tour of the proposed route on February 27th and that he would report back at a later meeting. The City portion of the loop includes the Coast Millennium Trail and the Bay-to-Baker Trail.

## **New Business:**

Interview of Applicants for the Greenway Advisory Committee: Informal interviews of three applicants were conducted to fill two vacancies on the GAC. One candidate will fill the remainder of Janie Pemble's first term and one candidate will fill the remainder of Edie Norton's first term. Interviews were conducted as follows:

- Rod Dean 7:20-7:30 pm
- Linda Grant 7:30-7:40 pm
- Carol Butz 8:45-8:55 pm

Recommendation on Greenway Advisory Committee Candidates: Following all interviews and Committee discussion, it was the decision of the Committee to recommend to the Mayor that Rod Dean and Linda Grant be appointed to fill the two vacancies. John Blethen will call all three candidates to advise them of the GAC's recommendation. Mr. Blethen will also call Mayor Pike to advise him of the GAC's recommendation and to request that the City move quickly to fill these vacancies (hopefully before the GAC potluck retreat in March).

Parks Level of Service 1991 - 2008: Eric Hirst distributed to GAC members a chart that he prepared based on the Parks Department's spreadsheet of land acquisitions between 1991 and 2008, which was discussed at the January GAC meeting. Mr. Hirst stated that his calculations reflect a slow but steady decline in Parks Level of Service between 1991 and 2008. He said that he believes this shows that the City needs to increase Park Impact Fees so that we have more money to keep up with growth. John Blethen said that, before tonight's meeting, he had discussed Eric's chart with Leslie Bryson. Mr. Blethen said that Ms. Bryson had a problem with Mr. Hirst's methodology and that she would attend the March GAC meeting to discuss this. Mr. Hirst explained that he calibrated the data from the 2008 PRO Plan to get the overall Parks LOS and that he took number of acres divided by population. Mr. Hirst said that his chart was in the nature of a Rorschach test as you could read into it what you want to read into it. Mr. Blethen stated that he believed that Park Impact Fees are a disincentive to infill, to which Mr. Remsen agreed, particularly since Whatcom County has no impact fees. Mr. Blethen also said that it is important to measure Parks Levels of Service in other than acres, in quality not just quantity. Mr. Hirst said that he looks forward to additional discussion of Parks Levels of Service with Ms. Bryson at the March GAC meeting.

GAC Potluck Retreat: John Blethen suggested that GAC members have a potluck retreat in March to discuss ideas for GAC going forward, including Greenstreets, Safe Routes to Schools, community gardens and other land uses. There was a consensus

that the GAC should have the retreat on a Thursday evening in March, on a night other than the night of the regular March GAC meeting. Tim Wahl said that the GAC could have the retreat at Woodstock so long as attendees carpool. Mr. Blethen asked GAC members to check their calendars for March 12 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm and said that he would send out a confirming email.

### **Sub-Committee Reports:**

Monthly Walk: The Committee decided that, since staff doesn't currently have any particular properties under active consideration that the GAC hasn't recently walked and since the GAC potluck retreat will be in March, there will be no March walk.

Northridge Park Phase II Steering Committee Update: Glenn Merrill reported that after the recent public meeting on Northridge Park, it was decided that the south node is on hold. He explained that the south node is the most contentious because the road is very narrow. He said that the north part is still being planned. Mr. Blethen said that the restrooms have been put on hold and that the park planning efforts are currently concentrating on trails.

Guest Invitations: There was a consensus that Kenni Merritt should invite John Carter, the City's Finance Director, to a future GAC meeting, possibly the April meeting. Mr. Blethen and Mr. Hirst, GAC Chair and Vice Chair, will review and consider upcoming agenda items and advise Ms. Merritt as to which future GAC meeting to invite Mr. Carter.

Park Advisory Board Update: Jim Zander reported that at the February Park Advisory Board meeting, the PRAB approved draft guidelines for the Whatcom Creek Salmon Art Trail. Mr. Zander handed out a draft brochure for the project. Mr. Zander also handed out the Parks Dept Recreation Report, and said that Parks staff reported that the 2009 budget is about \$192,000 less than 2008. Mr. Zander asked for a GAC volunteer to attend the March PRAB since he will be out of town. Mr. Blethen said that he would probably be able to attend. Mr. Hirst volunteered to be the back-up liaison if it turns out the Mr. Blethen has a conflict. If it turns out that Mr. Blethen cannot attend, he will call Mr. Hirst.

Strategic Planning: Mr. Blethen stated the next step for the GAC's strategic planning subcommittee would be to look at the development component and develop a strategic plan for development projects for GAC consideration.

**Executive Session:** Executive session was held from 7:55 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.

**Vote in Open Meeting following Executive Session:** In open meeting following executive session, Steve Walker moved to recommend the purchase of parcels 5 at a purchase price of no more than appraised value, likely to be between \$1.8 and \$2.3 million, using Greenway III Levy funds allocated for the northside. Scott Dorough seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

**Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

