

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
Wednesday, April 9, 2008

Present: Jim McCabe, Ira Hyman, Bill Hadley, Jane Blume, Tom Barrett, John Hymas, Adrienne Lederer, Julie Guy, Mark Peterson, Mike Anderson, Harry Allison

Staff: Paul Leuthold, Parks & Recreation Director
Marvin Harris, Park Operations Manager
Tim Wahl, Greenway Program Coordinator
Jonathan Schilk, Park Landscape Architect
Liz Haveman, Board Secretary

Attending: Edie Norton, Greenway Advisory Committee Liaison
Stan Snapp, City Council
Steve Wilson, South Neighborhood
Mary Mullen, South Neighborhood

I. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Executive Session was held from 7:00 to 7:30 a.m.

II. VOTE IN OPEN MEETING FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE SESSION:

In open meeting following Executive Session, Ira Hyman moved to recommend to City Council acquisition of a parcel of property near Bellingham's northeast Urban Growth Area boundary line using Greenway Levy funds. Adrienne Lederer seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

III. MARCH MEETING MINUTES:

Tom Barrett stated that for accuracy, it should be noted on page 2 of the March minutes under "Resolution for a Multi-Modal Trail Corridor" that some Parks Board members, as opposed to all members, were concerned that a proposed road in the corridor could make the traffic situation around the hospital worse. Motion made and carried unanimously to accept the March meeting minutes as amended.

IV. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Greenway Committee Update: Edie Norton reported that the Greenway Advisory Committee held a working retreat on the first Saturday in March where they formulated a list of priority acquisitions for North and South Bellingham. The Greenway Committee plans to vote on these lists at their April meeting. These lists will then be incorporated into maps showing proposed greenways that will be shared with the public and presented to City Council for approval. Edie also noted that the monthly Greenway Committee walks have been re-scheduled for the 1st Thursday of each month, and reminded all Park Advisory Board members that they are encouraged to attend.

V. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Franklin Park Amended Master Plan: Jonathan Schilk reported that Franklin Park is one of two parks in the York neighborhood. It is located south of Lakeway Drive and west of Interstate 5 on the southwest corner of Grand and Whatcom Streets. Jonathan reported that in 2006, funding was made available to upgrade the playground that is weathered and does not meet safety and ADA guidelines. In 2007, the neighborhood received a \$150,000

Neighborhood Initiative Program grant and additional REET funds were made available for additional park improvements to provide more park function and to enhance the beauty of the park. Jonathan reported that the playground improvement project was postponed in order to incorporate it into a revision of the Franklin Park Master Plan with the rest of the park improvements. As well as the problems with the playground equipment, the lawn area is in need of improved drainage to increase its usability, the basketball court is cracked and heaved, the boundary fence is in disrepair, a retaining wall is failing, and the site is unattractive.

The revisions to the Franklin Park Master Plan involve renovating the playground, re-grading the lawn and replacing the catch basin to improve drainage, providing wheelchair accessibility in the form of a concrete walkway, adding benches and picnic tables, replacing a section of retaining wall, resurfacing the basketball court, removing the fence and lining the park boundary with trees and other plantings, installation of a picnic shelter and installation of a small skateboard feature.

Jim McCabe noted that Jonathan stated estimated construction costs to the cent and asked if he had a contingency plan for escalating construction costs. Jonathan responded that that the cost estimate includes 5% escalation. John Hymas asked if Jonathan had considered a pervious hardscape rather than a concrete walkway. Jonathan responded that he did consider it, but it is not an option due to the fine, tightly compacted soil at the site. Mark Peterson noted that some of the lawn area is being reduced by trees and other plantings and asked if there will be enough room remaining for a good size multi-use field. Jonathan responded that his initial revision had more trees and plantings, but in response to neighborhood feedback, he scaled back in order to leave a good size multi-use field.

Ira Hyman moved to recommend to City Council the approval of the Franklin Park Master Plan amendments. Harry Allison seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

- B. Fairhaven Park Rose Garden House:** Paul Leuthold reported that the house in the old Fairhaven Park rose garden has been vacant since 2000 when the youth hostel that last used the facility closed. The house was left in disrepair with broken windows and holes in the walls. The house also has a failing foundation, out-dated wiring, and is not ADA accessible. Vandalism to the house has made the house an eye sore and a maintenance hassle. Now all windows are boarded and frequent park maintenance is required to paint over graffiti and re-secure the facility.

Marvin Harris passed around photos showing the house's existing dilapidated condition and reported on the history of the house. The house was built in 1914 by the Larrabee family. The house is an exact replica of another house built in the same time period at Woodstock Farm. There is another exact replica at Larrabee State Park that is currently being used as a state park caretaker house. Marvin reported that in 1999, Park Staff developed a Master Plan for the rose garden site and at that time, the house was identified as a problem. The cost of renovating the house to make it useable would be considerable; perhaps more than the value of the house itself. However, the framing of the house is still solid so a renovation of the house would not be out of the question if the funding were available.

Paul reported that in 2005, the Park Advisory Board discussed the state of the house and at that time, recommended that Staff put out a Request for Proposals to relocate the house. That RFP received no responses. Paul reported that over the years, he has received a number of suggestions from citizens ranging from renting the house as a private family dwelling to turning the house into some kind of community facility. However, none of these ideas were accompanied with the funding necessary to renovate the house to make it useable. Very recently, a citizen approached Paul with a plan to relocate the house to private property. Paul asked the Advisory Board if the Parks Department should put out another Request for Proposals for the house, or if the Parks Department should demolish the house.

Ira Hyman stated that he has mixed feelings about the site; while the house has some historic value, there is very limited parking at the rose garden site. Ira stated that the intersection of 12th Street and Chuckanut Drive is busy as is and may be a more difficult intersection to navigate with additional traffic to and from the house. Mark Peterson asked if moving the house off the site would generate money for some other kind of improvement to the site. Paul Leuthold responded that if the house were removed, maintenance cost would be decreased and the site would be more aesthetically pleasing. Tom Barrett pointed out that there is already a community building in Fairhaven Park that is improved, has ample parking, and is available to the public to rent. Paul Leuthold agreed and stated that if the funding existed to renovate old buildings in City Parks, his preference would be to spend the money renovating those at Woodstock Farm.

Tom Barrett noted that Steve Wilson and Mary Mullen, both of the South Neighborhood Association, were in attendance and asked for their input. Steve Wilson reported that the South Neighborhood Association recently received a small and simple grant to make repairs to the gazebo at the rose garden site and they are interested in preserving the house as well. Steve stated that he finds it difficult to talk to Parks Department Staff about the house because he feels that they have already decided that the house needs to be removed and they have no vision for what the house could be if kept at the site. Steve pointed out that the Parks Department does have a vision for Woodstock Farm, but Woodstock is far away and not easily accessible; the rose garden site at Fairhaven Park is a hub site of four neighborhoods and a majority of the neighbors can easily walk to it, which makes it a logical place to put priorities. Steve stated that a vision and a champion for the house and the rose garden site are needed, but he does not feel that the neighborhood should be the driving force of this vision.

Jim McCabe stated that the site Master Plan created in 1999 is a vision for the site, just not for the house. The challenge is to produce a vision for the house that does not duplicate services already in Fairhaven Park. Steve Wilson responded that he would like to see the house turned into a museum; an anthology of American folk music was collected by a South Neighborhood resident named Harry Smith.

Tom Barrett asked Steve if the neighborhood would appreciate having more open space or garden space at the park site if the house were removed. Steve responded that the neighborhood would prefer to keep the house; to find a park champion that can make lemonade out of lemons. Mark Peterson responded that while he would love to see the space turned into something useable, the champion has got to come forward and produce

the necessary funding to renovate and maintain the house. Mark stated that it is not the responsibility of the Parks Department or the Park Advisory Board to produce a champion. Mark asked if the Parks Department could put out a Request for Proposals for someone to either move the building off site or produce a vision to utilize the house on the site. Paul responded that this is a possibility, but the vision has to be accompanied with a practical plan to implement it and it has to be funded. The Parks Department does not have the funding to renovate the facility or the staff to produce and implement a vision.

Julie Guy recommended that the Parks Department put out a Request for Proposals for a time period of three months. At the end of that time period if no vision and champion are produced, an additional Request for Proposals could be put out for the house to be removed or demolished. Paul Leuthold responded that the site has been vacant for 8 years now and in the last 5-6 years only a small amount of proposals have come forward and none have been accompanied by definite plans or funding. Paul stated that he would like move forward with definite direction, to either request a plan for the house or removal of the house. Ira Hyman suggested that Paul move forward with a Request for Proposals for either option, but the RFP should stipulate limited parking space and require funding and an action plan for proposals to keep the house on site. Bill Hadley agreed and stated that the RFP should be publicized so the neighborhood is aware and has time to produce a park champion.

Ira Hyman moved to recommend that Park Staff put out a Request for Proposals for the Fairhaven Park rose garden house; either to move it off site or to produce a funded proposal to refurbish and maintain it and stipulate a particular use on the park site. Jane Blume seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

VI. ADJOURNMENT: The April 2008 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board was adjourned by consent at 8:55 a.m.

Approved: Jim McCabe, Chair
Attest: Liz Haveman, Secretary