

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
Wednesday, April 14, 2010

Present: Adrienne Lederer, Jim McCabe, Bill Hadley, Julie Guy, Dominique Zervas, Mike Anderson, Geoff Middaugh, Pam Holladay, Jane Blume

Excused: Mark Peterson

Staff: Paul Leuthold, Parks & Recreation Director
Marvin Harris, Park Operations Manager
Richard Henrie, Recreation Manager
Liz Haveman, Board Secretary

Attending: Seth Fleetwood, Bellingham City Council
McKinley Williams, Recreation Intern
John Hymas

I. MARCH MEETING MINUTES: Motion made and approved to accept the March 2010 meeting minutes as written.

II. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Greenway Advisory Committee Update: Paul Leuthold reported that Park Staff took the South portion of the Greenway Strategic Plan back to City Council for approval and the Council decided to put an indefinite hold on it until a decision can be made on Chuckanut Ridge property negotiations. Seth Fleetwood explained that Mayor Pike requested the delay while negotiations are in progress and that he expects it to be a 4 to 6 week delay. Dominique Zervas stated that her concern about an indefinite hold is that the South portion of the Greenway Strategic Plan may fall through the cracks and opportunities for acquisition may be lost. Pam Holladay asked Seth if it would be appropriate and helpful for the Advisory Board to draft a letter to the City Council expressing their concern. Seth suggested that they wait until June to see if property negotiations are completed. If not, the Board could draft a letter to the Council explaining their concerns and what may be at stake if the South portion of the Strategic Plan remains on hold. Paul Leuthold will draft the letter for circulation among the Board if property negotiations are not complete by June.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Recreation Report: Paul Leuthold introduced Dick Henrie, Recreation Manager, and stated that Dick has been with the Department since the Recreation Commission was created in 1978 in the basement of Whatcom Middle School. Dick Henrie stated that he and his Recreation Coordinators currently have cooperative relationships with over 150 community groups to accomplish a variety of recreational opportunities for the citizens of Bellingham. Dick stated that he feels that the role of our Recreation division is not to provide every opportunity, but to assist other agencies to make sure that the opportunities are provided. For example, Bellingham Parks & Recreation started a youth soccer program in Bellingham that was eventually taken over by the Whatcom Soccer Commission. We start new recreation opportunities and then hand the program off to other agencies who can meet that need.

Dick reported that in January 2010 he lost 2/5 of this Recreation staff to budget cuts, which resulted in the elimination of approximately one quarter of the Department's recreation programming. Dick explained that his staff have tried to be very strategic in program elimination and cut the programs with lower attendance that have a higher cost to operate. However, the programs cut were all important to those who lost that recreational opportunity. Dick stated that 21 hours of service per week at the Arne Hanna Aquatic Center have been eliminated and while a non-resident fee has been implemented to increase revenue, he expects that the non-resident fee will simply offset the revenue that will be lost by the decreased hours of operation and reduced programming.

Dick distributed various reports tracking the number of people attending recreation enrichment programs, athletic programs, Arne Hanna Aquatic Center programs, and park and school gym facility reservations coordinated by the Parks Department in 2009. Dick estimates that there were approximately 1,323,653 attendants in recreation programs; 132,778 park facility rental attendants and 22,695 school gym rental attendants in 2009. Dominique Zervas commented that the Recreation division of Bellingham Parks & Recreation provides phenomenal quality of life that is essential to the health of our community. Dick Henrie responded that we are fortunate to live in a City where the passion to play was passed down from families like the Bloedels, the Cornwalls and Frank Geri.

Geoff Middaugh asked if the closure of Western Washington University's football program impacted the athletic field attendance numbers. Dick responded that in terms of reservations, it did not impact the numbers. The field time that was occupied by WWU football was quickly snatched up by other community groups. Paul Leuthold responded that in terms of the budget, WWU had originally agreed to pay \$40,000 per year for 20 years into a fund to help pay for the Civic Field renovations. After the elimination of their football program, they re-negotiated that agreement to pay \$20,000 per year into this fund.

- B. Regional Tree Climbing Championship:** Geoff Middaugh stated that he requested this agenda topic because he is involved with the Treekeepers and would like to fill the role that John Hymas previously filled on the Park Board as liaison to the Treekeepers. Geoff asked James Luce to come to the Park Board meeting to talk about this event that is the interface between tree health and public safety. Geoff explained that trees add wonderful quality of life to our community, but can be very dangerous. James Luce stated that he has worked for Bellingham Parks & Recreation for approximately 25 years as an Arborist. James stated that approximately 85% of what he does is risk management. Bellingham has an extensive tree collection, some ornamental, some intended to be wildlife habitat. James stated that he and one other Arborist, Dan Thomas, care for approximately 2000 acres of urban forest in Bellingham. They work closely with the Public Works Department to care for Bellingham's street trees. They try to find solutions to protect trees in hardscaping, such as re-routing sewer lines to protect tree roots. They also train staff and volunteers on proper planting and tree care techniques and they do public outreach on tree care.

The Regional Tree Climbing Championship planned for July 24th at Elizabeth Park is a public outreach event. This event is the regional competition for the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). James explained that the ISA began competitions in 1976 as a way to promote safe working practices, demonstrate innovations in equipment and techniques and to provide industry recognition. At this event arborists from British Columbia, Washington

and Oregon will compete in various tree climbing events using ropes. James expects 30 competitors and 150 spectators.

Jane Blume and Pam Holladay excused themselves at 8:00 a.m. Jim McCabe took over as Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

IV. BOARD REPORTS:

- A. **Arts Commission**: Dominique Zervas reported that the Arts Commission did not meet in March. At their meeting in February, the Arts Commission discussed concern about art donations that come in prior to an approved maintenance plan and approval of the piece itself as part of the City's collection. They are going to focus on creating and sticking to an approval process in the future.
- C. **Big Rock**: Adrienne Lederer reported that the Big Rock Committee is having a work party on April 24 to clean the permanent sculpture collection in preparation for the Mother's Day event on May 9 from 1-4 p.m. This year's exhibit will feature new works by five artists who also have pieces in Big Rock's permanent collection.
- C. **Boulevard Over Water Walkway**: Geoff Middaugh reported that there is an article on the front page of the Bellingham Herald informing the public of the trail closure in Boulevard Park coming this summer for Pattle Point Trestle renovations. Geoff stated that his primary concern for this project is getting the word out to the public. The signs in place at the park and the newspaper article will certainly help.
- D. **Cordata Park**: Julie Guy reported that construction of a trail in Cordata Park is scheduled to begin in May. Julie also reported that Paul Leuthold attended the Guide Meridian/Cordata Neighborhood meeting the previous night and gave a report on all of the projects that the Parks Department has going on in 2010.
- D. **Lake Padden Golfers**: Mike Anderson reported that the Lake Padden Golf course is in great shape and that they have some junior programs lined up for the summer. Mike also reported that the loan payment on the clubhouse renovations will be paid off in 2010. The committee is working on a plan for the best use of the funds that were going to the loan once it is paid off. Paul Leuthold stated that the funds amount to approximately \$80,000 per year and their desire is to see those funds remain in the Golf Course budget rather than go into the City's general fund.
- E. **Watershed Advisory Board**: Bill Hadley reported that the Watershed Advisory Board has 3 new members. They are currently working on a conservation easement on Lake Geneva that retires 37 units that were previously planned for development.

- V. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**: Jim McCabe reported that the sale at Bayview Cemetery has been published in the Bellingham Herald. Paul Leuthold said that the buy one, get one half price grave sale at Bayview will begin on April 15 and run through June 15, 2010. Paul stated that the Cemetery has received many inquiries and that there appears to be widespread interest in the sale. Dominique Zervas asked what the long term implications of the sale will be on the Cemetery's budget. Paul Leuthold responded that he does not know if the sale will impact the

budget. They will receive future revenue from the sale plots in terms of fees for opening, grave liners and markers.

VI. ADJOURNMENT: The April 2010 meeting of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board was adjourned by consent at 8:45 a.m.

Approved: Jane Blume, Vice Chair
Attest: Liz Haveman, Secretary