

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
Wednesday, April 13, 2011

Present: Bill Hadley, Geoff Middaugh, Mike Anderson, Dominique Zervas, Jane Blume, Rosalie Nast, Adrienne Lederer, Julie Guy, Bill Langley, Diane Blake

Excused: Pam Holladay

Staff: Leslie Bryson, Park Design & Development Manager
Marvin Harris, Park Operations Manager
Liz Haveman, Board Secretary
Richard Henrie, Recreation Manager
Debbie Goff, Recreation Intern

Attending: John Blethen, Greenway Advisory Committee

- I. **AGENDA REVIEW:** No changes were made to the meeting agenda.
- II. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Executive Session was held from 7:01 a.m. to 7:20 a.m. Richard Henrie and Debbie Goff arrived at 7:15 a.m.
- III. **VOTE IN OPEN MEETING FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE SESSION:** In open meeting following executive session, Dominique Zervas moved to approve the Greenway Program purchase of property number 579. Jane Blume seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
- IV. **MARCH MEETING MINUTES:** The March meeting minutes were approved as submitted.
- V. **OLD BUSINESS:**
 - A. **Greenway Advisory Committee Update:** Julie Guy reported that she and Adrienne Lederer attended the Greenway meeting and stated she feels that the Greenway Committee is very organized and is making good progress on acquiring various properties. Adrienne Lederer suggested that the Park Board invite Linda Grant, the Chair of the Greenway Committee, to come to the Park Board meeting. Geoff Middaugh stated that the Greenway Chair is always welcome, and that he appreciates John Blethen, the former Greenway Chair, now Greenway liaison, to the Park Board and his regular meeting attendance. Geoff also stated that he had the opportunity to meet with Linda Grant, as well as Leslie Bryson, John Blethen and Pam Holladay to discuss the role and responsibility of each committee and that he will continue to work with Linda to define to the unique niche of each board. Leslie Bryson reported that Jonathan Schilk gave a presentation on the Samish Crest Trail project at the last Greenway meeting that he will also be presenting to the Park Board in the future. Finally, Leslie reported that the Greenway Committee continues to work on updating their Greenway Strategic Plan.
 - B. **Whatcom Rowing Association Update:** Leslie Bryson reminded the Park Board that at their February meeting, they approved Whatcom Rowing Association's (WRA) proposal to start a rowing club based out of Bloedel Donovan Park, and City Council has also approved the proposal. Leslie stated that a lease agreement has been entered into between the City and WRA for an area in Bloedel Donovan Park near the old locomotive where the WRA has constructed a fenced boat storage area. Leslie stated that per the agreement, WRA had a

wetland delineation completed to ensure that the fenced area was constructed outside wetland buffers and that watershed regulations were adhered to.

Leslie reported that the monthly lease amount was set based on the going rate for comparable space in Whatcom County for non-profit groups. Leslie stated that since the agreement was made with WRA, other boating groups in the community have come forward to request a similar agreement. Leslie stated that Park staff would like to see all of the various boating groups work cooperatively to share one facility, rather than enter into multiple agreements. The current agreement with WRA is a one-year lease with the option to renew for an outdoor fenced storage area only. Leslie stated that the construction of any buildings in the future would require pre-approval and an extensive permitting process, and if there are different groups interested that cannot work together to share the area, the City would do a public Request For Proposal process to ensure an inclusive non-motorized boating center at Bloedel Donovan Park.

Marcia Wazny arrived at 7:38 a.m.

- C. Bayview Cemetery:** Marvin Harris introduced Marcia Wazny as the Enterprise Coordinator, responsible for overseeing operations at Bayview Cemetery and the lease of the Lake Padden Golf Course. Marcia reported that Bayview Cemetery was established around 1887 and is currently operating on 55 out of 100 acres of land at the corner of Lakeway and Woburn Streets. Marcia stated that Bayview offers burial services including casket, cremation and memorial sales. The pricing for Bayview's services is based on comparable prices in the local market. Marcia reported that the economic downturn hit Bayview hard in 2009 as it became discretionary for families to buy a plot and memorial, versus less expensive cremation services. Marcia stated that since Bayview has a lot of land and limited marketing abilities, she came up with the idea for a buy one, get one half price grave sale in 2010. Marcia stated that on the first day of the sale in 2010, they brought in \$22,000. Marcia found that many people were using the sale as an opportunity to "pre-need" plots as well as memorials. The cemetery has received a number of phone calls from citizens requesting another such sale, which City Council approved for 2011 at their April 11 meeting.

Marcia stated that she understood that there were some questions on the 2011 pricing structure that Park Board reviewed and approved in January and that City Council also approved at their April 11 meeting. Marcia reported that most of the 2011 price increases that she proposed were based on increased labor costs. Also, the mausoleum costs were restructured to cover the need to rent lifts and the appropriate equipment for placement in crypts on the higher levels. Marcia reported that she also asked for a 2% markup on memorials so that if vendors increased their pricing, the City's pricing would go up automatically. Marcia stated that she researched the memorial markup in the competitive market and found that some cemeteries in the area have a 400% markup. Marcia stated that her goal in asking for a 2% markup was to keep things affordable for the public.

Diane Blake asked if Bayview Cemetery is a self sustaining enterprise operation or if it is subsidized. Marvin Harris responded that it is subsidized by the City's General Fund. Marcia Wazny explained that current grave sales include endowed care. Until the 1990's, very little to nothing from grave sales was going into an endowed care fund, which means

that the City's General Fund is covering the cost of mowing, weed eating, and other routine maintenance for each of those graves. With a couple hundred years of no endowed care, it is very difficult to reduce the General Fund subsidy.

John Blethen asked Marcia if Bayview is tapping into the alternative burial market. Marcia responded that "green" burials consist of a non-preserved body in a shroud, rather than a casket, in a shallower 3', rather than 6' grave with no memorial. Marcia said that Bayview does not currently have a certified area for green burial. Bayview uses concrete grave liners in order to create ground stability so that they don't have graves collapse when mowers run over them. However, Marcia is looking at options like bottomless grave liners and the creation of a scatter garden for families to spread ashes.

Bill Hadley asked if Marcia has considered only allowing flat memorials that mowers can drive over in order to reduce maintenance costs. Marcia responded that upright memorials are quite popular, and allowing them is a marketing tool for Bayview. Instead, they situate plots in straight, evenly spaced rows for the ease of mowers to travel between memorials. Marcia reported that she has figured that by the end of the summer each year, Bayview Cemetery staff weed eat around 500,000 memorials.

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Park Board Member Orientation: Leslie Bryson reported that an orientation for new Park Board members has been scheduled for April 29, 2011, at 3:30 p.m. in the Fireplace Meeting Room located at 625 Halleck Street. The orientation is open to all members of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board and will cover City policies and procedures that relate to the Board, the role of the Board and its operations including meeting and agenda procedure.

Marcia Wazny and Jane Blume excused themselves at 8:05 a.m.

B. Park Board Liaison Positions: Leslie Bryson reported that a discussion of the Park Board liaison positions was requested by Board members at their March 2011 meeting, particularly for the new Board members. Leslie stated that some liaison positions are ongoing to other City Boards and Commissions, and others are temporary for projects that come and go, such as construction and park plan updates. Leslie reported that many of the various liaison positions were created out of Board member interest and availability. For example, the liaison position to the Watershed Advisory Board began when Stan Snapp served on both the Park Board and the Watershed Board. Geoff Middaugh stated that he would like to see a Park Board liaison to all of the Parks Department's capital projects so that when the project is presented to the Board for approval, the Board is familiar with it and it's progression through the public process.

The document provided in the Park Board meeting packet is a draft by Park Staff that includes a definition of the Park Board liaison role and responsibility, and a list of current and potential liaison positions. John Blethen commented that he feels that the Board liaison can also serve as a buffer between the City and the public for contentious issues. Julie Guy stated that she also sees the Board liaison as an advocate for their particular topic, such as the "Share the Trails" campaign.

It was generally agreed that the document is a work in progress and that another discussion on Board liaison role and responsibility will be held at a future Park Board meeting and liaison positions could be assigned to new members.

- C. Permits for Alcohol in City Parks:** Leslie Bryson reported that as Interim Director of the Parks & Recreation Department, she has received requests for consumption of alcohol at park facilities, per Bellingham Municipal Code 8.04.150, which states that use of alcohol in City Parks is prohibited, except in areas or at events that have appropriate licensing from the State of Washington and have explicit, written permission of the Director of Parks & Recreation. Leslie stated that the Parks Department currently has provided written permission for the sale and consumption of alcohol to the lessees of the Lake Padden Golf Course, Joe Martin Stadium and the Sportsplex. However, on a frequent basis, requests for use of alcohol at private parties and receptions, as well as public fund raising events have been denied.

Leslie stated that a local non-profit agency recently contacted the Parks Department and requested a permit for the consumption of alcohol at a dinner at the Fairhaven Village Green. This agency has a long-standing relationship with the City of Bellingham and when approached, the Mayor's Office was generally agreeable to allowing the use of alcohol at food events in enclosed or defined park spaces. A draft departmental policy has been initiated for guiding the Parks & Recreation Director's decisions regarding the consumption of alcohol in City Parks. Leslie reported that this policy draft has not been finalized and asked the Park Board for their feedback. For example, when should alcohol consumption be permitted? For all parties with appropriate licensing from the State of Washington, or just for non-profit agencies?

Dominique Zervas suggested that Leslie research the policies of other communities. Leslie responded that she will continue to do so; she has already spoken with the Depot Market Square and Whatcom County Parks & Recreation and learned that both allow the consumption of alcohol with certain stipulations including licenses from the State of Washington, damage deposits and various fees and rules. John Blethen suggested that allowing the consumption of alcohol at designated park venues with certain regulations could be a good way to generate additional revenue. Bill Langley suggested that a permit for consumption of alcohol in City Parks only be provided in conjunction with reservation of a Park facility. Dominique asked if an enclosed area with licensed bar tenders should be required. Leslie responded that the Washington State Liquor Control Board has certain stipulations about enclosed areas for the sale and consumption of alcohol and the Depot Market Square has handled this by simply requiring that its renters abide by State regulations.

Geoff Middaugh commented that the sale and consumption of alcohol seems incompatible with the Fairhaven Village Green since it is located right next to competing bars and restaurants and is a family environment. Julie Guy agreed and stated that she strongly objects to allowing groups to cordon off the area for the sale and consumption of alcohol as she expects that space to be open for public use. Leslie Bryson stated that while the Parks Department has always required renters of the Village Green to allow the public to travel through, the State requires that an area be cordoned off for the sale and consumption of alcohol if allowed. However, the area between Village Books and the Pergola will remain

open to the general public during the event. Geoff Middaugh also commented that Guideline ii on the draft policy that stipulates a food versus alcohol ratio seems like it would be very difficult for City staff to enforce.

Leslie Bryson stated that she would report back to the Mayor's Office with the Board's feedback on the draft policy, and that she may come back to the Board before a policy is finalized.

- VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** Leslie Bryson turned the floor over to Richard Henrie, Parks Recreation Manager, to introduce his intern. Richard introduced Debbie Goff, a Western Washington University student majoring in Community Recreation. Debbie will be working on various projects and special events for the remainder of the school year.

Leslie Bryson reported that this spring has been particularly rainy and cold and has caused a compaction problem with the field at Joe Martin Stadium. The field is not draining properly and has resulted in a number of rained out games. Leslie stated that Park staff are working hard to resolve this issue prior to the start of the Bellingham Bells season.

Leslie also reported that she and Marvin Harris met with the Grateful Dogs Association at Bloedel Donovan Park recently. The Grateful Dogs have requested that the off leash dog area on the north side of the parking lot with lake access be opened again from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. this summer. Leslie stated that Park staff do expect the area to be reopened once the weather clears up and the turf dries out.

Leslie also reported that Park staff forwarded two emails from George Drake to the Board at George's request. Following George's presentation of the sculpture "*Nootka*" at the Board's March meeting, he also presented it to the Big Rock Garden Committee and asked that the dedication of the sculpture be a part of their Mother's Day Garden Party program. Leslie stated that the Big Rock Committee was in favor of placing the sculpture in the Garden, but did not want the dedication to be part of their Mother's Day program as they already have the event planned. Dominique Zervas commented that she understood George was upset about what he perceived to be a public meeting violation that took place at the Big Rock Committee Meeting when they excused him to go into executive session. Leslie Bryson responded that the Big Rock Committee did state that they were going into a closed meeting, but did not do that when George explained to them that it would be a violation.

- VIII. ADJOURNMENT:** The April 2011 meeting of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board was adjourned by consent at 9:07 a.m.

Approved: Geoff Middaugh, Chair
Attest: Liz Haveman, Secretary