

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
Wednesday, August 11, 2010

Present: Mark Peterson, Adrienne Lederer, Bill Hadley, Julie Guy, Pam Holladay, Dominique Zervas, Geoff Middaugh, Jane Blume

Excused: Mike Anderson

Staff: Paul Leuthold, Parks & Recreation Director
Leslie Bryson, Design & Development Manager
Marvin Harris, Park Operations Manager
Liz Haveman, Board Secretary

Attending: Les Reardanz, City of Bellingham waterfront development
Linda Stewart, City of Bellingham waterfront development
Mike Hogan, Port of Bellingham waterfront development
Greg Aucutt, City of Bellingham Planning Department

- I. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Executive session was held from 7 a.m. to 7:20 a.m. In open meeting following executive session, Adrienne Lederer moved to approve the purchase of a parcel of property on Samish Hill in the amount of \$3000 from Beyond Greenway funds. Jane Blume seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously. Dominique Zervas also moved to recommend that staff pursue due diligence on two additional parcels of property on Samish Hill. Geoff Middaugh seconded the motion and this motion passed unanimously as well.
- II. **JUNE MEETING MINUTES:** Adrienne Lederer requested that her Big Rock report be amended to include, "Big Rock Committee members grew herbs from seed in the Big Rock greenhouse. The herb containers were wrapped and given away for donation during the Mother's Day garden party." Motion made and approved to accept the June 2010 meeting minutes as amended.
- III. **OLD BUSINESS:**
 - A. **Greenway Advisory Committee Update:** Geoff Middaugh inquired about the status of the Mayor's negotiations to acquire Fairhaven Highlands. Paul Leuthold responded that he has not been updated and that he would contact the Mayor and ask for an update.
- IV. **NEW BUSINESS:**
 - A. **Waterfront Development:** Paul Leuthold introduced Mike Hogan, Port of Bellingham; Les Reardanz and Linda Stewart, waterfront development representatives from the City of Bellingham, and Greg Aucutt, Senior Planner with the City of Bellingham. Paul reported that the waterfront planning process between the City and the Port started in 2004 before the Port acquired the Georgia Pacific site. Paul stated that his goal throughout the waterfront planning process has been to ensure that public access to the waterfront is provided for individuals who will not own a boat, live or work on the waterfront. Paul stated that after much deliberation, the preliminary waterfront master plan includes 33 acres of parks, trails and open space.

Mike Hogan gave a presentation on the history of the Georgia Pacific site, how the Port of Bellingham came to acquire it, and the preliminary draft plans for cleaning up and developing the site for mixed use including a new marina, parks and trails, and shopping and living accommodations. Mike stated that the cooperative agreement for redevelopment of the waterfront between the Port and the City was born out of the idea that the Port would provide the land, demolition, clean up activity and build a marina, and the City would build the infrastructure including streets, parks and trails. Mike reported that the Port estimates the cost of cleaning up the site to be around \$100 million. The Port purchased a \$25 million insurance policy at the time that they acquired the site that will cover clean up costs above the estimate. Any costs over and above what the insurance policy covers would be charged to the party responsible for the initial pollution of the site.

Mike reported that there are 5 unique areas that will be redeveloped; a marine trades area, a downtown waterfront area, the log pond, the shipping terminal, and the Cornwall beach. The marine trades area will convert the old wastewater treatment pond to a new marina with a waterfront trail around the perimeter. The downtown waterfront area plan includes 3 park features; the Central Avenue pier, a commercial street green around the existing tiled tanks that will remain on site as a historic feature, and a downtown shoreline with a beach restoration similar to the beach at Marine Park in Fairhaven. The log pond area would be developed as a large waterfront park with a public beach. The shipping terminal will remain, but a pocket beach for public access will be added. The Cornwall beach area will be the landing point for the new over water walkway from Boulevard Park to the foot of Cornwall Avenue. Mike reported that the Port estimates that waterfront development will create approximately 7000 jobs and will provide 3 miles of new shoreline access and 33 acres of parks and trails.

Les Reardanz with the City of Bellingham distributed a handout that illustrates possible project phases for waterfront development. Les stated that this is a long term project and will be completed over the next 50 years or more depending on funding. Les explained that the plan is to phase infrastructure construction to support clean up activity prior to providing public access. For example, the Central Avenue pier will first be used for truck access for environmental cleanup activities, and will then be converted to pedestrian access. The draft phasing plan includes 5 phases. Phase 1 and 2 focus on site cleanup and initial infrastructure and activating the downtown waterfront area and are expected to be completed within the next 5 years. Phase 3 focuses on activating the marine trades area and providing access to the Cornwall beach areas, and is expected to be completed in 20 to 25 years. Phase 4 focuses on building the downtown waterfront area and is estimated to be completed 25 to 30 years down the road. The 5th and final phase is to transition the log pond area from industrial to mixed use with a soft bank shoreline and is expected to be completed in about 50 years, depending on funding and all of the various occurrences that can take place over 50 years.

Julie Guy asked about the buildings currently on site and if there is any obligation for historic preservation. Adrienne Lederer asked why the grainery building is unique and will be kept on site. Mike Hogan responded that the grainery building existed before Georgia Pacific bought the site. Its structural analysis is good and unlike many of the other buildings on site that are brick façade to hide mill equipment, the grainery building has floors and may be affordably restored. Les Reardanz stated that there is no obligation for

historic preservation, but there may be some tax credits available if anyone has the money and interest in restoring some of the existing buildings when they get to that phase of the project.

Dominique Zervas stated that she heard that there were differing opinions on the level of cleanup needed to protect the environment and make the site useable, and asked if the amount of cleanup needed is still being negotiated. Mike Hogan responded that the Washington State Department of Ecology has identified 6 different sites where cleanup is necessary and will be regulated to meet their standards. The Department of Ecology has a range of cleanup alternatives from full removal to capping and leaving contamination in place, to not even touching the contamination and leaving it as is. For each of the 6 sites identified by the Department of Ecology, the impacts of cleanup activity on the environment, public health risks, and cost will be balanced to determine a permanent and practical solution. Dominique asked about the shipping channel that she understands exists to this site. Mike Hogan stated that there are 3 federally recognized shipping channels in Bellingham Bay, one of which is the Whatcom Waterway to this site. As long as a shipping demand exists, this shipping channel may be dredged to maintain the authorized depth of 30 feet. Due to changes in shipping need, the preliminary master plan changes the end point of the Whatcom Waterway shipping channel from Roeder Avenue to outside the shipping terminal.

Dominique also asked if interim use of the site will be allowed around the phases of redevelopment. Les Reardanz responded that interim use will be allowed once the master plan is in place and initial clean up of the site is complete. Les stated that he anticipates some light industrial use of the site. Dominique asked Mike Hogan if they anticipate the master plan being changed when a new Port director is hired. Mike responded that the Port director works for the Port Commission, and they are being very careful to find the right person for the job who will carry out the plans as determined by the public process.

Additional questions about the redevelopment of the waterfront may be directed to City staff. Les Reardanz reported that they are maintaining a public comment journal to track the various comments and questions about the plans. Park Board members may email their questions to Liz Haveman, Board Secretary, who will compile a list and forward it to the appropriate City or Port staff.

- B. Skate Park Bench Artwork:** Marvin Harris stated that a local family who lost their son would like to donate a memorial bench constructed of olivine with an artwork inscription outside the standard memorial bench plaque. Photos of the proposed bench style, a location aerial, and a drawing of the proposed artwork were distributed to Park Board Members in their meeting packet. Dominique Zervas asked if rails will be added to the bench in anticipation of it being skated on. Marvin responded that he does not think rails will be necessary; olivine is fairly vandal proof and it will be set back in a grass area. Mark Peterson stated that the skate park is lacking areas to sit. Julie Guy moved approval of the artwork design and the installation of the bench in the skate park. Adrienne Lederer seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

V. BOARD REPORTS:

A. Cordata Park: Julie Guy reported that trail construction in Cordata Park is underway and is expected to be completed in September. The neighborhood is planning a celebration event; more details to follow.

VI. DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Paul Leuthold reported that in efforts to balance the budget, last month two permanent Parks Department employees were laid off. Also, two positions that are vacant due to a retirement and an employee moving on will not be filled. The positions laid off were a Recreation Coordinator and the Accounting Technician at the Arne Hanna Aquatic Center. Paul stated that he looking at cutting an additional \$325,000 out of the Parks Department budget for 2011. Mark Peterson asked why it seems that the Recreation division of the Parks Department seems to take more of a hit than other divisions. Paul responded that he and the Parks Department managers have prioritized our services as follows: 1) land, 2) facilities, 3) programs. The reason for this prioritization is that when the economy bounces back, programs are easier to bring back than land or facilities. Paul stated that up until now, we have been able to reduce the budget in areas where a large portion of the public has not experienced a big impact. However, bigger cuts are needed and the public will see the impact of the budget cuts that we are currently faced with. For example, reduced hours of the Arne Hanna Aquatic Center and closing the spray parks and some park restrooms are possibilities that staff are looking at.

VII. ADJOURNMENT: The August 2010 meeting of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board was adjourned by consent at 9:10 a.m.

Approved: Mark Peterson, Chair
Attest: Liz Haveman, Secretary