

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
Wednesday, December 8, 2010

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

Excused: Rosalie Nast

Absent: Mark Peterson

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

Attending: John Blethen, Greenway Advisory Committee
Byron Elmendorf, Lake Padden Golf Committee

I. NOVEMBER MEETING MINUTES: Mike Anderson requested that the words, “or similar mitigation” be added to the following sentence from the discussion on the Lake Padden Golf Course capital improvements: “At this time, the maintenance projects at the top of the list include a bioswale or similar mitigation between the maintenance facility and the creek to avoid contaminated run-off, and a solution to stormwater run-off at the golf cart storage area.” Motion made and approved to accept the November 2010 meeting minutes as amended.

II. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Greenway Advisory Committee Update: Paul Leuthold reported that the Greenway Advisory Committee had a discussion at their November meeting about the possibility of combining the Greenway Committee and the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board. Paul stated that this idea was identified by the F.A.S.T. Committee in 2008 as a way to cut costs by reducing staff time spent on City boards and commissions. This suggestion was presented to the Greenway Committee at that time and was not pursued because of the recent passage of the Greenway III Levy and the need to create a Greenway Strategic Plan. Recently there have been vacancies on both boards that have been difficult to fill. There is also a duplication of effort which impacts staff time, when we are down staff members due to budget cuts. For example, staff prepares and presents to both boards who vote on the same property acquisitions. Park staff decided to reopen the discussion with both the Greenway Committee and the Park Board to determine if there is interest in pursuing this idea with City Administration, and what the potential combination of the boards would look like. For example, would there be a Greenway sub-committee to the Park Board? Would the name of the Park Board be changed to include Greenways? Could the meeting time change? All of these issues would need to be identified and resolved before presented to City Administration.

Pam Holladay reported that she attended the November Greenway meeting as the Park Board liaison and expressed strong concern about the potential combination of the two boards. Pam stated that the City’s policy on Greenway Acquisition states that each parcel must be presented to both the Park Board and the Greenway Committee and expressed

concern that the voice of both boards would be diminished on such matters if they were combined. Pam also stated that her understanding is that the Park Board has a much broader role than Greenway land acquisition, and feels that the importance of the Greenway Program would be diminished if there were not a stand-alone Greenway Advisory Committee. Pam also stated that she understands there is some staff frustration with having to wait a month between the two board meetings in order to receive approval from both boards, but said that this problem could be solved by changing the time of one or both meetings. Pam stated that she believes that the budget concerns about staff time are exaggerated as staff are on salary and do not receive overtime pay to be at the meetings. Pam stated that she regards Eric Hirst and his letter of resignation from the Greenway Committee that expresses frustration with the diminished voice of the Committee and feels that the vacancies on both boards are due to the diminished voice of the boards.

Dominique Zervas asked Pam why she feels that the voice of the Park Board and the Greenway Committee will be diminished if they are combined. Pam responded that she would like to open up the discussion on that matter. Dominique responded that her understanding is that there are certain levels of duplication of duty between the Greenway Committee and the Park Board and that combining the committees to handle the duplicated duties would save staff time. The duties that are not duplicate could be handled by a Greenway sub-committee. Dominique suggested that in better economic times and if another Greenway levy passes, the two committees could expand again. Dominique shared that she sees the Greenway Program and the Park system in Bellingham as long-term, citizen priorities and does not feel that their importance would be diminished if the citizen advisory groups were streamlined.

Leslie Bryson reported that she staffed the November Greenway meeting where this discussion matter was brought up by Greenway Committee members because they have had fewer meetings this year due to lack of business items for the Committee. The Greenway Committee, like the Park Board, has had three vacancies for a substantial period of time that no one has applied to fill. Leslie stated that there is a cost for staff working overtime to (compensatory time) and that the amount of work spent on both committees does detract from the amount of time staff have available to spend on actual property acquisitions.

Julie Guy expressed her concern that the citizens of Bellingham voted for a Greenway Levy and there should be a separate committee with the charge to oversee that levy. Julie stated that if there is another levy in the future, the public may see the Greenway Program as less important if there were not a stand-alone Greenway Committee. Julie suggested that rather than combine the committees, the length of time between the meetings, as well as the number of staff members at each meeting, could be reduced. Mike Anderson agreed with Julie's suggestion to change the meeting times and stated that the Greenway Committee could continue to meet on an as-needed basis and cancel the meetings when there is no business. Adrienne Lederer also agreed and expressed concern that the business of both boards that each currently have a 2-hour monthly meeting could not be completed in one 2-hour monthly meeting.

John Blethen thanked the Park Board for being concerned Greenway Program advocates and for diligently attending the Greenway Committee's monthly walks to various properties

for potential acquisition. John stated that he believes that the lack of candidates for the vacancies on the boards is due to lack of leadership. John stated that he was on the original Greenway Committee when the first levy passed, has served on the Park Board, and is now back on the Greenway Committee. He would like to see new volunteers step up and re-energize the Program. John suggested that a closer relationship between the Greenway Committee Chair and Park staff will be helpful in the future.

Byron Elmendorf, former Director of Bellingham Parks & Recreation, explained briefly that both the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board and the Greenway Advisory Committee got their beginnings from a voter approved funding. In both cases, citizens wanted to make sure that City staff were accountable for spending the money the right way. Byron explained that the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board was formed when park bond committee combined with a recreation commission, so there is historical precedence for combining, or not meeting, when financial resources are tight and there is no business.

Geoff Middaugh suggested that he meet with John Blethen and Leslie Bryson to clarify the role of each committee and recommend ways to reduce duplication between them, as well as discuss all of the concerns about combining the two committees, or continuing to staff two committees. They could discuss options such as changing meeting times and ways to reduce staff time like preparing fewer maps and having fewer staff attend the meetings. Pam Holladay requested to be included in this meeting. Julie Guy moved to approve Geoff's suggestion and Adrienne Lederer seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

A. 2011 Park Board Chair and Vice Chair: Paul explained that while Geoff was just voted in as Chair a month ago, he was voted into complete Mark Peterson's term as Chair. Per the Park Board's bylaws, the Chair and Vice Chair must be elected each December for the following year. Dominique Zervas nominated Geoff Middaugh to continue as Chair. Mike Anderson nominated Julie Guy to serve as Vice Chair. Pam Holladay seconded both nominations and the Board voted unanimously to approve Geoff Middaugh as Chair and Julie Guy as Vice Chair for 2011.

B. Lake Padden Golf Committee Capital Improvements: Marvin Harris reported that the Lake Padden Golf Committee meets quarterly, and they have been discussing capital improvements that are needed at the course since 1999 when they took out a loan to renovate the clubhouse. They have been paying \$85,000 per year toward that loan, and it will be paid off at the end of 2010. The hope of the Committee is that the money that was going toward the loan that is generated by greens fees at the golf course will stay in the Parks Department's budget to go toward capital improvements at the course. The Committee put together a Lake Padden Golf Course Capital Improvement Plan; a prioritized list of \$1,085,000 worth of capital improvements that they would like to take out a loan to complete, either in one lump sum or in phases, dependent on City Council approval. Jane Blume asked where the loan would come from. Marvin responded that the Committee is thinking that they would need to get a commercial loan, which would require approval from the City Finance Department and the City Council.

Dominique Zervas commented that from what she understands, the Lake Padden Golf Course is strong financially, and covers its costs. Paul Leuthold responded that it is a successful enterprise fund. As well as covering its costs, the Lake Padden Golf Course subsidizes the City's general fund by approximately \$35,000 per year for youth sports programs. Dominique asked if the proposed capital improvements could allow the golf course to generate more revenue. Marvin Harris responded that the improvements could, and that the course typically has 35,000 to 38,000 rounds played per year, very much dependent on the weather. Byron Elmendorf stated that historically, the Lake Padden Golf Course has had as many as 60,000 rounds played per year, but there are more golf courses in the area now. Byron stated that the Lake Padden Golf Course is still the busiest golf course in Whatcom County. Marvin Harris stated that now that the golf course is leased by a private party, the lessee collects all of the greens fees rather than the City so they are able to do promotional fee discounts that the City was not able to do without gifting public funds. Marvin said that this and all of the improvements that the lessee has made to the greens have already made the course more desirable.

Dominique Zervas moved that the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board recommend approval of the Lake Padden Golf Course Capital Improvement Plan that was included in the Park Board meeting packet. Pam Holladay seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

- C. Donation of *Hope* sculpture to Big Rock Garden Park:** Marvin Harris reported that artist, Emory F. Scott, would like to donate his sculpture titled, *Hope*, to Big Rock Garden Park. Marvin stated that if accepted, *Hope* would be located in the west lower area of the park that is fairly vacant now. The Big Rock Garden Committee voted in favor of accepting the donation contingent on cleaning and sealing the sculpture prior to installation. A non-profit organization, The Mary Redman Foundation, has indicated a willingness to cover the cost of installation materials, and Marvin stated that he has offered Park Operations staff time to help with installation. The donation must also be approved by the Park Board and the Arts Commission.

Pam Holladay asked what the cost of maintenance over time would be. Marvin responded that it would be very minimal. Dominique Zervas stated that the Arts Commission is very concerned about on-going maintenance of pieces in the City's collection, as even rock and stone pieces require cleaning periodically. The Arts Commission has researched other cities and has found that larger cities like Seattle, for example, have much more stringent rules about donation. Seattle will not accept any pieces made of wood because of the maintenance they require. Dominique also reported that the Arts Commission makes reacession agreements with the artists prior to accepting donations that cover maintenance, repair and removal in order to address these concerns. Adrienne Lederer stated that the Big Rock Garden Committee cleans every sculpture in the garden each year prior to the opening of the annual sculpture exhibit. Adrienne also reported that when submitting pieces for installation in the garden, artists are required to fill out forms kept on file by Rae Edwards that give instructions on how their piece needs to be maintained.

Mike Anderson moved to approve the donation of *Hope*. Adrienne Lederer seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously. Jane Blume excused herself at 8:15 a.m.

D. Boulevard Over Water Walkway Letter: Geoff Middaugh reported that this project went before the Hearing Examiner on November 17, at which time the Hearing Examiner decided to keep the public comment period open until January 7, 2011. Following that date, City staff will have two weeks to respond to any public comment received on the project. Geoff reported that the public comment shared at the hearing included environmental and budgetary concerns. Geoff stated that he feels that the environmental issues can and will be resolved through the permitting process and that the public desires more waterfront access and generally supports this project. Geoff drafted a letter in support of the project on behalf of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board that he would like the entire Board to approve if they are in agreement. This letter would then be submitting to the Hearing Examiner to go in the public comment record.

Dominique Zervas stated that she understands that there needs to be resolution with Coastal Salish Tribes about their fishing grounds and stated that she feels that the environmental and ecological issues brought forward will be thoroughly vetted by the proper permitting agencies as the project moves forward. John Blethen said that he approves of the letter and commented that some concerns voiced about the over water walkway duplicating the South Bay Trail are short-sighted. John stated that he has been involved in the Waterfront Futures planning and eventually, Wharf Street will be closed and that duplication will disappear. John also stated that he feels that the environmental issues being voiced have not been scientifically tested. John stated that there are always environmental positives and negatives to bringing more people to the waterfront, but he believes that the positives will outweigh the negatives in this case. John said that he feels that it will be very important to respectfully work out the tribal fishing ground rights. Dominique agreed and suggested that a reference to the importance of working with the tribes on this issue should be included in the letter.

Dominique Zervas moved that the Park Board generally agree to the letter, with the understanding that Geoff will make the suggested amendments and distribute it to the Board for unanimous approval prior to submitting it to the Hearing Examiner for the public comment record. Mike Anderson seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS: Julie Guy thanked Park staff and Park Board members for attending the Cordata Park Trail dedication, and thanked Adrienne Lederer for all of her hard work planning the dedication ceremony. Julie also reported that two memorial benches to be placed along the trail have already been purchased and that the Guide Meridian/Cordata Neighborhood has agreed to adopt the trail for trash removal and weeding work parties.

Paul Leuthold announced that the City Council approved the City's 2011 budget and they reinstated \$20,000 for the operation of the spray parks at Cornwall and Fairhaven Park that staff had eliminated in order to reduce operating costs.

VI. ADJOURNMENT: The December 2010 meeting of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board was adjourned by consent at 8:59 a.m.

Approved: Geoff Middaugh, Chair

Attest: Liz Haveman, Secretary