

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
Wednesday, December 14, 2011

Present: Julie Guy, Pam Holladay, Geoff Middaugh,
Diane Blake, Dominique Zervas, Rosalie Nast, Mike Anderson

Excused: Bill Langley, Adrienne Lederer, Bill Hadley

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

I. **AGENDA REVIEW:** No new items were added to the agenda.

II. **OCTOBER MEETING MINUTES:** The November meeting minutes were approved as submitted.

III. **OLD BUSINESS:**

A. **Greenway Advisory Committee Update:** Pam Holladay reported that Greenway Committee member, Alex McLean, has been attending Transportation Commission meetings and keeping the Committee apprised of how the Pedestrian Plan links to Greenway trails and corridors and that there are some concerns about linkages in the Puget Hill area.

John Blethen stated that he is concerned about the negotiations between the City and the Lummi Nation in regards to the proposed Boulevard Over Water Walkway and suggested that the Park Board Chair and the Greenway Committee Chair draft a letter to Mayor-elect Linville to show support for this project and to encourage executive support for the negotiations. James King stated that he has met with Mayor-elect Linville and that she is aware of this project and the negotiations, and that a letter from the Park Board and Greenway Committee explaining the public process and interest behind this project would be a good idea. Geoff Middaugh volunteered to take the lead on drafting the letter. Dominique Zervas stated that she would invite Mayor-elect Linville to a future Park Board meeting.

John Blethen also suggested planning a joint Park Board-Greenway Committee working retreat to focus on long term planning for maintenance of recently acquired Greenway properties, including signage advertising that the property was acquired with Greenway funds. John stated that due to the state of the economy, there is some concern about the success of a future Greenway levy and that signage will help advertise the success of the Greenway Program. John also suggested that some longterm partnerships with community interest groups, like community gardeners, might be a way to utilize and maintain City properties without added cost to the City. Geoff Middaugh volunteered to work with Linda Grant, Chair of the Greenway Committee, on planning a retreat.

John Blethen reported that a number of years ago, he set up a Bellingham Parks Foundation account through the Whatcom Community Foundation and that currently, there

is approximately \$5000 in the account. John stated that this account could be rolled into another account if that is what Park staff and the Board suggest. Geoff Middaugh said he is not clear on how the Parks & Recreation Department works with the Whatcom Community Foundation and the Whatcom Parks & Recreation Foundation and that he would like to have that discussion on a future meeting agenda. Leslie Bryson stated that many private projects, such as the Fairhaven Park Labyrinth, work with the Whatcom Parks & Recreation Foundation to hold and disburse funds raised for donated park projects. Julie Guy volunteered to research the various foundations for this board discussion that could take place sometime in the spring.

IV. NEW BUSINES:

A. "Grace" tin woman sculpture: James King reported that he has heard citizen feedback about "Grace" both supporting keeping her in place and requesting that the sculpture be immediately removed. James reported that the Bellingham Arts Commission had a discussion about the sculpture at their last meeting and while they like the sculpture and find it to be aesthetically pleasing, their recommendation is that the artist be required to apply for a shoreline permit and bring it to the Arts Commission for approval as a temporary installment, or that the artist be required to remove it immediately. The Arts Commission expressed concern about the lack of public process, the unfairness to other artists who would like their work displayed and do follow the process and safety concerns. The sculpture may be sharp, is installed on a sharp rock that is accessible by foot during low tide, and has not been inspected to ensure proper installation.

Mike Anderson stated that he thinks guerilla art, and "Grace" in particular, is cool and that it is not reasonable to think that all art can be made safe for unreasonable people. Pam Holladay stated that guerilla art is a popular cultural trend and that the City should be prepared to see more of it in the future. Pam suggested that the City work with the local media to educate the public on the process for public art installation. James responded that the City has discussed this, and he expects that this will be done. Diane Blake stated that she understands the concerns expressed by the Arts Commission, but thinks that the artist's creativity should be applauded and that if allowed to remain, "Grace" could become another Bellingham landmark that adds to the uniqueness of the community.

Leslie Bryson stated that she asked Gina Austin, who is a civil and structural engineer, to review the information about how "Grace" was installed that was printed in the Cascadia Weekly. Gina stated that based on the information in the paper, the installation was properly done and recommended that if the piece were to remain, the bolt connections should be inspected. Leslie also stated that the artist has said, through his contact at the Cascadia Weekly, that he would remove the sculpture when it becomes rusted, which he anticipates in about five years. Marvin Harris stated that the Park Operations concern about guerilla art is primarily that of safety and ensuring removal of the artwork once it is deemed unsafe. Rosalie Nast stated that she feels that the City needs more public art and is in favor of keeping "Grace" as long as the liability for eventual removal lies on the artist.

John Blethen commented that ultimately, the Mayor and the City Council will make the decision about "Grace" and that the Arts Commission and the Park Board are purely advisory. Julie Guy stated that she feels the artist showed creativity, originality and competence and feels that the community should not be overly bureaucratic and allow

“Grace” to stay and become a landmark. The City needs to figure out how to keep “Grace” and let the community enjoy it. Dominique Zervas commented that frequently, when things are built without a permit, they are not torn down, but the builder is required to go back and complete the appropriate process.

Diane Blake moved that the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board support “Grace” and recommend that the City go through whatever process and efforts necessary to keep “Grace” in place. Julie Guy seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

- B. Squalicum Creek Park Phase 3 Development:** Leslie Bryson reminded the Park Board that the Squalicum Creek Park master plan was approved by Park Board and adopted by City Council in 2005. Phase 1 development of Squalicum Creek Park included construction of a ballfield, restroom, parking lot and a large amount of dirtwork to place utilities. Phase 2 development included construction of Willow Spring, a salmon habitat enhancement. Leslie Bryson introduced Jonathan Schilk, Parks Landscape Architect, to present Phase 3 development plans. Leslie stated that Phase 3 development will be paid for with Greenway 3 Levy and Park Impact Fees and that they are applying for matching funds through a Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program grant.

Jonathan Schilk reported that the construction cost estimate for Phase 3 development is \$3.4 million, not including the potential grant. Phase 3 development will include more site grading and earthwork, demolition of the front office building and removal of existing concrete slabs, construction of an additional ballfield, lighting of both ballfields, construction of a loop trail, basketball court, playground, a 2-acre fenced dog off leash park, two additional restroom facilities, a large picnic shelter, additional parking lot, grass, tree planting and signage. Adjacent to the playground, a field is proposed with small hills and a curved trail to replace the large mound of topsoil currently existing in the park that will be spread out during Phase 3. The neighborhood came to enjoy the pile of topsoil as a park amenity and the “humpy lumpy” field is a proposed park feature to replace it.

Dominique Zervas moved that the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board support the City’s grant application as presented. Rosalie Nast seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

- C. Division Street Trail:** Leslie Bryson reported that the Division Street Trail project will be paid for with Park Impact Fees and is expected to be constructed in 2012. It is the missing link between two developer constructed trail segments. Jonathan Schilk stated that the Division Street Trail project involves construction of approximately 500 feet of trail between Eliza Avenue and Mahogany Road inside the Division Street right-of-way in the Cordata neighborhood. This trail connection was identified in the 2008 PRO Plan and the North Bellingham Trail Plan. Jonathan stated that he expects the total cost of construction to be between \$80,000 and \$100,000, and roughly 40% of that cost will be spent on wetland mitigation.

John Blethen asked if Jonathan considered having the trail route follow the existing gas line instead of the planned route. Jonathan responded that he did look at that and other trail routes to make this connection, but that he chose the route that required minimal wetland mitigation. The gas line goes through the middle of wetlands. John Blethen asked if the

cost per linear foot for this trail project (approximately \$200 per linear foot if the 500 feet of trail costs \$100,000) is the cost that should be expected for future projects in the Cordata neighborhood. Jonathan responded that this is expected in critical wetland areas where mitigation is required, however, the higher cost per linear foot is also reflective that this is a relatively short trail segment.

Geoff Middaugh asked if crushed limestone surfacing is the Parks standard. Jonathan responded that it is. The crushed limestone called for in the Parks Design Standards Manual is a local material that is durable, firm and slip resistant. Where it cannot be used in some smaller neighborhood parks, asphalt or concrete paving is used. John Blethen suggested that the Parks Department experiment with some other products that might have a longer life expectancy. Leslie Bryson responded that for the price, the crushed limestone does have a good life expectancy, but that Parks staff are currently experimenting with crushed concrete and have also used a Graywacke rock from Lummi Island. Diane Blake commented that the finer crushed limestone on the new Cordata to Meadowbrook trail is much nicer than the larger grade on the main Cordata Park trail. Jonathan responded that the contractor had a difficult time finding the required crushed limestone grade and was required to add the finer grade top dressing on that trail.

- D. Boulevard Park dedication rock:** Leslie Bryson reported that when the upper picnic shelter at Boulevard Park was removed, a dedication plaque placed by the Rotary Club was removed and the proposed dedication rock is to replace that plaque. Staff suggested an interpretive sign be installed rather than a rock. The Rotary Club did not want to do an interpretive sign and would prefer to install a granite rock with a smooth face in an existing planting bed adjacent to Woods Coffee. The rock would be engraved to read, "Boulevard Park, dedicated xxx-xxx 1980, Originally proposed in 1973 by the **YWCA Eco-Action Committee**, Supported by the **Rotary Club of Bellingham** who helped assemble the land and promoted construction. Boulevard Park is a result of dedicated citizens working together with City Government. – Rotary Club of Bellingham, 2012".

Diane Blake asked if the location for this rock outside Woods Coffee is negotiable and stated that it seems like an odd location as it is not likely to be seen there. Diane also asked how tall the rock will be. Leslie Bryson responded that it will be approximately 3 feet tall and angled, and that alternate locations could be considered, but that they wanted to put it somewhere close to the entrance of the park in an existing bed. Julie Guy suggested the corner bed right near the sign at the park entrance. James King said that he got the impression from Brian Griffin that the dedication rock did not need to be prominent in size or location. John Blethen stated that to his recollection, there were a number of key players in the creation of Boulevard Park and a number of different funding sources. John suggested that the wording on the rock be carefully considered to ensure that the Rotary Club is not credited entirely.

Dominique Zervas moved approval of the dedication rock as presented. Pam Holladay seconded the motion.

Mike Anderson stated that he is concerned that the wording on the rock may give the Rotary Club ownership of something that they do not own. James King suggested that the last sentence of the proposed wording be moved above mention of the YWCA and Rotary

Club. Rosalie Nast suggested that the YWCA and Rotary Club not be bold-face type. Diane Blake stated that she is not clear on the purpose of this rock; the location seems odd and she is not sure why efforts would be focused on this. Diane stated that if this is going to be installed, it ought to be in a place where people would see it. Mike Anderson commented that he feels this is not a replacement for the plaque that was located on the upper side of the park dedicating the picnic shelter; he feels that this is completely different.

Geoff Middaugh called the Board to vote. The motion passed four to three; Mike Anderson, Rosalie Nast and Diane Blake opposed.

Leslie Bryson stated that she would share the discussion items of concern with Brian Griffin and consider alternate locations for the rock to be located.

V. BOARD REPORTS:

- A. Arts Commission:** Diane Blake reported that she has a schedule conflict with the Arts Commission regular monthly meetings and feels that she needs to resign from that liaison role. Pam Holladay and Rosalie Nast volunteered to fill that liaison role cooperatively.
- B. Planning Commission:** Geoff Middaugh reported that Bill Langley is following the Padden Hills rezone request as it includes a potentially large amount of property dedicated to parks and trails. Leslie Bryson stated that the City does have an existing conservation easement along Padden Gorge on the property and the previous development plans included dedication of 22 acres on the ridge with a trail. Leslie reported that at the Planning Commission Public Hearing, most of the public comment in regards to this project was in opposition due to traffic issues as there is only one point of access. Leslie stated that she has heard that the developer would now like to build on the ridge so there may not be as much as 22 acres of open space dedication on the ridge, but that there will still likely be a trail near the ridge connecting to Lake Padden Park, as well as a trail connection over the proposed water line to Padden Creek.
- C. Cordata Park and Friends of VanWyck Park:** Julie Guy reported that Public Works is looking at the extension of Horton Road, which would make Cordata Park accessible by vehicle and the next phase of park development could occur. Julie also reported that the Friends of VanWyck Park will be working with Park staff on a design charrette in February 2012 to come up with a conceptual plan for VanWyck Park including trails, potential uses and an access point.
- D. Woodstock Farm Conservancy:** Rosalie Nast reported that the Woodstock Farm Conservancy is looking into installing some interpretive signs at Woodstock similar to the new signs in Cordata Park. They are also planning to continue their fundraising efforts and want to invite Mayor-elect Linville to a future Conservancy meeting to make her aware of their issues of concern. The Conservancy is also concerned about potential vandalism to the Farm without an on-site caretaker.
- E. Transportation Commission:** Pam Holladay stated that she has focused her liaison role to the Transportation Commission on the Pedestrial Plan efforts. Pam stated that a report of pedestrian needs and recommendations has recently been posted on the City's website. The report primarily consists of sidewalk linkages, sidewalk widening and intersection

revisions. Pam stated that the Transportation Commission meets twice each month and that she is not able to attend those regular meetings. Leslie Bryson responded that the Commission discusses a wide variety of issues and that Pam could limit attendance to meetings where park-related issues are discussed.

VI. DIRECTOR'S REPORT: James King reported that he has spent a good amount of time meeting staff and touring park facilities. He has also met with various citizen committees and user groups including the lessee of the Lake Padden Golf Course and the owner of the Bellingham Bells, the Whatcom Parks & Recreation Foundation, the Friends of Big Rock Garden Park, the Lake Padden Golf Committee, the Whatcom Rowing Association, Sehome Hill Arboretum Board of Governors and with various individual City Council Members. He has also met with Mayor-elect Linville and feels that she is very interested in and supportive of the Parks and Recreation Department.

James reported that Linda Stewart has left employment with the City's Executive Office to take another position and that Leslie Bryson has been asked to take the lead on Waterfront planning until Mayor-elect Linville takes office and hires someone to fill Linda Stewart's position.

James reported that the City has been very patient with the Occupy Bellingham movement and encampment at Maritime Heritage Park. While the City has not given any written or formal permission for them to camp, they have been allowed to do so. However, the relationship between the City and Occupy is starting to change with the recent holes being dug in the lawn and general wear and tear to the park turf and amenities. Following the Occupy efforts to block the train tracks in downtown Bellingham, City staff have begun working tactfully toward encouraging the Occupy encampment to move on. Dominique Zervas asked how the City is distinguishing between the Occupy movement and homeless campers. James responded that leadership of the Occupy movement has changed over the past weeks. The City's original point of contact with Occupy had not been to the encampment within the past week and a half the last time James contacted him. The Occupy movement has been feeding the homeless and everyone camping in the park has been required to camp within the confines of the Occupy encampment bounded by park sidewalks. The desire of City staff is to impress upon the Occupy movement that they are not impacting corporate America, but the local citizen tax payers who will have to pay to repair the park lawn and clean up the mess left behind by the Occupy encampment.

James reported that he has been attending meetings on the funding payback plan for Chuckanut Ridge. Dominique Zervas asked if this topic could be on a future meeting agenda so that the Board can stay apprised in an effort to be strategic in planning for a future Greenway levy.

Geoff Middaugh reported that the City of Bellingham is now posting performance measures on the City's website and suggested that he would like to see these performance measures on a future Park Board agenda to see how they relate to the work done by the Board. Dominique Zervas asked if the Park Board has specific goals. Geoff responded that the performance measures name City goals and suggested that those applicable could be the Park Board's goals. John Blethen commented that the PRO Plan could also be used to determine the

Board's goals. Geoff agreed as the Park Board will be serving as the primary steering committee for updating the PRO Plan.

VII. ADJOURNMENT: The December meeting of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board was adjourned by consent at 9:01 a.m.

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