

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
Wednesday, February 11, 2009

Present: Bill Hadley, Jane Blume, Adrienne Lederer, Jim McCabe, Dominique Zervas, , Julie Guy, Tom Barrett, Mark Peterson,

Absent: Harry Allison, John Hymas

Excused: Mike Anderson

Staff: Paul Leuthold, Parks & Recreation Director
Marvin Harris, Park Operations Manager
Dick Henrie, Recreation Manager
Robin Eldore, Parks & Recreation Staff
Liz Haveman, Board Secretary
Heather Higgins-Aanes, Environmental Educator
Wendy Scherrer, Volunteer
Tim Wahl, Greenways Coordinator

Attending: Louise Bjornson, City Council
Barbara Ryan, City Council
John Blethen, Greenway Advisory Committee Chair
Jim Zander, Greenway Advisory Committee Liaison

I. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Executive Session was held from 7:00 – 7:30 a.m.

II. **JANUARY MEETING MINUTES:** Motion made and unanimously approved to accept the January 2009 Park Advisory Board meeting minutes as submitted.

III. **OLD BUSINESS:**

A. **Greenway Committee Update:** Jim Zander reported that John Blethen will continue as Chair, Eric Hirst Vice Chair of the Greenway Advisory Committee in 2009. There are currently two vacancies on the Committee. Bill Hadley asked if Committee members are appointed by neighborhood. Jim responded that no, but the Committee has historically tried to be balanced by neighborhood as well as gender. Jim also reported that at the last meeting, Tim Wahl distributed a spreadsheet of Greenway properties acquired since 1991 to the present. This spreadsheet is posted on the Greenways website.

B. **Salmon Art Trail:** Heather Higgins-Aanes introduced herself as the Environmental Program Coordinator for the Parks Department, and introduced Wendy Scherrer. Wendy did a 3 month internship with the Parks Department that ended in December, but is now volunteering her time to finish the Salmon Art Trail project. Heather stated that the Salmon Art Trail Guidelines that were distributed in the Park Board meeting packets were created to be consistent with the Bellingham Municipal Code and the Bellingham Arts Commission guidelines. Interested artists with new pieces should approach the City with their proposals, which would go to Park Board and then to the Arts Commission. Heather stated that new artworks should have the same general theme of salmon and our connection to nature so that all of the artwork along Whatcom Creek can be seen as a collection. Wendy Scherrer stated that this could be a great tourist attraction. Heather distributed two different draft brochures for the Salmon Art Trail and explained that they have not decided which to

use yet. The brochure advertises the existing artwork as a collection, similar to the collection of sculpture at Big Rock Garden and at Western Washington University.

Jim McCabe asked about the process of selection and if it would be more elaborate than what occurs presently. Heather responded that the intention is to use the same process that has been previously used, but the Salmon Art Trail Guidelines are intended to spell out the process in more detail. Jim also inquired what would happen if there were a disagreement between the Park Board and the Arts Commission about a particular piece. Heather asked if there has ever been disagreement before; Paul Leuthold responded that there had not been in the past. Dominique Zervas said that she feels it is a good idea to have a clear decision maker designated in the guidelines so that there is no confusion if a disagreement arises. Heather stated that she believes that a proposal wouldn't go to the Arts Commission if the Park Board didn't approve, but would find out and state that clearly in the guidelines.

Tom Barrett asked about the language in section 17.2 of the Salmon Art Trail guidelines. Tom suggested that due to the tight budget situation, he believes that the guidelines should state that the City "requires" donors to contribute funds toward the maintenance of the art work, rather than "expects". Marvin Harris said that his staff is not equipped to do more than very general upkeep on art pieces. They cannot make major repairs if vandalized, or re-create the art when damaged. Paul Leuthold said that the City is seeking an Art Conservator of some kind, who could do those things. Dominique Zervas stated that she likes the language "expects" so that if a really great piece comes along it can be installed whether there is maintenance funding or not. Tom Barrett suggested that if "required" isn't added in 17.2, then a subsection should be added to the guidelines to address maintenance. Heather said she will add maintenance to point 11.2.4 so that whether or not the artist provides maintenance funds becomes part of the selection criteria. Tom Barrett still felt, and Julie Guy agreed, that 17.2 should read "requires" and in the last sentence, regarding 10% of the value of the piece of art going to maintenance, the word "suggested" should be changed to "required" as well. Heather responded that she would make that change. She also said the 10% is intended to be the same as that required by the Arts Commission, and may change depending on what they determine. Jim Zander asked where the 10% figure came from. Wendy Scherrer said that they reviewed various other city guidelines to get that figure.

Jim McCabe asked how often art needs maintenance in general. Wendy Scherrer said that in speaking with WWU, they do yearly checkups. She said that every sculpture has maintenance needs, but the extent is unknown and the need varies. Wendy suggested that getting groups of volunteers to help would be beneficial and would help cut down maintenance cost. Paul Leuthold stated that he wants to try and stay away from Park Staff having to maintain the artwork. Marvin Harris explained that not all pieces will need the same maintenance and that the 10% could be too much for one piece, yet not enough for another. Barbara Ryan asked where the 10% funding goes. Heather responded that it goes into a maintenance fund set up by the Arts Commission, not the Parks Department. Dominique Zervas reported that the Salmon Art Trail is on the March Arts Commission meeting agenda and perhaps they could review how the guidelines fit with their guidelines and make a recommendation that would be brought back to Park Board. Heather noted that picture #2 in the brochure is a bench that had been completely ruined due to

vandalism. A retired gentleman in town volunteered to renovate it, has nearly done so and the Arts Commission will review where it should be re-installed at their March meeting as well. Tom Barrett moved and Dominique Zervas seconded the motion that the Salmon Art Trail guidelines be forwarded to the Arts Commission for review before coming back to the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board for final approval.

IV. New Business:

- A. Recreation Report:** Dick Henrie, Recreation Manager, distributed spreadsheets detailing participant usage in 2008 at various recreation facilities including the Arne Hanna Aquatic Center, Civic Athletic Complex, Joe Martin, and other athletic fields. Dick also reported on which sports are taking place on which fields, estimated attendance totals for sports and enrichment programs, the number of activities provided and the estimated hours of participation by citizens in our community. Dick stated that 3020 sports events at various athletic fields throughout the City is a conservative estimate. Dick also said that he took a very conservative average to determine approximately 140,500 sporting participants and 273,050 spectators in 2008, and estimated a total of approximately 804,227 recreation participants (athletics, aquatic, enrichment).

Dick reported that the City's tight budget situation has affected his staff and he expects additional cuts in the future, but when he talks to his staff the concern is how to continue to provide their services at the same level with less money and resources. Dick stated that their focus remains on the concern for quality. Historically, programs that were started with the Parks and Recreation Department have been handed off to other agencies, to continue to flourish, so that the Parks Department can focus on providing the programs that no one in the City is offering. Dick stated that this is why the Aquatic Center is so important; no one else is offering the same services at the same affordable price.

Tom Barrett asked if Dick has considered raising registration fees to help off-set the budget shortage. Dick responded that his staff do regularly evaluate program fees, but stated that during a time where revenues across the City are down, he is not sure that Recreation can expect to gain an increase in revenue by raising fees. People may decide not to participate in programs rather than pay an increased rate. However, they have raised some fees at the Arne Hanna Aquatic Center and at large popular events like the Lake Padden Triathlon to help offset the budget shortages, and will continue to evaluate and make reasonable fee increases as the need arises.

Paul Leuthold reported that Dick has also provided a huge service to numerous community events and non-profit agencies over the years. Dick stated that there are over 200 agencies that his staff cooperate with on events like the Canoe Journey, Memorial Day, Veterans Day and other special events. Dick stated that he is proudest of the Leisure Guide; there have been 118 of them printed over the years. The Leisure Guide makes the Parks & Recreation Department the leaders in coordinating and facilitating recreation services within the County; it is the original recreational resource for our community. Mark Peterson added that Lance Romo, Recreation Coordinator on Dick's staff, is a huge asset to our community and the Department. Mark stated that Lance recently put together an after-hours meeting with over 30 agencies to discuss and provide information on ways to move events towards zero waste and have a low impact on parks and trails. Mark also stated that the Recreation staff provide a huge service to the City in terms of organization and loaning

equipment for large events. Dick Henrie reported that Heather Higgins-Aanes also began a Towards Zero Waste Program at Civic Field in 2008, which resulted in a much cleaner stadium and far less garbage going to the landfill.

Paul Leuthold stated that many people feel that if you simply provide the parks, open spaces and trails, people will recreate, but many want the organization and structure that the Recreation staff provide. It is important to have both facilities and facilitators. You can measure some services with numbers, but you can't measure the impact of a recreational activity on someone's life. Recreation creates life experiences for people that make their lives better, and that is invaluable.

V. Board Reports:

- A. Arts Commission:** Dominique Zervas reported that there is a call for art in the lobby of City Hall. She distributed a flier advertising Velocity and the Mayors' Arts awards. Dominique also reported that there are 2 vacancies on the Commission and they are interviewing candidates. At the last meeting, the Commission had a budget update and decided to put a hold on funds for Childrens Art Education, Leisure Guide advertising, and Art sculpture maintenance funds. Downtown Sounds and the Mayors' Arts Awards funding will continue.
- B. Nooksack Loop Trail:** Paul Leuthold will be participating in a van trip of the intended Nooksack Loop Trail route with Daniel Tepper on Friday, February 27, at 9 am, beginning at the Max Higbee Senior Center. Park Board members are invited to attend.
- C. Big Rock Garden:** Adrienne Lederer reported that the Big Rock Committee is planning for the Mothers Day Sculpture Exhibit and is planning some volunteer work parties to prepare the garden for the Exhibit.
- D. Woodstock Farm:** Adrienne Lederer reported that Jonathan Schilk, Parks Landscape Architect, is working on plans to rework the Woodstock Farm driveway entrance for easier access. Adrienne suggested that Jonathan attend a future Park Board meeting to share the plans.
- E. Watershed Advisory Board:** Bill Hadley distributed a map and list of watershed acquisitions as of January 5, 2009.
- F. Boulevard Overwater Walkway:** Paul Leuthold reported that the Parks Department is currently working with Reid Middleton on an RFP for 2nd phase of the project. Bill Hadley asked if a route for the walkway has been determined and drawn up. Paul responded that it has; they are going with a version with a slight curve, closer to the shore. The drawing is posted on the City's website. Paul stated that the project will be funded with a \$2.1 million grant and \$4 million in Greenway funds. Paul reported that he anticipates construction to begin in 2012 pending clean-up at the foot of Cornwall Ave.
- G. Cordata Park:** Julie Guy reported that Gina Gobo Austin is working on getting permits to start building trails in Cordata Park from Horton Road out to Meadowbrook or Cordata Parkway. Julie stated that Gina expects to have the permits in 4 months so construction can get started in May even though the extention of Horton Road isn't constructed yet.

Tom Barrett asked if the Horton Road extension will be in the TIP. Julie said it has been requested but does not expect it to be included. Barbara Ryan said that many people would like to see all projects like this to be included in the TIP in the future.

H. City Council: Louise Bjornson reported that Chuckanut Village beach access was removed from the City Council's Consent Agenda on Monday because it came up unexpectedly. Paul Leuthold said that the agenda bill was submitted by Public Works Environmental Resources. He stated that Public Works is concerned about the environmental impacts of a concrete culvert and parking for beach access, but he feels that there needs to be more public process before the beach access is restricted. Paul reported that there is a good amount of community concern over the loss of a parking area and kayak launch if beach access is restricted. Louise stated that she is also concerned about providing beach access for the elderly if the parking area is removed.

VI. ADJOURNMENT: The February 2009 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board was adjourned by consent at 9:10 a.m.

Approved: Jim McCabe, Chair
Attest: Liz Haveman, Secretary