

**PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, January 13, 2009**

**Present:** Bill Hadley, Jane Blume, Adrienne Lederer, Jim McCabe, John Hymas, Dominique Zervas, Mike Anderson, Julie Guy, Tom Barrett, Harry Allison

**Absent:** Mark Peterson

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

**Attending:** Louise Bjornson, City Council  
Barbara Ryan, City Council  
John Blethen, Greenway Advisory Committee  
Jim Zander, Greenway Advisory Committee  
Jason Darling, RE Store  
Paul George, Cascade Design Group  
Kim Brown, Public Works  
Brent Baldwin, Public Works  
Katie Franks, Planning & Community Development  
Diedre Hunsaker, Planning & Community Development

**I. EXECUTIVE SESSION:** No Executive Session

**II. DECEMBER MEETING MINUTES:** Motion made and unanimously approved to accept the December 2008 Park Advisory Board meeting minutes as submitted.

**III. OLD BUSINESS:**

**Greenway Committee Update:** Jim Zander reported that the December Greenway meeting was cancelled due to the weather as well as the January walk. The Greenway Strategic Plan used to direct the allocation of discretionary Greenway Levy III spending went to City Council on Monday, January 12. Council adopted the North and Whatcom Creek Sections of the Plan and will wait for the release of the Fairhaven Highlands Environmental Impact Statement before approving the south portion of the Plan. Once the EIS is released, Council will schedule a meeting to reconsider the south portion. Dominique Zervas shared that Tim Johnson will have an article in the Cascadia Weekly today about the Greenway Strategic Plan. Leslie Bryson reported that some citizens have expressed concern that this came up suddenly and some feel that the \$4 million allocated in the Chuckanut Ridge area came up after negotiations with the property owner.. Leslie stated that there have been no negotiations on purchasing Chuckanut Ridge. The Greenway Committee will continue to identify properties that come up on the south side but staff will have to wait for Council direction to pursue further action on any south side property.

**IV. Director's Report:** Jim McCabe asked Paul Leuthold to report on the impact of the loss of the WWU football program on the Civic Athletic Complex and the impact on the parks due to the recent flooding.

Paul reported that the immediate financial impact is an \$8,000 loss in rental revenue. Paul stated that his larger concern is the Facility Use Agreement between the City and WWU in which WWU has committed to pay the City \$40,000 per year for 20 years to offset the cost of the Civic capital improvements. These funds have been placed in an escrow account with the plan to use them to pay for replacement of the field turf at an approximate cost of \$1 million. Paul stated that language in the contract includes an escape clause for WWU if there is a reduction of Civic use. However, Paul stated that he has spoken with Tim Wynn of WWU, who has indicated that there is no intention to pull out of the contract at this time. Paul also reported that due to the cancellation of WWU's football program, Saturdays are now available for other groups and there is a local soccer group that would like to use Saturdays. Finally, Paul stated that due to the reduction in revenue from Business & Occupation Tax, Real Estate Excise Tax, and the increasing cost of utilities,, the Parks Department is looking at amending the 2009 operating budget to reduce staffing at Civic.

Marvin Harris reported that no urban park assets have been lost due to flooding. Squalicum Creek Park had flooding in the parking lot and parts of trail. Arroyo Park experienced a section of hillside that gave away as well as some trail damage. Whatcom Creek flooded the section of trail behind Haskell Business Park, but the Red Tail Reach landscaping held up well during the flood.

**V. Board Reports:**

**A. Arts Commission:** Dominique Zervas distributed minutes from the December 2, 2008, Arts Commission meeting and a summary of the Arts Commission meeting on January 6, 2009. Key discussion items included a discussion of the artwork "The Sentinel" located at Bay and Holly and the community disagreements as to the style and the artist. Dominique stated that the Chair of the Arts Commission explained that the artist was part of a design team. No Bellingham design team applied. The Commission felt the artist was responsive to comment and worked quite a bit with members of the public during the design phase. Dominique reported that Allied Arts has extended an invitation to attend an Arts Day in Olympia. Everyone is welcome to attend, a chartered motor coach will be going from Bellingham. Dominique also reported that Arts Commission Sub-committee appointments were made and the Commission is working on an advertising plan for the year. Finally, Dominique reported that the Mayor's Arts Awards are coming up and distributed nomination forms.

Leslie Bryson reported that the Arts Commission is currently reviewing and amending their policy that requires certain projects to be approved by both the Parks Advisory Board and the Arts Commission. The changes will be that art pieces will still be approved by Arts Commission, but new building signage, bridges and other park projects will not need to be approved by Arts Commission if approved by the Parks Advisory Board. Also if art is to be donated to the City, it would need to come with money for a maintenance endowment fund. The museum will be having someone inventory current City art to come up with a maintenance plan.

- B. Bay to Baker Trail:** Daniel Tepper with the Whatcom Parks & Recreation Foundation attended the December Parks Advisory Board meeting and asked for a volunteer to be a liaison to a Nooksack Loop Trail (extension of the Bay to Baker Trail) work group. John Hymas volunteered. John reported that the tour of the trail route was cancelled due to weather and will be rescheduled in February. Louise Bjornson asked about the progress of the Bay to Baker Trail development. Leslie reported that there was money in the Greenway levies for acquisitions and that we can begin discussions with Burlington Northern working towards acquisition of the abandoned rail line along Squalicum Way. The portion of the trail that goes under I-5 to James St. will probably be done in conjunction with a Public Works acquisition. The trail will run alongside a road under I-5. Other pieces of missing trail includes property owned by Bellingham Cold Storage next to Sunset Pond and various other owners along the way; some are receptive, some are not. Jim Zander asked if there are any alternatives if we can't get across Irongate. Leslie said there is one easement near Irongate, but David Edelstein owns the surrounding property after that.
- C. Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee:** Paul discussed combining BPAC with the Parking Commission. Barbara Ryan concurred adding they could be rolled into a city-wide transportation committee, but this is 3-4 months away.
- D. Big Rock Garden:** Adrienne Lederer reported there is a meeting next week.
- E. Woodstock:** Adrienne Lederer reported they are working on creating projects for fund raising.
- F. Cordata Park:** Julie Guy volunteered to be the liaison for the public meetings for Phase I development. Leslie Bryson reported that the 2009 budget has funding for Phase I, which will include a trail. The Berger Partnership is the consultant for the trail design. The plan is to start the trail at Horton Road and run through the recently acquired adjacent county parcel.
- G. Lake Padden Golfers Committee:** Mike Anderson reported that the committee meets quarterly now and the new Lease agreement is working well.
- H. Northridge Park:** Paul reported that due to budget restrictions on the ability to adequately maintain newly constructed park amenities, just the trail will be constructed in 2009. The construction of the activity nodes will be deferred to 2010 or beyond.
- I. Trails Sub-Committee:** Tom Barrett stated that he feels that there seems to be better use of leashes with dogs due to the publicity of the Share the Trails campaign. Mike Anderson expressed that he feels that fast bicyclists are more of a problem than dogs. Barbara Ryan asked if bikers are a problem on Taylor Dock. Paul responded that when the dock first opened, bikers were a bigger problem than they appear to be now. A lot of bikers use it as part of their commute, which can be problematic with large crowds of other trail users as well. Paul stated that we need to educate all users regarding etiquette and decorum on trails. John Blethen suggested that the next over-water trail section to be built could be widened by 2 feet.

- J. Urban Forestry:** John Hymas reported there was no December meeting and the January meeting will be this week. John stated that the Urban Forestry Committee is continuing their research on creating a Heritage Tree Ordinance. John also stated that the Happy Valley neighborhood is working on a goal of 40% canopy cover. This will be included in their neighborhood plan update.
- K. Watershed Advisory Board:** Bill Hadley explained that the original purpose of this board was to purchase property in the watershed, but have been looking at redefining their role after running out of acquisition money. Bill also reported that they have recently acquired some additional money through a bond and continue to work on acquisition in their executive sessions.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

- A. Fountain Plaza Project:** Leslie introduced Jason Darling of the RE Store and Paul George, landscape architect for Cascade Design Group. Jason is working on adopting and improving the Fountain Plaza area across the street from the RE Store. The plans for improving the Fountain Plaza require an amendment to the Fountain Plaza master plan. The Parks Board would need to approve the amendments before Jason can begin major fundraising. Jason reported that they have held 5 public meetings where 50 participants shared ideas and concerns and helped develop the plan. Jason stated that he has had two meetings with Parks Staff regarding the plan. Jason also stated that he has enlisted support from a variety of businesses and the neighboring community to provide labor, supplies and staff support for the Plaza renovations. The Bellingham Herald featured the project and Jason's group was able to procure a couple of Small and Simple Grants from the City. Whatcom Community Foundation has volunteered to handle the funds for the project. A new café is going into the old Kentucky Fried Chicken building near the Plaza and has committed a cash donation for the project.

Paul George explained the design incorporates history as well as ideas and requests of the neighborhood groups. Features requested include a dog watering station because the park used to have a horse trough, a fountain, and rocks for kids to climb on. Paul stated that the current fountain is a hazardous depth; the new design will be 6" deep. Louise Bjornson asked why the depth of the fountain needs to change. Paul and Jason answered that it is a safety and Health Department issue. Anything more than 2" of water is considered a hazard. Also the current depth is not needed to have an interesting design. Leslie stated that there is a covenant in the property designation that there must be water for man and beast, so some form of a fountain needs to remain, but it is not necessary to maintain the existing fountain. The plan also proposes to eventually vacate Monroe Street and incorporate it into the park, but this idea may not be fully supported by the adjacent businesses. Leslie commented that the neighborhood wants to see more grass areas. This could be a maintenance issue in terms of having staff available to mow and maintain small areas of grass. The Monroe Street vacation and the planting of grass will need to be re-visited as a second phase to the Plaza renovations. Paul George stated that the Surveyors Monument will remain in the park but will be relocated. Also, a Big Leaf Maple is currently in the park and will be left. Dominique Zervas asked if the amount of impervious surfaces was taken into consideration in the park plans. Paul George answered that pavers that allow for

percolation as well as the use of native vegetation are included in the design. Jason Darling stated that donations will be the major source of funding for the Plaza renovation. Leslie Bryson stated that there might be some Park Impact Fees that could go toward the project and Marvin Harris stated that there may also be some sidewalk replacement dollars from Park Operations to assist.

Harry Allison moved to approve Phase I of the amended Fountain Plaza master plan; everything south of the Monroe Street right of way, and noted that the Parks Board encourages maximum use of pervious surfaces where favorable. Dominique Zervas seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously. Jason asked for recommendations of organizations or individuals to approach about fundraising. Dominique Zervas suggested Bay Rotary.

- B. Greenstreets:** Kim Brown of Bellingham Public Works explained that the Greenstreets program was created to identify gaps in the connections of trails to streets, to identify wayfinding and signage gaps, and to prioritize those gaps. The program needs funding though some of the projects are already listed in the 6 year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Julie Guy asked why the north side of Bellingham was not included in the Greenstreets map and narrative. Leslie Bryson responded that older streets have older standards that need to be updated to fill in the gaps. Also, North Bellingham has few trails yet, so gaps between trails and bicycle routes have not yet been identified. The newer streets in North Bellingham will be constructed with sidewalks and wider shoulders for bike lanes. Jim McCabe added that the bikers on the committee commuted mostly to downtown and focused on central Bellingham. Adrienne asked how North Bellingham can be added to the list. Kim Brown responded that the Neighborhood Association should recommend it to BPAC; Kim also stated that they have received a large amount of input from the Cordata Neighborhood and they are aware of needed sidewalks and crossings in that area. Adrienne commented that the Cordata Neighborhood Association asked for a sidewalk on Eliza and a stop sign at Stuart and Cordata. Brent Baldwin responded that though these requests are not currently in the TIP they are on file.

Jim McCabe asked how these projects will get funded. Brent Baldwin responded that the Greenstreets Plan will be incorporated as one piece of the overall bicycle/pedestrian Project lists used to create the TIP. There are more projects to do than money to complete them. City Council decides which projects get funded. Brent also stated that that there is no money to add anything new this year. Barbara Ryan commented that the Transportation Commission will work on a comprehensive plan for the entire city that overlays streets, sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, urban villages. Brent Baldwin commented that the next step is at the policy level, and will be to ask if Greenstreets will be added to the new Transportation Commission. Jim asked if there is funding identified for wayfinding signage. Kim responded no, funding sources will need to be identified between Parks and Public Works; generally trail signage would be funded by Parks and street signage would be funded by Public Works. Barbara Ryan commented that this is the time to identify and prioritize projects to be ready when money is available. Dominique requested to have a City map at each Park Board meeting.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT:** The January 2009 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board was adjourned by consent at 9:00 a.m.

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