

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
Wednesday, January 11, 2012

Present: Julie Guy, Pam Holladay, Bill Hadley, Bill Langley, Rosalie Nast
Adrienne Lederer

Excused: Geoff Middaugh, Diane Blake, Dominique Zervas, Mike Anderson

Attending: John Blethen, Greenway Advisory Committee liaison
Bill Miller, citizen

Staff: James King, Parks & Recreation Director
Leslie Bryson, Design & Development Manager
Tim Wahl, Greenway Program Coordinator
Jonathan Schilk, Parks Landscape Architect
Liz Haveman, Board Secretary

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 a.m. by Julie Guy.

- I. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** At 7:01 am, Julie Guy adjourned the meeting to Executive Session to hear the following items:
- a. Potential Property Acquisition.

The meeting was called back to order at 7:25 a.m.

- II. **VOTE IN OPEN MEETING FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE SESSION:** In open meeting following executive session, Bill Langley moved to recommend that staff pursue due diligence on property parcel 268 for park and trail purposes. Adrienne Lederer seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

- III. **DECEMBER MEETING MINUTES:** The December meeting minutes were approved as submitted.

IV. **OLD BUSINESS:**

- A. **Greenway Advisory Committee Update:** John Blethen expressed a desire for the Greenway Advisory Committee and the Parks Board to work together to impress on City Council that there is a need to find a way around the Critical Areas Ordinance so that trails can be constructed affordably.

Pam Holladay reported that Alex McLean is the Greenway Committee liaison to the Transportation Commission and that he has concerns about the Pedestrian Plan in terms of safety in the I-5/Meridian Street master plan. Pam stated that Alex feels that the Transportation Commission is primarily focused on sidewalks, curbing and streets and not trails. The Greenway Committee is considering a subcommittee to make recommendations for more non-motorized transportation options in the I-5/Meridian Street master plan component of the Pedestrian Plan. Pam asked if the Parks Board should consider participating in this subcommittee. Tim Wahl commented that development in the Cordata area happened in the automobile era and that it is difficult to situate trails now as there are not a lot of options in this area. James King commented that a letter to the Transportation

Commission to make them aware of the concerns might be appropriate. Leslie Bryson stated that she would look into the I-5/Meridian Street master plan as she had not heard about this component of the Pedestrian Plan and would report back at the next Park Board meeting.

Pam Holladay also expressed concern about the increased cost of wetland mitigation to park and trail development projects due to the stringent Critical Areas Ordinance. Pam suggested that the Park Board might consider creating a subcommittee to study the City's Critical Areas Ordinance and to develop an exemption for parks and trails to present to City Council. Leslie Bryson stated that there is currently an exemption for essential public facilities, but all of the stringent mitigation is still required. Leslie stated that she has asked her staff to gather data to determine how much higher development costs are due to the Critical Areas Ordinance. For example, the Division Street Trail project is expected to cost \$125,000 and \$35,000 of that is for wetland mitigation. In addition, the Parks Department will need to hire a wetland biologist to monitor the plants in the mitigated area for 10 years following construction. John Blethen commented that he feels that if staff could quantify and qualify the burdens and suggest specific modifications, City Council would be receptive to that. Julie Guy commented that this issue might be better addressed by Parks staff rather than a board subcommittee. Pam agreed. James King asked Leslie Bryson to draft a memo with suggested modifications to the Critical Areas Ordinance for a future Park Board meeting. Leslie responded that they may be able to have data gathered by the March meeting on how the local law is more stringent than the state law and what the direct impacts are to park and trail development.

John Blethen reported that a joint Greenway Advisory Committee and Park Board working retreat is being planned on February 25. The Greenway Chair, Linda Grant, will work with Geoff Middaugh to set the agenda and more details will follow. Suggested agenda topics include a discussion on projecting where the Greenway Program will be at the end of the current levy and a Greenway Program review as there are many new members on the Committee. The time and location of the retreat have not yet been set.

V. NEW BUSINES:

- A. 2012 Park Board Chair and Vice Chair:** Julie Guy reported that Geoff Middaugh has expressed willingness to serve another term as Park Board Chair, but that she would like the Board to elect a new Vice Chair. Julie nominated Geoff Middaugh for 2012 Park Board Chair and Bill Langley for Vice Chair. Adrienne Lederer seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
- B. Woodstock Farm:** James King stated that he put this item on the agenda because he would like the board to have a discussion on the constraints and potential uses of Woodstock Farm in order to help staff determine how to move forward on drafting a use policy for Woodstock Farm. Staff are considering questions like whether or not to allow renters to obtain a liquor license for events on site, whether or not to lease the Farm to a commercial vendor or try to find a non-profit agency to manage the site, or to have a live-in caretaker and manage and rent the farm to the public as we do other park facilities. Leslie Bryson reported that she asked Jonathan Schilk to attend this portion of the meeting as he is the project manager for the Woodstock Farm master plan. Leslie reported that a two day planning charrette was held shortly after Woodstock Farm was purchased. Goals named in

that charrette were to preserve the buildings, keep vehicle access on site to a minimum, increase trail access to the site and to maintain the peaceful tranquility at the Farm. When Woodstock Farm was purchased, the tenants at the Farm remained and helped maintain the property as part of their rent. When the driveway improvements and Inspiration Point renovation projects began, the tenants had to move out. Shortly thereafter, the septic system was inspected and found to have failed. Parks staff are now working on getting the septic system repaired, which must happen prior to introducing another live-in caretaker, leasing the Farm, or programming it for public events.

Jonathan Schilk reported that a steering committee for the Woodstock Farm master plan formed after the charrette and has met infrequently because budget funding has not been identified for the project. Parking at Woodstock has been a main topic of conversation at the steering committee meetings. Parking is very limited on site and there are many constraints to pedestrian and bike access to the site due to the danger posed by traffic on Chuckanut Drive. There are also constraints on how different parts of the land can be used due to some state grant funds that were used to purchase the Farm. Jonathan stated that the master planning process for Woodstock is challenging because such a process usually begins with an idea of how the site should be used, and Parks staff are not sure that they want to dictate potential uses to interested vendors in a Request For Proposals.

Jonathan stated that finding safe pedestrian access to Woodstock Farm is difficult. The best option currently is to build a trail connection from the Interurban Trail through the recently purchased Clark property with a well marked pedestrian crossing at Chuckanut Drive. The septic drainfield will also have an impact on trail connections to the site; it may be that the trails will have to be narrow footpaths rather than the six foot wide standard.

Leslie Bryson stated that the site master plan will define the areas of the Farm that a potential vendor could utilize. Leslie reported that when repaired, the septic system will allow for the equivalent of up to ten bedrooms on the site. Public restroom needs will limit the number of onsite residents. It may be that the restrooms in the cowman's cottage, chicken coop and barn need to be eliminated. Julie Guy asked about the estimated cost of installing the correct septic system. Leslie responded that it will cost an estimated \$50,000 to \$60,000 and that remaining funds from the acquisition grant through the State Aquatic Lands Enhancement Program can be used for this. John Blethen asked if staff have considered installing a compost toilet. Leslie responded that a compost toilet may be considered for the public restrooms on site.

Bill Langley asked how many parking spaces are currently on site. Leslie responded that two were developed in the recent improvement project, but that probably no more than 20-30 cars will be able to park on site. If a use policy is drafted that allows for public rental of the site, part of the rental agreement will require that the renter provide a plan for shuttling people to and from the site. John Blethen asked if the Clark property has been considered for additional parking since that use was offered as a potential selling point to the Greenway Committee. Jonathan responded that the steering committee considered it, but are not recommending it because of the dangerous Chuckanut Drive crossing and the surrounding neighbors. Bill Langley also asked if facility rental fees have been set for the site yet. Leslie responded that they have not been; setting the rental fees will be part of drafting the use policy.

Julie Guy asked what would be involved in an RFP process to lease the Farm. Leslie responded that staff are not sure; it is desirable to have an onsite caretaker to provide maintenance and security, but it may be difficult to find a vendor in this economy with the financial backing necessary to care for the buildings and maintain the Farm. Ideally, the City would like to partner with a non-profit agency that could use the Farm as an educational center with funding provided through grants, but it may be necessary to work with a commercial vendor who could raise funds by renting the site out for weddings or special events.

Rosalie Nast commented that the Woodstock Farm Conservancy feels that an onsite caretaker is a top priority for security. They would also like to have some interpretive and wayfinding signage installed to make the site more user friendly to the public. They are concerned that a lease to a commercial vendor would limit public access to the site and they feel that the lack of a safe pedestrian crossing on Chuckanut Drive is currently a major constraint to using the site. Jonathan Schilk agreed about the pedestrian crossing and commented that as the master planning process proceeds, it will be important to communicate with the Washington State Department of Transportation that improvements to Chuckanut Drive are needed to make it safe for pedestrians and bicyclists.

- C. Park Board Goals and Priorities:** James King stated that since the Mayor is tentatively planning to attend the February Park Board meeting, the board should consider what they would like the Mayor to hear while there and suggested that they might want to have a goal setting discussion. Julie Guy suggested that James work with Geoff Middaugh prior to the February meeting to frame the goals and priorities discussion so it is organized. Perhaps an initial discussion and exercise should take place at the February meeting and the Mayor should be asked to attend the March meeting instead where the goals could be presented. James said that he would talk to Geoff about it. James reported that Parks Department staff are currently working on a goal and priority setting exercise as well and passed around a document drafted last year by Park staff listing department services and assets as they relate to the Council Legacies and Strategic Commitments. James stated that the next step is for staff to define specific one-year and four-year goals as they relate to the Legacies and other planning documents like the Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan and the Greenway Strategic Plan. James also stated that he would like the Parks Board to consider goals that they as a board should be working toward, as well as goals that they think staff should work toward.

VI. BOARD REPORTS:

- A. Planning Commission:** Bill Langley reported that the Planning Commission has recommended approval of the higher density zoning changes in the Padden Hills development plans. The next step is City Council approval.

- VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** James King reported that the eviction of the Occupy Bellingham camp at Maritime Heritage Park was challenging, but that staff are happy to re-establish park use and repair damage. James also reported that staff are in the planning stages of removing multiple homeless camps on the Chuckanut Ridge property and garbage. Staff estimate that total site cleanup will require an 8 person crew working for 3 weeks. Parks staff have communicated with Responsible Development about potential volunteer work parties to assist

in the effort and that staff are considering an all staff Parks Department work party. Cleanup will be challenging because there is limited to no vehicle access to most of the camps on the property to pack the garbage out. Once cleanup and site stabilization are complete, the next step will be a long term planning effort for the site.

James reported that he has met with Mayor Linville on a few occasions and is pleased in her leadership and the way that she makes herself available to staff. Rosalie Nast asked if she is working on negotiations with the Lummi Tribe on the Boulevard Over Water Walkway. James responded that she is aware of the negotiations, but that it will take some time for her to get her feet on the ground. During her first week in office she visited every City work site and met with many staff and citizen interest groups.

James reported that Leslie Bryson has taken the lead on Waterfront development for the City on an interim basis until the Mayor hires someone to fill this position. James also reported that the Port has been doing earthwork at the Cornwall landfill site to begin the cleanup process. John Blethen commented that he is concerned that the cleanup process has started prior to the adoption of a waterfront master plan. Leslie Bryson responded that the City is 75% responsible for the cost of cleanup and allowing the Port to cap the Cornwall landfill site is saving the City money. James stated that the Department of Ecology has not yet made the final determination on what level of cleanup will be required and the cap may be a temporary solution if the determination requires something more.

James also reported that he is in contract negotiations with the Bellingham Bells and that he has been meeting with the Lake Padden Golf Course lessee on maintenance needs. He is also talking with a semi-professional adult soccer team interested in using Civic Stadium and he is talking with George Drake about a potential lease proposal for Big Rock Garden Park.

Public Comment: The one guest in attendance left at 8:40 a.m. James King had suggested that the public comment period be moved to the beginning of the Park Board meetings prior to executive session in the future.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT: The January meeting of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board was adjourned by consent at 9:00 a.m.

Approved: Julie Guy, Board Vice Chair
Attest: Liz Haveman, Secretary