

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
Wednesday, June 11, 2008

Present: Jim McCabe, Bill Hadley, Jane Blume, Tom Barrett, John Hymas, Adrienne Lederer, Julie Guy, Mark Peterson, Ira Hyman

Absent: Mike Anderson, Harry Allison

Staff: Paul Leuthold, Parks & Recreation Director
Marvin Harris, Park Operations Manager
Liz Haveman, Board Secretary

Attending: Edie Norton, Greenway Advisory Committee Liaison
John Blethen, Greenway Advisory Committee Chair
Louise Bjornson, City Council
Stan Snapp, City Council
Steve Wilson, South Neighborhood Association
Mary Mullen, South Neighborhood Association

I. **MAY MEETING MINUTES:** Motion made and unanimously approved to accept the May 2008 Park Advisory Board meeting minutes as submitted.

II. **OLD BUSINESS:**

A. **Greenway Committee Update:** Edie Norton reported that the Greenway Committee interviewed four candidates for the two Committee vacancies at their May meeting and recommended that the Mayor appoint Scott Dorough and Damon Gray to the Committee. The Mayor has approved of both candidates and they will be forwarded to City Council for approval on June 23. John Blethen reported that the Greenstreets Committee, that includes Greenway and Park Board members, has met twice so far to gather input on where there are gaps in the bicycle/pedestrian routes between streets and trails. They are working on creating a map of the City that clearly defines the gaps in order to discern how to close the gaps. John also reported that the June 17 walk will take place, but to a different property in the North Bellingham area than what was originally planned. Details will be emailed to Park Board and Greenway Committee members.

III. **NEW BUSINESS:**

A. **Dirt Jump Bike Park Renovation Update:** The WHIMPS Mountain Bike Coalition has been the driving force in the recent renovation to the Dirt Jump Bike Park near Civic Field. Mark Peterson gave a presentation on the WHIMPS and their current projects and partnerships, including the Dirt Jump Bike Park renovations.

Mark reported that the WHIMPS Mountain Bike Coalition formed in 1986 as a small group of people who simply enjoyed riding their mountain bikes. They soon began volunteer trail work in order to create better riding trails. The WHIMPS are now responsible for all trail building and maintenance on Galbraith Mountain. The WHIMPS have a wide variety of members including WWU students, families with young children, teens and adults. They also mentor students through service learning projects and teaching them etiquette and proper trail building techniques. They work with some at risk students and have had teachers report to them that they have provided positive experiences for these students that have made real impacts in their lives.

Mark reported that the WHIMPS are concerned about the impact of mountain bikes on the trails. They have annotated research sources from 5 different studies that state that mountain bikes have less of an impact on trails than hikers do. Nonetheless, the WHIMPS completed over 3000 hours of volunteer hours on trails last year. They built low bridges over wet areas and in other areas to enhance the riding experience.

The WHIMPS have made Galbraith Mountain one of the premier riding areas in Washington State. Mark reported that people visit Bellingham to ride their mountain bikes. In order to make local businesses aware of the positive impact that mountain bike tourism has on Bellingham, the WHIMPS are creating a "Biker Buck" program. Mountain bikers are encouraged to spend their money at local businesses and leave the vendor with a "Biker Buck" that they can get off the WHIMPS website to let the vendor know that their business is due to the local mountain biking community. Mark stated that mountain biking tourism is a huge source of revenue in other cities. For example, Vancouver B.C. estimates that they receive approximately \$1,000,000.00 annually from mountain bike tourism.

Mark reported that the funds approved by the Parks Board for the Dirt Jump Bike Park renovations were from the Civic Field Improvement Project. Due to weather constraints, the WHIMPS were delayed in proceeding with the project and approximately \$3000 of the \$10,000 approved was needed for other Civic projects as those funds had to be spent prior to the end of 2007. However, the WHIMPS did some fundraising on their own and spent 1/5 of their annual budget on the Dirt Jump Bike Park renovations. The project is nearing completion. They still need to clean out the bio swale and plant some native plants on the back side of the park. The WHIMPS hope to organize a community work party to complete the project when the weather clears up.

The WHIMPS have partnered with Bellingham Parks & Recreation on the Lake Padden outer loop trails as well as the new Miranda Trail in the Samish Hill neighborhood. They also partner with Whatcom County Parks & Recreation, Trillium, and the Department of Natural Resources.

B. Request from South Neighborhood in regards to Fairhaven Rose Garden House RFP:

Steve Wilson introduced himself as a member of the South Neighborhood Association and stated that he and Mary Mullen came to the meeting to discuss the Request for Proposals for the Fairhaven Park Rose Garden House. Steve and Mary attended the May Park Board meeting and spoke in favor of keeping the house on the grounds and coming up with a community use proposal for the house.

Steve reported that members of the neighborhood have received a good amount of community support to keep the house on site following Dean Kahn's article about the house in the Bellingham Herald. Members of the neighborhood have met with Rae Edwards, Parks Volunteer Coordinator, and with Katie Franks, Planning & Community Development Project Specialist, and others to discuss a proposal that the neighborhood is putting together for the house. They have been awarded a Community Block Grant that they can use on the grounds; Katie Franks is researching whether the funds may be used on house improvements as well. Mark Peterson inquired about the amount of the Community Block Grant. Steve responded that he's not sure; probably less than \$200,000.

Steve reported that the neighborhood is making progress on their vision for the house and site, but they could use more time. Their vision includes using the house as an educational space with office space. They are looking for grant funding for teachers and educational resources. The grounds maintenance would be provided by neighborhood volunteers. They plan to submit a proposal by the July 2 deadline, but they could use more time to further develop their vision and put together a proposal that they could feel really good about. Steve requested a deadline extension to August 5. He stated that he thought that the deadline would be 90 days from the release of the Request for Proposals, which would be August 5.

Steve reported that there are a number of neighbors who are sentimentally attached to the house and the grounds and he expects that there will be some outcry from the neighborhood if a proposal to remove the house from the site is selected. Steve also stated that there is a drainage issue with the grounds that needs to be addressed regardless of whether the house is there or not and that there is considerable neighborhood enthusiasm and interest in improving the grounds.

Ira Hyman asked Paul Leuthold if he is aware of anyone else working on a proposal, and if there are any legal issues with extending the deadline. Paul responded that he is aware of some others who requested copies of the Request for Proposals and who toured the house. Paul stated that it is legal to extend the deadline if the deadline is extended for everyone; however, the RFP states that the house must be moved prior to October 31, 2008. Pushing the deadline back a month reduces the amount of time available to move the house should a proposal to do so be selected. Paul stated that he appreciates the sentimental attachment to the house, but that a business decision is needed on how best to handle a dilapidated building in the park.

Mark Peterson stated that he would have a difficult time approving the request to extend the deadline as the house has been vacant and unusable since 2000.

John Blethen stated that he recognizes and appreciates the community support for repairing and keeping the house on site because it is highly visible and is the gateway to Fairhaven.

Jane Blume asked Steve Wilson if they had a cost estimate for bringing the house up to code. Steve stated that they estimate the cost at \$150,000, but the cost really depends on the end use of the site. The neighborhood has received a very positive response from a number of agencies who would like to use the house, but none of these agencies have stepped forward yet with a concrete funding commitment.

Julie Guy stated that she does not believe the deadline should be extended because Steve Wilson attended the May Park Board meeting and learned about the Request for Proposals prior to its release, so they have had more time to work on their proposal than others.

Mark Peterson moved to keep the Fairhaven Park Rose Garden House Request for Proposals deadline as July 2, 2008. Adrienne Lederer seconded the motion and the motion passed 7-2; Bill Hadley and Jane Blume opposing.

C. 2009 Parks Capital Budget Request: Paul Leuthold distributed copies of the 2009 Parks Capital Facilities and Capital Maintenance Budget Request. Paul stated that the Parks Request for 2009 Capital funds was submitted to the City's Capital Budget Committee. The Capital Committee will take each City department's capital requests and create a priority ranking for the entire City to determine which requests are approved. The Parks Department's Capital Request averages to approximately \$7,000,000 each year, with some flexibility due to changes in the economy. Ultimately, the Capital Committee will assign each department a Capital dollar amount, and then each department ranks their priority requests and determines how to use their approved amount. Paul ran through the list of the Parks Department's Capital Facilities and Capital Maintenance requests, which were listed with descriptions and dollar amounts.

The 2009 Parks Capital Facilities requests included: development of Cordata Park, patio enclosure at Arne Hanna Aquatic Center, Cornwall Park expansion, replacement of the playgrounds at Highland Heights Park and near Frank Geri Field 4, Northridge Park Phase II design and development, trails in North Bellingham to connect to Cordata Park, Boulevard Park shoreline renovation and new over water walkway, Little Squalicum Park master planning, and staff labor costs to complete these projects.

The 2009 Parks Capital Maintenance requests included: neighborhood park improvements, irrigation system improvements, replacing sports field lighting lamps, sign replacements, asphalt patching and resurfacing, roof replacements, playground part replacements, sidewalk resurfacing, limestone to resurface trails, Big Rock Garden retaining wall replacement, purchase of a chipper, parking lot fencing at Boulevard Park, parking area off Lakeway Drive near dog off leash trail between Bayview Cemetery and Whatcom Falls Park, and Sehome Arboretum improvements.

IV. ADJOURNMENT: The June 2008 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