

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
Wednesday, June 8, 2011

Present: Bill Hadley, Mike Anderson, Dominique Zervas, Jane Blume, Rosalie Nast, Adrienne Lederer, Julie Guy, Pam Holladay, Diane Blake, Geoff Middaugh, Bill Langley

Staff: Leslie Bryson, Park Design & Development Manager
Liz Haveman, Board Secretary

Attending: Tom Siebold and Bill Fly, Bellingham Table Tennis Association

I. **ANNOUNCEMENT:** Thanks to Jane Blume for close to 9 years of dedicated service on the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, including time served as Vice Chair of the Board.

II. **AGENDA REVIEW:** No changes were made to the meeting agenda.

III. **MAY MEETING MINUTES:** The May meeting minutes were approved as submitted.

IV. **OLD BUSINESS:**

A. **Greenway Advisory Committee Update:** Leslie Bryson reported that the Greenway Committee has been working on updating the Greenway Strategic Plan that was adopted by the Greenway Committee and the Park Board in 2008. In 2009, City Council adopted just the north portion of the plan, and tabled the south portion. Leslie stated that the purpose of updating the Strategic Plan is to note where funds have been spent since the 2006 levy ballot, note available balances to date, and to reallocate funds from some project areas to others where opportunities have changed. Leslie distributed a one-page table summarizing the Greenway Committee's recommended strategic planning allocations, and stated that the next step is for staff and the Greenway Committee to develop the updated Plan's text and corresponding maps. Once complete, the new Plan will go before the Greenway Advisory Committee for approval, then to the Park Board, then to City Council.

Dominique Zervas asked what the money in the King and Queen Mountain project area will be used for. Leslie responded that it will be used to connect the Bay to Baker Trail and King and Queen Mountain, in conjunction with using park impact fees for a neighborhood park anchor. Leslie stated that there are also proposed trail connections to Werner, Bowhay and VanWyck properties. Dominique commented that she thought that the Greenway Committee and staff wanted to move away from a North/South split with the Strategic Plan Update. Leslie Bryson responded that the original ballot language and the first Greenway Strategic Plan designated a certain amount of funding for different areas. In order to be consistent and follow where the money has gone and is going, we should keep the same project area labels in the Plan Update.

Geoff Middaugh expressed concern that the Plan Update has a recommendation of \$2 million for Fairhaven Highlands, while the Mayor has suggested that approximately \$4 million of Greenway funds could be spent on that acquisition. Geoff also asked about the \$1 million allocation for Galbraith Mountain while he has heard that acquisition may cost \$5 million. Geoff expressed concern that this Plan Update does not acknowledge real conversations that are going on about Fairhaven Highlands and Galbraith Mountain. Leslie

Bryson responded that the allocation for Galbraith Mountain in the Plan is not to buy Galbraith; it is for a trail connection to Galbraith from adjacent City property. The Plan does recommend a total of \$4 million for Fairhaven Highlands, in two separate increments of \$2 million each to reflect the unallocated \$2 million recommended in the 2006 Council resolution. Leslie also stated that the Greenway Strategic Plan is a recommendation to City Council that represents citizen input on Greenway designations since the 2006 Greenway Levy. City Council makes the final decision on where money will actually be spent. Leslie reported that she expressed a concern to the Greenway Committee about their recommendation to move so much money out of the BNSF/Squalicum Creek Corridor project area. Leslie stated that we have been doing a feasibility study in conjunction with Public Works that could provide an opportunity for Parks to construct trails along the abandoned railroad from James Street to Roeder Avenue. Leslie stated that the Greenway Committee may or may not incorporate her recommendation in the final Plan Update.

Leslie stated that staff will plan an executive session at the next Park Board meeting to discuss specific properties. Geoff Middaugh responded that he would like to see that, along with a map and a draft of Plan Update text to review ahead of time. Geoff said he would like to see a unified Plan for the entire City that is supported by the Greenway Committee, Park Board and the City Council. Mike Anderson stated that he would like to see the goal that is trying to be accomplished in each project area listed in the Plan. Leslie responded that the intention is to have each project area state what was originally allocated, what has been spent, what is left, and what they would still like to accomplish in that project area.

Pam Holladay reported that the Greenway Committee is changing to weekday evening walks during the summer months. The walks will be on the 3rd Thursday of each month from 5:15 to 7 p.m. An email with more detail will be sent out to all Greenway and Park Board members.

- B. Big Rock Garden Committee Role & Responsibility:** Julie Guy stated that at the last Park Board Meeting, the Board discussed the fact that the Big Rock Garden Committee is not an official City Committee, but more of a volunteer friends group. The Board discussed changing their name to "Friends of Big Rock Garden" in an effort to make it clear to the public that they are a group of volunteers.

Geoff asked if the Board consensus was that the Friends of Big Rock operates as a subcommittee of the Park Board. Leslie Bryson responded that she does not see them as a subcommittee of the Park Board because they are not made up of all Park Board members. They are a volunteer group and a Park Board member serves as a liaison to them. Dominique Zervas stated that she feels that a clearly defined distinction is needed in the form of written guidelines for the Friends of Big Rock, and asked if these guidelines should be drafted by City staff or by the group themselves. Leslie Bryson responded that staff should provide the guidelines as they perform volunteer services on a City owned property. Adrienne Lederer stated that as the Board liaison to the Friends of Big Rock, she does not think there would be any issue with this. The group simply needs to be told what they are authorized to do. Leslie Bryson agreed and stated that she envisions guidelines that are broad enough to cover any friends group.

Diane Blake asked if friends groups need to operate under the direction of the Parks Department. Leslie Bryson responded that they do; they must reserve Park facilities for their events following the same procedure as the general public, and any work performed on City property must be pre-authorized by the City. Leslie stated that these points can be part of the guidelines, as well as things like clarifying that group membership is open to all and that group meetings are subject to the Public Meetings Act. Leslie stated that she will draft some guidelines.

V. NEW BUSINESS:

A. 2012 Parks Department Capital Budget Request: Leslie Bryson reported that in the past, the Parks Department has had use of General Fund and Real Estate Excise Tax dollars that are largely not available anymore for capital projects due to the economic downturn. Leslie stated that generally, capital projects are projects that cost \$50,000 or more, with the exception of some capital maintenance projects such as paving and trail resurfacing that are under \$50,000.

Leslie reported that the Parks Department's 2012 Capital Budget requests include Greenway 3 levy funds for development of Squalicum Creek Park. Staff will apply for a grant in 2012, and Park Impact Fees from surrounding neighborhoods can also be used on this community park. Leslie estimates that construction would begin in 2014.

Leslie also reported that the synthetic field turf at Civic Stadium is due to be replaced and will cost approximately \$1 million. The annual payments from Western Washington University for Civic improvements since 2007 have accumulated around \$180,000, but the remainder of the \$1 million cost is unfunded at this time. Leslie reported that use of Civic Field has grown dramatically over the years and a private fund raising effort may be necessary to complete this project. Jane Blume asked if the Parks Department can start charging all of the user groups a turf replacement surcharge. Leslie Bryson responded that she hopes to have a surcharge beginning next year. Diane Blake asked if the Bellingham School District could help provide the funding. Leslie responded that the City requested that the School District participate in the renovation, as they are one of the largest user groups. We have an interlocal agreement that allows for use of each other's facilities, and the School District does pay the City an amount each year, but not enough to help with this project, and the School District is struggling with their own budgetary needs as well.

Leslie stated that each year, Park Impact Fees are designated for neighborhood trails and land acquisition. Additional Capital Budget requests include funds for the construction of a public restroom at Woodstock Farm and shoreline improvements at Boulevard and Bloedel Donovan Parks. Leslie stated that some Park Impact Fees are available for the proposed overwater walkway at Boulevard, but there is a remaining unfunded need in the amount of \$2 million to complete this project.

Leslie reported that historically, Real Estate Excise Tax funds were available for capital projects, but they are limited now and in high demand due to the poor economy and cannot be counted on for these unfunded projects. Julie Guy asked if staff could apply for grants for all of the unfunded requests. Leslie responded that they can apply for grants if there is a suitable grant source, but she does not think there are any grants available for

projects like turf replacement. Bill Langley asked if the City has considered corporate sponsorship of Civic Field. Leslie responded that she believes the City would be open to that, but that the Parks Department does not have staff for marketing or pursuing sponsorships. Board members suggested that staff consider drafting sponsorship guidelines and brainstorm ways to generate sponsorship for capital projects.

VI. BOARD REPORTS:

A. Big Rock Garden Committee: Adrienne Lederer reported that the Mother's Day Garden Party was very successful and the group is discussing options for another short term fundraising event.

B. Cordata Park: Julie Guy reported that there is a Parks Volunteer Work Party scheduled on June 29 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. along the Cordata Park Trail to remove invasive plants.

C. Lake Padden Golfers: Mike Anderson reported that the committee is scheduled to meet in two weeks to discuss capital improvement projects at the course, and how the money that was going toward the loan on the clubhouse renovations might be spent now that the loan is paid off.

D. Samish Crest Trail: Leslie Bryson reported that Jonathan Schilk is working on the design for this project, with construction scheduled for 2012..

E. Treekeepers: Geoff Middaugh reported that the Treekeepers volunteered to help with an inventory and assessment of the City's urban tree infrastructure. Geoff stated that they would like to see this information included in the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Jane Blume asked if Treekeepers worked on the revegetation plan for Little Squalicum Park. Geoff responded that they do have a member, Paul Thompson, who has worked with Gina Austin on the revegetation plan. Jane asked Leslie Bryson when Little Squalicum Park will re-open. Leslie responded that it is likely that it will remain closed for the remainder of the year. Leslie reported that Oeser ran out of money and the EPA has now contracted with someone new to finish the work. Most of the contaminated material is being removed from the park site. Originally, the plan was to provide a repository for contaminated material on the site.

F. Watershed Advisory Board: Bill Hadley reported that there is a group of WWU students monitoring Lake Whatcom and that they gave a report at the last meeting on where the phosphorous in the lake is coming from. Leslie Bryson stated that at the last Park Board meeting, there was a discussion on comments that Clare Fogelsong was reported to have made to the County Council about potential use of City funds to maintain County properties in the watershed. Leslie reported that she has asked about the use of those funds for maintenance of City owned properties in the watershed and reported that there may be a possibility of the watershed program providing maintenance of Euclid Park and the parcel of property leased from DNR in the Silver Beach area.

G. Woodstock Farm Conservancy: Adrienne Lederer reported that the Conservancy held an Inspiration Point dedication and fundraising event at Woodstock Farm on May 21. The event was not real well attended, but some funds were raised that will go toward construction of a public restroom at Woodstock.

VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Leslie Bryson reported that July is Parks and Recreation Month, a program of the National Recreation and Park Association, and has been recognized by the U.S. House of Representatives since 1985. Leslie stated that she will bring a resolution to City Council at their June 20 meeting to designate July as Parks and Recreation Month in Bellingham. Leslie encouraged Park Board members to attend the Council meeting.

Leslie also reported that the bid for Meadowbrook Trail construction has been awarded to Razz Construction. Meadowbrook Trail will connect Cordata Park Trail to Birchwood Church. This trail connection is vital as the church allows public parking for Cordata Park and has constructed a playground that is open to the public. Razz Construction built the Cordata Park Trail. It is expected that they will begin construction in July.

Julie Guy announced that she is going to start a "Friends of VanWyck Park" group to work on site planning for this parcel of property in North Bellingham. She stated that she is looking for volunteers interested in meeting occasionally.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: Tom Siebold and Bill Fly introduced themselves as citizens interested in starting a Bellingham Table Tennis Association. They requested use of a park facility in which to store their tennis tables and play two or three times per week. Leslie Bryson responded that park facilities are available for rent by different user groups, but that she would have to check with Park staff about the availability of ongoing storage space. Leslie suggested that they put together a proposal that includes details of the space they need and how often they need it. Tom responded that they were hoping that the Parks Department would help them start a program. They currently have a handful of interested people, but feel that if it were advertised as a Parks program, participation would grow, and requested the opportunity to work with the Parks Department on a pilot program. Leslie encouraged them to write their proposal and stated that she would discuss their proposal with the Recreation Manager and Operations Manager.

IX. ADJOURNMENT: The June 2011 meeting of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board was adjourned by consent at 9:05 a.m.

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