

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

Present: Jim McCabe, Mike Anderson, Harry Allison, Dominique Zervas, Julianna Guy, Bill Hadley, Adrienne Lederer, John Hymas, Mark Peterson,

Absent: Tom Barrett

Excused: Jane Blume

Staff: Marvin Harris, Park Operations Manager
Carleen Strasser, Parks & Recreation Staff
Leslie Bryson, Design & Development Manager
Lori Jacobson, Aquatic Center Supervisor

Attending: Louise Bjornson, City Council
John Blethen, Greenway Advisory Committee Chair

I. EXECUTIVE SESSION: No Executive Session

FEBRUARY MEETING MINUTES: Motion made and unanimously approved to accept the February 2009 Park Advisory Board meeting minutes as submitted.

III. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Greenway Committee Update: John Blethen reported that there are 2 vacancies in the Greenway Advisory Board. The Mayor will be interviewing 3 people and make the final appointments. The March potluck retreat has been moved to next month's meeting in order to meet the incoming members. Leslie Bryson reported that at next month's meeting there will be an Executive Session and that the hiking trips will start.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

B. Recreation Report: Lori Jacobson distributed the Spring Aquatic and Pool Schedules for the Arne Hanna Aquatic Center. She noted that by the time the PRAB were having their morning meeting there were already 75 people in the water. This morning swimmers between the ages of 10 and 70 were participating in: swim team practice, the Master Swimmers program, lap swimming, deep water running, playing in the training pool, and hot tubbing. She then proceeded to relate a day in the life of the Aquatic Center. Between 8:30am and 12:30pm the following classes and programs are happening: lap swimming; deep water running-very popular program, sometimes there are more participants here than lap swimmers; water aerobics; water childcare for adults who are swimming; Arthritis Exercise program; and swim lessons. There are 6 different levels of youth lessons offered as well as teen and adult lessons. The Arthritis Exercise program is a range-of-motion program designed for all ages recovering from injuries. Lori noted that the facility has 100 people in the water using 3 staff to supervise. Between 12:30 and 4:45pm there is a Family Swim which is used by Life Skills classes and other school groups; more swim lessons, high school swim team practice, and club swim team practice. At this time there can be up to 250 people in the water. Between 4:45-10pm programs include the Adapted Aquatics program which is very popular. It utilizes volunteer university students to staff the program. The students get school credit for being part of the program. To round out the evening, the

pool has the Open Swim which includes the waterslide and 2 additional staff to run it; lap swimming; teen/adult lessons; kayaking and scuba programs. Lori quoted attendance numbers per day as 500-700 swimmers in the water, and 200-300 walk-ins/spectators. She thought attendance has increased in this economic downturn. The maximum capacity per day is 1100-1200 people. There are anywhere from 3-8 staff working per day depending on the programs that are running. She reported the recovery rate of revenue vs. expenses is about 50 % with \$500,000 in fee revenues and \$1mil. in expenses. For the 2010 budget, Lori made changes that did not cut revenues but did lose 1 full time position. Lori was asked if the proposition to pipe heat over from the Sportsplex was being considered. Marvin Harris answered saying there would be too much heat loss in the traveling distance to the pool to be a viable option. John Hymas asked about the option of a Solar Hot Water Array on the roof. Lori responded that they are currently working with a "green" company and researching alternative heating sources as well as grant sources. Mark Peterson asked what is the biggest expense. Lori said besides staffing costs, natural gas and electricity Julie Guy asked if there was any research done on the resistance to raising fees. Lori stated yes, and that in 2004 when fees were increased, they saw a loss in revenue initially but have recovered since then. Lori said lesson fees will be increased and that they are researching a resident vs. non-resident fee format. Jim McCabe asked the board if they would like to have an advisory board meeting at the Aquatic Center sometime. There was general agreement to schedule that, but a large enough meeting space is in question. Jim asked the board to give it more thought for the future.

- C. Samish Way Urban Village:** Darby Gilligan from the Planning Department spoke on the Samish Way Urban Village. She defined that it was on Samish Way and located West of I-5 and North of Bill McDonald Parkway. The project started with a series of public workshops with 50 in attendance at each. June 18 the project went to the Planning Commission. The plan is to move from an area that is auto-oriented to a walkable, mixed-use area. The plan wants to improve public spaces and connections between adjoining neighborhoods. The transition zones between neighborhoods is the highest priority area.. The project will enhance the connection to Sehome Arboretum via Allen St. and Newell St. It will use existing city ROW, leave vegetation and enhance the trail and wayfinding system, as well as add benches. The plan also recommends enhancing pedestrian crossings, the bus stops and bike parking. They would also like to have a public plaza for the area. It would be approx. the size of Fairhaven Village Green and use park impact fees for construction. There is not a specific location at this time in the plan for the plaza. Mark Peterson asked if there was funding through developers. Darby stated that the formation of a Local Improvement District is possible. Leslie Bryson stated that with the Pro Plan update last year it was looked at how to accommodate additional park space as Urban Villages are added. Adrienne asked if there was a height restriction and Darby answered yes the plan has taken the current restrictions into consideration. Jim McCabe inquired about the I-5 crossing. In writing the Master Plan for long term vision the crossing would be included. Leslie explained that Public Works will install a crosswalk at the north end of Newell St to connect to the York Neighborhood and Franklin Park. Louise Bjornson commented that she had a picture of this area taken from Samish Way toward the Arboretum just after some logging had occurred and 2nd growth trees were growing. She hopes that evergreens are in the plans as they are a representation of the northwest.

V. Board Reports:

- A. Arts Commission:** Dominique Zervas reported that the Whatcom Creek Salmon Brochure was approved as presented. A big issue for the Arts Commission is the maintenance of future downtown artwork. They are still in the maintenance process for all the current artwork, especially one which has moving parts and they consider hazardous. The Arts Commission is brainstorming how to get money for the maintenance projects. A proposal for a new totem to be installed was approved as presented. The piece could be considered a safety issue because it will be installed horizontally. Maintenance issues for the piece will be considered as well. Leslie Bryson commented that it is proposed to be installed as part of the Salmon Art Trail. Julie Guy asked why the piece is horizontal. Leslie answered the piece is in the shape of a canoe and represents the struggle between commercial fishing vs traditional fishing. The Arts Commission discussed the Fountain Plaza proposal and thought that the design was too busy. They suggested the focus be on artwork or the fountain.. They also think it is premature since the Urban Village proposal was initiated. Leslie shared that the Arts Commission gave preliminary approval to the Fountain Plaza but development won't happen immediately because it will take time to raise the funds for the project. There were 8 nominees for the Mayor's Arts awards. The Commission will review the nominees and make recommendations to the Mayor.
- B. Bay to Baker Trail/Nooksack Loop:** Jim McCabe reported that Paul Leuthold drove a group, escorted by Dan Tepper of Whatcom Parks & Recreation Foundation (WPRF), on a driving tour of the potential route. This is a project of the WPRF. The tour group included Whatcom Parks and Recreation Foundation members, the Everson Mayor and the Ferndale Mayor. The route includes several former railroad line rights-of-way. There are property acquisition issues as the railroad easements have reverted back to property owners. The trail has lots of potential but there are still access and funding issues to work out. Louise Bjornson shared copies of the original Bay to Baker Trail proposal brochure. Louise asked about the status of this project. The city portion is funded with Greenway levy.
- C. Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee:** The Bicycle Pedestrian Committee may fold into the new Transportation Commission.
- D. Big Rock Garden:** Adrienne Lederer reported that 21 sculptors applied for the Sculpture Exhibit. The committee is in the process of judging to pick out 10 sculptors. They are also working on different fund-raising ideas.
- E. Woodstock Farm:** Adrienne Lederer reported she joined a tour at Woodstock Farm led by park staff Tom Slack and Tim Wahl. The goal was to note all the maintenance needs for the farm. One of the main issues is the drainage coming off of Chuckanut Dr. into the farm. This maintenance list will be part of the Master Plan of the most important items to accomplish at the farm, then to raise the funds for those projects. Mark Peterson asked if the park was open to the public. Leslie answered that the public was welcome to come out and walk through the grounds but not the buildings as some of those are residences and the rest are not set up for public viewing. The question was asked if the current residents would move out during some construction next year. Leslie responded that has not been confirmed. Jim McCabe asked if some of the maintenance projects could be done with volunteers. Adrienne said no because most of the projects will require professional engineering. Marvin Harris added that park staff has worked at Woodstock

and accomplished putting a new roof on the main building and electrical maintenance and a new roof for the garage, and that there is some money available in the Park Operations budget for painting.

- F. Boulevard Overwater Walkway:** Leslie Bryson reported that a feasibility study has been completed. There is a \$2.1 million grant available. The Request For Qualifications for the permit and design is complete with construction scheduled to be completed 2011. The cleanup of the Cornwall Landfill is scheduled to be completed in 2012. There have been no public meetings since last June because more planning is needed. Leslie requested that a Park Board Committee member be a liaison for this project, Harry Allison agreed to be liaison.
- G. Cordata Park:** Julie Guy reported that an access easement to the property gifted by the County crosses her condo association property. Now the Condo Board is involved and are cooperating with the Parks Department.
- H. Greenstreets: No report?**
- I. Lake Padden Golfers Committee:** Mike Anderson reported that the golf course has been closed due to the weather. Brush removal was a major project on holes 1,2 and 3. This resulted in opening up some sun corridors which helps cut down on moss growth. Some former drain lines were discovered during this project, maybe some of the lines can be re-used to work with the current drainage. Marvin Harris stated that the lease of the Golf Course requires a certain amount of maintenance to be performed. Money received from the lease goes to pay for maintenance. One of the maintenance projects were to improve drainage on a number of the sandtraps. He also reported that the meetings have been moved from monthly to quarterly. Jim McCabe asked about the enterprise fund activities. He was at a meeting where the budget discussion and one slide implied that the golf course was a significant budget expenditure. Jim asked how much does the city subsidize the golf course. Marvin answered the total golf budget is \$800,000/yr with the revenue from golfers paying back \$100,000. Most of that went to improvements to the Club House. The Cemetery is another enterprise fund and it generated \$200,000/yr in revenue with a budget of \$455,000. The Cemetery has an endowment fund to pay for maintenance. Some of the fund has been used so the total amount has went down. The Cemetery is now charging Endowment Fees to bring the fund back up. Leslie Bryson added that in addition to sustaining the golf course, the enterprise money also supports youth recreation programs. Jim McCabe asked if information could be sent to John Carter on the presentation of Enterprise Funds because it needs to be clear that they are self-sustaining programs.
- J. Northridge Park:** Leslie Bryson reported that 95% of the design is complete and permits are in process. The project will be put out to bid early Summer 2009. At the last public meeting Paul decided the department did could not take on additional park maintenance at this time, so the development of the park nodes will be delayed until the city is back on track with incoming revenue. Just the additional trails will be built. The Master Plan has not changed, it was just broken up into 2 additional phases.

- K. **Urban Forestry:** John Hymas reported that they are upgrading the City's tree ordinance. The Happy Valley Neighborhood plan is also being updated.
- L. **Watershed Advisory Board:** Bill Hadley reported that Stan Snapp created a Lake Whatcom Reservoir Group. It is a group of 9-11 people who will look at the history and establish the needs and goals to improve the Watershed. Bill McCourt will lead the group. They will meet weekly until the 1st of May where they are working on a guide for the watershed. The Watershed Advisory Board has recently acquired a 24-acre plot north of Stimpson Reserve and it has been added to the watershed protection. The Lake Whatcom Watershed Protection area has been added to State activities that protect Puget Sound.

VI. ADJOURNMENT: The March 2009 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board was adjourned by consent at 8:35 a.m.

Approved: Jim McCabe, Chair

Attest: Carleen Strasser, Bellingham Parks and Recreation Staff