

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
Wednesday, October 10, 2007

Present: Jim McCabe, Julie Guy, Bill Hadley, Jane Blume, Tom Barrett, Stan Snapp, Harry Allison

Staff: Paul Leuthold, Parks & Recreation Director
Leslie Bryson, Design/Development Manager
Marcia Wazny, Enterprise Coordinator
Liz Haveman, Board Secretary

Attending: Louise Bjornson, City Council Member

I. EXECUTIVE SESSION: Closed Session from 7:00-7:35 a.m.

II. EXECUTIVE SESSION ACTION: In open meeting after executive session, Julie Guy moved that the properties presented by Park Staff in Northwest Bellingham be recommended to City Council for acquisition by purchase and/or donation; Stan Snapp seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

III. SEPTEMBER MEETING MINUTES:

Motion made and carried unanimously to accept the September meeting minutes.

IV. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Greenway Committee Update: Leslie reported that staff continues to work with the developer of the property on Samish Hill to gain a connected greenway corridor. Negotiations with the developer may include some land trade. Once an agreement is reached with the developer, any plans would be presented to the Park Board for approval and then to City Council. Tom Barrett mentioned that there is a possible rezone proposal for a 750 multi-family housing unit planned for that development that he recently learned of. Leslie was not aware of this, but will look into it. Leslie also reported that the Greenway Committee continues to work on an extensive priority list for property acquisition that covers North and South Bellingham. Committee members have asked Park Staff to provide each of them with some maps to get an overview before properties are evaluated and compared. Julie Guy asked if money has been budgeted in 2008 for development of the new park in Cordata; Leslie replied that money is budgeted in 2008 for design and in 2009 for construction.

V. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Proposed 2008 Bayview Cemetery Price Increase: Marcia Wazny reported on a 2008 price increase proposal for Bayview Cemetery. Marcia stated that the price increase proposal is based on a regional market survey that she conducted of other municipal owned cemeteries in Washington State and local privately owned cemeteries. In the market survey, Marcia discovered that Bayview's current pricing of children's graves, interment and graveliners is higher than other cemeteries and consequently proposed no increase in these costs. Marcia also discovered that Bayview was low in the pricing of companion ground urn sites and niche interments and consequently proposed a 5% increase in these costs. Otherwise, an overall 3% price increase is being proposed to offset labor and material inflation. Marcia estimates that the price increase will result in an additional \$10,000 in annual revenue.

Marcia reported that Bayview Cemetery is unique in that it is the only cemetery in the City of Bellingham. Bayview allows upright monument gravestones while the other large cemetery in Whatcom County (Greenacres in Ferndale) requires flat gravestones. Marcia also shared that

Bayview is the resting place of many historically significant people and it is also home to the largest paper birch tree in Washington State. Marcia reported that while her marketing budget is quite small, she and her staff market by providing excellent customer service and maintenance of the grounds. She also advertises in the Bellingham Herald, through the Bayview website, and gets word of mouth referral from local funeral homes.

Marcia reported that as well as the price increase proposal, she is working on a new administrative policy for Bayview that will allow for additional burial options. Marcia reported that under the current administrative policy, each family grave site allows one casket and two cremations. Under the new administrative policy, each family grave site will allow one casket and five cremations. This will give families more options for burial without using more land. Each family site will allow one upright stone and two flat stones that will still provide enough space for six family names. The new administrative policy will also provide the option for a single ground cremation site. Currently, if a site is required for one person, the only option is to purchase a companion site. Another option that Marcia would like to provide is a section for people to be buried with their pets. Marcia recently attended a national conference and learned that other cemeteries in the U.S. are offering extensive pet cemetery options and have even expanded this service to offer a dog off leash park and veterinarian care. Marcia would like to look into the possibility of having a section in Bayview where pets can be interred with their owners. Marcia would also like to look into the possibility of a garden where ashes can be scattered; perhaps in the wooded area, with a central bench and large memorial stone where names can be inscribed. Once the new administrative policy is written, it will be brought to the Park Board for approval before City Council.

Harry Allison moved to approve the 2008 Bayview Cemetery price increase proposal; Julie Guy seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

VI. BOARD REPORTS:

Stan Snapp reported that the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee has created a brochure similar to the Parks Board's "Share the Trails" campaign that is aimed at bicyclists and drivers sharing the roads. The Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee is currently working on applying for a grant that will give them a marketing budget for their campaign to "Share the Roads".

Jim McCabe reported that all but one of the sculptures from this last year's Big Rock Garden exhibit are being removed this month in preparation for winter and next year's show. Jim also reported that Big Rock Committee members have expressed a desire to focus the 2008 sculpture exhibit opening on Mother's Day more toward the art and a Mother's Day celebration rather than having multiple public speakers. The Big Rock Committee is also discussing future funding for Big Rock Garden and they will be putting together a proposal that will be brought to the Park Board and City Council to have some money budgeted for Big Rock in 2009.

Leslie Bryson reported that the Civic Field improvement projects are nearing completion. New fencing has been installed at Joe Martin stadium and new ticket booths are being installed at

Civic Stadium with canopies to give patrons a place to wait in line out of the rain. Leslie also reported that the dirt jump park is in the process of being re-worked by volunteers, including donations from Ram Construction.

Paul Leuthold reported that the Lake Padden Golf Course Request for Qualifications to combine the lease and greens maintenance under one contract received only one bid from the current leaseholder. Rather than interview the already known leaseholder, the Committee decided to move straight into negotiating the lease agreement. Paul and Marcia Wazny are working with the Legal Department to draft the contract. The Request for Qualifications was so detailed that it laid the groundwork for much of the lease contract.

Bill Hadley reported that at the last Arts Commission meeting, they learned about a project being led by the ReStore to refurbish the fountain located in the plaza area of the Fountain District on Meridian Street.

VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Paul Leuthold reported that the 2008 Budget will go to City Council for approval on October 29. Paul noted that \$150,000.00 was added to the budget by the Mayor's Office to assist the Bellingham School District in the design and construction of a full size gymnasium at the new elementary school on Aldrich Road. Paul reported that there is a growing demand for full size gymnasium space in Bellingham. The next step will be to work out an agreement with the School District to ensure that the Parks Department's sports scheduler will be able to have some priority scheduling of this new full size gymnasium. Paul also reported the salmon education program that was transferred from the Parks Department to the environmental division of Public Works approximately 3 years ago is being transferred back to the Parks Department in 2008. However, the position will still be funded by Public Works.

Paul reported that the preliminary draft of the Environmental Impact Statement for the New Whatcom Waterfront Development consists of two large volumes. Paul has been reading through them to ensure that there will be areas of the waterfront designated for public use..

Paul reported that the Request for Qualifications for a consultant to complete the Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan Update has gone out. One goal of the Plan update will be to clarify and simplify the computing of the parks level of service.

Paul reported that the City has developed a new website that will go live on October 19. This date has now been pushed back to October 25. The new website will make it easier for citizens to find out which departments offer which services.

Paul reported that he has been involved in the steering committee for the new Library. As part of his involvement he will make sure that consideration is given to replacing the green lawn space that is currently behind the Library when a new facility is constructed.

Paul reported that the Sehome Hill Arboretum Board was awarded a \$5000 grant from REI to help improve access on the east side of the Arboretum as outlined in the master plan. A group of Sehome High School students are working with the Washington Conservation Corps to construct a trail for east side access as their senior culminating project. A work party for this

project will take place on "Make A Difference Day", October 27. Volunteers will meet at 9 a.m. in the Sehome High School parking lot.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT: The October 2007 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board was adjourned by consent at 9:05 a.m.

Approved: Jim McCabe, Chair of October meeting

Attest: Liz Haveman, Secretary