

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
Wednesday, October 13, 2010

Present: Adrienne Lederer, Bill Hadley, Pam Holladay, Dominique Zervas, Geoff Middaugh, Jane Blume, Mike Anderson, Julie Guy

Excused: Mark Peterson

Staff: Paul Leuthold, Parks & Recreation Director
Leslie Bryson, Design & Development Manager
Tim Wahl, Greenway Program Coordinator
Liz Haveman, Board Secretary

Attending: Stan Snapp, Bellingham City Council
Bud Meltsner, pickleball interest group

- I. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Executive session was held from 7 a.m. to 7:15 a.m. In open meeting following executive session, Geoff Middaugh moved to recommend that Park staff pursue due diligence on a parcel of property located on Samish Crest. Mike Anderson seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
- II. **SEPTEMBER MEETING MINUTES:** Motion made and approved to accept the September 2010 meeting minutes as submitted.
- III. **OLD BUSINESS:**
 - A. **Greenway Advisory Committee Update:** Leslie Bryson reported that the Greenway Advisory Committee did not have a September meeting, but a meeting is scheduled for October 21. Leslie also reported that the Greenway Committee hosted a hike on Saturday, October 9, to three different parcels of property under consideration for acquisition. Geoff Middaugh asked about the status of the letter that the Board has proposed sending to the Mayor and the Council requesting adoption of the entire Greenway Strategic Plan. Geoff stated that he is concerned that this viable, established plan is being placed on hold while the Mayor pursues acquisition of Chuckanut Ridge outside of the established process. Julie Guy moved that a letter be sent addressed to the City Council with a copy to the Mayor from both the Chair of the Park Board and the Chair of the Greenway Advisory Committee, requesting that the Greenway Strategic Plan be adopted in its entirety. Geoff Middaugh seconded the motion and the motion passed, 8-1, Mike Anderson opposed. Mike stated that regardless of whether or not the Greenway Advisory Committee chooses to be party to the letter, he would like the Park Board to send it to avoid further delay. Dominique Zervas stated that if the Greenway Advisory Committee discusses the letter at their October 21 meeting and decides not to be party to the letter, she would like to know why before sending the letter. Geoff Middaugh expressed concern about further delay considering the Council meeting schedule and the approaching holidays. Pam Holladay stated that she would attend the Greenway Committee meeting as the Parks Board liaison to present the letter and get their feedback. Geoff moved that the Park Board send the letter after the Greenway Committee discusses it at their October 21 meeting, regardless of whether or not the Greenway Committee signs on. Julie Guy seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Cornwall Park Pickleball Courts: Marvin Harris introduced Bud Meltsner, a citizen involved in a local group meeting regularly at the tennis courts in Cornwall Park to play pickleball. Marvin stated that over the past couple of years, the Parks Department has received an increased number of citizen requests to add pickleball courts in the parks. Marvin reported that the group that Bud Meltsner is involved with has been chalking pickleball court lines on two of the tennis courts at Cornwall Park. Marvin stated that he is in favor of permanently painting pickleball lines on these two courts because they are rarely used for tennis. Marvin stated that he believes this to be the case because of the lack of sunlight due to the tree canopy over the courts. Marvin also stated that the pickleball court lines would be painted in a different color than the tennis court lines so as not to confuse tennis players.

Bud Meltsner stated that pickleball is the fastest growing sport in America, particularly among seniors. Bud reported that his group meets at Cornwall Park on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, except in inclement weather. His group plays at the YMCA on the same days and times when the weather is poor. Geoff Middaugh asked if there has been any discussion with local tennis groups about painting pickleball lines on the courts, and if pickleball will create any different wear and tear on the tennis courts. Marvin responded that there is not a tennis group meeting at Cornwall Park; the courts are rarely used. Bill Hadley agreed that as a citizen who walks in Cornwall Park daily, the tennis courts were not being used until the pickleball group started meeting there. Bill stated that before the pickleball group started using the courts, they were receiving very little use compared to the cost of maintaining the courts. Bud also stated that pickleball players wear the same shoes as tennis players and that pickleballs have no impact on nets. A pickleball is similar to a wiffle ball and the paddles are similar to ping pong paddles. Bud stated that it will be important to select the correct color of line so as not to conflict with the tennis court lines, and that his group would like to consult with Park staff to ensure that the lines are painted correctly. Park Board members generally agreed that they fully support multi-use of park facilities and the inclusion of permanent pickleball lines on the tennis courts at Cornwall Park.

B. Park Board Chair Nominations and Vote: Jane Blume reported that Mark Peterson is not able to continue as Chair of the Park Board due to personal time constraints. Jane stated that she is willing to continue as Vice Chair, but would not be able to serve as Chair due to occasionally needing to leave early for work. Mike Anderson nominated Geoff Middaugh to serve as Chair of the Park Board for the remainder of Mark's term. Pam Holladay seconded the nomination and the Board voted unanimously to elect Geoff as the Chair.

V. BOARD REPORTS:

A. City Council: Stan Snapp reported that Council is beginning the 2011 budget process and stated that the Parks & Recreation Department will be presenting during a work session on Monday, November 15, in the Mayor's Board Room. The work session is scheduled between 9 a.m. and 12 noon, and the Library, Museum and ITSD are also scheduled during this time. The Parks Department will give their formal budget presentation at the November 22 Council meeting. Paul Leuthold reported that his goal for the 2011 budget presentation is to identify the impacts of all of the Parks Department's budget reductions

and to show Council what the Parks Department is doing to support the adopted Legacies despite budget reductions. Paul stated that he wants to make it very clear to Council what will not be happening next year due to budget reduction so that when they receive calls from concerned citizens, there will be no surprises. For example, the Arne Hanna Aquatic Center's hours of operation will be reduced daily and they will be closed on a number of holidays where they have been open in the past. Also, spray parks will be closed next year unless a private sponsor steps forward to pay their operating cost. Community events like Kids Festival and the Boulevard Park summer concert series will also be cancelled unless they are sponsored. Stan Snapp suggested that Paul also explain to Council why programs are being cancelled rather than facilities being closed.

- B. Director's Report:** Paul Leuthold reported that there was an article in the Bellingham Herald on Sunday, October 10, about a group of professional wakeboarders "winching" in Whatcom Falls Park that has resulted in a number of concerned citizens wondering why permission was granted for this activity. Paul stated that permission was not granted for this activity and that he has contacted the City Attorney's Office and the Police Department about citing the individuals involved in this activity. "Winching" is wakeboarding over jumps and falls propelled by an 11 horsepower winch, rather than behind a boat. Concerns include liability for injury and the cutting of tree branches and damming of the falls to create a better "winching" environment. Paul reported that he sent a letter to the individuals involved in this activity to set up a meeting to express these concerns.

Paul also reported that he has been working to find a workable solution for the dog off leash area at Bloedel Donovan Park. Paul stated that last winter, the turf at Bloedel was heavily degraded due to dogs off leash and large areas of mud were created that resulted in heavy siltation to the lake. Paul reported that Parks Department narrowly avoided citation from the City's Stormwater Division and the Washington State Department of Ecology by putting up temporary fencing to close turf damaged areas. However, the temporary fencing was vandalized and blown down repeatedly by the wind. Paul researched the purchase of more permanent fencing, but found that it would cost approximately \$10,000, and would have to be moved periodically to different areas. Park maintenance staff are reduced during the winter months and could not accommodate this task. Paul thought of asking volunteers to move the fencing, but there is an extensive, expensive irrigation system at Bloedel Donovan Park that could be easily damaged by a fence stake. Paul contacted two large user groups of the dog off leash area, Grateful Dogs and Placid Pets, and asked for their input. It has been decided that dogs will be allowed off leash at Bloedel Donovan Park until 10 a.m. only, year-round. If the turf gets damaged to the point that sediment begins to run into the lake, the dog off leash area will be closed on the north side of the park, and off leash dogs will only be allowed on the south end of the park. Paul also reported that a citizen has questioned the park maintenance practices at Bloedel Donovan Park, which resulted in the creation of a Bloedel Donovan Park Maintenance Plan that is being reviewed by a consultant from Washington State University to determine best management practices.

Paul reported that Brett Sports & Entertainment is selling the Bellingham Bells to a new owner who has expressed a lot of enthusiasm for working with the Parks Department. Paul also briefly reported on various Park capital projects underway. The reconstruction of Inspiration Point has been fraught with a number of issues that have delayed the

completion of the project, but the project is moving forward. The new trail at Cordata Park is very close to completion and a dedication is being planned by the neighborhood on November 7 at 2 p.m. at the end of Horton Road. The contamination cleanup being conducted by Oeser under the supervision of EPA at Little Squalicum Park will probably extend into next year. The Pattle Point Trestle renovation at Boulevard Park has begun, but citizens moved the protective fencing over the weekend to access the trestle. Staff is working with the contractor for a more secured work site. Also at Boulevard Park, testing for contamination from the South State Street Manufactured Gas Plant is underway. The remedial investigation is being funded by Puget Sound Energy and a grant from the Department of Ecology. Additional funds will be required to perform cleanup activity that could cost as much as \$8 million.

- C. Arts Commission:** Dominique Zervas reported that the Arts Commission has \$9000 remaining in their 2010 budget for maintenance that they will be using on various pieces. In light of the City's budget constraints, they do not know if they will have anything for maintenance in their budget next year. Dominique also reported that installation of the Watershed Bell at Maritime Heritage Park has been delayed pending approval of engineered plans. Dominique also reported that Allied Arts is facing considerable budget constraints and the downtown chalk art festival may be cancelled next year.
- D. Watershed Advisory Board:** Bill Hadley reported that a member of the Watershed Advisory Board recently completed a research project on the history and current status of the parcel of property at the mouth of Silver Beach Creek that is leased from the Washington State Department of Natural Resources by the Bellingham Parks Department.
- E. Treekeepers:** Geoff Middaugh reported that October is Urban Forestry Month. A movie entitled, "Bury Me In Redwood Country", will be shown at the Pickford on Sunday, October 24, at 2:30 p.m., about the pristine redwood forest landscape.

VI. ADJOURNMENT: The October 2010 meeting of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board was adjourned by consent at 9:00 a.m.

Approved: Jane Blume, Acting Chair
Attest: Liz Haveman, Secretary