

**PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, September 10, 2008**

**Present:** Bill Hadley, Jane Blume, Tom Barrett, Adrienne Lederer, Mike Anderson, Jim McCabe

**Absent:** John Hymas, Julie Guy, Harry Allison, Mark Peterson

**Staff:** Paul Leuthold, Parks & Recreation Director  
Marvin Harris, Park Operations Manager  
Leslie Bryson, Design & Development Manager  
Liz Haveman, Board Secretary

**Attending:** Louise Bjornson, City Council  
Edie Norton, Greenway Advisory Committee Liaison  
Dominique Zervas, Park Board member-elect

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

**II. OLD BUSINESS:**

**A. Greenway Committee Update:** Edie Norton reported that Marvin Harris attended the August Greenway meeting and requested \$177,377 from the Greenways Endowment Fund for 2009. The money will pay for a forestry service vehicle & maintenance, and will reimburse two full time staff hours to do maintenance work on Greenway properties. Edie reported that the Committee voted to approve Marvin's request as it falls under the intent of the Endowment Fund, to maintain properties purchased with Greenway funds.

Edie also reported that the Greenway Committee spent time reviewing a set up of maps and a strategic plan document prepared by Tim Wahl. The Committee has also drafted a strategic plan and they are working on consolidating theirs with the one written by Tim.

Edie reported that the Greenway Committee has planned a potluck picnic on Thursday, September 25, at 6 p.m. at the Lake Padden Playground Shelter. All Park & Recreation Advisory Board members are invited, as are Park Staff and Board members and Staff from Whatcom County Parks & Recreation. Attendees should dress warmly and bring a potluck dish to share.

Jim McCabe stated that he has talked with Tim Wahl about finding the proper balance of duties between the Greenway Committee and the Park Board. The Greenway Committee is specifically charged with researching and making recommendations on properties for acquisition with Greenway Levy funds. That work should not be duplicated by the Park Board. However, the Park Board is asked to vote on property acquisition recommendations as well as the Greenway Committee. Jim stated that the strategic plan that is being drafted by the Greenway Committee will be a useful tool for Park Board members. It will define the intent of the Greenway Committee and their overall plan so that Park Board members can look at specific parcels of property and see how they fit into this plan.

Tom Barrett noted that it is quite valuable to know the location of a property parcel prior to the meeting where the Board is asked to vote on a recommendation on that parcel. The

Board needs to have the opportunity to be familiar with that property and how it fits into the strategic plan in order to make a recommendation.

**B. Fairhaven Park Rose Garden House Update:** Paul Leuthold thanked Jim McCabe, Adrienne Lederer, Bill Hadley, Mark Peterson and Harry Allison for their participation on the interview panel for the Fairhaven Park Rose Garden House proposals. Three proposals were received; two to relocate the house and one to adaptively re-use the house on site. The three proposal candidates were interviewed on Friday, August 29. Two proposals scored favorably; one to relocate the house and the one to re-use the house. On September 8, the proposals and interview results were submitted to City Council to provide direction to staff. City Council voted unanimously to accept the proposal submitted by RE Sources for Sustainable Living and the Center for Local Self Reliance to adaptively re-use the house.

Paul stated that he is working on drawing up a contract with clearly defined benchmark goals for the re-use of the house. Paul noted that one of the first goals will be for the Center for Local Self Reliance to officially organize as their own entity and obtain 501c(3) status from the IRS. Then negotiations can be made with this organization up front, rather than first negotiating with RE Sources and then having to re-negotiate with the Center for Local Self Reliance some time later. Paul stated that the Center for Local Self Reliance proposal addresses some different proposed uses of the facility including educational classes on gardening and canning, and a rental space for offices or community classes or events. As the contract negotiations begin, it will be important to work with this group on a clear understanding of the intended uses of the building to ensure that it is not used as a duplicate rental community building, like the Fairhaven Park Pavilion.

Tom Barrett asked if the responsibility for the house and the grounds will fall on the Park Operations staff until the Center for Local Self Reliance is organized and running. Marvin stated that currently, the house is boarded and his staff respond to vandalism issues. No other upkeep or maintenance to the house is being done. Park Operations will continue to mow and care for the grounds around the house until the gardening area for the Center for Local Self Reliance is specified and agreed upon.

Louise Bjornson stated that the group noted in their proposal that they plan to have \$75,000 to put into the project by March 31, 2009. Louise stated that this group will need to work on funding sources other than grants. Paul Leuthold agreed and noted that City Real Estate Excise Tax is not coming in as steadily due to the drop in the housing market. Some City grants may not be available in the future. Paul stated that this group does have a lot of enthusiasm for the project and they have a number of organizations in the community that support their objectives.

### **III. BOARD REPORTS:**

**Arts Commission:** Bill Hadley reported that he has tried to keep up with the Arts Commission, but is not available on the evening that they hold their meetings. The meetings are on the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. Bill asked if another Board member would be interested in taking over. Dominique Zervas stated that if she is appointed to the Board, she would be interested in serving as the liaison to the Arts Commission.

**Big Rock Garden:** Adrienne Lederer reported that the Big Rock Committee is working on fundraising ideas and reviewing how they jury the annual sculpture exhibit. The current sculpture exhibit will be in place until the end of October, 2008. Adrienne stated that the Committee always has weeding or maintenance projects underway and they can use volunteers.

**Civic Field Improvements:** Leslie Bryson reported that the new stadium seating has been installed and the Civic Field improvements are now complete. Board members expressed a desire to tour the facility and see the improvements; a meeting was held at Civic Field prior to the renovations. Staff will look into having the October meeting at Civic Stadium.

**Greenstreet Bicycle Routes:** Jim McCabe reported that the Greenstreets Committee had 3 or 4 meetings, which was all the time that was allotted for Kim Brown's work schedule. Jim reported that Kim is working on a report of the issues generated from those meetings, but has been tied up with other things and has not had an opportunity to complete the report yet. Leslie Bryson stated that she recently spoke with Kim regarding a new trail built by a developer connecting 34<sup>th</sup> Street to 36<sup>th</sup> Street near Padden Gorge. Kim asked Leslie if the Parks Department was going to put up any signage on Conelly Street, 2 blocks away, directing bicyclists to the new trail. Leslie said that she expressed her opinion that signs on the street should be funded and installed by the Public Works Department, and signs on trails should be funded and installed by the Parks Department.

**Lake Padden Golfers:** Mike Anderson reported that the recent lease of the golf course to a private party appears to be a good decision. Mike stated that the golf course itself and the amenities at the course are greatly improved. The new greens keeper is highly experienced and shows real care in his work.

Jim McCabe asked if the lease to a private party has helped relieve the accounting burden that the course was for the Parks Department previously. Paul responded that it has. Before the course was leased, the greens fees were public funds accepted by a private entity, which required strict auditing. Now that the course is leased, the lessee pays the City a monthly amount and they keep all the greens fees. This allows them to gift and flex fees for promotion to meet the demands of the market. The only issues that have come up in the lease so far are working out who is responsible for paying for different items. The City and the lessee are working together to make a great golf course at a reasonable price.

Paul stated that the loan on the clubhouse will be paid off in 2010. The Lake Padden Golfers Committee has identified some capital improvement projects that are needed. It has not been decided yet if the amount that was going into loan payments should be invested directly back into these projects one at a time, or if they should take out a new loan and do all of the projects at once and continue with a loan payment.

**North Bellingham Trail Plan:** Leslie Bryson reported that there will be a public hearing at City Council on the North Bellingham Trail Plan on October 6 during Council's evening meeting. Park Board members are encouraged to attend to support the Plan.

**PRO Plan Update:** Leslie Bryson reported that at the last Planning Commission meeting on the PRO Plan, the Commission directed staff to take the suggestions and ideas generated

during the Planning Commission meetings back to the PRO Plan Steering Committee for review to see if they would like to change their recommendation. The Steering Committee met and after reviewing the suggestions and ideas, decided to stick with their original recommendation. The Steering Committee did decide to show two UGA boundaries on the map in the PRO Plan, the boundary approved by the County and the boundary in the City's current Comprehensive Plan. Leslie reported that the PRO Plan goes back to the Planning Commission on October 2, 2008, and goes to City Council on October 20, 2008.

**Squalicum Creek Park Update:** Leslie Bryson reported that the parking lot at Squalicum Creek Park is being paved this week. The ball field area inside the fence has been accepted and the Parks Department has taken over maintenance of the field. Games will be scheduled on the field this spring. Marvin Harris reported that after the parking lot is paved, the gates that get locked in the evening will be moved to the park's interior so that the paved parking area will always be accessible to the public. This is to ensure that the lock-up crew does not need to worry about locking cars inside the park at night. Leslie stated that the park does not have a sign yet. The area by the road is railroad right-of-way, so it has not been determined yet where the park sign will go. Leslie also reported that the Grateful Dogs Off Leash Association received a Small and Simple Grant from Community Development to purchase trees for the dog off leash area. Grateful Dogs is going to have a planting party this fall so the trees will have some time to get established before the dog off leash area is completed in the next phase of development.

Leslie Bryson also reported that she asked Renee LaCroix from Public Works Environmental Resources to come talk about the changes that will be necessary to the park master plan in order to complete the salmon enhancement project at Squalicum Creek Park. Due to the recent changes in the City's Critical Areas Ordinance that requires a buffer of 75 feet or more along streams, creeks and wetlands, a ball field, the pavilion and the perimeter trail may be impacted. Paul Leuthold stated that he is asking to get something in writing from the Public Works Department ensuring that the park amenities can still be built.

**Trail Sub-Committee:** Tom Barrett reviewed a list of possible projects for the Trails Sub-Committee that he and other Board members brainstormed in February 2008. Due to full meeting agendas, this is the first time in 2008 that there has been time during the meeting to discuss the list of ideas. Jim McCabe suggested that the Trails Sub-Committee be moved up to an actual agenda item at a future meeting in order to devote more time to discussing and selecting a project for the Sub-Committee.

**Urban Forestry:** Jim McCabe reported that the Urban Forestry Committee is working on an Arbor Day Celebration at Elizabeth Park on Saturday, September 27 from 10 a.m. To 2 p.m.

**Watershed Advisory Board:** Bill Hadley reported that the Watershed Advisory Board was initially set up to acquire watershed properties, which they did successfully until they ran out of money. This year the Board has been working on reconveyance and looking at re-defining their goals. The City recently issued a bond for the purpose of acquiring additional watershed properties. Payment of the bond is from the existing watershed usage fee on City water bills.

**Woodstock Farm Conservancy:** Adrienne Lederer distributed invitations to the first annual Woodstock Farm Art Show scheduled for September 13 and 14, 2008. Adrienne reported that there will be free shuttles running to Woodstock from Fairhaven Middle School and the North Chuckanut Mountain Trailhead.

#### **IV. NEW BUSINESS:**

**A. Squalicum Creek Park salmon enhancement project:** Renee LaCroix introduced herself as an Environmental Coordinator for the Public Works Department. She works on salmon habitat restoration projects that are almost solely grant funded. Renee reported that in 2003, she received a grant to daylight Squalicum Creek to create salmon habitat, and has worked with Jonathan Schilk to incorporate a salmon enhancement project in the southwest corner of Squalicum Creek Park, per the adopted park master plan.

Renee reported that she is currently negotiating with Allsop on the possibility of acquiring a small corner of their property adjacent to Squalicum Creek Park to run the spring through to connect to Squalicum Creek. Renee stated that the plan is to construct in 2009 in two phases. The first phase will take place within the Squalicum Creek Park boundary; the second phase will connect to Squalicum Creek once the connection route has been determined. Renee stated that a trail and bridge will be built at the same time as the spring construction to minimize Critical Areas Ordinance mitigation requirements.

Tom Barrett stated that he is concerned about the potential loss of park space and asked Renee if the construction of the salmon enhancement project prior to the development of the park will impact the Parks Department's ability to develop the park. Renee responded that she does not believe that it will; she understands that the 75 foot required buffer can be averaged to vary between a 25 foot buffer in one area and a 150 foot buffer in another area, as long as there is a 75 foot net area along the entire length of the spring. Because of this, Renee doesn't expect that there will be any issues with development of the park. Tom asked if it is possible to hold off on constructing the salmon enhancement project until after the park is developed and asked what Renee's timeline on the grant is. Renee responded that the grant stipulates that the spring must be constructed in 2009. Leslie Bryson stated that the funding to develop the rest of Squalicum Creek Park will not be available until 2010. Jim McCabe asked Renee what the cost of the salmon enhancement project is. Renee responded that it is approximately \$250,000.

Leslie Bryson stated that Planning Director Tim Stewart had indicated that the Planning Staff would work on re-writing a section of the Critical Areas Ordinance to provide a hold harmless agreement that will not hinder enhancement projects by imposing an additional critical area setback to adjacent properties. Leslie reported that the Shoreline Master Program has a similar hold harmless agreement and that allowed Haskell Business Center to retain full development rights on their property adjacent to the Red Tail Reach enhancement project. Paul Leuthold stated that he will get in touch with Tim Stewart to follow up on the progress of this change to the Critical Areas Ordinance.

Leslie asked Renee to discuss the depth of the creek. Renee stated that the master plan called for a creek depth of 4 feet with a small waterfall. However, the waterfall is not conducive to young salmon spawn and an 8 foot creek depth with no waterfall is necessary. Tom Barrett asked if Renee will need to get a shoreline permit for this project. Renee

responded that she will. Renee also stated that she believes that compared to all of the creeks in the City of Bellingham, she believes that Squalicum Creek has the most potential for providing salmon habitat. Louise Bjornson stated that the creek used to be full of salmon and the surrounding area in the past had quite a diverse wildlife population.

Leslie Bryson asked Renee if she would be willing to call the project "Squalicum Creek Park Salmon Enhancement Project", rather than "Willow Spring Salmon Enhancement Project". Renee said that she is not at this time because her internal accounting is set up under the name "Willow Spring". Renee stated that she is not sure who will be responsible for officially naming the spring once it is created. The State of Washington controls the water right-of-way, but the spring runs through City property.

Bill Hadley asked Jonathan Schilk if he had any comments on the project. Jonathan stated that he believes that there are a lot of unknowns with the project. Jonathan stated that when grading for the park, the contractors discovered a large amount of buried concrete and debris that cost \$50,000 to dispose of. It is unknown if more will be found when construction of the salmon enhancement project begins and how that will affect the project budget. It is also unknown exactly how the Critical Areas Ordinance may impact construction of the rest of the park. However, Jonathan stated that the footprint of the salmon enhancement project has been reduced to approximately 2 acres in an effort to reduce impact to the development of the park. The project initially had a 3 acre footprint on the master plan. Also, the creek needs to be quite a bit deeper than the master plan, but Jonathan stated that the master plan assumption may have been flawed and that Renee's current plan is more realistic. Jonathan also stated that the ground is quite porous, and he is not sure how the new stream will be maintained. Jonathan noted that if possible, it would work well to run the spring through the corner of the Allsop property; that section is currently hard piped.

In summary, Jim McCabe noted that the Parks Board is generally in favor of the salmon enhancement project at Squalicum Creek Park, but is concerned about how the Critical Areas Ordinance will impact the rest of the development plans for the Park.

**V. ADJOURNMENT:** The September 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