

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
Wednesday, September 14, 2011

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

Excused: Bill Langley

Staff: Leslie Bryson, Interim Parks and Recreation Director
Tim Wahl, Greenway Program Coordinator
Rae Edwards, Parks Volunteer Coordinator
Liz Haveman, Board Secretary

Attending: John Blethen, Greenway Advisory Committee Liaison
Kim Brown, Public Works Transportation Options Coordinator
Diane Rapoza, Friends of Big Rock Garden Park
George Drake
Jack Weiss, Bellingham City Council

I. AGENDA REVIEW: No new items were added to the agenda.

II. EXECUTIVE SESSION: Executive session was held from 7:02 to 7:19 a.m. Dominique Zervas arrived at 7:05 a.m. In open meeting following executive session, Pam Holladay moved to recommend acquisition of a 6-acre parcel of property located in Project Area N1 in Northwest Bellingham. Diane Blake seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

III. AUGUST MEETING MINUTES: The August meeting minutes were approved as submitted.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Greenway Strategic Plan Update: Leslie Bryson reported that the final draft Greenway Strategic Plan Update was approved by the Greenway Advisory Committee at their September meeting. Following that meeting, at the request of the Committee, text was amended throughout the Plan in an effort to make it clear that this is an acquisition plan and not a project development plan. Leslie also stated that Appendix 1 was revised to move the numbers for the Samish Hill original designation and the 2009 addition which were located in the wrong rows on the previous version.

Geoff Middaugh stated that he would like the Greenway Strategic Plan to show balanced acquisition throughout the City. Leslie responded that it does. The total amount of money designated for acquisition in North Bellingham and in the Whatcom Creek Corridor have stayed in those areas; it has simply been shifted within those areas to reflect purchases that have been made and changed opportunities. Leslie stated that by moving money within the North Bellingham project area, there will be more flexibility to complete corridors in the Cordata and King and Queen Mountain areas. Tim Wahl stated that the Greenway Strategic Plan will change as opportunities and resources change, but that the Greenway Committee and the Park Board have to state that citywide acquisition is important. Geoff stated that he would like to see the City Council adopt this as a unified Plan that reflects the needs and desires of the City. John Blethen stated that he does not anticipate any issues;

he feels that the previous issues that Council had with the Plan had to do with Chuckanut Ridge and those have been resolved now that Council voted to purchase the property.

Leslie Bryson reported that the updated Greenway Strategic Plan will go to Council for adoption on October 10, 2011, in conjunction with the Annual Report to Council being presented by the Greenway Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Linda Grant and Scott Dorough.

Dominique Zervas moved to recommend adoption of the Greenway Strategic Plan as amended. Julie Guy seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Geoff Middaugh suggested that since the discussion on adoption of the Greenway Strategic Plan did not take as long as he anticipated, the Board could discuss the funding plan for the purchase of the Chuckanut Ridge property, specifically the loan from the Greenway Endowment Fund, and how that will affect park maintenance funding. Leslie Bryson reminded the Board that the Mayor attended a previous Park Board meeting and explained that the purchase plan for Chuckanut Ridge includes \$4.5 million in Greenway Levy 3 funds and \$500,000 in Park Impact Fees collected on the South side. Leslie stated that the remaining amount of the purchase price, \$3.3 million, is to come from an interfund loan from the Greenway Endowment Fund principal. Leslie stated that interfund loans are common in the City and that the amount borrowed must be paid back and interest must be paid as if the fund were continuing to earn interest. Leslie stated that only the interest accrued on the Greenway Endowment Fund can be used for maintenance; not the principle. Therefore, the amount of money in the Parks Department's budget for maintenance coming from the Greenway Endowment Fund will not be affected by the loan. Leslie qualified that maintenance needs are high and that any time a new property is purchased the needs increase, but borrowing from the Endowment Fund principle will not affect the current use of the interest for maintenance.

John Blethen asked which firm completed the appraisal of the Chuckanut Ridge property. Leslie responded that it was done by Integra, a Seattle firm that the City has used for property appraisals. John asked if the City hired Integra to do the appraisal, or if the bank did. Leslie responded that Washington Federal paid for the appraisal. The City did not do a separate appraisal. John stated that his concern is how to pay back the interfund loan with interest. Leslie stated that City Councilman, Jack Weiss, held a meeting last week to discuss possible payback plans. Ideas discussed at this meeting included a private fundraising effort on the part of Responsible Development and the possibility of implementing the banked capacity property tax increase. Another idea suggested is to sell part of the property, or other City owned properties, to pay back the loan. The Council vote to purchase Chuckanut Ridge was unanimous and the closing date is set in October. Leslie stated that there is a homeless camp and some bike jumps on the property that need to be cleaned up, but overall, the property is in good shape and has a lot of trails. Leslie reported that once the property closes, staff will need to come up with a stewardship plan for the property using neighborhood volunteers.

Geoff Middaugh reported that he has invited Frank James and Joe Yaver from Responsible Development to come to a future Park Board meeting to talk about their private fundraising plan and their ideas for the future of the park and its trails.

Diane Blake excused herself at 8:00 a.m. Kim Brown arrived at 8:01 a.m.

- B. Pedestrian Plan:** Leslie Bryson introduced Kim Brown, City of Bellingham Transportation Options Coordinator for the Public Works Department. Kim stated that the Pedestrian Plan was initiated to improve walking conditions throughout the City. The Pedestrian Plan involves an evaluation of what is currently working well and what needs to be improved.

Kim reported that the planning process began with the hiring of a consultant to guide the process. An initial public meeting was held to discuss the various features that make a walk-able community, including land use and infrastructure. They also looked at a few case studies in Bellingham to show areas that work well and other areas that don't. The community has been asked for input and they received 830 online survey responses. Kim stated that the survey analysis process is tedious. Over 2400 locations of concern were listed on the survey responses and they are working on geo-coding these areas by neighborhood and removing duplicates. Kim stated that while there was a good spread of survey respondents throughout the City and UGA, some neighborhoods had a higher rate of response than others, so that will be taken into consideration as part of the analysis.

Kim stated that the City is currently working on a needs assessment that includes GIS analysis to identify schools, parks, trails, shopping centers and demographics surrounding these areas including income, vehicle ownership and public transit to determine where people are who rely on walking facilities. The next step in the process will be to review current policies and design standards in an effort to determine whether or not new policies and standards are needed. The goal of all of this is to identify areas of high pedestrian activity, or those with the potential for high levels of activity, areas that need improvement, and then to develop an implementation plan. The implementation plan will include a cost analysis.

George Drake arrived at 8:10 a.m.

Kim reported that a second public meeting will be held closer to the date that a draft of the Pedestrian Plan is published. In the meantime, the community is still welcome to comment on needs on the City's website. Kim stated that the Pedestrian Plan steering committee has broad representation with members from the Bellingham School District, City of Bellingham Planning and Public Works, Whatcom County Health Department, Opportunity Council, Senior Information and Assistance, Western Washington University, the Downtown Bellingham Partnership, Transportation Commission, Whatcom Transportation Authority, Parks & Recreation Advisory Board and more. Kim reported that they have learned that there is a need for more coordination between the Public Works Department and the Parks Department to ensure wayfinding and safe street crossings along trails.

Jack Weiss arrived at 8:20 a.m.

Mike Anderson asked how the various pedestrian projects that are identified in the planning process will be funded. Kim responded that the newly created Transportation Benefit District provides dedicated funding for pedestrian and bike infrastructure. They will also apply for grants and look for ways to incorporate pedestrian improvements, bike lanes and

ADA accessibility improvements in other street projects. Kim stated that once a needed improvement is stated in a planning document, it becomes a better candidate for grant funds.

Diane Rapoza arrived at 8:24 a.m.

Rosalie Nast asked Kim if she has an idea of the project timeline and when the second public meeting might be held. Kim responded that she expects it will be sometime in early Spring. Kim stated that the Pedestrian Plan will be a stand-alone document referenced in the City's Comprehensive Plan so that it can be updated as often as needed.

Geoff Middaugh commented that he hasn't seen Greenway corridors referenced in the Pedestrian Plan documents that he has seen and asked Kim if they are being incorporated. Kim responded that they are looking at the Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan as part of this process. John Blethen commented that he feels one of the Greenway Program shortcomings is way-finding signage and he hopes that the Pedestrian Plan will help come up with a funded plan for more signage. John also stated that he would like to see the Bellingham School District get more involved in the planning and development of trails as safe walking routes to schools. Kim responded that so far, she has found the new Bellingham School District administration to be open to alternative transportation options and she will continue to work with them. Adrienne Lederer commented that in her neighborhood, Horton Road is the defining line between the Bellingham School District and the Meridian School District. Neighbors on one side of the street belong to one and the other side of the street belongs to the other. Adrienne suggested that the Meridian School District also be included in the Pedestrian Plan process.

- C. Big Rock Garden Park sculpture show proposal:** Leslie Bryson introduced George Drake, the original owner of Big Rock Garden from whom the City purchased the Park. Leslie distributed copies of George Drake's sculpture show proposal entitled, "David Marshall Tribute Exhibit", and copies of a map of Big Rock Garden Park with areas highlighted to show where George plans to stage the show and prepare the sculpture pieces for the exhibit. Leslie stated that while George has proposed a private lease of Big Rock Garden Park in addition to the tribute show, the purpose of the discussion today is not to consider the lease proposal, but to focus on the tribute show proposal.

George Drake reported that he has not signed any contracts for anything related to his lease or tribute show proposals; he will obtain City approval first. George stated that he is a dreamer, but also a pragmatist when it comes to his planning. He reported that the Sebastian exhibit that he was instrumental in bringing to the City last year cost approximately \$75,000, of which he privately fundraised all but \$3000, and that amount was paid out of his own pocket. George estimates that the "David Marshall Tribute Exhibit" will cost approximately \$20,000 and he currently has \$2000. George stated that he will adjust the tribute show plans as needed, but he currently plans to acquire at least \$250,000 in sculpture donations for the show. George said the show will have national and international advertising in an effort to make Big Rock Garden Park a tourist destination.

Dominique Zervas thanked George for his dreaming and complimented his efforts on the Sebastian show. Dominique stated that she understands that George is working in a

limited timeframe, and that while she understands it all begins with a dream, she would like to see a more detailed plan that includes where the proposed funding for the show might come from and what George would specifically like from the Parks Department, the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, and what he anticipates the involvement of the Friends of Big Rock Garden Park would be. George responded that he feels that the Friends group is not supportive of the show and they would not be involved in the show planning. George said that he is willing to work with them on a Mother's Day event for the opening of the show, but that he would plan the show and take care of the shipping, transportation and installation. George stated that the Marshall estate is willing to pay the shipping cost for all of the works that they own; he also has donors who are willing to give, but he will not give out their names as they wish to remain anonymous. George stated that the back-up plan is that he would pay for the exhibit himself if he were not able to raise the funds from donors.

Leslie Bryson stated that if approved, the Parks & Recreation Department would come up with a license or other appropriate agreement for the show that would grant George use of some areas of the Park between November 1, 2011, and November 1, 2012. Leslie stated that the Parks Department cannot commit staff or funds for sculpture installation or trail construction. Leslie also stated that such an agreement would displace some current activities at Big Rock Garden during this time period, such as the Greenhouse Gardening program for special populations and the annual Mother's Day sculpture exhibit by the Friends of Big Rock Garden Park. Adrienne Lederer stated a concern that the Friends of Big Rock Garden Park might be displaced altogether if such a license were granted. George Drake asked Diane Rapoza to address that concern from her point of view. Diane Rapoza introduced herself as a member of the Friends of Big Rock Garden Park and stated that both she and another volunteer, Tim Fry, work at Big Rock Garden Park weekly on general park maintenance and propagating plants in the greenhouse. Diane stated that she works well with George and that while there are some Friends volunteers who do not, she feels that the work done by herself and Tim would probably continue.

George stated that he does not want any other sculpture exhibit planning to take place while he is working on the "David Marshall Tribute Exhibit", and it is not feasible to share the greenhouse space with the special populations gardening program. The reason being that he would be bringing in art from at least 20 different artists of international repute. The greenhouse space will be needed to store and secure over \$1 million of sculpture and it would be impossible to ensure the safety of the gardening participants and to secure the facility if another program were using it at the same time. George stated that the show he is planning would be on a totally different scale than what's gone on at Big Rock Garden Park before. George said that he does feel that he can work with Jim Cool, former Parks employee and member of the Friends of Big Rock Garden Park, to make a portion of the greenhouse available for plant propagation during the time of his proposed show license.

George stated that all he would ask of the Parks Department besides the license agreement is the loan of equipment on weekends when it is not being used. George stated that he would find volunteers to run the equipment. Geoff Middaugh stated that he is concerned that there are other stakeholders in Big Rock Garden Park that haven't been heard from, like the Friends of Big Rock Garden Park. Diane Rapoza thanked Geoff for his concern and stated that the Friends of Big Rock would like to be heard. Diane said she feels that the special populations gardening program may be able to be held in an alternate

location for the year as they frequently do not use the greenhouse anyway; perhaps one of the community garden sites could be used for a time. Diane stated that her concern is the Mother's Day community event put on by the Friends of Big Rock; she feels that many members of the community come to the event for the event, rather than the artwork. George responded that he would like the "David Marshall Tribute Show" to open on Mother's Day and he would be willing to work with the Friends of Big Rock Garden Park to put on the community event. Geoff Middaugh suggested that George draft an operational plan to describe what the joint efforts would be for approval prior to the agreement. Dominique Zervas noted the short timeframe that George is working on and expressed concern that there may not be time to get an operational plan approved by the Friends of Big Rock, the Park Board, and the Arts Commission prior to November 1. Leslie Bryson responded that the temporary show pieces do not require approval by the Arts Commission, only permanent pieces.

Dominique Zervas stated that she understands that George cannot name his anonymous donors, but that she would like to see a funding plan to ensure that if funding runs short, the Park is not left with partially constructed trails and an incomplete project. Dominique suggested that some sort of a bond could be put up to ensure that funding is in place. Adrienne Lederer agreed and said that she would like to have another Board discussion at the next meeting on George's plans for construction of trails and sculpture installation. In order to give a comparison project, Leslie Bryson gave the example of Project Labyrinth in Fairhaven Park. Leslie stated that with this project, the Park Board approved the labyrinth concept and location, and then Park staff came up with the specifics in the agreement. Leslie stated that this sculpture exhibit proposal could be handled in a very similar manner. If the money was not raised or the framework of the license not met, the labyrinth would not have been constructed. Leslie suggested that the Park Board could make a recommendation to staff about whether or not to move forward on working with George on his sculpture show proposal, and then staff could come back to the next meeting with a better understanding of what would be required in the agreement and they would have time to get formal input from the Friends of Big Rock Garden Park.

Pam Holladay moved to recommend that Park Staff work with George Drake to develop an appropriate agreement for his David Marshall Sculpture Exhibit proposal at Big Rock Garden Park that will include collaboration with the Friends of Big Rock Garden Park for the Mother's Day event. Dominique Zervas seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

- V. PUBLIC COMMENT:** Bellingham City Councilman Jack Weiss stated that he came to the Park Board meeting to make the same apology to the Board that he made to the Greenway Advisory Committee at their September 1 meeting. Jack apologized for what he sees as the Council's lack of process, or changing of the process mid-stream with the Chuckanut Ridge purchase. Jack explained that this property purchase was under close public scrutiny with a tight timeline and he feels that the Council got caught up in the decision to be made and forgot about the process of including the Greenway Advisory Committee and Park Board. Jack stated that the Council Finance Committee, chaired by Michael Lilliquist, is concerned about coming up with a reasonable payback plan for the interfund loan from the Greenway Endowment Fund principle, and that a public meeting will be held next week to gather input on payback options. Jack stated that the Council would like to receive input from Park Board

members. John Blethen asked how the interest on the Endowment Fund loan would be paid, which is estimated to be about \$50,000 per year. Jack Weiss responded that he believes the interest will be paid with Greenway 3 Levy funds. John recommended that the funding ordinance specify that the interest be paid out of Greenway 3 Levy South side funds.

VI. ADJOURNMENT: The September 2011 meeting of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board was adjourned by consent at 9:15 a.m.

Approved: Geoff Middaugh, Board Chair

Attest: Liz Haveman, Secretary