

THURSTON COUNTY

PARKS & RECREATION BOARD

4131 Mud Bay Rd SW
Olympia 98502

JANUARY 13, 2009

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT Donna Weaver Smith, Chair
Candice Rydalch
Larry Schaffner
Ed Cael

ABSENT

GUESTS Tom Patten

STAFF Michael Welter, Director
Chuck Groth, Park Operations Manager
Kerry Hibdon, Capital Projects Manager
Sue Poyner, Recreation Program Manager
Linda Abell, Senior Office Assistant

CALL TO ORDER – The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm with the approval of the minutes.

Mr. Patten, a resident of Lacey, gave a compliment to the county maintenance staff for outstanding service at the Regional Athletic Complex. He praised upkeep of the fields and keeping the facility looking good. Members were reminded that this is the last meeting that Chuck Groth will attend before retiring in February. Mr. Schaffner shared that a Boston Harbor resident offered appreciation for the new trail to Burfoot Park.

2009 Operations Overview - Director Welter briefed members on the impact of the recent county budget shortage to the department. Because of a reduction of over \$800,000, including a reduction in general fund contributions to the Parks department of nearly \$500,000, many department staff were laid off. This included three maintenance positions. He explained that the remaining three maintenance positions are now funded by other county departments and are now basically contract positions responsible for maintaining the trails and completing work on county stormwater sites and at the Waste & Recovery Center.

As a result of reduced maintenance staff, the decision was made to permanently close Frye Cove Park and the restrooms at the Boston Harbor boat launch, discontinue landscaping services previously provided to other county buildings, and the seasonal closure of remaining parks and sites which include Burfoot, Kenneydell, the Griffin athletic fields and the restrooms at the Chambers Lake Trailhead on the Chehalis Western Trail. These facilities are set to re-open on April 1st of 2009. This is only the second time in history that parks have been seasonally closed. Members discussed the possibility of using community groups or other volunteers in the parks to help with regular upkeep so that parks could remain open, but realize that there are liability concerns on the part of the county.

In addition, the department is no longer participating in the maintenance of the Regional Athletic Complex, however Director Welter reported there is ongoing discussion about possible ways for the department to stay involved with the RAC in order to honor the contract between the county and the City of Lacey and preserve the partnership.

Mr. Hibdon explained that park caretakers have been provided with a new checklist and system for patrolling the Parks during this period of closure and are being asked to report any vandalism, damage to park structures as well as signs of unauthorized park use. Mr. Hibdon reports that a tree removal project is nearing completion on the Chehalis Western Trail. A similar project is being done on the Yelm- Tenino Trail which includes asphalt replacement due to damage caused by the extensive root system of alder and cottonwood trees. Both projects will follow with a re-planting in the fall.

Mr. Groth informed the board that shelter and lodge fees have increased for 2009.

Ms. Poyner reports that the cuts in recreation staff will have a direct result on the departments' ability to provide health and wellness services to county residents, including programs for youth and the disabled. Most disappointing is the loss of the annual weeklong summer camp for disabled children and adults that the Parks and Recreation department has offered for over 30 years.

Reichel Property Acquisition Update – Purchase of the two lots near Burfoot Park should be completed by next week.

Comp Plan Review – Members discussed section 4 of the Parks Comprehensive Plan. There was a suggestion to better explain the definition of enterprise recreation so that it will make more sense to the general public. The plan should also reflect the recent loss of both general fund dollars and key department staff and should clarify how these losses will impact the future of the department.

Parks Board Vacancies – There are currently 3 vacancies on the Parks Board. One (1) position is an at-large and the other two (2) are in Commissioner Romero's district. Ms. Romero was just recently sworn into office and Director Welter is waiting to hear back from her about possible appointees.

Ski Lake Property, Littlerock – Director Welter shared maps and sales information about a 48-acre piece of property located in Littlerock. The property includes a man-made ski lake, picnic area, boathouse, a bunkhouse as well as a large home. In the spirit of enterprise recreation, Mr. Welter asked members to consider the possibilities of not just this property, but other potential sites that be available in the county.

With there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Linda Abell
Recording Secretary