

**THURSTON COUNTY
PARKS & RECREATION BOARD**
Parks Department Conference Room
Olympia, WA

SEPTEMBER 11, 2007

MINUTES

PRESENT Jon Halvorson, Chair
Bernie Chaplin
Larry Schaffner
Donald Krug

ABSENT Grant Larsen
Candice Rydalch
Donna Weaver

STAFF Michael Welter, Director
Chuck Groth, Parks Operation Manager
Kerry Hibdon, Capital Projects Manager
Cheri Johnson, Administrative Assistant

CALL TO ORDER – The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Member Chaplin moved to approve the minutes of the August 14 meeting. Member Krug seconded. The motion carried.

CAPITAL PROJECTS REPORT – The Regional Athletic Complex is looking great. Staff continues to learn turf techniques to improve the fields.

Griffin Fields – The well house has been built. Mr. Hibdon stated that the department will install the irrigation system and the school district will pay for the materials.

Trail gates – The maintenance crew is spending a majority of their time on removing gates and installing the new bollards. The entire project should be complete by the end of October. Staff has received both negative and positive comments concerning the bollards. Staff has also witnessed users going through intersections without stopping, and one near miss involving 2 young boys and a car. The crew will work at keeping the brush cut back at intersections for good visibility. A board member suggested placing rumble strips at the most dangerous intersections, but Mr. Welter reported that the Federal Highway Administration has suggested they not be used.

Mr. Hibdon reported that the City of Olympia has installed a ramp that goes up to the trail on Martin Way. Staff was not aware of the project, but it was engineered by the County Roads Department.

Mr. Hibdon reported that staff has had conversations with the City of Olympia about their idea of developing a 37-acre parcel of property they own adjacent to the Chehalis Western Trail into walking trails. The property is accessibly only by way of the Chehalis Western Trail. These are preliminary discussions and they have not submitted a proposal. Staff has several concerns including undesirable uses because of how secluded it is. There was no mention of who will maintain it.

PARKS REPORT – Mr. Groth stated that according to recent workload indicators, approximately 700,000 people visited the parks this past year, not including the trails. The biggest increase has been at the Griffin Athletic Fields.

NatureServe – Mr. Groth has been approached by NatureServe, an organization that is working cooperatively with the National Geographic to produce an online encyclopedia of natural resources in the nation. They are interested in including the Glacial Heritage Preserve in the initial phase of the project. They will come on site to take pictures of the site and it will be included in their online resources. The entire project is expected to be complete by the end of 2008.

DNR CHEHALIS WESTERN TRAIL – The Department of Natural Resources is ready to move forward with transferring their 6 mile portion of the CW trail, from Martin Way to Woodard Bay, to the County. DNR is now evaluating what needs to be done to effect the transfer, including determining a true value. It will come with some IAC restrictions since IAC funds have been used in the development of the trail. Parks staff has looked at the entire trail and evaluated its condition and there will have to be some negotiations on repairs prior to the transfer. One of the issues is removal of the gates which the DNR did not plan on removing and replacing with bollards.

The board felt that acquiring this additional section of the CW trail was clearly within the scope and strategies of adopted Parks Plan and was an obvious move for the department.

Member Chaplin moved that the Parks Board recommend to the Board of Commissioners that the Commissioners support the transfer of the DNR-owned Chehalis Western Trail to the Parks Department and submit a letter to DNR stating Thurston County's interest in acquiring the trail property. Member Schaffner seconded. Motion carried. Donald abstained from the vote due to a conflict of interest.

BURFOOT PARK TRAIL PROJECT – Mr. Hibdon presented three options for an alternate foot trail into Burfoot Park as has been requested by members of the Boston Harbor Neighborhood Association. He stated that the first 2 options would require special use permits because of the grade of the trail, wetlands or other critical areas. An estimate by staff is that it would cost approximately \$10,000 for permitting and labor to complete either trail option. The third option would lead down the caretaker road to the beach and in front of the residence, but it would not go to the upper portion of the park. The board had several concerns regarding all the options, including cost and the ability to maintain a newly designed trail that would require hand labor. The board also was concerned of impact to the caretaker and neighbors along Boston Harbor Extension Road if the road was made accessible to visitors.

Director Welter stated that he would be meeting with Commissioner Wolfe and Mrs. Rafferty of the Boston Harbor Neighborhood Association this Friday to discuss potential land acquisitions in the area and he would deliver the information presented.

2008 BUDGET – Director Welter reported that the department will not be receiving money from the Water and Waste Management Department (WWM) to maintain the Waste and Recovery Center contract next year. It was a service contract requiring a specific level of service and the maintenance division did not meet some of their maintenance requirements. Thus, WWM have decided to try other options. Also, Central Services has increased its internal fees to the department by approximately \$60,000 next year. These impacts will affect staffing. In order to balance the budget for 2008, the department must take a 1.75 staff reduction in the maintenance area. Director Welter stated that he is meeting with the Chief Administrative Officer to share his concerns about reducing the park maintenance effort by the 1.75 FTE and hopes to discuss solutions that would prevent the loss.

PARKS DEPARTMENT REORGANIZATION - Director Welter stated that Mark Swartout will not be entering into the reorganization strategy plan for the Parks Department. He is being assigned to lead the County's effort in the Budd Inlet and Puget Sound clean-up efforts. This multi-year assignment will not afford Mark the time necessary to also take on the role of managing the Parks Department and other functions defined in the proposed reorganization. For the time being, the current management structure will remain in place.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE – Members Chaplin, Weaver, and Schaffner attended the Board of Commissioner briefing with Director Welter to talk about the comprehensive plan update and the board's recommendation to hire a consultant. Director Welter was very encouraged by the Board of Commissioners conversation. They are willing to spend money on a contractor to update the plan. Director Welter feels that money can be saved by using resources through WSU Cooperative Extension to facilitate the focus groups. He stated that he feels as long as the parks board moves toward completion of the plan by mid year of 2008, the department's ability to seek grant funds should not be compromised. Director Welter suggests inviting Mr. Landerman to the next Park Board meeting or a subcommittee of the Park Board to discuss the strategies around updating the Comprehensive Parks Plan. . He will contact Member Weaver, who was absent, to get her interest in participating.

COUNTY MISSION/VISION - Director Welter shared with the board the County's initial efforts in creating a vision and mission plan for the County.

With their being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.