



ANACORTES PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board

January 6, 2022

6pm

No in person meeting. Virtual meeting only.

Zoom Meeting Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88308344363>

Preliminary Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Approve December 2021 Minutes
3. Nominate/Vote for 2022 Board Chair
4. Introduce New Board Member-Kit Gerwels
5. Public Comments
6. Friends of the Forest Update
7. Staff Reports
8. Conservation Easement Program update
9. Ebike use policy in the ACFL
10. Other Business

Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board

Minutes of the Meeting: December 2, 2021

Board Members Present: Sandra Starbuck, Brian Wetcher, JoAnn York-Gilmore

Staff Present: B. Vaux, S. Phillips

Meeting called to order at 6:15PM, via Zoom, after working through some log-in glitches.

November 2021 Meeting Minutes unanimously approved.

Public Comments:

B. Wetcher followed up on Tom Glade's question to city staff, re: the Allmond family donation to the ACFL. This is known as the John M. Morrison Natural Park, or the Morrison Meadow, east of Little Cranberry and north of the 29th Street Water Tank.

Friends of the Forest Update:

No FoF staff in attendance. Vaux reports the annual fundraiser went well.

Staff Reports: Phillips reports he is just back from vacation. The Nov. 20th volunteer work party in the ACFL went well, a successful Ace of Hearts Creek holly pull, as well as some Heart Lake Road clean up. Wetcher asks about Heart Lake beaver activity. They have been busy at the AOH headwaters, but we have not seen further impact at this time.

J. York-Gilmore reported on Parks Commission activities: Skate Park group raising tons of money, and a safe street crossing of "R" Avenue is high on everyone's mind. The current stage of the cemetery expansion is close to complete.

Vaux explains the trailhead kiosk at #10 was totaled by a vehicle over the Thanksgiving weekend. Anacortes PD is investigating. A new kiosk will be forthcoming after the New Year.

Vaux also updates the Board on the Parks & Rec Dept Admin Assistant hiring process. We are hoping to have someone in place before Christmas.

Wetcher asks if anything new on the Whistle Lake dam. Vaux answers: No.

ACFL Plan Update: City Council unanimously passed the ACFL Plan update on November 8th. Yay for us!

CEP Update: Director Lunsford via Vaux says the Skagit Land Trust has all of the COA info/work. We are now awaiting the SLT's own mapping and legal description work. Should have it by the end of the year.

Ebike Meeting Plan for 2022: Vaux asks the Board if they have any particular preferences as we move forward with the somewhat delayed Ebike in the ACFL discussion. Starbuck mentions it will be a challenge via remote meetings. She anticipates a large volume of written comments.

Wetcher asks if there is a timeline on this issue, Vaux explains there is not. Both agree it would be nice to have a policy in place by the April 1st seasonal opening of motorized recreation in the ACFL. Wetcher stresses the importance of advertising the current ACFL Ebike policy, decided at the Forest Advisory Board level: ***Ebikes are regarded as motorized recreation, and are required to follow all motorcycle guidelines.*** The Board would really like updated feedback on this from the local trails community at the January meeting.

The Board would like to hear from other regional trail managers at the February meeting, and focus on additional public comments at the March meeting. Written comments may be directed to Vaux at the Parks Dept throughout the process. He will make sure all comments are distributed to the Board.

Board members made it clear enforcement will be a challenge no matter what is decided.

I also wanted to call out another group of three mountain-biking locals who stepped forward with an interest to volunteer on their own time. I trained them in the ways of drainage and now they send me periodic reports from the woods with the number of hours spent and where they worked, along with bigger issues they encountered. They are trained to do light seasonal maintenance – re-establishing drain dips, or below-grade scrapes/trenches that encourage water to leave the trail surface and dissipate off-trail. This helps keep the trail corridor confined to a reasonable width:

people tend to step around puddles when they see them. So – you know who you are, guys – thanks!

Also thanks to the aforementioned superstar volunteer (October 2021), who logged another 4 hours with me last Friday.

From time to time, I also get messages from people who already cleared things from trails, which I appreciate twofold. I appreciate the work they did and the notification of it, so that I don't head out on a report from someone else to do that work. So, while I'm giving thanks, I thank them as well. And also, the ones who just notify. Having thousands of eyes equipped with smartphones on the trails makes trail maintenance much more efficient than it probably once was.

Maintenance

Water levels reached new highs all over the Forest Lands late last month, and this continued into early December. At this time, things have subsided a great deal, but the soil remains saturated. And the beavers are busy at 32nd, Heart Lake. Trail 108 at the bridge, knock on wood, has remained free-flowing all month.

I removed the rooster trap, or whatever it was, from Trail 250 on 12/7. It is a dog kennel that was lined with straw with a bowl of chicken feed. Removing this involved using a bicycle and cam strap to drag it out. I'm still waiting for someone to claim it but haven't heard anything.

The Trail 215 repairs that we made in September mostly are doing fine with the elevated water table. One exception was the location where we removed a seemingly useless culvert near trail 320. I replaced that culvert on 12/8 with a new one and the trail is no longer inundated there.

Some trailbuilding shenanigans happened near trail 107 mid-month. Parks staff got involved with identifying the culprit, assessing the damage, and undoing the work they attempted. I think Bob may elaborate on this, so I'll keep it to that. We also found an unusual shrine of sorts in roughly the same area a week later, but it's probably unrelated.

I helped park cars, greet visitors, and move equipment around to support our department's Wonderland Walk on 12/10-11.

I did some pothole patching on Erie Mountain Road on 12/16 and will continue with that today if there's time.

We may close out the year with SNOW... today I am getting chains set up to block Erie Mountain Road and Little Cranberry Lake road in case we need road closures.

I accepted an invitation from Richard Mellon of the Washington Trails Association to join in an onsite project planning update meeting taking place today at Trail 311. I look forward to meeting Arlen and engaging in trail talk with the experts.

Seasons Greetings and happy **MMXXII** – 2022 is just around the corner!



December 2021 Parks and ACFL Operations Administrative Report

Q'elech'ilhch

This is the new name of "N" Avenue Park. Renamed at the Dec 13 Council meeting in honor of the Samish village that was the first human settlement along the northern shores of what is now Fidalgo Island. The word translates as "Ironwood", the Samish name for the native ocean spray bush. The image of Mayor Gere presenting Tribal Chairman Tom Wooten with the Council declaration was very powerful.

Washington Park Slide

You may have noticed the closure of the switchback trail that connected Puget Way to Washington Park. We had a very significant slide there over the Thanksgiving weekend. The City's focus on the area is the integrity of Puget Way, and we have hired GeoEngineers to do a bank and road stability study. Results should be available soon. The Parks Department has no short term plans to re-open the trail. A long term plan for bank stability will be developed.

Rotary Club Centennial Project

We remain hard at it. The project leadership team and I met with COA GIS Manager Robert Hoxie, discussing concepts for way-finding and interpretive signage. GeoEngineers has delivered the final draft of the Critical Areas Assessment report, and I was able to submit the Shoreline Exemption permit application.

Kit Gerwels Appointed to Forest Advisory Board

Mayor Gere appointed Mr. Gerwels at the Dec 13 Council Meeting, and Council unanimously endorsed. Kit is ACFL seasonal help alumni, and is looking forward to serving his community in this new way.

Beavers

I am happy to report our ACFL beaver population is hard at work. The amount of water they are able to store is an incredible benefit, especially during these atmospheric river events. Your friendly neighborhood parks staff keeps an eye on a few key spots, and we do have permits to tend to a couple of dams with hand tools. The emphasis in these very limited situations is to keep infrastructure, i.e., Heart Lake Road, various trails, neighborhoods, etc., intact and above the flow.

Trees

ACFL Steve enjoyed a much deserved vacation the end of November/beginning of December. I did my best to occasionally fill in for him on the parks maintenance crew, mostly clearing trail of down trees. And of course, tending to the beaver dam rounds. Thanks to the whole Parks Crew for rotating thru the ACFL, as well as keeping the parks and cemetery clear of wind-thrown trees.

Trail #107 Vandalism

Based upon the tools we gathered, and the request for their return, some local kids have been building unsanctioned bicycle jumps just southwest of the 107 trailhead. I have done my best to

reach out to them, but finally had to ask APD for help. Officer Scheepers obliged and made contact with one of the parents. I am hopeful this individual will contact me sometime soon.

Admin Assistant

On Nov 30/Dec 1 we brought in our Final 4 vying for the position recently vacated by Victoria. It was good being able to meet each of the candidates in person, as we did a rotating "interview" with the various elements of our department. And congratulations to local resident Darby Jordan for accepting the job offer. She began working with us Monday, December 20th.

Wonderland Walk

My role leading up to the event was putting together parking team assignments. We have a great crew of city staff and volunteers eager to help the region enjoy the holiday wonder at Washington Park. While our crowds were not as large this year, we still had close to 1,000 folks each night. The parking team was a pleasure to work with, and special thanks to the Anacortes PD for having an officer staged at Sunset Ave and Skyline Way each night.

2022 Campground Reservations Off to a Solid Start

As of the writing of this report, 544 camping nights have been reserved in Washington Park next year.

Van Life and Other Rogue Over-Nighters

Please help parks staff stay aware of unauthorized overnight guests. The Heart Lake Road corridor, with its many pull-off's, parking lots, trailheads and side roads is particularly popular for this kind of thing. The parks and woods close at 10PM. Anyone on site after that is trespassing.

Worth Mentioning...

...making sure Parks and Public Works are working together on the COA snow plan. Parks is typically the lead on priority parking lots and specific building access issues. PW coordinates available equipment and other resources.

...did some South Cranberry Unit watershed touring with Emily and Nathan from Planning. Nathan is brand new to the team, and eager to learn about the COA's incredible wealth of natural resources.

...I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving with family, friends and anyone else you invited over.

...have been attending Council meetings as the Capital Facilities Plan and 2022 budget have been dynamic topics. Director Lunsford doing an excellent job of working with Finance Director Hoglund on same. Kudos to the entire Parks & Rec staff for keeping expenses within our planned spending schedule. Not to mention the impressive revenues we have been able to generate. Happy to report the Budget and CFP were passed by Council at the Dec 13 meeting. Parks & Rec staff, programs and plans remain very much intact.

...thanks again to Mary Snyder and Victoria Alsup for both coming in and working with us while we transition into a new full-time Administrative Assistant.

...regular meetings with FoF Executive Director Asa Deane continue. We are working with the Friends on their 2022 priorities.

...I had to miss this month's Samish Nation / COA hike in the ACFL, but Denise and Steve carried on and I am sure had a great outing.

...attended regular meeting of the Parks Foundation Guemes Channel Trail sub-committee.

...took the 3rd and the 16th off.

I am sending this material out early this month as I will be on vacation Dec 24 – Jan 2. Have a wonderful holiday season.

Faithfully Submitted,

Bob Vaux, Assistant Director
December 21, 2021