

Minutes of the Meeting: Aug 4, 2022

Board members present: Brian Wetcher, Tabb Stringer, JoAnn York-Gilmore, Kit Gerwels

Staff present: Bob Vaux, Steve Phillips, Darby Jordan

Guests: Asa Deane, Dr Reem Hajjar

Meeting held in person and via Zoom and called to order at 6:06PM

Minutes: May minutes were unanimously approved as submitted.

Public Comments:

Asa spoke about the Little Cranberry Lake boat launch project. He has heard from the Friends of the Forest Board and they are in support. The suggestion they had was to increase the signage about sensitive areas on the lake. Jonn Lunsford and Travis Anderson are taking lead on this project and it is in the beginning stages. They will attend a future meeting to discuss the project.

ACFL Dams Update:

Bob spoke about the Department of Ecology site visit in July. This visit was conducted by state engineers and accompanied by Ross Wagner of Wagner & Associates as well as Bob. They inspected both Little Cranberry and Whistle Lake dams. The LC dam has no stability issues but some of the wood in the spillway is soft. The DOE engineers mentioned cutting back some of the brush downstream. The Whistle dam consists of mostly vegetation, which if removed would eliminate the dam. The DOE engineers suggested an additional structure downstream that would keep the dam and trail intact. Bob suggests looking at the existing dam and finding a way to make it more stable. The DOE has federal funds for dams and the City has submitted a letter of intent to receive some of these funds. We expect to hear back about this in November.

Water Quality:

Bob explained what has happened in Little Cranberry Lake with the closure and caution about lake use. Just prior to July 4th, there was a spike in the fecal coliform numbers. This required closure of the lake. The subsequent tests done weekly have shown significantly lower numbers allowing a switch to the caution notice. We are now seeing a slight increase in the Blue-Green algae in both Heart Lake and LC Lake. Signs are posted to use caution and to give information to lake users.

Skagit Systems Cooperative Seed Collection:

Bob sent the email chain out to the Board previously with the details of this request. The local tribes are hoping to ensure the health of the Skagit River

Valley and the diversity of the native plants. The ACFL does not allow the public to harvest or take any samples. Questions raised by the Board were the protocol to be used, and how the groups would be identified and monitored. Brian requested that any data about the gathering points and type collected would be shared.

US Navy Run up Mt Erie:

There has been a request from NAS Whidbey to use the road up to Mt Erie for a run the morning of September 30th. There will be approximately 100 participants. This will require the road to be closed for several hours. The Board expressed support for this event.

Friends of the Forest Update:

Asa shared an update on the first annual Summer Celebration and Fundraiser. It went very well and hosted local community members as well as people from out of town. They are planning to make this an annual event. Asa also updated the Board on the Trail Ambassador program. There were more volunteers this year, allowing for more coverage at trail heads. They plan to have this program grow again next year which will allow for more weekends or more locations to be staffed. The fall fundraiser will be the first Saturday in November and will be an auction. They have hired a new staff member to be their Community Programs Coordinator and focus on hikes and science. Beck will be leaving the FoF program to run an outdoor preschool in Woodinville, and Hannah has been hired to take her place.

Parks Commission Report:

Jo-Ann reported on the June meeting of the Parks Commission. There is work being done on the final plans for the Skate Park. The Remote Control cars group has not met with staff yet. There was extensive damage done to the beaver dams in the ACFL, with someone destroying them repeatedly. Staff put up a game camera and put word out on social media and in the newspaper. Since the extra attention, there has been no additional damage.

ACFL Trail Committee Report:

There was no meeting.

Staff Reports:

Steve had nothing to add to his written report. He did express again a huge thanks to our seasonal staff. They were an absolutely amazing crew to work with this summer!

Bob had nothing to add to his written except to announce a date for the summer work party in partnership with the Friends of the Forest on September 10th.

Other Business:

Brian asked about the powdery mildew on the big leaf maples and if Steve is seeing any sign of die-off. Steve stated that he is noticing this statewide as he has traveled. Dr. Peterson with Transition Fidalgo has looked at various trees in our area and feels they will be ok.

Bob introduced Dr Reem Hajjar, a Forestry Professor with Oregon State University. She is doing a case study on a number of community forests across the nation. She is looking into how community owned forests work across the US and how they provide benefits to citizens. She will be interviewing various people on her visit to Anacortes on August 16th.

Brian spoke about a riparian improvement project involving Evergreen Islands and the City of Anacortes for the Happy Valley stream and wetlands. This is in the very beginning stages.

Adjourn at 7:15pm

Respectfully Submitted by Darby Jordan