

Minutes of the Meeting: November 2nd, 2023

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

Staff present: Bob Vaux, Darby Jordan

Meeting held in person and via Zoom and called to order at 6:01PM

Minutes: October minutes were unanimously approved.

Public Comments:

Tim Schmidt, Anacortes resident, was in attendance and spoke about his enjoyment of riding his motorcycle in the ACFL in the 7 months per year that it is allowed. He rides daily and believes this allows for improved balance and muscle tone. Tim did suggest another entrance or exit to the Whistle Lake area as there are limited ways to access it at this time. Bob spoke about the restrictions near trail #21 in the Heart Lake area, which would give other options for entry and exit to Whistle Lake. This was part of the State Park originally and still holds the same restrictions and regulations. Motors are not allowed on this trail.

Jeff Rentaria was in attendance and spoke about a project he is working on for school. This project includes researching urban growth and climate change impacting Anacortes. The Board expressed support in this project and directed him to speak with Transition Fidalgo as well as look at the reports on the ACFL website. Nate also mentioned that Shannon Point has data back to the 70's.

Friends of the Forest Update:

Ellie was at the meeting and introduced the new Executive Director of Friends, Katie Earley. Katie started about two weeks ago and has been getting to know the City staff, Board members, Friends staff and their programs.

Ellis shared that it has been business as usual with the 3rd grade program wrapping up their plant diversity unit. Kindergarten programs will run through the month. Their after-school program continues as well as their community hikes. Their Halloween hike was quite popular!

Staff Reports:

Bob shared that the process to hire a replacement ACFL staff member was continuing. There was 21 applicants and the Parks staff was assisting in reviewing and scoring the submissions. Six applicants will have in person interviews on November 7th and the finalists will attend a meet and greet with staff shortly after that. We hope to have someone hired in 2-3 weeks from that last meeting. Steve has continued to help with work parties. The public is letting us know about downed trees.

Bob also shared that Staff has met with Fish & Wildlife regarding removing the culvert near 31st but this will take a biologist report and substantial funding. The goal would be to return this area to a wetland with natural outflow of the storm drainage.

Parks Commission Report:

JoAnn reported on the Parks Board meeting. There was an advocate in attendance regarding the Ace of Hearts dog park. She spoke about the increased use as there is more condensed housing and small or no yards. There is a group doing volunteer work out there to improve the space.

Other Business:

Brian expressed concern about the number of cars at times at the A avenue access and parking. Ellie shared that it was the Skagit Audubon society and there were several groups that were dispersed for their event.

Kit reminded everyone that there is another Forest Plan public comment meeting on November 7th at 6pm.

Adjourn at 6:36pm

Respectfully Submitted by Darby Jordan