

Minutes of the Meeting: January 4th, 2024

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

Staff present: Bob Vaux, Jamie Burroughs, Darby Jordan

Meeting held in person and via Zoom and called to order at 6:02PM

Introduction of new ACFL Maintenance Technician:

Bob introduced Jamie Burroughs to the Board and public in attendance. He shared that this was the Parks department's first "blind hire" and was a very competitive process, but Jamie quickly rose to the top of the pool. He is a local resident and AHS graduate. Jamie spent five seasons at Deception Pass state park and then three years at the Skagit County Transfer Station. He is excited to get back into parks and give back to his community. The Board extended a warm welcome to Jamie.

Annual Board Chair Election:

Kit moved that this item be held until the next meeting when all members are present.

Minutes: December minutes were unanimously approved.

Public Comments:

Tom Glad spoke and quoted the following from the ACFL Forest Plan: Whistle Lake, Heart Lake and Little Cranberry Lake watersheds should be managed to maintain their pristine and/or fragile environment and to preserve watersheds, wildlife habitats, wetlands, aesthetic values, and recreational uses with priority for residents.

This policy should have precluded/excluded the plan to build a boat launch facility on Little Cranberry Lake. (In the local vicinity, boat launch facilities are readily available at Heart Lake, Lake Erie, Lake Campbell, and Washington Park.)

Mr. Glade also reminded the Board that Gene Murphy was celebrated with the 2008 Yeoman Award for Environmental Stewardship from Evergreen Islands. He also went on to discuss his many years of financial support of the Skagit Land Trust, as well as the ACFL's Conservation Easement Program. Tom also suggested that the ACFL close at sundown to protect the wildlife.

Brian asked if the ACFL is supposed to close at dusk and Bob stated that it is 10pm for all parks and the forest lands. In the 1990's, there was a push to change the time to dusk, but there was no support for the change.

Mark Nihart spoke about bike riders at night and looking at the liability to the City. Even without the ability to enforce the closure, the ordinance would protect the City.

2026 Forest Plan Update Discussion: Public Comment Review Schedule

The window for public comment was closed yesterday. Since December 21st, there have been 14 new comments that will be compiled and posted soon. There are 65 comments from 46 people. Staff is now preparing a matrix for Board review. The February meeting will host Jonn Lunsford and a presentation on the Little Cranberry project. The timeline was generally laid out to facilitate presentation to the City Council by Fall of 2025 with the Board stating that adjustments could be made as needed.

Friends of the Forest Update:

Ellie was in attendance and reported that they have filled their February Day Camps and have a waiting list at this time. They are preparing for the next session of their Naturalist program with registration opening mid-January. The holly pull in December was well attended and the volunteers have asked that programs like this continue.

Staff Reports:

Bob shared that next month the Board will have Jamie's first maintenance report. Bob reported that Jamie is getting help from Steve in this transition and training. Bob met with the Friends of the Forest regarding the March volunteer work party and the potential to add more. All Parks staff are spending time in various areas to increase cross training. Staff are watching the weather reports and with the snow often bring the ATV users to Parks and the ACFL.

The Board asked about how often staff come across off-leash dogs in the ACFL. Bob responded that it is the biggest and most ongoing issues. There is a City ordinance that makes the charge a misdemeanor.

Parks Commission Report:

JoAnn reported on the Parks Board meeting. December brought many activities in the Parks and Recreation department. Parks Board members Chris and JoAnn attended the public meeting about the Cap Sante look out. There were neighbor concerns about increased traffic and parking.

Other Business:

Bob gave the reminder that next month's meeting will be discussion about Little Cranberry.

Adjourn at 6:43pm

Respectfully Submitted by Darby Jordan