

April 8th, 2025

Parks Commission in Attendance: Brad, JoAnn, Sarah, Alex and Chris

Staff in Attendance: Jonn, Bob, Dustin, Nichola and Bradyn

Call to order: 6:01pm

March minutes passed unanimously.

Public Comments:

None

Correspondence and Communication:

Forest Board Notes- JoAnn shared that the Forest Board has reviewed the public comments received and the draft plan. Staff is now in the process of writing the final draft which will come back to the Board for approval and then go to Council. There will be opportunity for public comment at that time.

She also reported that the Friends of the ACFL have a new Executive Director, Josie.

The Board got a thorough report from Jamie about the vandalism and issues he is faced with in the forest lands.

Jonn shared there was no Parks Foundation meeting.

Community Center Presentation:

Former Mayor Laurie Gere was in attendance to present about the future Community Center.

This was an idea that started years ago when she was Mayor. It became apparent that families and youth needed a space to gather. She met with community members and support groups for a year, discussing issues and challenges. Two issues that were solved out of these meetings were a drug dog and School Resource Officer. However, teens were still requesting a youth center.

The group looked at locations and partnerships over the years and in 2021 there was land donated and two major donors came forward. It was decided in 2022 by Council that if it were to be built, they would support the Parks & Recreation Department running it.

There have been quiet conversations with various community members and now it is time to broaden the scope to all of the community. It has evolved from just a Youth Center to being a Center for all of the community.

The major donors have given the deadline of the end of 2025 to see forward motion on the fundraising for this project.

Laurie discussed the reasons why this is needed in our community, such as year round recreation, health, community engagement and the weather. This Center will support individuals, families, and youth. This will not be an event center or wedding venue and will also not have a pool.

The location donated is on R Avenue just south of the Ben Root Skate Park. This location is ideal due to the donation of the land, but also it is on a bus line, near the skate park and Tommy Thompson trail. It is also in an area that will allow for growth within the City limits.

Laurie spoke about the funding already raised and what is needed in community support. The land and \$10 million have been donated. There needs to be another \$10-15 million raised by the

community. The goal is that it will be owned and maintained by the City but built with community supports and funds. There will most likely be user fees that help off set operating costs.

The next step is to gather volunteers for project and fundraising plans. Laurie is looking for community members to put her in contact with other major donors. Capital fundraising will begin in May with the next informational meeting to be held on April 24th at 6pm in Council Chambers.

Questions were asked about looking at other Centers in other communities as a model, Laurie responded that Anacortes is behind in having a community center and she has reached out to other cities regarding their spaces.

Another question about Council authorizing a levy was asked. At this time, the major donors would like to see funds raised by the community.

Inquiries were voiced about reaching more people. The issue that conflicted with this meeting was spring break. The hope is for a larger crowd at the next meeting.

Suggestions were made for fundraising with a buy a brick model, bringing in the Samish and their funding options, and speaking to the Parks Foundation.

Discussion was had about the other user groups, fundraising options and next steps.

Laurie would like to see a Board formed and progress on fundraising by summer so that the major donors see the support for the project. The goal is to have \$2 million by the end of 2025.

Department Reports:

Dustin shared that the Community Center is an exciting opportunity for the Recreation Department. There have been conceptual designs including a gym.

There is volleyball happening now as the school sports are outdoors and have freed up gym space. Badminton is running on Wednesdays. Track and field will be starting soon with over 120 signed up at this time. The Egg Dash happens this Friday at 6pm sharp at Storvik park.

Bob reported that staff are close to phase 2 of the Ben Root Skate Park-the restrooms and parking lot. He is working at getting an engineer under contract.

The preliminary design for W 6th Street Park should be delivered soon. There will be a community meeting in early May.

Staff is in the process of hiring seasonal staff. Interviews have been held and now Bob is offering jobs and working with HR to get them on board.

April 19th is the Dallas Kloke clean up to check climbing routes on Mt Erie and also do some trash clean up.

April 26th is opening day for fishing.

Nichola was in attendance and gave the Board a bit of insight into her responsibilities and what her days are full of. She is the Team Lead and also Cemetery Lead. She was the only playground safety inspector until recently when Bradyn passed the training and test. She shared that this is a busy time of year as everything is growing but the seasonals have not started. Big changes at the Cemetery have been happening. The large juniper at the north end has been ripped out and staff will be planting grass. There is also a new water line being laid to help with irrigation at the cemetery.

Bradyn was also in attendance and spoke about his tasks. The team is trying to keep up with routine maintenance as well as various projects. They have upgraded the Altair Americus park, hardened the Marine Stadium trail on the east side of Cap Sante, done some extra landscaping at fire station #2 and all of the small mowing around town. Bradyn mentioned that his day is always different and he enjoys the variety.

Jonn reported Nicole, Nichola and Darby are working on updating cemetery policies, including green burials.

Parks staff will go to the Planning Commission in May with the Parks Comprehensive plan.

Then will present that to the Parks Board in June. The City Comp plan is due by year end.

Jonn announced that the ribbon cutting for the new Cap Sante Rotary outlook will be on April 16th.

Last night with the presentation on the Tommy Thompson causeway and trestle. The video is available online.

Other Business:

Brad asked about the funding for the Heart Lake project. Jonn responded that the legislature has to pass the budget and that should happen before the end of the session on June 30th. At that time, there will be community meetings and engineer drawings.

Chris asked about the staff freeze and if that had been resolved. Jonn shared that due to changes at the federal level the FEMA funds that were expect may not come through so there will be no hiring of full time staff this year.

Sarah asked for an update on the pickleball courts. Staff shared that the fence has been repaired and the screens will be installed by month end. The legal department is working on the inter-local agreement with the school district to help improve and upgrade the tennis courts to allow for pickleball there.

Adjourned at 7:00pm

Respectfully submitted by Darby Jordan