



ANACORTES PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

P.O. BOX 547, ANACORTES, WA 98221
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Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board

**February 5th, 2026
6PM**

In person and virtual meeting options.

In Person: City Hall Main Floor Conference Room

Zoom Meeting Link:

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

Preliminary Agenda

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Approve January '26 Minutes**
- 3. Public Comments *for any item not on the agenda***
- 4. Bioacoustic Inventory and Monitoring: Invasive American Bullfrog**
- 5. Friends of the ACFL Update**
- 6. Staff Reports**
- 7. Parks Commission Update**
- 8. Other Business**

Adjourn

Minutes of the Meeting: January 8, 2026

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

Staff present: Bob Vaux, Jamie Burroughs, Darby Jordan

Meeting held in person and called to order at 5:32pm

Minutes: December minutes were unanimously approved.

Public Comments:

None

Nominations & vote for 2026 Board Chair

Kit opened the floor for nominations from the Board for chairperson for the 2026 year. Brian nominated Kit. There were no other nominations. The Board voted unanimously to elect Kit.

Anacortes Walk Fest

Tom Decker was in attendance to speak about this event happening in town. This is being run through the Chamber for both residents and visitors, and the City of Anacortes has signed on as a sponsor. He shared about the event: May 1-4, 2026, with about 26 walks all over the island focusing on history, culture, art and health, some of which will be in the ACFL. The walks will be led by community volunteers. Participants must be over 18 or be with a parent or guardian. The organizers have been in contact with the Anacortes Family Center and Salvation Army to partner with each and provide specific and appropriate walks for their clients. The City has determined that there is no need for background checks for the volunteers.

There will be a charge for participation to cover the cost of running the program but if there are any funds left over, they will be donated to local service groups. This does not qualify as commercial use as the funds are being routed through the Chamber and no staff are getting paid. It was mentioned that these volunteers and participants may be a great source for new ACFL volunteers. The Parks Commission is supportive of this project, but Staff would like to have Forest Board support as well. Brian stated that this is something that would fall under the approval of the Parks Director, that the Board is an advisory entity to Staff and Council.

Kit shared that if this is successful a more formal policy may be put in place. Tabb moved to support this event, there was unanimous approval from all Board members.

Friends of the ACFL Update:

Josie Henderson was in attendance and shared that Ellie has been promoted to Community Programs Director and in this role will be the representative from the Friends to attend the Forest Board meetings.

Ellie reported that they have lots of programs going and they will be running a homeschool program next week. Sign up for the Naturalist program and after school programs open on January 15th. Their conference week is already full. Their annual meeting will be March 11th, featuring Robby Andrus. Ellie will bring information soon about expanded hours for the Forest Discovery Center.

Staff Reports:

Bob shared that staff has been trying to provide staff coverage on weekends this winter to try and patrol for motorcycles and dogs off leash, as well as any other concerns. Steve P. was out on Saturday and stopped a dad and his sons on motorcycles and had a good conversation. Any parks staff can take advantage of this voluntary overtime opportunity. Braydn will be out in January sometime.

Mark Nihart was in attendance and asked about getting a police officer out in the ACFL. He stated that at a Council meeting, Council member Moulton requested of the police chief that with their full staffing, that an officer be assigned to the ACFL. Bob replied that they are nearing full staffing and hopes that there will be help with enforcement this summer.

Bob also shared that the main project right now is getting the Heart Lake project going. The next Forest Board meeting will be in the conference room at 6pm. The Forest Plan is currently being reviewed by the Mayor and then will go to Council. The Planning department has the second draft of the SEPA documents.

Jamie shared that he has been busy working on beaver rounds and clearing blow downs.

Parks Commission Report:

JoAnn reported that the W Side Park partnerships are forming and the plan is coming together. The Maritime Plaza project is out to bid with construction expected to be completed by the end of May. The PSE lease has been signed and lease renewed.

Other Business:

None

Adjourned at 6:27pm

Respectfully Submitted by Darby Jordan

JANUARY 2026
Assistant Director's Highlights
Parks & Recreation

Submitted: January 29, 2026

Bob Vaux

FOREST PLAN

- State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA): Darby and I reviewed Forest Plan changes with Planning Manager Libby G. Shout out to Libby for all her efforts working with us on this required step in the Plan update.

HEART LAKE PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

- Received final drafts of proposals from both Engineering and Environmental consultants. Worked through one last question and submitted contracts into the City queue on 1/23. Working now with our WA ST Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) Grant Manager on final prep before liftoff.

BEN ROOT SKATE PARK IMPROVEMENT PROJECT PHASE II

- Waiting for RCO approval of our Cultural Resources Study and MacKay Sposito to finish design. Am in active contact on both fronts.

ACFL TRAIL "PATROL"

- Parks Maint. Tech Braydn was out on an early January Saturday, attempted to make contact with a mountain biker riding with a dog off leash. The rider refused to stop.

WHISTLE LAKE AREA BEAVER ACTIVITY

- Our beaver population has been busy in the Toot Swamp area. Jamie and I visited the swamp's outflow and the dam there has been fortified significantly. Have requested a site visit with WDFW.

TREES

- Jamie and I were able to help a Rotary Park neighbor with a hazard tree limb. It is down and hauled away.
- Thanks to the Parks Crew for doing a great job cleaning up the hazard tree job that Precision Tree Service handled for us last month. We saved thousands of dollars by finishing the work in house.
- Anna D. from Planning and I visited the Highlands NGPE to deal with a couple of hazard trees and the appropriate mitigation for their removal.

WASHINGTON TRAILS ASSOCIATION BIG ROCK PROJECT

- Finally, was able to take Richard M. up on his generous offer to tour the WTA job site at Skagit County's Big Rock Park - one of my favorite places. The crew there doing some great work, and very inspiring for some possible improvements in the ACFL.

COUNCIL MEETINGS

- Attended the 1/20 meeting. Mayor Walters doing some housekeeping regarding Boards and Commissions. Also working on codifying them. Council voted in support of minor changes made to Forest Advisory Board membership language. Essentially, terms will now be four years instead of five, and a member of the Planning Commission is no longer required. Current terms are not impacted by these changes.

DOWNTOWN STREETScape

- Joined Director Lunsford for a focus group on this project, lead by consultant First Forty Feet and the Downtown Alliance. We focused on connecting the Tommy Thompson Parkway with the Guemes Channel Trail, as well as connecting the downtown corridor more directly with the Depot.

W. 6TH PARK

- Have been meeting with Legal/contracting staff, exploring public/private partnership options.

THANK YOU...

- COA GIS staff for helping me out with a recent surge in Geocache activity.

ROGUE MOTORIZED USE CONTINUES

- Concerned and frustrated trail users continue to report motorized use of the trails on trails that are both closed for the season and often not available for motorized use anyway. The Emotos (basically, electronic motorcycles) are spotted and reported. The age range of many of these reports is younger teen, so the problem is very much a local one. Parks staff continue to find time to regularly patrol and seek visitor compliance with ACFL policies.



Toot Swamp

James Burroughs
ACFL Maintenance technician
January 28, 2026

ACFL Maintenance Report: January 2026

Downed/Hazardous tree removals

- Removed downed trees and mitigated hazardous trees on trails: 10, 11, 21, 22, 28, 112, 200, 205, 210, 215, 219, 225, and Guemes Channel Trail. One of the many trees that came down on Trail 210 this month unfortunately was a large old growth Doug fir. *(Picture included)*
- Cleared storm debris from trail tread and restored safe corridor width and overhead clearance.
- Assisted Park crew in Falling and cleanup of dead Trees at Washington Park



ACFL Bridge log and ACFL volunteer work parties

- Completed ACFL Bridge log and Bridge inspections
- Completed ACFL volunteer work parties summaries for 2025 for Stormwater Department

Environmental Monitoring

- Conducted beaver reconnaissance with ACFL Bob at Toot Swamp to assess activity and hydrologic impacts.
- Completed routine beaver rounds at Ace of Hearts, 32nd Swamp, Little Cranberry Lake Spillway, Mitten Pond and Whistle Lake Dam outflow.

Old growth Tree Climbing Hardware

- Assisted Volunteer tree climber in the Removal of Climbing hardware in the old growth Doug fir located near Heart Lake.
(Picture included)



ACFL Rounds and Sanitation

- Completed routine Rounds of the ACFL
- Collection of garbage and litter
- Maintaining ACFL Restroom facilities
- Cleaned up illegally dumped debris off Mount Erie Road
- Located old homeless abandoned camp in the woods off of Mount Erie Road, I cleaned up and disposed of debris
- Multiple off- leash dog contacts

In town Work

- Completed slash and debris cleanup from tree work at Grandview East.
- Removed and cleaned up fallen tree limbs impacting adjacent property near Cap Sante.
- Replaced deteriorated decking boards on Ship Harbor Trail.
- Repaired damaged wire rope on Tommy Thompson Trestle.