

## Parks, Recreation and Fair Board Minutes

Thursday, March 18, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm with the following Park Board members in attendance:

**Board Members Present:** Tim Manns, Greg Francioch, Chris Allen, John Semrau, Jose Riefkohl, and Kevin Loy

**Staff Members and Representatives:** Brian Adams and Aric Gaither

**Members from the Public:** None

*A motion was made to approve the February minutes and March agenda. The motion to approve the minutes and agenda with a spelling correction was approved and passed unanimously. John asked to include the trust land language to the November minutes.*

### Board Discussion:

#### **Fair and Fairgrounds Update:**

Aric provided a report on all the new activities at the fairgrounds. There are 35 rentals in 2024 which is three times the number of the pre-covid numbers. There is no longer a dearth period, with rentals spanning the entire year. The two new employees are very active in their respective roles. Frances came from a history of fairground experience and has been instrumental in increasing the number of events and activities. After outgrowing other locations, Aric revealed that the Highland Games will be utilizing the fairgrounds in 2024. John (maintenance) has been working diligently on the necessary repair and maintenance work. His skill base is quite broad, which has helped reduce the need for contracted assistance.

The Fairgrounds has created a lot of capital in the community and as a result, volunteer turnover has been low and morale has been high. A slew of dedicated volunteers assists in a variety of ways throughout the year. Kevin Loy was instrumental in bringing success to the annual Fair by organizing the youth activities for the traditional early afternoon Thursday lull. This included the cheerleading competition that fills the stage area with family and friends. The capital improvements slated for this year includes the replacement of sewer lines and a new restroom facility.

The Board had positive comments and about the ongoing success with the Fair and Fairgrounds. John wondered how the Thursday through Sunday format has been embraced. Aric said that it was vetted with the superintendents and received well. There were questions about the attendance and engagement of the Board of County Commissioners. Staff responded with the ways in which we keep them engaged. An opening summary of events is done in the commissioner hearing room a month prior to the fair. This is complete with 4-H and FFA presence. The Board is scheduled to come see the fairground improvements and enjoy lunch during the summer months. We also make sure they have judging to do and stage time during the Fair.

Aric discussed the foundation and the progress being made. The legal work is close to being completed and the members have been selected. The foundation will provide financial assistance and help provide a sounding board for ongoing activities and improvements. With discussions for relocating the

fairgrounds on the horizon, the Parks Advisory Board may be asked to provide a role with the public interface.

#### **NSRA Disc Golf:**

They are in the process of preparing a proposal for review. They would like to extend the course. Because of the masterplan, I have asked that a written proposal is produced for Board review. It's a very popular park with future needs and we want to make sure we are designing features in the best interest of the public, both now and for the future. Our maintenance staff also has concerns about the ongoing work that has been done without staff permission. Some of this labor has created a greater amount of added work for our staff.

#### **Skagit Playfields Soccer complex:**

The soccer fields are getting quite a bit of interest and I would like to make sure we honor our commitment to the Latinx leagues. We will be constructing an MOU and this agreement will ensure the ongoing commitment to the neighboring community which is demographically rich with a high percentage of residents from Latin America. We hope that this acreage can evolve overtime, as other needs arise. The Advisory Board will be leaned on to ensure future activities align with our comprehensive plan. In the future, this may include gym space for our recreational leagues.

#### **Studley Acquisition:**

We believe we have a path forward now that we have a better understanding of what the Studley Family is requiring. We are very appreciative of their generosity and are grateful for their patience. We will have twenty years to complete a trailhead, trail, and parking lot to fulfil the terms of the reversionary clause.

#### **Filippini Waterfall:**

The wetlands have been delineated and a trailhead design is in the works. A preapplication meeting is scheduled for March. There is a question of whether we need to rezone to OSPI. The Filippini Family has the design work 90% complete. Some of the trails bisect wetland buffers. The greatest hurdle may be the WSDOT access permit. The surface water permit is dependent on the amount of gravel needed to complete the access and parking lot. We anticipate the need for six vehicles, including one ADA.

#### **Update on Rec/Current Projects:**

**Recreation:** March Madness is here and so is the Tulip Basketball Tournament (March 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>). We've grown to 78 teams this year following post COVID numbers in the 60's. It's great to see this popular event flexing it's own March Madness muscles.

Although we're busy with both spring and summer programs as summer sports camp registrations are already coming in, it's important to take a moment and reflect back on one of the busiest winter seasons EVER for winter Recreation programs. We saw top participation numbers in all of our leagues from the Boys SWISH Basketball League, Girls Winter Basketball Games, the Men's WINTER Basketball

League and Adult COED Volleyball Leagues. We have a brief moment to catch our breath and savor what Recreation accomplished this winter. We're now looking forward to a busy spring with basketball, softball, volleyball, and field rentals that include youth baseball, as well as adult slowpitch and fastpitch softball tournaments.

**Skagit Playfields:** Soccer fields: We have designs for the playground replacement and are waiting to see if funding comes through for a community Lowes grant. They will help with some of the equipment, including special disability playground equipment. The portable mounds for youth baseball are in production. We have met with some Cal Ripken representatives about expanding league play this spring/summer. We have sponsorships for two scoreboards and are seeking funding for the other two fields.

**Big Rock Acquisition:** This is a priority in the Comprehensive Parks Plan and the Skagit County Strategic Plan. We hope to attain the grant in the 2024 grant cycle and complete the project by the end of 2025. I am in the process of writing the grant before its due in May. There will be an initial presentation in June before the official 12-minute presentation in August. The project rankings are revealed in September, and the funds are allocated during the 2025 legislative cycle. If successful, the funding becomes available in July of 2025.

**Adjourn: 7:15 pm**