

Parks, Recreation and Fair Board Minutes

Thursday, November, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 pm with the following Park Board members in attendance:

Board Members Present: Tim Manns, Elizabeth Detillion, Jose Riefkohl, Greg Francioch, Chris Allen, and Kevin Loy

Staff Members and Representatives: Brian Adams

Members from the Public: None

A motion was made to approve the September minutes. The motion was approved and passed unanimously.

Board Discussion:

Grizzlies

The conversation with grizzly reintroduction was discussed but no recommendations were made. The plan is to introduce 5 to ten grizzlies per year for five to ten years, working towards a goal of 25 grizzlies. After the reintroductions, the plan is to allow reproduction over time. After 60-100 years, the population would be expected to reach 200 bears. Comments are due in November and a decision is anticipated in the spring.

There were concerns about the reintroduction amongst the board with one concern focused on recreationalists. As recreational providers, we want to see more people enjoying the outdoors. If there are grizzlies, will the perceived threat deter people from enjoying the North Cascades? Comments about perceived threats v. real threats were the focus of the conversation. No formal position was adopted by the board.

Studley Conditions for Acquisition

The board is very pleased with the generosity of the Studley Family. The reversionary condition wasn't a concern, so as long as parameters are established. The board felt we should have a design of what we are responsible for meeting their expectations. A design should be created showing exactly what we need to do to meet their expectations. Brian is to have Patrik create a design and bring it to our attorney and Board for review.

Frailey Mountain:

According to John, the Frailey Mountain site was Skagit County trust land before it was conveyed to County for Park purposes as a firearms range. He believes the RCW says it needs to return back to County trust land. Frailey Mountain was not traded for other County trust land. It was already County trust land; County land that had been deeded to DNR to hold in trust for timber revenue to County. The conveyance from the DNR took it out of trust and gave back to the County for operation as a range. John would like the DNR to propose an alternative range site that has access or for the DNR to grant access over current DNR road to Frailey Mountain so it can continue to be used as a park site.

Projects

Skagit Playfields:

Soccer fields: TRICO has wrapped up the project although we will be holding on to retainage through the germination process to make sure the coverage meets our expectations and specifications. Canadian Geese were causing some concerns but their presence has decreased with each week. The contractor is attempting to keep them at bay by placing cardboard cutouts of prey. We hope to have the fields ready for play in the summer of 2024. The project was completed under budget.

HMSP: We have vastly exceeded our visitation and revenue projections. With rates increasing on January 1, we anticipate even greater revenues next year. After making repairs to the deck and outdoor facilities, the interpretive center is open to the public through the end of February. We are awaiting permits for replacing the day-use restrooms We plan on starting construction in the late spring of 2024.

Guemes: The new interpretive sign will be installed as soon as get new cantilevered frames. We have been joining islanders as they continue their grass roots effort in planning, designing and building a trail that will separate pedestrians from traffic.

Recreation: Moving towards conclusions in Fall Sports Leagues already. Regular season play will conclude by early December in Men's Basketball, Adult COED Volleyball and our Girls SWISH Basketball League. December will be busy with Fall League Tournaments, plus Boys Pre-Season Games for 4th-8th grade teams on two dates (December 2nd/16th). We're also busy planning for our upcoming Boys SWISH Basketball League, which will get underway on Saturday, January 6th that we expect to have 110+ teams for. We haven't even hit winter, but are starting to hear from softball & fastpitch tournaments looking to schedule their 2024 events at the Skagit Valley Playfields, which we expect to have another full weekend tournament season.

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. We are beginning the grant phase. The grant will be presented in August, project rankings are revealed in September, and the funds are allocated during the 2025 legislative cycle. The monies become available in July of 2025.

Acquisitions:

Filipini Falls: Brennan continues to pursue the design and permitting for the trailhead.

Studley Community Park: The family would like to see conditions added to the transfer agreement. These matters are being resolved and the attorneys are sorting out the details.

Adjourn: 7:15 pm