

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Minutes

Thursday, April 16, 2026

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

Board Members Present: John Semrau, Barry Brower, Tim Manns, and Greg Francioch

Staff Members and Representatives: Ken Hansen

Members from the Public: Kimberly Royle, Arlen Bogaards, Nathan Salseina, and Mayor Kesti

A motion was made to approve the February minutes with correction of meeting date, approved and passed unanimously.

Board Discussion:

Property (P40165) Surplus Request

Kimberly Royle represented Mason Acres, owners of P40217, which is divided by an old rail ROW owned by the County (P40165). The owners would like to reestablish utilities to an existing RV site on their property, which will minimally require an easement on the County property. Kimberly wanted to know if P40165 was incorrectly recorded as County property, since none of the neighbors have remnants of the rail ROW dividing their parcels. The Board shared that the only way to prove that would be through a title search that she would need to procure. Assuming the property is recorded under County ownership, any request to purchase surplus property would require sale through public auction, so an easement will provide more guarantees on desired use.



NSRA Ballfield Proposal: Sedro-Woolley

Nathan Salseina represented Bill Bullock at the City of Sedro-Woolley with a request to enter an interlocal agreement with the County that would allow the City to relocate their ballfields from Riverfront Park, which have been flooded four times in the last 25 years, to the southern portion of NSRA surrounding the Veteran's Memorial. Replacing the ball fields with soccer fields will reduce the amount of infrastructure that is susceptible to floods and costly to repair/replace. The City proposed a 20-year lease agreement and hopes to start construction in spring/summer 2027.

Members of the Board shared public concerns from their districts on displacing American bitterns from their habitat in the grassy and wetland areas on south end of the park. Tim Manns pointed out that there are many NSRA visitors who come specifically to hear and see American Bitterns and other uncommon wetland species. Bitterns nest in the field proposed for the baseball diamonds. American bitterns are protected by federal law, so their habitat needs to be preserved. John Semrau urged that Sedro-Woolley also consider locating the ballfields and parking on the county property on the east side of Helmick Road. This undeveloped property is part of NSRA. The Board was supportive although said the disc golf users should be brought into this discussion. The City was asked to investigate locating fields away from the bittern habitat area while considering parking requirements.

Big Rock Update

Arlen Bogaards from the Washington Trails Association shared volunteer efforts in trail building and getting Yudwasta Big Rock Park open in 2025. 43 volunteer days were counted from a group of 338 volunteers, where 60% were from Skagit or Whatcom Counties. Phase 1 of trail building is complete and Phase 2 will be a trail from the bench site. WTA needs to know where the future parking site will be located. The County does not have a final parking plan at this time, although has executed a contract with Northwest Surveying & GPS to assist in establishing the best location. The Board said parking at Hilt Creek Falls needs to be the priority in 2026 due to permit timelines. The Gribble Creek culvert crossing has a bridge being designed for a future bridge and trail, although timeline is undetermined.

STAFF REPORT

Ken will be visiting project sites as the new Parks Director with priority given to Yudwasta Big Rock Park and Hilt Creek Falls.

Meeting adjourned at 7:03 pm

Next meeting scheduled for May 21 at 5:30 pm