

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Minutes

Thursday, May 21, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 pm with the following Park Board members in attendance:

John Semrau, Barry Brower, Jose Riefkohl, Gery Cardenas, and Greg Francioch

Staff Members and Representatives: Ken Hansen **Members from the Public:** None

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair pro tem John Semrau called the meeting to order. District 3 unrepresented.

Approval of Minutes

Ken reported receiving an e-mail from Tim Manns regarding details on the bittern habitat and more desirable plan to use northern part of Helmick field as an area for Sedro-Woolley to consider. Ken read the added language.

Motion: Approve minutes as amended.

Moved by: Gery

Seconded by: Greg

Vote: Unanimous approval

Board Discussion:

Parks Naming

Facilitated by Ken, who requested confirmation on Board's park name recommendations prior to scheduling a public hearing and formally establishing the names.

- Big Rock Yudwasta confirmed.
- Hilt Creek Falls supported with no objections.
- Studley Community Park naming tabled until project completion per terms in the purchase and sale agreement.
- Los Arcos Field naming delayed until soccer field plans are more established. Unable to properly maintain this field due to staff resource limitations. Spanish name acknowledges the LatinX population involvement in local soccer and is interpreted as the arches (the goals).

Department Name Discussion

Ken initiated conversation based on merger between Parks and Facilities Departments. He has some ongoing confusion between multiple public-facing names (Parks Department, Parks & Recreation, Parks, Recreation & Fair), which he acknowledged has more public interface than Facilities Management does.

He shared need to formally establish merged department name primarily for administrative purposes, where documented change in the County was delayed following feedback from the Fair Board that had concerns with branding, phone calls from the public, and messaging with a large volunteer force. Gery wants Fair in the name, because the name tells the community where the County's value are. Other members of the Board endorsed the Parks and Recreation name and logo as the more prominent and publicly known references to the department. Ken suggested a long and short name could be used with longer name on the webpage and shorter name for administrative purposes. Mixed views on surveying the public; consensus leaned toward not issuing a standalone public survey. Ken will take board input to county administration for decision-making. Motion approved to allow Ken to proceed with administrative consolidation while keeping naming flexible.

Board Officers

Discussion on need for leadership following vacancies. Nomination: John Semrau for Chair (by Barry; seconded by Jose). Board agreed to leave nominations open until the next meeting, with the vote to occur then. Members may vote by proxy.

Board Vacancy – District 3

Discussion regarding Kevin Loy's replacement, where Dean Taylor expressed interest informally. John advised Ken to contact Commissioner Burns to determine if he has any potential candidates to nominate. Ken will follow up.

Board Bylaws

Ken noted inconsistencies between RCW guidance and current board structure. Board historically has not adopted bylaws because it functions as an advisory body, and John referenced copies of older resolutions outlining terms and structure that he will share with Ken. Unlikely need for future action, assuming the previous resolutions provide with basic board parameters (number of members, terms).

Board Trail and Park Priorities

Ken inquired on any established priorities (top 3) for trails and parks to consider in future budget requests, especially following the recent expansion of Big Rock Yudwasta Park. No change reported from priorities established in the 2022 Parks Comprehensive Plan.

Staff Report

Nookachamps / Centennial Trail Segment

- Two grants submitted (WSDOT pedestrian/bicycle; RCO).
- WSDOT application likely ineligible due to missed tribal consultation requirement.
- RCO grant remains active but only covers ~50% of cost.
- If only RCO grant received, County will negotiate for ability to reduce scope to maintain progress.

Guemes Road Trail

- Public Works flagged issues where trail shifts into right-of-way.
- Ken to meet with Public Works and Risk to explore signage and narrower trail options.
- Board requested explanation for why trail alignment moved into ROW; Ken will follow up with consultant and report back.

Big Rock Park

- Boundary and wetland studies underway; next step is identifying location for main parking lot.
- Trail development to follow.

Young's Park (Guemes)

- Upper-section sculpture-park trail design underway by Pacific Landscape Architecture.

Howard Miller Steelhead Park

- Inquiry from public about trail signage; potential need for wayfinding improvements.
- Board confirmed no major changes in trail priorities since last comprehensive plan update, though Big Rock may represent an emerging focus.

Rexville Park

Land-swap desired with Drainage District 15, and John thinks the parcels may have been recorded incorrectly. This would allow for park expansion in larger contiguous area.

RCO Planning & Restoration (PRA) Grant Opportunity

- Grant can fund master planning, design, environmental review, and more.
- Due mid-July, so we have a short timeline.
- Could support:
 - Comprehensive Parks Plan update
 - Fairgrounds facilities / comprehensive plan
 - Northern State master plan update
 - Design for smaller park improvements (Hilt Creek, Studley, etc.)
- Board members asked to send Ken any suggestions with background context for grant preference.

Other Business

- Northern State ballfields: Public Works Director Bill Bullock will attend next month's meeting for board direction. Ken will contact him with request to work on second option that shift new fields north and east to mitigate identified Bittern nesting area.
- Informal update shared on Brian's Camino de Santiago trek—completed 485 miles and continuing.

Meeting adjourned at 7:12 pm Next meeting via Teams scheduled for June 18 at 5:30 pm