

MINUTES — Regular Meeting
CHUCKANUT COMMUNITY FOREST PARK DISTRICT
Wednesday, July 22, 2020 at 6 PM
Online Meeting Through Zoom
Mailing Address: PO Box 4283, Bellingham, WA 98227

Official email addresses for Commissioners, where public may send comments (subject to public disclosure):

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Our Mission: The mission of the Chuckanut Community Forest Park District is to ensure the entirety of the property is protected in perpetuity in public ownership, with respect for its ecological, recreational, and educational functions and to serve as a fiscal mechanism through which the district, via a tax levy, will repay the City of Bellingham for the Greenways Endowment Fund loan.

Call to order: John Brown. Welcome Commissioners and Citizens. Per Chapter 42.30 RCW (Open Public Meetings Act), CCFPD board meetings are open to the public. This meeting is being voice recorded. Due to the Covid-19 outbreak and the Governor's "Stay At Home" Order, this meeting of the Chuckanut Community Forest Park District will be conducted online on Zoom.

Roll Call: John Brown, John McLaughlin and Hue Beattie are present. Frank James joined part way through the meeting.

Old Business: Report from Nicole Oliver, Director of the Parks Department of the City of Bellingham. As part of the upcoming master plan, the Parks Department has created a trail and wayfinding plan that includes improving and decommissioning trails, establishes a main loop trail, installs "you are here" signage and begins prioritization of trail improvements as the first step in the process. As Chuckanut Community Forest Park District is reviewing new trail designs at the same time as the Parks Department had a concept that it was ready to bring to us, it is great timing to connect. We want to fine tune something that we can get posted sooner than later so that people can feel more confident and comfortable walking in the Forest.

R. Albro: As the screen sharing of the map was not working during the meeting, the map was just shared via the chat and will be sent out to the board members after the meeting.

N. Oliver: Laine Potter, Gina Austin, and Todd Ellsworth all did some work in the field with the trail crew. We could have another meeting, or share feedback in writing, however the Board thinks. They would like to get some signs up sooner rather than later. This is not the end all be all plan for the trail plan for the Forest, this plan is just the basics.

John McLaughlin: I was able to review the map. My class came up with trail designs that were posted a little over a year ago, had a public meeting and got a lot of feedback from the public. Came up with new designs based on revised criteria. The Parks Dept design follows very well from the criteria that we came up with and it looks like CCFPD and the Parks Department design are very close in alignment with the way we are thinking.

Nicole Oliver: I like the criteria you had originally. Some great work came out of it. Laine Potter did field work in early March where they were able to see how the wet areas are inundated. Their focus was to do some avoidance of the really wet areas. The Parks Dept. has money in the budget and have ideas about where to post the signs. These are "you are here" signs in yellow, 13 locations, as well as hopefully some other small signage, "you are on the main loop trail" to help people be safe and find their way around in there.

John McLaughlin: Signs look like they are at the all the main trail heads and key trail intersections, which are places where people need them most.

N. Oliver: They are telespar posts that you pound into the ground, so we are not digging holes or pouring concrete. They have money and time to be doing this right now, so as soon as you can get us back an A-Okay or any fine tuning, we can get those signs done.

Member of the Public: I like what I see at a quick glance, it has a more extensive network than most of the ones by the students, including the higher dry trails. It would be nice if there could be one trail in the wetland area that could be maintained by a bridge and it would be nice to preserve the secondary access to the interurban on the southern side.

J. McLaughlin: There is a major trail that goes between the western extension of wetland JJ and wetland KK. That is a site that would really benefit from a boardwalk combined with restoration of a hydrologic connection between those two wetlands. That is a place where visitors can have access to wetland habitat.

N. Oliver: That is the kind of thing that will definitely be explored in the master plan when we are going to talk about improvements and better access and projects.

L. Potter: Right where you are talking about was something that Gina Austin and all of us discussed, which was using this initial map to get some wayfinding out there, decommission some trails that we can all agree are good to decommission. When we begin the master planning process, what are those priority projects that could use some repairs or a boardwalk, and how could we find some funding? Could we utilize some trail crews or volunteers? As part of the master plan those high priority projects will be identified.

N. Oliver: Frank James had mentioned about the inclusion of the Chuckanut Community Forest into Fairhaven Park with respect to zoning. Goes back to some email exchanges between Catherine Moore and myself. When we purchased Fairhaven Park in 2014, when the next ProPlan was done (inventory of our Park Assets), the Parks Dept. added the Chuckanut Community Forest acreage to Fairhaven Park and the project was added of doing a master plan was added to the capital budget. It was put on the map of Fairhaven Park and has appeared as that since that time. We have identified the Forest as the Chuckanut Community Forest. It is adjacent and accessed by Fairhaven Park. That doesn't mean that we can't call it the Chuckanut Community Forest within Fairhaven Park. It is not its own entity on its own. It is contiguous with the park and we should plan it as part of the Park.

H. Beattie: There are six entrances to the community forest and there is only one coming in from Fairhaven Park.

J. Brown: I talked to Leslie Bryson and it was a very convenient thing to do to have it be Fairhaven Park. She said the naming process would go forward and there would be input from a great many people about what to name it and at that time it would be given its own name. To be candid with you, the board has been a bit reluctant to allow the name of Fairhaven Park to be a default position because that will get fixed and the naming process will be circumvented or set aside and it will all become part of Fairhaven Park. I don't think anyone wants that to happen. Of course, it is contiguous with Fairhaven Park.

H. Beattie: For example, in Happy Valley, you have the Fairhaven Plaza at 32nd and Old Fairhaven Parkway, which is Happy Valley, not Fairhaven.

J. Brown: Is it your position that there will be a naming process, and at that time, whatever people decide to call it we will come together and figure out a name for it. N. Oliver: The naming process is a public process that involves the master plan, which we have planned and then the names, we go out into the public and ask for ideas for names and then those go to the Park Board who picks their favorites and the city council decides.

N. Oliver: We have since refined it based on your input, as it did appear in multiple ways in different city documents, and you were all very consistent in correcting us to call it the Chuckanut Community Forest in planning documents.

J. McLaughlin: It looks like a plan that will work, it will protect the areas that are particularly sensitive, and it will work for visitors. A plan that closes too much, people will make their own trails anyway. What you have here will support the needs of the people wanting to be in the place and explore the place in ways that make sense for visitation and conservation.

F. James: To protect the ecology you need an interim plan to manage access. There is a very well-developed bike trail on the back side over near where the beaver dam used to be, highly sculpted and in need of being reclaimed. It is in the back side where not many people go, but those kind of things pop up and together, we need to actively manage the ecological conservancy, so that when we do get to a master plan there will full integrity of the place to be preserved.

J. McLaughlin: That gets to an issue that I wanted to raise about different components of a master plan that my students and I can help with, in particular that is a restoration plan. I have fleshed that out to eight components that I am happy to share with you. In the past you weren't able to allocate any time or effort to it, but as we approach the master planning process perhaps you could. I am interested in your feedback of what would be useful so that any work that the students do could be of the most value.

N. Oliver: I have thought about that since you first brought it up. This master plan is quite different than a lot of our plans. They vary from park to park from decade to decade from funding source to funding source. Some plans are the latest version of the third phase with the landscaping on it and it is literally the name of the park on the bottom and this is the master plan. Some plans have much more documentation and text, and I think this one, given the interest in the property, the scope of it, the restoration opportunities and the trails in it, I do think there are some different components that will be unique for this plan. We talked about the work you could do to inform it, with information on the critical species, the really unique species, restoration ideas, I think that is a wonderful idea to put those priorities in this plan. I think that this park long term is going to be about preservation more than access. I think there is so much access right now, our initial plan is about decommissioning trails. That is not our typical beginning approach for a park property. I think that you are absolutely on the right track. I am not really seeing the bike facility concepts as a good notion in my mind, based on what we have seen in other areas, and now that we have Galbraith which has so much of that use as more appropriate there. Already since Covid, we are seeing an amazing amount of trail building in our more remote open space areas. I think this plan can very much be built on what you want it to be and how it will serve the interests of the community.

F. James: I think there is a movement within the board away from any bike facility on the site. There are already considerable conflicts where we have seen issues with little old ladies walking along and some young kid on a bike knocks her down. That is something to be considered in trail design. We may want to make some trails that T in a way that makes it inconvenient to go at high speed. The University has done a very good job of that in some of their design works in bikes on campus don't go as fast. I think we are taking a turn away from what had been discussed and advocated for by the board at some point for some sort of bike facility. It does seem increasingly incompatible with the conservation quality there.

In addition to John McLaughlin's efforts, there have been several community groups that have been working with us to catalog the variety of species. There are birders, several years of mycological surveys, and we are encouraging the groups that are doing that to put them into an online data base that has a life of its own as it will. We are trying to work with groups to do it in a systematic way so that they are not compromising the integrity of the place, in their eagerness to help and do surveys. We have worked with several groups to do that and hope to do more of that so that we have a very thorough baseline of data for what is there. There are a variety of freshwater fairy shrimp and a variety of other organisms that are quite fascinating and might lend themselves to some interpretive work and then there are the more worrisome things. There is a cougar that lives in my neighborhood that killed a deer a few blocks away. It is encouraging that there is a way for animals to get from Clark's Point over to the 100-acre woods up into the mountains. In service of the master plan we want to build a robust scientific database that will support it.

N. Oliver: I think that was all good. I think that we are on the right track. Any work that you do will be helpful. We can produce some great maps and help guide us into the future. We want to set very good solid goals. Fairhaven Park itself doesn't really have a master plan. What happens there very much has an impact on the Chuckanut Community Forest.

J. Brown: I am very encouraged by the way that Ms. Oliver is open to and on top of things.

F. James: We are very excited to have Laine Potter here and welcome you. The other part of this is to jointly manage this with the Land Trust Parcel that is there. We are also talking of reintroducing Beavers into the old Beaver Pond. We have reviewed the technical requirements and it has gotten

easier than it was a few years ago. The old Beaver Pond is shallow and would need some damming and lodge work. There are not trails through that area, but around it.

N. Oliver: We could also have a section on Hoag's Pond in this master plan, as it is very related with what the priorities are and the intention of the place.

F. James: We did approach our legal counsel about what we can spend the money we raise on. Basically, we can do things that are in the service and protection of the land, which might include a broad variety of activities. As you budget, if there are things that would protect the ecological integrity and the conservation value of the property, we can expend funds for that purpose. Even things relative to safety, signage, or wayfinding stuff or in terms of making temporary improvements to parking so it is safer. There is an issue of the current parking access which we get complaints about, as it seems unsafe to several people. If there are things like that, we would be happy to consider assisting with financing. In other places, park districts manage a lot of the park activities in cities and counties. The former mayor approached me about would the Park District like to expand and take over all the Parks. That is not something that we are interested in, we are focusing on the conservation value of this area. There is a broad mandate and there is some interest amongst board members in supporting those things. I know I mentioned that once before and you said we got it covered.

N. Oliver: I don't have it covered anymore.

F. James: We want to be your partner in that way of thinking. Of course, we have to get re-elected. But the community has proven in taking this project on that they want to contribute. That enthusiasm has not gone away. People express that when they come and talk at a board meeting. I think that would include perhaps a slightly expanded version of our mission. As you know we went to court and those court proceedings were about, are we just paying this park off or do we have a larger mission. The findings of the court are that we definitely have a larger mission. We want to stand by that decision and stand by that commitment that we have a larger mission.

Todd Ellsworth: Commissioner James, with that said, where the district has an opportunity, we as a community, and even leveraging Recreation Northwest, as we look at the proposed trail decommissioning plan, your support whether it is just saying yes, or even fiscal support to help with decommissioning of trails could be a great help in ecological restoration.

F. James: Absolutely, we have had that vision for some time. There are other big projects. There was a large ditch that was put in to drain one of the wetlands that was put in by a prior development activity that was never permitted or approved, which I believe does active damage to what was there then and persists. We would be interested in taking on not just the trails, but some of those larger issues that I have think have great ecological value.

Todd Ellsworth: My perspective as we have evolved through this, is about different stages. The master plan is a long-term goal and what we have here is a trail plan. My understanding of the master plan is more the facilities and everything around it. What we can do here is really get into what is the trail plan, what John McLaughlin has been doing with his students, and our tour of the property with Parks staff to at least start somewhere. I am stoked with what you have said John on what Laine has presented. I am excited that we are on the same page as far as I can tell.

J. McLaughlin: Frank hasn't had a chance to review the Parks map yet, but it has gone deeper than that. If you look at that map, at the part where we are talking about restoring conditions to support beavers is precisely where we are talking about removing a conflicting trail. Your trail plan would really support the stage to support beaver restoration, if we can get beavers in there, then we are talking about facilitating the restoration of sea run cutthroat spawning up in that big wetland. Now you have the possibility of restoring hydrologic connectivity, restoring anadromous fish population and that all benefits the visitors who might come see fish making it from saltwater up into this place.

F. James: Despite the 8" pipe that is 60 feet long, somehow fish have made it up there. The pipe is being replaced now too, this summer or fall, the Hoag's Creek fish passage, by WSDOT.

J. McLaughlin: If you want to think even bigger, than what this is leading to is the city working to mitigate climate change. If you think of all the things the climate change does to the water cycle, this is a project of removing the pipe and restoring the hydrology maintained by the beavers in that system would actually mitigate impacts of climate change. It is a great model project for the city of how we can take a more active role in our future, rather than letting it just happen to us.

F. James: We are excited to have your involvement Todd, and of course Laine. We have been waiting for you to get settled Laine and now we will be beating a path to your door. Hopefully one of the things we can do is consider financial support as well.

N. Oliver: I think the best way we can go about that is to tell us what you would like to do. Those types of partnership projects, we want you to be very encouraged and decide as a board that this would be the best thing that you can support and come up with a proposal. That is what Recreation Northwest did by putting in that boardwalk off 18th. That was an amazing, targeted way to improve access. We wouldn't have been able to do that at that point in time.

F. James: I am really looking forward to the partnership aspect. I don't think it is so much what the board has in mind. What we are doing now is to measure what is there, and then to limit the impacts now on what are negatively affecting the property. We are really about conservation and about preservation primarily.

N. Oliver: Maybe the best thing to do is update the baseline study of everything.

F. James: I think that is a really good idea, combine the professional oversight by someone like Ann Eissinger, and the citizen science we have been doing. Also, we would like to make that information part of the public domain, such as the mycological data. We also want to create ways to get to and from those sites in such a way so that they aren't destroyed.

N. Oliver: The end result could be a plan, but it could also be a living document that could be on the city's website as a repository of all this information that would continue to grow, as people add more information to these collections. I think we have some good ideas.

Robyn Albro will send out a copy of the Parks Map of proposed trails to the board.

The board expressed their thanks to Nicole Oliver, Laine Potter, Gina Austin, and Todd Ellsworth for coming.

Gina Austin: I wanted to thank you all, this has been extremely informative. I didn't realize the breadth and body of knowledge that this group has. I assumed obviously you had great care and passion for this area, but this is incredible. Thank you for including us.

J. Brown: Thank you very much Ms. Austin.

F. James: Some of us have been involved for 20 years.

N. Oliver: The very first public meeting I attended at the City of Bellingham was on the original proposal to develop this property and that is how I got involved in city government.

H. Beattie: Remember Dr. Gibb, we had a plan to do the whole Chuckanut area, all the way down to Skagit, a park district. That large plan didn't work, but when we got down to this small area, at least that worked.

Nicole Oliver, Laine Potter, Gina Austin, and Todd Ellsworth left the meeting.

Hue Beattie: I would like to request that Robyn print copies of the pdf's, agendas, and everything. We should have written materials. Frank: I am okay with the electronic versions. John Brown and John McLaughlin: Electronic copies are fine. Send paper copies to John Hymas if he wants them.

Motion: Moved by John McLaughlin to approve May 27th and June 24th, 2020 meeting minutes. Seconded by Hue Beattie. Approved 4/0.

Park Advisory Board Meeting Report: Not given as John Hymas is not at the meeting.

New Business:

Monthly expenses and cash flow sheets.

Petty Cash: WECU Bank account balance as of 5/31/2020 was \$2,720.09.

Treasurer's Report: As of June 30, 2020, Whatcom Co. Treasurer's Monthly Report, beginning unencumbered cash balance (6/01) \$314,557.41, ending unencumbered cash balance (6/30) \$235,564.76. We received tax revenues of \$23,887.17 in June. \$3,686 in operating expenses, and \$99,719.70 was paid on our loan to the city of Bellingham.

Current debt outstanding as of 6/30/2020: \$949,053.24.

Motion: to approve District Payroll Input Form, wages for Robyn Albro, 26.25 hours in June 2020, total gross of \$.656.25 by John McLaughlin. Seconded by Hue Beattie. Approved 4/0.

Consent Agenda: Motion to approve following payments by Hue Beattie. Seconded by Frank James. Approved 4/0.

- Payment on the June 15, 2020, Invoice #91741 from Carmichael Clark PS for \$997.00, for regular professional services.
- Payment on the June 30, 2020 Invoice 31187 for payroll from Whatcom County Administrative Services for \$30.00 .

Reminder: R. Albro will send an email to three board members right after the meeting. Please respond confirming that you approve paying of bills as listed in the consent agenda and payroll.

Old Business Continued:

- Discussion about Resolution 15, bill paying when the board cannot meet.
Catherine Moore: This is a good tool in the board's tool kit. Don't know what is going to be happening with Covid. We don't know if we are going to be going back to routine and necessary business limits on our public meetings. We don't have to do it this way, it just gives the board another option. Robyn Albro: We don't have to use it, but if we get to a place where we didn't have a quorum for a regular board meeting, it might be nice to have it. Also, it only covers regular bills, not the special bills that come in just once a year.
F. James: I think it is important to do. We are in a second wave right now and I believe that once school starts, we are going to have a bigger wave than what we have now. We could be in serious trouble regarding our functioning. We could be back in a place where we would only be doing necessary and routine business. I think it is a valuable tool going forward. I think it would be wise and prudent to do this. I think it makes sense for us and makes us a more functional board. J. Brown: I am comfortable with doing approving this. H. Beattie: I am in favor of it. J. McLaughlin: Yes.
John Brown moved that we accept this Resolution and Hue Beattie seconded it. Approved 4/0.
- Public hearing for trail designs:
John McLaughlin: I am planning to finish up the components of a restoration plan for the fall and submitting that for everyone. Pretty easy to compare the Park's trail plan with the students' second trail plans.
F. James: Trail plan restoration plan combination or two separate activities?
J. McLaughlin: Restoration plan complements the trail plan, because the first thing on it is what do you do with the trails that you are removing. How do you restore them? How do you deter subsequent use of the restored trails? They are related. I am thinking of the components of the master plan. What is going to be needed both for the components of the master plan and for the place and start to put those in place to foster development of the master plan and for our stewardship of the place. When we have a hearing, it would be great to include the four student plans but also to include the Park's plan. F. James: That is a great idea. Do you think that is practical to hold the hearing at the next meeting? J. McLaughlin: It is hard to include everyone in the summer and it is not a lot of notice. I would suggest that September might be a better time. F. James: Do you think it would be possible to talk about both the restoration plan and the trail plan, or just the trail plan? J. McLaughlin: Let's focus on the trail plan. F. James: Let's include the Park's trail plan and bring them up for public discussion together. Last time when I talked to Nicole Oliver, she said we don't need any money. I am wondering if they are even going to have adequate funding to have the master planning process in a meaningful way. We may need to participate in that process financially. I think that is something to think about between now and next meeting. If we are going to take on additional financial responsibilities, how we might think about that. What specifically we would like to do. It does sound like the city is in hard times financially.
J. McLaughlin: What they have done in prior master plans is they hire a consultant who has a scope of work and they go and do it. If much of that master planning scope of work has already

been completed, then they still might want to hire a consultant, but it is not going to be as big of a job and it could be a whole lot less expensive and take less time to do.

Consensus about moving the hearing to the month of September. We will include the student's trail designs and the Parks Dept. trail plan. At our next meeting, we might want to talk about what additional financial burdens we might want to take on in support of the conservation of this property. What do we do to protect the integrity of the property now?

- H. Beattie: One thing that came up tonight, maybe we could include Hoag's Pond as part of the Chuckanut Forest District. F. James: Ecologically speaking, it is integral, just like the property where the Land Trust has the conservation easement. Hoag's Pond is city property. We could begin a discussion with the city, at least at a planning point of view, they should be planned for as a unit. J. McLaughlin: That would suggest doing something about the culvert that blocks the Interurban Trail that blocks the cutthroat from going all the way up to Hoag's Pond. F. James: That sounds like something we might want to take on as a project. J. McLaughlin: Now we are talking about watersheds, the headwaters both in Chuckanut Community Forest and in Hoag's Pond. It absolutely makes a lot of sense.
- F. James: I met with the mayor twice so far. He is supportive of what we are doing. We didn't have a specific set of asks. I think the real issues were the naming and the role of the park board. John do you feel the need to meet with the mayor? J. McLaughlin: Let's flush out the restoration plan first because that really gets into what we are talking about with the city and this place being a model for climate change. I had a brief meeting with him, he saw me on my bike, about a network of bee gardens. I connected him with a bunch of people who are doing some bee citizen science and planning for that. I think we are thinking in similar directions. F. James: The mayor seemed very encouraging and I think our next discussion will be when we have an ask for something. J. McLaughlin: Related to that I have the components of a restoration plan for a class this fall. I would like to send that out and get feedback. J. Brown: Thank you, we will look at it. F. James: I am excited about it and the process and the benefits to both the Park District and the City from what you are doing. It can be a model for how it can be done other places. It can lead to change, especially now that the Parks Dept. has Laine on board. We want to give her as many ideas about that as we can. If there is anyone to get together with John, I would get together with her. I am going to try and get together with her too. I think she is going to become a more pivotal person. That is an informal thing I think we should pursue.
- Question from John Hymas about how the economic downturn may affect when our loan is paid off. It was suggested that we ask the treasurer about that. F. James: I think it would be good to get an update on what the projected time is and if we are thinking of funding some of these other issues, it would be a new thing for us, but we would also want to know what financial circumstance we are going to find ourselves in over the next few years. R. Albro: I will have him update the document he gave us before. F. James: There has been a lot of ongoing construction. Might want to know if there is some planning about projections based on the impact of Covid, mid-term, not just short-term.
- H. Beattie: We were talking about the wetland mitigation bank earlier. The city might use our forest as part of their wetland mitigation bank. J. McLaughlin: What they have done in the past, when anyone is trying to develop a parcel that is going to impact wetlands and streams, the developer must do on-site mitigation. That leads to additional costs and frustrations. The city wants to create a mitigation bank, in which anyone can compensate for their impacts on some other wetlands' location. There are several other mitigation banks around the state, the closest is the Lummi Nation. This is being reviewed by the Dept. of Ecology and the Army Corp of Engineers. It doesn't affect us directly, but it could. The four receiving sites are farther north and east in the County. The city will be buying these lands and doing mitigation and restoration actions. The Chuckanut Community Forest is in the map of receiving areas so any

developments within the receiving areas could be available for mitigation in the bank. As we are talking about lands already protected, it doesn't affect us. What we could be concerned about would be the future, if we were to do something with beaver restoration that would enhance the wetland here, then what we do could be counted towards mitigation for destroying wetlands elsewhere. That might be something we might be uncomfortable with. The deadline for input is past. I reviewed it and sent in a very substantial review. I think they have done a terrible job. In principle, mitigation banks can be win-wins, in practice, they are vulnerable to subversion and actually lose-lose. What the city has proposed here is one of those. If you look at the people who they asked input for, it is a bunch of developers, a bunch of consultants that work for developers, and I think they asked Rachel Vasak (Nooksak Salmon Enhancement Assoc.). It looks like a boondoggle. They are claiming most credit for preservation which the critical areas ordinance already achieved. So really what they are doing is talking about doing something, taking credit for it, and then allowing destruction of wetlands somewhere else. It would be a net loss of wetlands. They are also talking about taking credit for restoring habitat for salmon, and all but one place is blocked for salmon by culverts. There are some real problems with it, but I don't think it affects us directly. H. Beattie: Thank you John for letting us know what is going on. J. McLaughlin: We are not in any of the areas they would be doing projects on, and we are already protected. F. James: I don't see any reason that we were listed. J. McLaughlin: I was fairly critical on scientific grounds. I think as a body we could only burn bridges by getting involved with this, given our very positive interaction tonight. F. James: It is not our issue.

Next Meeting: Wednesday August 26th, 2020. Meeting will be a zoom meeting.

Adjourn. Time: 7:45 pm.