

MINUTES — Regular Meeting
CHUCKANUT COMMUNITY FOREST PARK DISTRICT
Wednesday, April 28, 2021 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.

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.

A visual and audio recording of this meeting will be posted on the CCFPD website. If your camera is on during the meeting, your voice, likeness, and surroundings, will be publicly available and viewable on the CCFPD website. If you choose to speak with your camera off, or by calling on a telephone, only your voice will be recorded.

Call to order: Frank James. Welcome Commissioners and Citizens. Per Chapter 42.30 RCW (Open Public Meetings Act), CCFPD board meetings are open to the public.

Roll Call: Frank James, John Hymas, and Hue Beattie. John Brown and John McLaughlin are excused.

Motion: Moved to approve agenda by Hue Beattie. Seconded by John Hymas. Approved 3/0.

Introductions: Bob Carmichael, legal counsel, Robyn Albro, secretary, John Blethen, Laurel Baldwin, Irena Lambrou from South Neighborhood, Steve Wilson, South Neighborhood Board Member, and Reis Southworth.

Motion to approve minutes for March 24, 2021 meeting by John Hymas, second by Hue Beattie. Voted to approve 3/0.

Old Business:

Noxious Weeds in Chuckanut Community Forest.

Presentation by Laurel Baldwin, Weed Control Coordinator for Noxious Weeds in Whatcom County. Laurel Baldwin: We did a survey in the Forest last Thursday and did some mapping. We hiked three or four miles all around in the Forest on all the trails we could get to. We got a pretty good feel for the impacts on the Forest. I was surprised to not find a few things. Fairhaven has quite a population of Spurge Laurel (an evergreen plant) and we didn’t really see it in the Forest. There was an oddity of a bamboo planting in the middle of the Forest in an open area. It is a short growing species; don’t know which bamboo cultivar it is. We have a mapping program I can share with you [comes up at 6:05 in the video of the meeting]. Yellow dots are the points and labels of the weeds that we found. We tended to stay more on the periphery, the outside borders, but we certainly can do a more comprehensive survey at some other time. The reason I wanted to stay on the outer edges is that is where a lot of the weeds come in, from the trail heads, people track them in, or they drift in to open spots. Saw a fair amount of Bush Holly. I came in from the Fairhaven Trailhead. There is a fair amount of English Hawthorne (listed on the noxious weed list) in the northwest area.

The Noxious Weed List is revised every year and those are the weeds that get our attention. They are noxious, non-native plants. We also have priorities of weeds. Most of the weeds we found in the Chuckanut Community Forest are C class or B class, they are more widespread and more commonly found in Whatcom County and Western Washington. We didn’t find any unusual/rare or

Class A noxious weeds, which if we did, we would try to see about helping eradicate those. The other ones are for management and we are not requiring control at this point.

Had some English Holly and European Mountain Ash in the north of the Forest. Mountain Ash is a monitor species, not a regulatory one at this time. I was happily surprised to see that there weren't huge swaths of Herb Robert, which is a very common and invasive understory problem for forests here in Whatcom County. I was pleased to see that this forest, this ecosystem, is at a point where it is starting to see some impacts moving in from invasive species but by and large it is a well-established native plant community. It is still feasible, at this point, to move in and remove some of those things by hand, with volunteers in the community involved, stick to a mechanical removal. It is not pristine, but it is a really nice forest to be in.

There is some Periwinkle off Chuckanut Dr and some Scotch Broom also, and that could be WSDOT right of way rather than the Forest. Sweet Woodruff is another ornamental I found. It looks like perhaps in the community to the southeast of Chuckanut Dr. that the trailhead was used as a yard waste dump. When people dump their yard waste, they end up with ornamentals spreading in forested areas. There was more English Holly and more Periwinkle (Vinca) off the trailhead further south off Chuckanut Dr. English Ivy comes and goes. There are some places where it is not up in the trees, it is only on the ground. Pretty easy to solve up in the trees, you can cut them along the base of the trunk and let the above ground plants die off. The understory is more of a concern because it can crowd out native plants. There aren't vast swaths of English Ivy in this forest.

We did have a Class A, Giant Hogweed, over on the Interurban Trail, but not in the Forest. Two plants showed up a couple of years ago, they have since been controlled and removed. There is another little plant called Lesser Celandine, a Class B Noxious Weed. There are small patches that we have been digging up along the trail as well, also outside of the Forest. It travels well on shoes and boots and it is a cute little plant, so people have traded it. Now it is illegal to buy, sell or transport in the state. There is also a patch of knotweed on the eastern edge to the north but didn't see any in the Forest.

In the north there is more English Holly and Mountain Ash. The short bamboo is in the north in with some Scotch Broom, which is the only batch of Scotch Broom I found within the Forest. They are young Scotch Broom that drifted in because this is an opening or were tracked in and grew there because there is sunlight. They are young plants, and they could be weed wrenched out pretty easily. If you click on the dot on the map, it shows the latitude/longitude, date we were out there and number of plants. There are photos attached as well. There is a specialized tool that is just for Scotch Broom to wrench it out that we loan out for free. The tool also works on young invasive trees, European Mountain Ash and English Hawthorne.

John Hymas: Is it true that if you cut Scotch Broom to the ground while it is blooming, you get a decent kill rate? Laurel Baldwin: Yes, it is. There are a couple of different options. Weed wrench is one of the options; you can also cut it down to the ground. On older plants we've gone in and cut the plants in the fall, about 6 to 8 inches above ground, then girdle the bark off the stump. When you do that, you save the soil disturbance from happening. Anytime you pull up a weed, especially the scotch broom, you are disturbing the soil and any seeds that are dropped off the scotch broom are exposed to sunlight, water, and air and they germinate, so you can get a flush of seedlings.

There is a weird little bamboo planting in here in the northeast, about 600 sq. ft. Not very noticeable because it is a very short bamboo in a forest opening [see photos at end of minutes]. Could be mistaken for weed canary grass. Frank James: Are there methods to control it that are relatively easy? Laurel Baldwin: Excavators. When you get into a situation like this, you are looking at excavation or chemical treatment. There is also Ivy hanging in the same space. Frank James: Can you cover it? Laurel Baldwin: You can experiment with black plastic or even maybe with solarizing where you use clear plastic in the heat of the summer to bake the weeds. Someone would have to check and make sure the tarp or cover was staying down and it would have to be there long-term, for a few years. Have to keep checking the edges of the tarp to make sure things are not poking out the edges. Bamboo is sharp when it first comes up and it can poke right through plastic. Plastic would have to be loose so when the tip comes up it just bends.

Frank James: Is this map publicly available? Laurel Baldwin: No, this is a mapping program given to us through Washington State Dept. of Agriculture. They haven't made it available to the public on a really useful scale. There is a large-scale map, but when you scroll in, the points disappear, and that is because of private property issues. I can send the link for that map for whatever use it would be.

I wanted to impress upon all of you that I think the Forest is in good shape and a good place to be protected. It is getting a little bit of invasion, but it is not terrible.

Frank James: If you were to prioritize that list in terms of what should be addressed first? Laurel Baldwin: I think I would go after English Ivy first, just because it is so limited, and it can take off so badly. Frank James: There has been some community effort on that up in the northeast corner and possibly another place too. Laurel Baldwin: Because Scotch Broom is so easy and it is in a central part, it would be easy to work on that too and get that out of there.

Frank James: There is soil disturbance in the south on an adjacent piece of property where machinery is being used to make trails. It seems like soil disturbance is a major source of new invasive weeds. Laurel Baldwin: Absolutely. Frank James: Is there something we can do to help prevent the spread from places of disturbance. Laurel Baldwin: Clean equipment is important, such as hosing down equipment before it comes in and ensure it is cleaned up and doesn't track things in from other sites. Also establishing cover on whatever exposed soil you have. That is really important to get something in there that you want, even if it is temporary, otherwise mother nature is going to pick out something opportunistic like a weed. Covers for a spot depends on the conditions but stick to native plants that will work in that spot, or an annual grass to cover it for now. Wood chips work, but it depends on your end intent for that site.

Frank James: There are bike trails that people are developing, and I think the person would be quite cooperative with us if we had practical ideas, such as cleaning equipment and using wood chips.

Laurel Baldwin: Ivy can sometimes come in with wood chips. Eventually you might want to plant the area, but the wood chips do cover the soil and keep the weed seeds from settling in.

Frank James: That is an immensely helpful presentation and eye-opening to all of us. We were all worried and the presentation was reassuring to me.

Frank James described the planning phase we are in right now with the city and the long-term planning document that will guide the city and us, and whoever holds the conservation easement. Discussed the use of goats to eat the bamboo, similar to a weed eater, deals with the parts above ground, but not the roots. Also talked about Japanese Knotweed being a concern, even though it is outside the boundary of the forest.

Laurel Baldwin: Another noxious weed, Spurge Laurel is an evergreen shrub that is all over Fairhaven, it has been an ornamental, no longer sold in nurseries, very invasive, birds eat the berries and spread it. Looks like a little rhododendron, little green flowers, and black berries. Have a taproot that goes forever, and they are hard to control. Pulled up some Herb Robert and Mountain Ash seedlings that we could pull up with our bare hands.

Frank James: Could we make educational material or interpretive materials available in a sign, what to look for, though there is some danger in that as people might pull out the wrong thing? Laurel Baldwin: There could be some interpretive signing, the city did that in the Padden Creek daylight project for noxious weeds. At Lookout Mountain, Stimpson, Hertz Trail and other county parks, we have boot brush stations. There is a boot brush at the bottom of a sign and the top of the sign says stop invasive species in their tracks, wipe off your shoes before you go in the forest. Those get a lot of use and brings about the awareness that people should be cleaning their shoes. I think a lot of people use it to clean off their shoes before they get in their car. That is another form of outreach that we have found to be successful. In terms of having people pull up weeds, it is helpful if they are trained in identification. People can think they are pulling up something that is invasive, for instance, native bleeding heart looks a lot like Herb Robert, and it is easy for people to mistake the two. It is good to have volunteers and have them monitored, but I wouldn't encourage the public to pull weeds out there.

There has already been a volunteer who has offered to help with that, that is a steward at Arroyo Park for noxious weeds. John Blethen suggested working with the Parks volunteer coordinator, Amy Brown, to put a work party together. Frank James mentioned there were previous work parties with Amy to pull out English Ivy. Laurel Baldwin could make sure that Amy and City Parks get access to the map. Discussed taking out the Scotch Broom out by Chuckanut Dr., but Laurel wasn't too worried about it.

Steve Wilson with South Neighborhood said they would work to get volunteers out for a work party.

Laurel Baldwin would be happy to work with the City Parks Department on noxious weeds in the forest.

Frank James expressed gratitude for the informative presentation and looks forward to working together to make our community noxious weed free.

No public comments.

Park Advisory Board Meeting Report: John Hymas had forwarded minutes from previous Park Board Meeting. John Blethen reported on the last meeting. Nothing too relevant to the Chuckanut Community Forest, though he did alert the Greenways Committee that the steering committee for the master plan process was forming and trying to encourage someone from Greenways Committee to add their perspective.

Old Business:

- **Update on Master Plan and Steering Committee:** From Laine Potter via John Brown: "We did receive the proposed master plan outline from the CCFPD and are currently reviewing. I'm working with an intern from WWU to identify and organize historic reports, including the draft 2015 baseline we discussed at the last board meeting, to determine where redundancies exist between documents and plans and where gaps and opportunities for documentation occur." "I am working to solidify the last few members of our steering committee and will send a doodle poll shortly to find the best bi-weekly meeting time for the group."

Nicole Oliver sent out a note the afternoon before the meeting that Robyn Albro received and forwarded to the Commissioners [see below].

Parks staff is refining the master plan outline, timeline, and planning process, as well as collecting and coalescing all the existing studies, reports, and background data that we have on the forest and surrounding area. The outline provided by the board included extensive environmental inventory and assessment, most of which can be gleaned from existing reports and studies that can be refined and referenced as part of the plan. I've also been pulling together the history of the area, and details of the many associated parcel acquisitions in the Interurban Basin that adjoin the forest.

The steering committee will launch next month. We spent some time with environmental staff at the city with expertise and history about this property, as well as other habitat assessment work done in this and the surrounding areas. We are also starting to design some public participation and outreach materials and mechanisms, including a self-guided tour and survey.

I look forward to getting the district's feedback on the proposed trail map, and hearing about the restoration efforts suggested via the upcoming public hearing. Thanks, and see you soon.

City Parks is looking for a digital version of the draft recommendations (they have a printed version). Bob Carmichael will look, and we could also contact Ann Eissinger. The main difference with the final report is that the recommendations were taken out.

Bob Carmichael is encouraged about the assessment sent by Nicole Oliver. He is a little bit concerned that Nicole Oliver thinks that by pulling all the environmental inventory and assessment documents together, she will have everything that she needs, but Ann Eissinger would not agree with that at all. She would say there are all these things missing from the baseline report; that it is bare bones. Bob thinks it is important to talk with Ann about.

Frank James will reach out to Ann Eissinger about that in the next week or so and ask her about the draft baseline report with recommendations.

Robyn Albro brought up the other studies we have access to, the fungal and mushroom studies that Vince Biciunas has access to, that she would mention to the Parks Dept.

- **Potential Presentation** by Analiese Burns, Habitat and Restoration Manager, Public Works City of Bellingham on new data from their Urban Forestry Management Plan assessment on wildlife corridors, forest structure, restoration opportunities, and fire risk.

Hue discussed the presentation Analiese Burns made to the Happy Valley Neighborhood Association on forest management. It is mainly an account of trees from the air and projections. It is two years old already. They were trying to estimate coverage of trees in the urban area.

We had originally asked Analiese Burns to present her findings to the Board in May, but she cannot do that as she must first present to the City Council. Nicole Oliver had also mentioned that she would like to have the steering committee be at that presentation. We will ask Analiese Burns to present at the July 23rd Board Meeting.

- **Update on Public Hearing on Restoration at June Board Meeting.** John McLaughlin and Robyn Albro will collaborate on the Public Hearing Notice and information to be posted on the website (after John McLaughlin returns from his research trip), hopefully by mid-May. Robyn Albro will see about getting information into the Weekly part of the Herald to try and gather more interest for the public hearing.

New Business:

- **Election for John Hymas board position.** John Hymas' board position will expire at the end of 2021. John Hymas is going to run for the position again.
- **Discussion of when to start in person meetings again.** No recommendation from Bob Carmichael. He doesn't have any municipalities that are meeting in person yet. We can meet in person in Phase 3 with proper social distancing with everyone wearing masks. Bob Carmichael: I think that dissuades everyone, not being able to see faces. Frank James says there is still a fair amount of disease in the county, especially the north portion.

Bob Carmichael: What is the likelihood that we will be able to meet indoors without masks pursuant to state requirements. Frank James: I think that is going to be one of the last things to change. Masking prevents spread from someone who might have disease. I think those recommendations for indoor gatherings will be in place for some time.

Could meet outdoor with social distancing without masks or continue with zoom meetings. As the commissioners all have their vaccines, they can sit closer and other people could be farther away. At this point the library is still closed and there is no date for reopening but could be late spring. Could do it outside at Larrabee at the Gazebo and still have it on Zoom at the same time. Robyn Albro will investigate the technological options. It can be complicated if everyone has devices to be on zoom, as there can be audio problems.

Bob Carmichael: Another change that would be needed would be in our Policies and Procedures if we are going to meet somewhere other than the Fairhaven Library, because it clearly calls out that regular meetings are held in the Fireplace Room in the Fairhaven Library. There needs to be at least 24 hours' notice of a change in venue. Suggested an amendment such as: the regular meeting could be altered to a different location with 10 days prior notice to all the commissioners, location listed on the district's website and in emails that are sent out to Friends of CCFPD.

Table this discussion to next month so Robyn Albro can research the tech and Bob Carmichael can have a document set up to adjust the policies and procedures.

Monthly expenses and cash flow sheets.

Petty Cash: WECU Bank account balance as of 3/31/2021 was \$2,967.

Treasurer's Report: As of March 31, 2021, Whatcom Co. Treasurer's Monthly Report, beginning unencumbered cash balance (3/01) \$220,816, ending unencumbered cash balance (3/31) \$265,016. We received tax revenues of \$51,940. Paid out \$5,769 in operating expenses, and \$1,968 was paid on our loan to the city of Bellingham. Current debt outstanding as of 3/31/2021: \$645,233. More monies will be paid on the loan next month, after people pay their taxes.

Motion by Hue Beattie to approve District Payroll Input Form, seconded by John Hymas, for wages for Robyn Albro, 20.50 hours in March 2021, total gross of \$512.50. Approved 3/0.

Consent Agenda: Motion by John Hymas to approve following payments, seconded by Hue Beattie. Approved 3/0.

- Payment on the March 15, 2021, Invoice #94459, from Carmichael Clark PS for \$958.50 for regular professional services.
- Payment on the April 06, 2021, Invoice #32395, from Whatcom County Administrative Services for \$30 for 1st Quarter Payroll Services.

Next meeting: Wednesday May 26, 2021.

Adjourn. Time: 7:26 pm.

