

MINUTES — Regular Meeting
CHUCKANUT COMMUNITY FOREST PARK DISTRICT
Wednesday, February 23, 2022, 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): Frank James fjames.ccfpd@gmail.com John Hymas jhymas1331@gmail.com
 John McLaughlin johnm.ccfpd@gmail.com Hue Beattie hue.ccfpd@gmail.com
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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 has been 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 Brown, John McLaughlin, and Hue Beattie are present. John Hymas is out sick.

Motion by John Brown to approve Agenda for today's meeting. Second by Hue Beattie with an amendment to approve the paying of bills and the financial items first and addressing other business after other Commissioners arrive. Approved 3/0.

John McLaughlin arrived.

Monthly expenses and cash flow sheets.

Petty Cash: WECU Bank account balance as of 01/31/2022 was \$2,967.

Treasurer's Report: As of January 31, 2022, Whatcom Co. Treasurer's Monthly Report, beginning unencumbered cash balance (01/01) \$252,927, ending unencumbered cash balance (01/31) \$250,557. We received tax revenues of \$565. Paid out \$1,031 in operating expenses, and \$1,903 was paid on our loan to the City of Bellingham. Current debt outstanding as of 01/31/2022: \$23,083.

Motion: To approve District Payroll Input Form by John Brown, seconded by Hue Beattie for wages for Robyn Albro, 23 hours in Jan. 2022, total gross of \$581.25. Approved 4/0.

Consent Agenda: Motion to approve following payments by Hue Beattie, seconded by John Brown. Approved 4/0.

- Payment on January 15, 2022 Invoice #97060 from Carmichael Clark PS for \$796.50 for regular professional services.
- Payment on January 25, 2022 Invoice #50308 from Herrera Environmental Consultants, Inc. for Task 1 for \$1,605.24.
- Reimbursement to Robyn Albro for the January 29, 2022 Invoice #INV130493927 from Zoom for annual Zoom membership for \$133.11.

Reminder: Robyn Albro will send an email to three Board members right after the meeting, John Hymas, Hue Beattie, and John Brown. Please respond confirming that you approve the paying of bills as listed in the consent agenda and payroll. As John Hymas was not in attendance, Robyn will send the email to Frank James.

Introductions: Bob Carmichael, legal counsel, and Robyn Albro, secretary. Other attendees: Vince Biciunas.

General Public Comments: There were no public comments.

Motion by John Brown to approve Minutes for 01/26/2022 meeting. Hue Beattie seconded. John McLaughlin brought up a change to page three, first line of the second paragraph "base mount" needs to be changed to "base map." Approved 4/0.

Election of Slate of Officers: John Brown moved that Frank James continue to be President and John Hymas continue to be Clerk. Seconded by John McLaughlin. Approved 4/0.

Herrera Update and Master Planning Update

Robyn Albro shared an email update from Tina Mirabile of Herrera:

Thank you for the invite to tonight's Board meeting. Since we are still developing the major components of the stewardship plan, we would like to defer meeting until the next Board meeting on March 23rd. Since the past Board meeting in January, we have completed a site walk with John McLaughlin and John Hymas to discuss our observations of hydrological connectivity between wetlands, trail impacts, forest structure and habitat classifications, and criteria for classifying priority areas for preservation, conservation, rehabilitation and restoration. We also met with Nicole and Laine of City Parks to discuss incorporating the recommendations of the stewardship plan during the development of the Parks Master Use plan and conservation easement. We are reviewing some additional base maps we have created to illustrate site hydrology and soils connectivity and associated recommendations for some areas for trail abandonment and or improvement.

We are excited for the opportunity to be of assistance to the Board on this project! Please feel free to contact myself or Chris should any additional information be needed at this time.

Report by John McLaughlin: Tina Mirabile, John Hymas and John McLaughlin all met by the upper picnic shelter in Fairhaven Park. Walked down the trail and across the bridge built by Recreation Northwest across wetland BB and proceeded to walk a variety of places around the Forest looking at a variety of issues. Tina Mirabile was concerned about the Urban Forestry Management Plan and the ratings of the Forest. She selected plots and measured trees within those plots, to compare them with the definition of what is a mature forest, and a definition that uses the average tree diameter to determine whether a tree is mature or not. John McLaughlin pointed out that averages can be very misleading. This protocol doesn't really tell you the characteristics of the forest. If you are just going with the average tree, you could get the same value and average for an old growth forest (where you have a few very large trees but also many very small trees) as you would a tree plantation (where trees are all the same diameter). John thought Tina was using a definition from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife that was for some reason using the average. Focusing on that is a big waste of their time. It would help to get a professional opinion from them, especially since they work with the City, to nudge them to take another look at the baseline documents for the Urban Forest Management Plan, but for our purposes that is not very useful.

We moved on and spent most of the time looking at conditions, restoration needs and what is going to be needed to restore the Forest. We walked around most of the wetlands except for the big wetland JJ along the Interurban Trail. Looked at various trails and trail widths. Particularly looked at the trail that connects JJ to AA. There're trails that aren't on the trail map in Ann Eissinger's report that go right along the northern edge of wetland KK. Tina said that trail doesn't need to be there, it's redundant with other trails as it goes way too close to the wetlands. Also looked at some of the very wide trails. Tina and John Hymas recalled when these trails were basically narrow footpaths/deer trails and now they're wide enough to drive a truck down. It was recognition of the things we've been talking about re the proliferation of trails, the widening of trails, the loss of shrub cover and wildlife habitat. Spent time looking at large snags that would also help it meet the definition of an older forest. We looked at some of the hydrologic connections between wetlands, some of the same ones that were identified by the Army Corp of Engineers when they determined that this place was under their jurisdiction because it did connect to Padden Creek and therefore to Bellingham Bay. Particularly looked at connection between KK and CC and then the outlet of CC that flows down Chuckanut Drive and ultimately to Padden Creek and the connection between JJ and KK. We talked about what it might take to restore that and then talked about shrub cover. Tina noticed that for similar forests there really is not much shrub cover and many species are missing. There are lots of ferns, salmonberry in a few places, but very little Indian plum or snowberry or some of the other kinds of shrubs we find in similar forests. In Sehome Arboretum you have all these shrubs in considerable abundance, density, and diversity throughout. The lack in this Forest may be a legacy of the geotechnical survey work where the developers geotechnical team drove all over Forest. You can connect the dots between their test pits and figure out that they drove their equipment just about all over the Forest and no shrub is going to be able to survive that kind of weight and impact. We may be looking at 10 to 15 years since that work was done. The shrubs just haven't been able to come back in. We may be looking at a legacy of prior development preparation. That was all work that was approved by the City planner, the SEPA official for the City at the time. That leaves us with additional restoration that we really didn't notice in our restoration priorities.

Tina showed us some of the sites she was looking at and gave us her impressions of the place and what they're going to be working on. I tried to immediately steer back to what we're really looking for from her, some of the things that we aren't sure the City is focusing on. What we really need is their expertise for our plan for basically fulfilling all the restoration priorities approved in our resolution. We can say what the priorities are, but they can help us in determining how that should be done to restore subsurface and surface flows between wetlands and what would work to narrow trails and close trails and then to keep them that way. There are plants that would do a good job, if they are planted in sufficient density to convince people they don't want to go that way and they should stick to official trails. Tina was concerned about the connection where wetland CC connects with Chuckanut Drive near

16th St. The neighbors of the development off 16th St don't want the access to 16th St to be any kind of official trail and they don't want people parking in their neighborhood. She didn't feel it would be good to provide parking or any other major access at the outlet of CC. It would be very dangerous as it's just below the crest of the hill and there are a lot of hazards with traffic coming over the hill right towards where people are parking or pulling out. It's also problematic because you have flowing water there. There are all kinds of potential impacts and conflicts between trying to restore hydrology and visitor use and pretty much all agree that the access that's currently being used, the gravel space at the crest of the hill, right across from the Crest would be appropriate. John Hymas mentioned that one of the major points of public input was creating a loop trail, a major trail connecting endpoints so that people can walk in a loop. There's a missing part between the Viewcrest access and the trail that comes out to Chuckanut Drive right next to wetland CC next to 16th St, and you could connect those with smaller trails that go across the wetlands, but it would be a lot less impact if we routed a trail parallel to Chuckanut Drive, perhaps in the Forest or perhaps outside of it that takes you along terrestrial soils.

Frank James: I was concerned with the City's interest in using the old roadway [that goes between JJ and CC] as the major trail through and how that might impact hydrology or the potential for restoration. That seems like a good idea, but is something that may not be a good idea given the proximity to the wetlands. In our committee meetings they had this idea that they would utilize what used to be a road and redevelop it as the main through trail from Fairhaven Park over to the Interurban. But it seemed to me it went very close to the wetlands, and might be more appropriate to move that to a different location. John McLaughlin: That trail, basically the entire way until it diverts off to wetlands AA, is entirely in a wetland buffer. Tina did mention that the wetland buffers have changed since those that are reflected in Ann Eissinger's report or the City maps. Our critical areas ordinance has changed a bit so wetland buffer which depends on adjacent land use or land use intensity are now 100-foot buffers instead of 150 foot buffers. We did stop at what she called the RV park, the open area between KK and JJ and we talked a bit about restoring surface and subsurface flows. Tina didn't get into talking about a bridge or boardwalk and any excavation of the compacted soil. She did talk quite a bit about the area, the complex of AX and AY. In particular, she was very concerned that trails that come off the ridge at the north of the property, but then descend into that wetland area into a natural congregation point because of its geographic location and because it's open, people may gather in open areas, particularly in the summer. It's been fairly dry, but conditions were still quite wet there. Getting in there, we had to cross some fairly wet places and so we have the classic issue of a widening footprint where people are trying to walk around the mud, and it just gets wider and wider. Tina wanted to address the interest and need for people to have gathering spots but avoid the environmental impacts of that particular location. She was being fairly creative about ways to do that.

Frank James: The related question I had was when a presentation was made to the Steering Committee, it was clear that construction of over wetland trails was very expensive, approximately \$1000 a foot. So, I was wondering if they had thoughts or planned to investigate those costs, impacts, and some plan for how to manage it in the long term? John McLaughlin: They hadn't talked about that too much; she was mostly talking about avoiding money. There are a couple of places where the current trail system does cross wetlands in a few places. We walked along those. Tina was of the opinion that we ought to get rid of those and come up with trails that avoid those conflicts.

Vince Biciunas: At the last Steering Committee meeting, Nicole Oliver ran us through the PowerPoint presentation. What surprised me, which I didn't know about until then, and I'm telling you, because you and the Herrera people don't know that the City Parks Dept. Is planning with Recreation Northwest to do an open teaching area that's outside of our forest that is at the 18th St. Trail junction. They cleared a bunch of blackberries out and it's a gentle slope and it's a perfect place to put an outdoor school kind of set up with benches or something. It is across the trail to the north from the stone benches. The wetland at A7 and AA is probably not going to happen and besides, that's also very close to the gravel pit and I think the gravel pit would be a meeting place before the wetland.

John McLaughlin: This addressing the conflicts with the current trail system and wetlands is going to take some thoughtful design work for the trail network. It's something some of my students have worked on and some of those designs have been well received by the public and others not. It's really going to come to a head when the City starts trying to resolve some of those conflicts.

John McLaughlin discussed several trails that cross wetlands and are problematic – the major trail that goes down to the Interurban Trail is adjacent to and crosses wetlands, coming off that trail are other trails that cross web, the current trail that bisects wetland CC (a popular trail), and the trail that connects Chuckanut Drive at the outlet of CC. John McLaughlin: That trail is not as much of a problem because it's a stream and a small bridge will work just fine if it's wide enough, so it doesn't exclude other uses. I think the bigger issue is how to connect that access point with the primary access point at the crest of the hill.

Frank James: My question is it seems we want to keep trails out of wetlands at the same time we want to have access to those wetlands. Something I would like to see as a goal is to have a plan that would have some sort of access trail, maybe even a dead-end trail that went into the wetlands, was elevated, and allowed people to

experience the wetlands. It's an incredibly beautiful place and I think that to see those wetlands in action, without impacting the wetland, would be a desirable thing. I think that's the sort of \$1000 a foot estimate they made, though most of that cost was regulatory, not actually construction. There may be some ability to be creative in terms of bringing the cost down some. John, what about the big ditch that was dug to drain those wetlands a long time ago? Is there some consideration of trying to rehabilitate or somehow provide the more traditional ecology in that area or did that get addressed? John McLaughlin: That's not in the Forest property.

Vince Bliciunas: I walked through the Forest two weeks ago before this cold weather and I walked on the trail that goes from the gravel pit to the main road and it crosses KK wetland. There's a new footbridge that wasn't there last fall and it was pretty long. I also wanted to say that it sounds like what you need for Herrera to focus on is the stuff that will be in phase two of the City's Master Plan. Phase one is quick and dirty signage and making a main trail. Phase two is designing a trail network, doing the bridges, and really studying how the trails are ultimately going to be. I don't know how much detail phase one is going to have, a lot of the detail in trail design will be in phase two.

Frank James: One of the biggest dangers in what's being proposed is the City would have too general a plan without enough detail and they would do what was easy and defer what was hard, expensive, and that would never get done. There are many competing interests in the City for Park money. One of the things that I hope to request of them or maybe demand of them is they have some plan that's reasonable and a plan for funding it. I think we almost have an obligation to ask for that. John McLaughlin: That's part of why the Forest is in the condition it is now because it became public property, and to be fair, the City didn't have the money, the budget to deal with it and to initiate master planning right then and actually start doing the work. So, in the intervening decade people have been using it and so we have had all these impacts. These impacts are going to continue and the longer we wait, the worse it's going to get. Frank James: That's an issue we need to raise very directly with the City specifically.

John McLaughlin: I think that's going to be beneficial for users. People don't want to work through mud or get lost. We need to do the work, or the City needs to do the work to decide what is going to be the trail alignment, know where trails are going to be and then that's going to determine which trails need to be closed, narrowed, repositioned, improved? Where are we going to put any of these bridges or crossings? Once you know where the actual trails are going, then that determines the restoration sites you're going to need to work on, so it seems that this is phase two, that Vince described, and it really needs to come first, unless you want to simply put in signs to say you are here to keep people from getting lost. Vince Biciunas: We were talking about the signs being educational, to teach people why their dogs should be on a leash and what the ramifications of that are. John McLaughlin: You really must know what your design is before you can start working on pieces of it.

Frank James: I think that's why we hired Herrera and that's what we need that document to do. John McLaughlin: Except the City has taken ownership of what the trail design is going to look like. Frank James: No, they don't get to do that. We have input on that, and this is how and where and when we get to have input on it. That's my vision. John McLaughlin: Then I think a productive use of Herrera's expertise would be to point them to the City's draft trail design map, which has a lot of question marks on it. And have them, based on their considerable expertise on all the issues related to trails, recommend resolving these uncertainties and considering all these things up front. It sounds like the master planning process is pushing this to later. Again, I think that would be much more useful than having Tina or anyone else spin their wheels on measuring tree diameters.

Hue Beattie: Reading this evaluation of the Fairhaven Park entrance plan, where they tore down the old gate and they were going to replace it, with a grant or budget of ~\$78,000. Part of their plan is to put a sign up on Chuckanut Drive down a little south of Viewcrest that says Chuckanut Community Forest, Fairhaven Park, so we're going to be seen from the south at least pretty early by tourists. Then the way to get in is through Fairhaven Park. They had quite a few historical photos that showed the wood brick gate, made of big cedar logs. They had this whole thing that you came through and you could see in the background quite a bit of older forest that I thought, well that's about where we are today, and some of those trees look pretty old there. Those are interesting photos while we're talking about the diameter of trees. If you haven't seen that, look up the Fairhaven Park plan. Frank James: Thanks. I looked at that and it's really heart breaking because I loved what they took down and they preserved it with the possibility of replacing it and for some reason to replace it is \$285,000. Hue Beattie: The sign they have up there, the temporary one since 2006, it's visible. You can see it better than the ones they have mocked up to possibly put in front. The need to repaint the white on the walkway a bit.

Frank James: I have another question, there is a substantial chunk of short bamboo there. Did that get looked at or talked about? John McLaughlin: They didn't do that. Frank James: It seems like it'll be a major challenge to get rid of permanently. It's kind of in the middle of nowhere. There's a map that they have, and they've got it marked on there. There aren't a lot of trails around it, but it's in the northwest end of things where there aren't many trails. That seems like one of the challenges to restoration that would be substantial.

Frank James: We spent a fair amount of time on this, but it's one of the main things we have to do. We've intermixed it with some of the master planning update activity, but I think it might be good, if there isn't more

discussion, to move on to the master planning update. John, I really appreciate you meeting with them, and I hope you can continue to have an ongoing dialogue with them. They seem quite busy, but I think we need to have a hand in shaping what happens. I think our concerns should definitely get to them. If we want them to work on trail design, that's not currently in their scope of work. That would be a course change and we need to be clear about it.

Vince Biciunas: I think they're going to ask the public, so can I just say that looking at this draft Master Plan spreadsheet that we reviewed at our last Steering Committee meeting that I think will be public, has a page on trails to remove and improve and public opinion will be solicited on trail issues, wayfinding, access, and all that before it gets to dogs and bikes and every other thing. After the public gets to weigh in, I think the real work will begin and that's where I hope Herrera will hit the ground running. It sounds like the public engagement is supposed to happen in the middle of March. Since the last meeting, I told people who asked about the Master Plan to go to the Engage Bellingham site web page and read the minutes of the steering committee meetings and the documents that are posted there. Everything we know is pretty much there.

John McLaughlin: This commission has held a few public hearings in which we've received some fairly specific input from the public regarding the loop trails and secondary trails. Has any of that feedback make it to the Steering Committee? Vince Biciunas: Not officially. Maybe John and Frank should look at those results and make sure they are represented. John McLaughlin: Yes, because the public, to their credit, showed up and they made a lot of thoughtful comments. There was a lot about bikes and dogs, but also a lot about some of the trail issues we're talking about. I think we owe it to our constituents to make sure that input gets included. I think we have a written record of them. Vince Biciunas: All we have to do is look in the minutes. Maybe pull those minutes and ask the City to post them on Engage Bellingham.

Frank James confirmed the Open House on March 16th. Vince Biciunas: Nicole Oliver asked me to write a blurb about the survey we did back in October. She has the raw data, but I also gave her the total numbers and we'll see what she uses.

Frank James: we might all want to just go look at Engage Bellingham page. There will be a presentation at the City Council during March as well, although there's no date on that yet except for the month of March. Robyn Albro will send a notice to the Friends of CCFPD saying this is coming up and if you want to learn more about what's been going on, you can go here, see the Steering Committee minutes and other documents.

Response to Urban Forestry Plan Letter

John Brown: The Parks Dept said that they were in receipt of it and appreciate it. They asked about a report on coring of trees. We have nothing like that, and I told them that. Frank James: What there was, was the City Arborist went and measured the diameter of trees to establish that it was a mature forested wetlands that is out there, and that we included in our letter to them. There was never any coring unless the developer did it. John McLaughlin: That was one of the issues the developer's consultant wanted to do, but I think it was the arborist who pointed out that you don't need to do coring, that the wetland definition of diameters are great. John Hymas mentioned on our walk that coring has potential impacts for the trees, such as fungal infections or other problems.

Frank James: We have had an informal response that they haven't responded at all. I think the plan would apply to this as the prime example of an urban forest. What they establish in that plan is very relevant to our interests and what we're doing. John McLaughlin: I think it has two scales of relevance, so first these documents inform whatever plan they develop. This is phase one. It's collecting baseline information and if the baseline information is erroneous, then that undermines confidence in the plan. Where that might make a practical difference is decisions about the management of the Chuckanut Community Forest, but also of forest connection to the Chuckanut Community Forest. If there are errors in classification of the Forest and the associated wildlife connections to the Chuckanut Community Forest and the Sehome Arboretum, that are so well known, then in areas that aren't as well-known errors might go without notice. Then decisions about management of tree retention and that sort of thing would be ill informed. We want a management plan that is well informed and right now the baseline documents don't do that. So that ought to compel the City to take action to develop a better set of baseline documents. We would hope for something more than acknowledging receipt of our letter. We would hope to see a substantive response to improve the baseline information they are working with.

Robyn Albro read Nicole Oliver's email on January 25th, "City staff are reviewing your comments and will respond as soon as this review is complete."

Bob Carmichael: I think that Nicole will follow up and it's incumbent on her to do so because this was a serious letter from the Board. Do we sit tight for another month or should someone contact Nicole Oliver and ask her about the status of their response and when might the Board expect that? John Brown will email Nicole Oliver and mention there was considerable discussion about it and the Board is wondering why it hadn't received a response yet and when a response might be forthcoming. He will let everyone know what kind of response he gets.

Other Old Business?

John Blethen: I think we're on a short timeline here and I'm concerned about the secondary trails. I think some of the things that you're noted, like the lack of a complete understory are important. It looks to me like Parks is mostly going to close trails and that's going to be how they're approached. I may be way off base, but I'm not seeing that they're necessarily going to reroute trails or spend the time to do that. It would be wonderful if we could involve Herrera in that because they do not have the expertise to do that. I realize it's outside of the scope of Herrera, but what I think the City is going to take their little map that they've got that X's out trails and I'm not sure that they're going to take this Master Plan much further than that. That seems like really one of the most important components of the Master Plan. That's my take and I don't know what the magic thing is going to reorchestrate where the secondary trails are. I don't think it's going to happen in phase two. They're going to do the major trails. They are going to put some wayfinding in and at some point, they'll gradually work on getting around some of the obvious trails that we need to get rid of, but I'm not sure that there's a strong desire to reroute trails particularly. I could be wrong, but that's my take listening to what's been going on.

Hue Beattie: I wonder if they'll have their wayfinding thing figured out by their open house? Vince Biciunas: The signage is not on the Engage Bellingham site.

Other New Business?

John Blethen: I've got a question about long term maintenance and whether this Board has some ability to require that. I can tell you that every park, every forested park in town is degraded at this point. If you go to Whatcom Falls Park, you'll see the incredible people pressure on all the trails is huge. So, I think Frank your interest in long-term funding is a very important component to this Master Plan. Being able to implement it is another. I don't know if there's some way that you guys have some leverage to guarantee that there's money set aside for this part, because it's going to need ongoing help.

Discussion whether the Land Trust would take over maintenance, but Frank James felt that probably wouldn't happen. Frank James: If we want long term funding, we're going to have to figure out where it's going to come from and try to enshrine that in the process somehow. John McLaughlin: I'll defer to our counsel, but I think that any money transferred to the Land Trust or any other easement holding is going to be to defend the easement. It's going to be up to the landowner to do the maintenance and to restore any impacts from violations.

John Brown: If this is moving in the direction of keeping taxes going or the Park Board going beyond the payment of the debt and the transfer to the conservation easement, I think you're going to run into problems. Are you talking about that?

John Blethen: My concern is the Greenways Levy is about up. You've got another year of Greenway's money and I don't think that unless we pass the Greenways Levy or unless we do a citywide metropolitan park district that there's enough money to support the park system we have. These big parks they're doing all over town are hugely expensive when you start mowing fields and doing maintenance on sports courts. I would really like to see a spreadsheet on whether the City can afford to maintain the park system without either Greenways or a metropolitan park district. I was just hoping there was some little way we could guarantee that there was something built into this agreement that would say that the City will do X over the next 10 or 20 years because the money is going to really be tight, particularly now that we're doing a program to deal with climate change.

John McLaughlin: Didn't any effective Master Plan anticipate the ongoing maintenance of the place and come up with a plan to address those? Frank James: That's what I've been saying all along. We have to have that as part of the master planning process or it's a waste of time. There must be a plan for how you fund these things, whether it's building that trail into the wetlands and back out, that would be expensive, but I think necessary for people to fully appreciate what it is we preserved. Obviously, the maintenance costs are substantial. John Brown, to your point, I think we need to keep open minds about it. There's a political component and there's legal stuff.

Bob Carmichael: Frank, I think you have a good understanding of where we stand. The only thing I would add is that there is and there could be a bit of a fine line in the conservation easement as to when the City's responsibilities for protecting and preserving are not met to the point where they actually are obligated to take some restorative action to the land to meet their obligations under the conservation easement, even as it is written. That's not the sort of restoration improvements that we're talking about here, where we're looking for, you know, maybe building boardwalks and doing other creative things to restore impacted areas and improve the ecological function. Having said that, part of it will depend on how aggressive the Land Trust will be on monitoring the City's compliance with that conservation easement, so the bar is not as high as I would like it to be in the conservation easement. It would be great if we could raise that bar and put some additional responsibilities more expressly on the City that would be legally binding from what is there now. That could certainly be done. My guess is the City will resist that and that will be challenging to get some additional language in the conservation easement. That's not to say that it wouldn't be worth a try if we have some specific ideas in mind. We could look at those ideas, maybe consider some creative ways of adding some additional language which wouldn't be a nonstarter with the City. I'm not for closing

that potential I think is out there, but I am pointing out that there's challenges there. I do think there's an element of, shall we say diligence with monitoring that conservation easement which could be better than what we've done while we've been in charge of it. If the Land Trust wanted to look at it and monitor it and say we're seeing some degradation here from the functions, and at least we have a baseline report, and my concern is that's what will happen. It shows what John Blethen has said about other City Parks. I agree with what he said about the general state of our parks. The good news here with us is that we're the only park that has a conservation easement. We're the only park that has a baseline study and if the Land Trust is willing to enforce it and make sure the City doesn't allow degradation to occur there are legal tools available to them to do that, even in existing conservation easement. That's not to say we shouldn't look at improving it.

Frank James: It seems like some of the work we have to do is political. We all got elected to this Board and I think we owe the people that elected us to do the best we can to preserve this and protect this parcel of land. I think the first step would be a candid discussion with our elected leaders, our colleagues or peers on the City Council and in the Mayor's office and really try to find out what their intentions are. This has to be approved by the City Council and Nicole Oliver has a very tight timeline, a tighter timeline than I'm comfortable with. I don't think we can do what they want to do in the time frame that they've given. They have their reasons for wanting to do it, but honestly, I don't think it's possible. Everybody will make an effort and we can compromise where we want to compromise, and we can be uncompromising where we need to be uncompromising. I think we can have an active role in this. I think the first place is going to be to meet with City Council people and meet with the Mayor to articulate our concerns and after that it's back to community organizing.

Vince Biciunas: Can I ask your opinion about how do we globally deal with the next Greenways or when the subject come up of a citywide metropolitan park district? How do we think ahead about our stance on that?

Hue Beattie: I think we've shown that a metropolitan park district can work even if it's just our little area. There are other examples throughout the state that are even bigger and better and I think a metropolitan park district is a better way to fund parks in our City. Then you wouldn't have greenways.

Discussion of metropolitan park district. Frank James: I talked with Kelly Linville, and she entertained the idea as a way to offload a bunch of costs that were hard to contain, but in the end, she didn't pursue it. John Brown: Does anyone know whether or not Seth Fleetwood has taken a stand on this at all?

John Blethen: He missed the meeting, but I was told that he would go either way. I will say that Kelly Linville was totally in favor of a metropolitan park district, and she said at a Park Board meeting that she would come back to guarantee that we had a metropolitan park district. I'll tell you why, it's because parks eat up a large piece of the general fund. I am suspicious of a metropolitan park district because I suspect that the money is going to go to town lots and it's going to free up money from the general fund. If you do a greenways levy, then after 7 or 10 years, the voters look at it and say, oh this was really a successful program we got. We got open space. If you look at a metropolitan park district, it's for life. I'm concerned that a metropolitan park district will become a park slush fund to take pressure off the general fund. That's me being negative.

John Brown: If some kind of it could be written in such a way that did not happen, I gather that you would be in favor of it? John Blethen: I would be more in favor of it if there was a guarantee that some percentage went to open space and to complete the many linkages that are incomplete and do restoration on the property that we have rather than more money for formal parks with mowed areas and tennis courts. There has to be some kind of balance. Currently a lot of the money goes just basically to restoring buildings and doing maintenance so only a small portion of the current levy, like 23% or something actually goes to land acquisition. They feel that's enough money, but I can tell you I've been involved in greenways since the beginning and we're not acquiring property. We acquired virtually no property during Kelly's administration. Had she gotten it together, we could have a much large community forest on the top of the hill up there instead of a dying forest with mountain bikers running over it. A She didn't want it and B the politics of it didn't work out between the City and the County. Vince Biciunas: The money from outside coming in for bikes was another factor. John Blethen: The problem was the City and County were at odds and so we didn't get any of the conservation futures money for that project. None of it was earmarked. That was kind of a deal breaker when we would have had to pick up the entire tab.

John Brown: But we've raised the issue, can we proceed any further with it? We're all more conscious of it than we were. John McLaughlin: I think the one asset we might have is we're the only Park District in the City history and so our vote of confidence might mean something. At the same time, what John Blethen is pointing out is what is the true meaning of greenways. It's a concept with international application. When he starts talking about acquiring missing pieces and creating a network, you're talking about the true meaning of greenways and that's very different than mowing lawns or acquiring manicured parks. Both are important and the City's population wants both, but the tendency is to do the later and not do the acquisitions and the completing of a network that John's talking about.

Frank James: If you go back to the core planning documents, even from the state about urban development and how you develop a city, it includes very clearly those arteries of plants and animals that keep the place alive. That gets overlooked in many applications for development, where those connections and vibrance of plant and animal life just gets put over on the side and not considered in those decisions. I think we've come so far; it seems like we just have to finish this particular conservation effort. What keeps bioregions alive is not cutting down all the trees and actually retaining the integrity of the ecological systems. If we fail, it is the failure of humanity against the onslaught of greed.

John McLaughlin: That was a principal campaign plank for the Mayor, one of the things he stood upon. But you're also talking about a general principle of responsible planning, and you don't want cities that clear all the green space, cut down all the forests, and so anyone who wants any connection with nature, then leapfrogs and sprawls outwards, because then you have basically a monotonic spread of urbanity from Vancouver to Portland. You want to, and it's incumbent upon any kind of responsible planning, to retain nature in the city and make the place attractive and livable to residents so they don't feel compelled to keep sprawling outwards. Frank James: And then we can share our space with bobcats, cougars, and deer, and maybe not kill all the deer with our automobiles.

Hue Beattie: I was looking at 34th St where they went underneath the freeway, both lanes north and south. There is some connectivity there you could come up Padden Creek through there and Godzilla could walk through there it's so big. I don't know what they're going to connect to, it's not much on the other side though. Frank James: It's part of the connectivity we're trying to build. The cougars that are down there come right up the hills underneath there so at least I think we should begin to plan a political strategy of how we're going to get the City Council and the Mayor to share the vision. I think they do actually. I don't know all the current council people, but I think we need to start reaching out to them and finding out where they're at and educating them about what these issues are.

Vince Biciunas: We need leadership John McLaughlin and Frank James. John Brown: But John Blethen is the one who got us into this.

Frank James: This is the team, the people that have been given the torch to carry. I hope we can do it. Any thoughts you have Bob at this pragmatic level, I would very much appreciate.

Bob Carmichael: I think at a pragmatic level, the first person to start with is the Mayor, because he's Nicole's boss and one of the things we're concerned about is the speed at which this is taking place, and if nothing else, it would be good to educate him about some of the discussions we've been having. There are legitimate concerns and I think Seth would be receptive to listening. That's where I would start and then I would go to the Council.

John McLaughlin: We could also leverage the forest to greater effect, if you think of these ideas we've been talking about of restoring beavers to the big wetland and using that to mitigate impacts of climate change. Right now, our comprehensive plan ignores climate change entirely, except for some rudimentary calculations of the additional carbon emissions resulting from development, but it doesn't look at all the impacts of climate change coming at us and here we have a way of addressing that, of serving as a model for the rest of the City. I think you know, given Seth's interest in environmental stewardship, that could really catch his attention.

Frank James: John, will you join me if I make an appointment with the Mayor?

John McLaughlin: Yes. I've already talked to him and shared a bunch of resources about pollinator pathways, he's really interested in that. Pollinator pathways are basically creating a network of flowering plants through the city to support native bees.

Next meeting: Wednesday, March 23, 2022, at 6 PM.

Adjourn. Time: 7:42 PM.