

**MINUTES — Regular Meeting**  
**CHUCKANUT COMMUNITY FOREST PARK DISTRICT**  
**Wednesday, January 26, 2022, at 6 PM**  
 Online Meeting Through Zoom  
 Mailing Address: PO Box 4283, Bellingham, WA 98227

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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:** John Hymas, John Brown, John McLaughlin and Hue Beattie are present. Frank James excused.

**Motion** by Hue Beattie to approve Agenda for today's meeting. Second by John Hymas. Approved 4/0.

**Introductions:** Bob Carmichael, legal counsel, and Robyn Albro, secretary. Other attendees: Vince Biciunas, Chris Webb and Tina Mirabile of Herrera.

**General Public Comments:** Vince Biciunas: I would like to say hello to everyone. I am a former Commissioner.

**Motion** by John Hymas to approve Minutes for 12/08/2021 meeting. Hue Beattie seconded. Approved 4/0.

**Park Advisory Board Meeting Report:** No Report.

**Old Business:**

**Ratification of Amended Agreement with Herrera**

Bob Carmichael: At the last Board meeting the Board approved the original amended agreement that Herrera sent to us. Then some revisions were sent by Herrera's office and some from Chris Webb to the scope of work. We agreed to those through the President, but since that was not the precise document the Board approved at the last meeting, I said to Frank that we should bring it to the Board and have them ratify it. Chris Webb or his company has signed it and Frank James has already signed it. Best practice is to have the Board vote to ratify it.

Hue Beattie: It says the draft project GIS Base map is one of the deliverables and we're supposed to have comments within two weeks of receipt. When do we get the draft GIS part?

Chris Webb: Getting your input on the project schedule and the pace at which we undertake the work is actually something we want to talk about with you today. The presentation we're going to give you is a bit of an update on what we've done and where we're going. There are reasons to go quickly and there's reasons to be deliberative and we are looking for guidance from you, so we don't have a precise schedule with a date yet.

Hue Beattie: But those two weeks will still be there, though, whenever you set the date?

Chris Webb: Yes, and if it means to be more than two weeks that can work. We just don't want to lose momentum and have to stop and start because that's inefficient. That is why there is not a hard deadline, we just want to maintain consistent progress on the project.

The revisions were just some updated scope language and then some kind of terms and conditions issues.

Vince Biciunas: I'd like to make a suggestion, could we hear the presentation that Chris has referred to before you guys go ahead and ratify? Maybe you'll feel more comfortable then.

John Brown: I think it's a very good suggestion. I still feel delinquent that we haven't studied it down to its specifics, but it doesn't seem that we're talking about significant changes or revisions that will in anyway impact the whole work. I'm comfortable voting for it.

Bob Carmichael: Yes, we are not talking about significant changes. They're all within the spirit and intent of the first document you saw. They're just filling in some gaps. I looked at it carefully, as did Frank James, and there are

minor changes. I think the Board should ratify it and if you're not comfortable ratifying it, we can do that later in the meeting after the presentation. John Brown: I think it's reasonable that we listen to what Chris and Tina have to say and then we can ratify it.

After the Herrera presentation, John McLaughlin moved to ratify the agreement with Herrera. Hue Beattie seconded. Approved 4/0.

### **Herrera Presentation**

Chris Webb: I want to say how pleased we are to be working with you. I've lived in Bellingham over 25 years, and I've been very familiar with the property, and we're honored to be selected to work with you and participate in this part of its preservation in perpetuity. The purpose of this presentation is to introduce ourselves and talk about where we are in the project, who we are, the status of where we are, and what our next steps are and get your thoughts on that. Power point presentation started.

This is the team who's working on the project. I'm the project manager with a background as a civil engineer, mainly on the civil engineering stormwater management elements, which is not the kind of technical focus of this work. The technical focus of this work is in the realm of ecology. Tina is here, who is our lead ecologist here in our Bellingham office.

Tina Mirabile: I want to express my gratitude to be able to work on this project. I've been in the Bellingham area since 1995 and I came to Bellingham with a job and a place to live all at the same time. It happened to be running the youth hostel right there in the old Fairhaven Rose Garden, so the 100-acre woods was kind of my backyard where I explored everything. But I'm actually a professional wetland scientist. I've been doing ecological projects as a consultant both at the City and Whatcom County for almost 20 years. I've worked through the land trusts, and I know some of you through that. It's great to be here.

Chris: Some of the other team members are Danielle Raposa, who is a more junior ecologist who is assisting Tina in this work, and she also lives in Bellingham. Lauren is our GIS lead, also here in Bellingham, who has assembled all of the maps. She's one of John McLaughlin's former students. Our lead landscape architect, who's also an ecologist, is Kate Forester, who is in Portland. These are the core teams who will be putting together this work for you.

This is the task structure that's in the scope of work that you are imminently potentially going to ratify here. We are just moving from task one into task two. There's been a substantial amount of work done to date and we have reviewed all of the documents that were provided and some others that we found so we can hit the ground running and build upon all of the substantial work done to date and we have pulled together the initial project-based map, which you'll see here shortly, and so we're at the point now of formally initiating the project. We want to work with you, and this is where we have some questions for you about how the best and most efficient way to make sure that the stewardship plan that we deliver is meeting your goals. We think we know what your goals are, but we want to confirm them and make sure our work hits the mark. We are excited to get on site with you and walk with whomever you feel is appropriate to join that walk, the Board or other invited experts or people with other knowledge to walk around and just discuss the site, call our attention to specific elements, and help us get a download of your institutional knowledge and goals. Then, once we've done that, we'll move into our analysis phase where we really study the ecology and hydrology to understand it deeply. This is going to be done largely in the form of GIS using Lauren. The maps are the main tool that we work on there. Then we will be looking for opportunities about where to conserve, preserve, restore, and then how we might go about doing those and what particular practices we would recommend. Then we'll roll that whole effort up into delivering a stewardship plan that we know will inform both the specifics of the conservation easement, but also be handed off to the City and hopefully dovetail with their Master Plan so that your wishes and the science can inform their management practices over perpetuity and so we've outlined a six-month work plan. To do that, we can, within certain bounds, sort of speed up and slow down to sort of match other timelines. Tina will now speak to some of our technical work to date.

Tina Mirabile: You have provided a good list of background documents and when we were reviewing them, we came up with the idea that we needed a base map because there didn't seem to be a consolidated view of pretty much all of the information that these background documents are providing. That is why we took that approach, and we were able to get some information from the City as well as the State and Whatcom County for priority habitats and species and then we overlaid everything with the trail maps, but in trying to understand the use frequency, or which trails might be more major than minor, then Chris introduced Strava.

Chris Webb: Strava is an app that's used by trail runners, cyclists, and others who are out doing fitness. They aggregate all of that data and we have reached out to them and gotten that data and there's heat map data showing the frequency of different user types on which trails and so it's basic. It would supplement the sorts of surveys that I know that you've done of trail use so we can really see which trails are heavily used by cyclists and

others. We're very aware and we went through several meetings in our scoping to understand and really be clear about the Master Plan that the City is preparing and the stewardship plan that we are preparing. And while we're not producing a trail master plan, as was initially described in our proposal, the City is doing that, but of course we're going to be commenting and the utility of the trails is central to our work. But we use that Strava data to have another data source about which trails are being used most or least.

Tina Mirabile: It turned out that we couldn't do just one base map because there was so much data, but we ended up with this representation where we overlaid the wetlands that have been documented with the City with the parcels that make up the community, forests, land, and any adjacent land owned by the City, which is kind of the light green, and then the regular open space properties, which is through that Interurban trail area, in the darker green. All these little bubbles that are on the trails were a way we thought to originally identify the trails through a numbering system, but it turns out when Danielle and I were out in the field yesterday we ran into some residents that are using the trails regularly, and apparently there are a lot of local names that they've given to a lot of these trails. I don't know how familiar many of you are with these local names, but some of them are quite colorful like Trillium Hill, the Swamp Trail or Table Rock so we might try to incorporate some of that local knowledge into this, just to give it a little bit more sense of this is how people are using it and what is attractive there.

The next map is the same information again, but with the categories of the wetlands. The way that wetlands work is there's usually four categories that Ecology has set aside. One wetland is usually the highest quality wetland. It provides the most functions and it goes down to category four which is wetlands that are degraded or not performing functions at their highest level. The majority of the wetlands in the Community Forest are category one or two wetlands, which are pretty high quality. The emphasis was to try to see how these wetlands are functioning regarding the potential trail crossings that are depicted here as well. We also overlaid the City's Urban Forestry Management Plan that tended to categorize most of the forests as being relatively young. I know that there's some contention regarding that and I wanted to look at it more from how ecology might also classify the Forest. The category one wetlands that meet ecology definition as mature forested wetlands are colored green/blue. I thought that was a beginning to try to get at the sense of what kind of Forest we actually have here and some of the data that I used for that was actually the tree survey that was done for the Fairhaven Highlands project where they actually measure the diameters of the trees at breast height, which is a normal way of classifying a tree and so I'd like to have you know that when we're looking at the habitat that's being provided here, we're trying to use science based data and then we're also trying to look wide just so that we're not real narrow in how it might have been classified or defined in the past. This is a map that shows habitat connectivity based on the terrestrial wildlife network that the City has identified, and these are the striped areas. The red lines are the actual areas that were identified for connectivity for terrestrial wildlife, and this was an overview that shows some of the larger areas that are around the Forest such as Hoag's Pond and Mud Bay. To the south, Whatcom County has a Chuckanut wildlife corridor, which is the magenta pink striped area. This is another way that we are trying to look at things. As far as how to classify and evaluate what areas are most important in various different definitions besides water quality and habitat. Any questions?

Vince Biciunas: I didn't hear you mention you were referring to or using Ann Eissinger's baseline study. Tina Mirabile: Definitely, yes, we are. The thing is not a lot of information in Ann's report was mapped and so that's why we're trying to take that qualitative data and somehow incorporate it. That way we'll be addressing and looking at things. It is definitely a key document. Vince Biciunas: Ok. I didn't see it on that list of documents that you had on an earlier slide. Tina Mirabile: Oh, it should be on there. It was the first thing we read so it might have been removed. I can't remember what she called her report. Vince Biciunas: It was the baseline study.

Tina Mirabile: I appreciate your bringing that up because Ann definitely has a lot of detailed information that we don't want to lose. It was the first thing Danielle and I read.

On this next map, these little red dots are points that we collected using our phones using Arc GIS field maps. It's an application that allows you to take photos and do points as you go along the way of the site walk that we did yesterday. After we finished the site walk, we had a meeting with John McLaughlin to go over it and get some of his insight into the project. We definitely want to set up a site visit with anyone who's interested, including John McLaughlin or anyone that you would be interested in inviting as an expert or for additional input into the process.

John McLaughlin: We talked about this a bit in our meeting yesterday, but a couple of your maps are showing two of the wetlands being divided in their ratings. So, the major portion of wetland CC and JJ are rated as category one, and then you have extensions rated as category two. Both of those divisions, I think, are legacies from the former developer's consultant who divided those wetlands. There are different ways of dividing them. With the CC wetlands, the consultant claimed to have found a neck of terrestrial land/soil separating those two. We talked about that yesterday and that is suspicious. It doesn't exist and that should be one continuous wetland. They subdivided wetland JJ into two pieces and rated those pieces separately. If you look at the Department of Ecology ratings guide, it explicitly states that wetlands should be rated as a whole even if they cross legal or political boundaries, so

I'd suggest, since we're now concerned about ecological reality, instead of legacies of a former developer, I recommend in your GIS maps, changing those two wetlands, in particular to being one continuous category.

Tina Mirabile: Thank you John for bringing that up. We did talk about that, and I was thinking that they could even be classified as a mosaic type of wetland, which is another way ecology puts wetlands that are in direct proximity to one another, even if they don't have a physical connection. But I agree that yes there is a hydrology connection with those particular map-divided areas. I did not get a chance to update the maps since we had our meeting.

John McLaughlin: It's been troublesome seeing the City continuing to put forward some of these erroneous designations, but now that you're doing the work for us, we would like to make sure that the wetlands get corrected.

Tina Mirabile: Thank you. I just wanted to emphasize that we are trying to take a very scientific approach in evaluating what the existing habitat is to help us define the areas for prioritization for preservation, conservation, and as areas that are impacted that could use restoration actions as well. We plan to include recommendations for removal of invasive plants and or maintenance to help retain habitats or bring them to a higher quality as we can through the project so they can be identified for the conservation easement.

These are some pictures that we took along the way. The photo there illustrates that need to develop restoration needs and strategies. The existing trail use right there is definitely not providing an opportunity for the habitat to function at its highest level, and so it appeared to be multiple opportunities for either removing some trail crossing that might be impacting areas too much and or creating conveyances or boardwalk opportunities so that if trails are maintained in certain areas or provide viewpoints that they'll do it in a way that does not result in ad hoc degradation or uncontrolled degradation. The categorization of the Forest as a young forest, we wanted to make sure that the mature forested habitat components could be documented in a way to recognize that beyond wetlands, there's mature upland forests in there, as well as some areas where it is younger, but we want to prioritize preservation for those habitats that are functioning at the highest levels. We can't quite see the text on this one, but we're conducting the ground trooping of our maps while we're out there and trying to document important habitat features as we see them for a variety of species. We will also consider the connectivity of the hydrology as well as the people use on the property.

Here we have our next steps. John McLaughlin was definitely interested in doing a site walk and we wanted to invite community members and any other experts or anyone you might also wish to visit the site with us. After we gather, we wanted to try to do a planning charette and goal setting while everyone's together out there, or we could do a separate meeting as well. Then my goal is to try to create criteria for evaluating the different zones or priorities for restoration, preservation, and management of invasive plants. We plan to coordinate with the city of Bellingham on the trail plan and as well with Bob on the conservation easement language that we're going to be presenting as part of this project's deliverables.

Chris Webb: This is an invitation for you to let us know if this seems like we're on the right track. We are curious to know how the Board wants to work with us. We're suggesting we all walk the site then maybe sit around and come to some agreement on what the goals of the stewardship plan would be, and we want to do that in concert with you. We want to make sure that we're all delivering a stewardship plan that's going to meet your goals and understanding what those goals are. I'd love to hear anyone's thought and how we can have your participation in this process.

John Brown: Could you send out to the Board your possible times for walking the property together? I want to say also that if Frank James were here, he has a spectacular kind of vision for the way in which you are working and the way in which the City is working and the way you could be working together, and I can't imitate that vision. I wish he were here. I'd like John McLaughlin to weigh in. I'd like to ask you Chris, you have had experience working with Nicole and Laine with the City on these things before and from my point of view it is very important that you work with the City and interface with them. To a certain extent, we have been slightly nervous about having the City run the whole Master Planning project. Frank has explained this to you. We would like to have our own say in this and without running the whole show ourselves. We definitely want a 50/50 kind of input and I think that you are bringing that to it. You're aware that interfacing with the City is very important to us. I'd like to get your and Tina's opinion on this. The City's own plan is to have a public meeting. The Steering Committee will have another meeting before the open house. Their overall plan is to push this Master Planning process ahead so that it will come to pass on their own timeline. You were talking about a six month out date for the completion for your work. I believe the City's timeline is considerably shorter than that. I don't know how that's going to work, but to a certain extent, you're going to have to work it out with them.

Chris Webb: Yes, I was intimating that sort of tension and I've had conversations both with Frank and Nicole individually, as well as together at a meeting that Bob was at. I have worked as a civil engineer on several city of Bellingham master planning processes for Maritime Heritage Park and Little Squalicum Park so I'm familiar with what goes into this process. I felt Nicole intimated that there was potentially some flexibility in the schedule and that

she was perhaps stepping on the gas a little bit to get everybody moving and so the timeline threaded the needle between the City's need to expedite and what I was hearing from Frank about this is an 800-year plan and we don't need to rush, we need to do this right. But I have not circled back to Nicole since we've been under contract. I've also known Nicole for 25 years and so I can speak pretty freely and frankly with her. If this general process and general timeline is agreeable to you all, I can reach out to Nicole and say this is the arc we are on and does that work for you? Can you maybe tap your brakes, and we'll press on our gas and try and sync it up.

John Brown: I think that you two will work it out and that we will gradually evolve in a satisfactory way for everyone. Have you looked at John McLaughlin's letter on the Urban Forestry Management Plan.

Chris Webb: I have not read it in detail. I know Tina and Danielle have read it in detail.

John Brown: He's been very critical about some things; the letter is very specific and it's a fantastic letter. Finally, the City has developed their own idea of a trail plan and you do not. As I understand, you are not out to develop a trail plan, but you will talk with the City about their plan. I'm comfortable with that. I'd like to hear if John McLaughlin has anything to say.

John McLaughlin: I'd like to speak to a rehash of some of what we discussed at yesterday's meeting. Some of the things we went through were some of the restoration priorities that the Board had discussed and how they would relate to the scope of work and what's going on. In a nutshell, the City has this expedited idea for our schedule for creating the Park Master Plan, but that doesn't mean the work that this place needs will be done within that time. They don't have the budget to do it. They haven't budgeted the resources to do that work. I think where Herrera can really help is with providing some of the expertise in describing the work that is going to need to be done, whether it's restoring hydrologic connections between wetlands or restoring compacted soils and vegetation. They could really help in describing how we achieve those priorities. I haven't really seen any evidence of that coming out of the Master Planning process. That's where I think Herrera can really complement what the City is doing, and we can really work as effective partners. I think as a Board it's our stewardship responsibility to see that those elements get included and again, I think that's really the impetus behind bringing I Herrera is a partner with us.

John Brown: John, do you think at the next Steering Committee meeting that it is appropriate that Chris and Tina press these hydrological concerns and connectivity for them? John McLaughlin: I think it's a question of do we and they think that's the best use of their time. I think it's really important at some point to have their work be included and I would defer to them. Would their work be ready to be included.

Chris Webb: I think one of the fundamental approaches to this is the identification of zones of ecological value. It's unclear yet how the conservation easement language would key into some of those zones, or in terms of allowed uses and the like. We haven't identified those zones yet and that's a bit of a fundamental first order organization of all our thoughts that hasn't occurred yet. It does seem a little early.

Tina Mirabile: As I mentioned, I'm just now trying to create the criteria for evaluating the zones and I'm not sure that within a two-week period I would have enough conclusive data to support the zones. I still need to do more data collection for the way that I feel like the zones should be identified as well as where the restoration efforts should go. So, I don't know if there's a way to do a meeting after the next one as I don't know how often these Steering Committees happen.

John Brown: They wanted to move ahead with an open house, and they have. They have no more Steering Committee meetings before the open house, and we press them to have one and now they are. We don't know the exact date, but we think it will be within the next 10 days. Whatever you're not able to come up with at the next Steering Committee meeting, at least you will be able to say to them that you are working on those issues.

Vince Biciunas: I just want to bring up the aspect of the public comments. Once the City sponsors Engage Bellingham Open House, we're going to have public comments about where we want to have a circular trail and about the bicycles/dogs' issues. What you're working on is the conservation part and I think we need to ask you to emphasize the conservation parts so that later, if we want to say no dogs here or no dogs there or no bikes here, that there's a solid scientific proof.

Chris Webb: That's consistent with how we're seeing it. I know they'll have the desires of the public. We'll certainly be there, but there's the constraints, which will be the maintenance of certain ecological function and we're hoping that these zones will inform the allowed uses. That will give us a basis for what uses would be appropriate in each zone. These zones are the underpinning of making those decisions.

John Brown: You're aware the City is working with a consultant. We're working with a consultant. My own private hope is that you and their consultant will be able to duke it out and arrive at a meeting of the minds.

Chris Webb: That's my hope as well. I think it's time now that we are up to speed with you, we have our maps pulled together, and we've done our homework and read all our background material that we do have that kind of

call with the City and explain to them where we are in the process and see where they are in their process and try and sync up here and understand more about who their consultant is and what they might be doing.

John Brown: Your presentation has been very satisfactory to me.

John McLaughlin: I want to mention, even if Herrera hasn't finished their spatial analysis to figure out which zones of various degrees of interest and use are where, we do know now that there are places where hydrologic connections are impeded. There are trails that are going to have to be removed. There are places where vegetation is going to have to be restored. I think it would be really helpful to have Herrera's knowledge and expertise in those and what it takes to do those things, be interjected into the process, and maybe even inform the City so that they're prepared to respond to those at the open house. So even though we're not ready to do the analysis, I think Herrera does bring expertise about, conceptually, these issues they're going to have to be addressed and how to do them even if we haven't determined or delineated precisely where those actions need to be. I think this is all consistent with the existing contract.

Chris Webb: To say it another way John, we know there are certain types of impact and there's a certain finite list of types of impacts and those types of impacts are going to have common responses, right? So we can develop that toolkit now, even if we don't know where yet.

Tina Mirabile: I appreciate that John, because I think that will be a good way to do a heads up for the City and the public. These are the things that are important. I was a little concerned about drafting up even just our base GIS map because with the trails then it seems like it would open up some sense that oh, they've already decided some things and then suddenly you get all those public reactions. So, we were trying to keep it more within your group, getting your guidance as to the process and then eventually we will have a final product with all the zones. But I agree just talking about the zones and the type of actions I think is a great way for such a presentation early on in this process, so I appreciate that.

John McLaughlin: If I could offer some advice, I recommend you focus on the things we've been talking about and don't even touch the issues of dogs on or off leash. Chris Webb: I've done enough park master planning work in my life that I've seen things get hot on that issue. John McLaughlin: Let the City take the heat on that.

Chris Webb: We will send out some dates for the site walk. We would love to know who you want to be on that site walk. Is it just the Board? Do you have another invited guest you'd want to bring? I think it's important to keep the group focused so we can be effective and efficient. I could imagine a half day where we walk for a couple hours and then sit for a couple of hours. How can we best understand the will of the Board and the specifics and your institutional knowledge? Do you have other background documents? How do you want to transmit that to us? We would like to set some goals. We can imagine how we would work with you to set goals, but if Board members have proposed goals, we're all ears. We really want to come through in the stewardship plan with the goals that the Board told us the plan should achieve if it's to be successful. We've been thinking about this quite a bit and talking to a lot of people, so we've got a good sense of it, but we want to make sure we have a complete and accurate sense of your goals.

Bob Carmichael: If I could interject here just to help move this along a little bit more. When I read the next step page and saw reference to committee members, I wasn't sure if you were referring to Steering Committee members connected with the Master Plan, or you were referring to Board members. Now I'm understanding, based on your comments Chris, you were referring to Board members. What I think we ought to have a brief discussion about whether the Board wants to undertake this site walk that is proposed on the list. If we are going to have a Board outing like this then that would be an open public meeting. We would need to schedule it as a special meeting and do all the required notices and have the minutes of it etc. So, it can be a little bit cumbersome, but we can do it. If the Board wants to do that, we can certainly make that happen, so that's decision point number one. Before we leave this topic, I would like the Board to, through a motion, a second, and a vote, ratify the existing contract, if the Board is willing to do that.

Discussion of whether taking the site walk should be a public meeting (which it would have to be if more than two Board members were to attend the site walk at a time) or there will be more than one site walk so that any Board members who want to go on one can. Per Bob Carmichael, it would be a public meeting because you would be gathering to discuss issues related to the Park District. Under the Open Public Meetings Act, the definition of an action includes simple discussions. A meeting where you are in the audience and there's a presentation, that's fine, you don't need to call an open public meeting for that, as long as you are not talking to each other. Otherwise, three or more Board members meeting for a site walk would be a public meeting and it would have to be announced as a special meeting and Robyn would have to come and take notes. John Brown suggested that two Board members get together and walk through with Herrera. Suggested times can be sent via email. Tina also suggested they can let the Board know when they are out in the field collecting data, which they will be doing multiple times, so that if there are more than two Board members who are interested, there is another way for people to come by when we're already out there. John Brown agreed that was a good idea.

**Report on the Steering Committee Meetings and any Master Planning Updates**

John Brown asked Vince Biciunas to summarize the last Steering Committee. She said she was not at the meeting, but she would summarize it from her outline of the meeting.

Vince Biciunas: The Master Plan goals are to restore and protect ecological function and provide educational opportunities, conservation, improve user experience and public safety. Those are the things that agree with everything else that everyone has been discussing. So, I think the Steering Committee is on the same track with the rest of us. I think the only thing was framing the questions for the public for the open house. I'm sure they'll have questions all ready for our next meeting and we can say yay or nay.

Chris Webb: We should see if we can have maps in some form available for the open house because I think how we choose to represent the ecological functions on the site in this simple form, how the questions are answered and what information the public has – if we had a collage of the existing habitat. . . I'm trying to think of what we could do without taking on too much extra un-scoped work, as a way to make sure the public has the benefit of the information when they're giving their opinions.

Vince Biciunas: You could talk to Nicole about that and see what they are planning. They have maps too.

Chris Webb: The maps are reflecting the things that this Board thinks are important to show on maps and as John was pointing out, getting them shown correctly in terms of categorization and so forth.

John Brown: I will say that the last Steering Committee meeting went well, and Frank made some very generous and gracious comments to Nicole and about the staff about the kind of work that she was doing. We were uncertain if we were going to have a meeting before the open house, but Nicole agreed to have one, being scheduled sometime between Feb 15<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Urban Forestry Plan Letter**

Nicole sent a letter to say that they are still going through it. She did ask, "If you have the Urban Forestry Services Inc.'s 2009 tree coring in the Chuckanut Community Forest, we would greatly appreciate if you could send us a copy." John McLaughlin: I don't think that the report was ever created, or at least shared with anyone that we know of. That was I think precipitated, or the idea of coring trees, came from the developer's wetland consultant, who was disputing whether or not the wetlands really merited a rating category and that all came down to the Department of Ecology definition of what is a mature forest about? There you have two criteria regarding the surrounding forest and that is tree ages and tree diameters. You could resolve that status simply by measuring diameters instead of the additional work and impact of coring. I think that issue was resolved without having the cores.

What I'm hoping is to suggest for any public meeting or open house, it would be helpful if somehow the special attributes in this place got conveyed. For example, there are very few places in the City where you have the absence of amphibians, what's called habitat splitting. Most amphibians have an aquatic phase of life and a terrestrial phase of life. In most of the City, the habitats that provide those functions are severely separated. You don't have amphibians in Sehome Arboretum because the aquatic and terrestrial habitats are too far separated. In the Community Forest, they're right there, adjacent, and so we have really unusual conditions. We also have a mature forest with trees that occasionally fall down, so you have lots of snags and logs which provide essential habitat for a large number of organisms and that ought to be conveyed to show how special and unusual this place is. We could also emphasize its location as essentially an ecological hub or connection between many other areas and that relates to this urban forestry letter where their baseline reports the wildlife report does not recognize it as a hub. In fact, it doesn't recognize most of the connections to wildlife. That's even impacting our work because some of the data layers that Herrera has are coming from the City and City's own data layers really are not reflecting the existing degree of wildlife habitat connectivity. If we could at least emphasize the special attributes, qualities, features of this place, at least the three I just mentioned, to the public so they know just what a gem, what a value this place is. I think that'll be helpful. I think it is part of our responsibility. We've been collecting money from people to protect this place, and this would help communicate just how much worth that investment, that money, has been.

John Brown: I believe from the way Chris and Tina are taking notes they are going to make this part of their report.

John Hymas: I just want to add that coring trees is an invasive procedure, and you don't just do it at the drop of a hat. There are other ways to determine if a tree is sound or their age, like measuring diameter at breast height and rapping on it with a rubber mallet to tell if a tree is sound. There's no reason to do invasive procedures like tree coring as we have the danger of pathogens entering the tree.

Hue Beattie: I just wanted to thank Herrera for the maps, they are very well done. They're easy to look at and understand. I hope they can make some bigger copies to have at the right time. I often wonder about the places where gravel was extracted from our area there and in the history of it and if there's a way to increase our water storage on site somehow because of the droughts we're having, or fire problems and stuff and I hope that we can delineate water storage potentials and access to water for fire hydrants.

John McLaughlin: The greatest potential for water storage is restoring beavers through the big wetland along the interurban trail. We've talked about that a bit and that has the greatest potential for restoring water and raising the amount that could be stored and the greatest ecological benefit. Had a bunch of students that came up with plans for how to do that. I'm happy to forward those to the group.

### **New Business**

**Zoom Renewal:** Discussion re renewing Zoom for another year. If buy for a year will get a discounted rate. The discount is equal to getting four months for free. It was moved by Hue Beattie to renew Zoom at the annual rate. Seconded by John Hymas. Approved 4/0.

### **Monthly expenses and cash flow sheets.**

**Petty Cash:** WECU Bank account balance as of 12/31/2021 was \$2,967.

**Treasurer's Report:** As of December 31, 2021, Whatcom Co. Treasurer's Monthly Report, beginning unencumbered cash balance (12/01) \$303,993, ending unencumbered cash balance (12/31) \$252,927. We received tax revenues of \$2,114. Paid out \$10,323 in operating expenses, and \$42,857 was paid on our loan to the city of Bellingham. Current debt outstanding as of 12/31/2021: \$24,985.

**Motion** by Hue Beattie to approve District Payroll Input Form, wages for Robyn Albro, 37.75 hours in Dec. 2021, total gross of \$943.75. Seconded by John McLaughlin. Approved 4/0.

**Consent Agenda: Motion** by John McLaughlin to approve the following payments. Seconded by Hue Beattie. Approved 4/0.

- Payment on December 15, 2021 Invoice #96794 from Carmichael Clark PS for \$2,851.50 for regular professional services.
- Payment on Invoice #0613895 for the bond of \$100,000 on the clerk and president of CCFPD for 3/5/2022 to 3/5/2023 to RLI Surety for \$350.00.
- Payment on January 13, 2022, Invoice #33457 from Whatcom County Administrative Services for payroll service for fourth quarter of 2021 for \$30.
- Payment on the December 15, 2021, Invoice from the Whatcom County Auditor's Office for the November 3<sup>rd</sup> General Election for \$6,112.37.

**Reminder:** R. 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.

**Next meeting will be on the fourth Wednesday:** February 23, 2022, at 6 PM.

**Adjourn.** Time: 7:28 PM.