



Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Minutes

Thursday April 16, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 330pm with the following park board members in attendance:

Board Members present: Tim Manns, Jason Benson, and John Semrau,

Staff Members and Representatives: Brian Adams

Public: Jim Taylor, Jerry Granahan

Agenda and Minutes:

The February Minutes will be reviewed at the May meeting. Although there was a lack of quorum, we held the meeting and made no binding motions/decisions.

Board Discussion

NSRA Trail Plan: Skagit Trail Builders:

The Board discussed the trail plan for NSRA. The board was appreciative of the time and energy put into the plan but felt it may need additional public process before a plan is formally adopted. Tim wondered whether we could accommodate a hiker only trail so that hikers could enjoy a walk without the need to keep an eye out for bicyclists. Jim felt that the type of trails at NSRA lent were a good fit for shared use since the trails are relatively flat and the line of sight was considered in the design. The board appreciated the efforts to ensure the design was consistent with the Olmsted vision. Tim felt there could be more mention in the suggested interpretive signing of how the habitat value of the land and also an added goal of maintaining/restoring the environment. There have been over one hundred species of birds counted at NSRA and many people go to the park to experience nature. Tim is willing to help with those goals and can draft some additional language towards that end. The question was raised: what kind of public process is needed to ensure the plan meets a broader perspective? Brian said he would provide some ideas and what a public process would look like for the Board's review at the next meeting. Brian will send the trail plan out to the Board before the next meeting.

Electric Bikes on the Cascade Trail: policy review:

We have had a lot of questions that have arisen about whether e-bikes would be considered on the Cascade Trail or other locations. The e-bikes are being used on roads, sidewalks, and paths throughout the state. Agencies are scrambling to set new policies, much like they did with electric engines on lakes twenty-five years ago. John Semrau said he would like to see class 1 or 2 bikes allowed and not differentiated. He felt speed wouldn't be an issue since the unstable surface will regulate the speed of riders. In addition, we no longer have the ability to patrol/enforce riders since we don't have a ranger doing regular rounds. In the Anacortes Community Lands they allow e-bikes on the same trails as motor bikes but they are not allowed on trails where motorbikes are prohibited. Brian thought e-bikes should be allowed on commuter trails such as the Cascade Trail on a trial basis. Jerry and Jim felt that NSRA would also be a good place to allow e-bikes since there is an aging demographic. Jim spent time in the southwest and

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said e-bikes were being used responsibly and that user conflicts have not become an issue. Jason mentioned the value of e-bikes in helping folks go further and see more things. There was a thought that single track trails may not be appropriate for e-bikes at this time. More discussion will be pursued. Jim believes a code needs to be established so that "rule-followers" can legally ride on trails. Some jurisdictions have decided simply to ignore enforcement of e-bikes while informally letting them ride trails.

Park Board Recruitment:

Some names were floated. Tim mentioned the importance of bring diversity to better represent the make-up of our County's demographic, especially in district 2. Brian has asked for all members to bring ideas and names forward for further discussion.

Staff Report:

Brian talked about staff assignments during COVID 19. Most recreation events have been cancelled through at least July. We are awaiting news from the state on what restrictions there will be for event sizes. The Fair has a very good chance of being mothballed. He also discussed the project progress for NSRA, Presentin, and the Fairgrounds. The bathroom at NSRA has been placed. We won't have working toilets until at least June. The Skagit Trail Builders have been partnering with us on the trails with help from volunteers, including students and staff from the Job Corps. The volunteer work parties are ongoing. The new trail will give visitors access to the campus before looping back to the park. I meet regularly with the Port of Skagit as we implement the plan. The bid documents for the veterans' plaza will be going out in the summer of 2020. Presentin will be delayed. The good news is that we were able to pull in another \$500,000 in grants. We are working with the State on purchasing 80 acres adjacent to DPSP. A grant will be applied for by the State this year. We are also pursuing a parcel adjacent to the DNR lands at the south end of the county. This would provide a place to access other public lands.

Adjourn. Next Meetings: May 21, 2020

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