



ANACORTES PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board

March 4th, 2021

6pm

Virtual Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88262846910?pwd=SkxNaFlkblpGcWNwYUk0V3JzU0tnZz09>

Preliminary Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Approve March 2020 Minutes
3. Public Comments
4. Communication/Correspondence
5. Whistle Lake Dam
6. Staff Reports
7. Other Business

If reasonable accommodation due to a disability is needed

contact Mac Jackson at 360-293-1918

48-hours prior to the meeting date.

ACFL Forest Advisory Board Minutes

March 5, 2020

(Please note this March 5th meeting occurred just days before the City of Anacortes began implementing COVID19 pandemic response protocols. Mention of future actions and activities is a reflection of this timing.)

Attendees: Board Members: Sandra Starbuck, Chair, Brian Wetcher, JoAnn York-Gilmore, Nick Stowe

Staff: Steve Phillips, Bob Vaux, Jonn Lunsford

Public: Asa Deane, Friends of the Forest Executive Director, Dan Senour, ACFL Trail Committee, Stacey Curtis

I. Meeting called to order at 6PM

II. February Minutes Approved as Submitted

III. Public Comments: S. Curtis submitted a letter dated Feb. 7, 2020 from the Department of Ecology regarding the closed city dump site. The letter is a notice that DOE is rescinding its previous position that the dump site required no further action. Curtis explained that the proposed bicycle skills park is the reason she comes to the Forest Advisory Board meetings. She asked that the City's website be updated to reflect the information contained in this letter, and hopes the FAB will discuss at its April meeting.

Wetcher: it is unclear what DOE wants.

Vaux: hopeful that Skagit County Health Dept water test results of the site will be shared with the COA by April FAB meeting.

Lunsford: have other dump sites in Skagit County and beyond also received updated opinions from DOE?

IV. Communication/Correspondence: Deane/FOF states the FOF had a good annual meeting last week, 50 folks in attendance. Announces FOF Naturalist Melissa Courtney is leaving her job, should be working through the month of June. The job has been posted, and they are hoping to bring on the new Educator mid-May. Vaux is scheduled to attend the next FOF Board meeting. There are two hikes coming up: March 20 at Little Beaver Pond and March 28th at Little Round Top.

Lunsford: working on the Mt. Erie cell tower lease terms with the Kiwanis Club. We have reached out to a King County evaluator to assist us with discussion with Puget Sound Energy.

Wetcher: would it be possible to work with the Police Department to impound motorcycles being illegally operated in the ACFL? He would like to reach out to the City Council and work on ordinance language in order to impound the motorcycles of repeat offenders.

York-Gilmore: regular Parks Commission meeting will be March 10th.

V. Ebikes: Vaux; I have reviewed some of our initial trial ideas with City Attorney Swetnam. She is looking further into how the ADA component may or may not work for this. Vaux then reviewed York-Gilmore's email with FAB regarding ideas for a trial Ebike period in the ACFL. Various ideas were shared about a permitting process, who qualifies for said permits, how many might be issued and who would qualify.

Wetcher: would prefer the COA not coming up with new criteria for ADA eligibility. "This is not something we want to engage in as a pioneer."

York-Gilmore: likes an Ebike permit process related to ADA criteria.

Senour: are we seeing motorized skateboards in the ACFL, and do we have any policies regarding same?

Stowe: opposed to this permitting system.

Starbuck: shall we stay with our current policy of regarding Ebikes the same as motorcycles?

Stowe: yes.

Wetcher: need to be wary of the proverbial camel's nose.

Starbuck: this is why we are discussing a trial period.

Vaux: the FAB may simply decide against any consideration that differs from current policy.

Lunsford: we need to make sure we continue to emphasize our work of balancing environmental impact with outdoor recreation.

Deane: the FOF Board supports the status of Ebikes being the same as motorcycles, but would be open to exploring a trail period.

Phillips: the COA may be ahead of the curve to really get a sense of a trial period. We should wait for Ebikes to become more common.

VI. Staff Reports: Phillips explains motorcyclist in his report photo has not been identified. Heart Lake Road clean up work party was successful.

Lunsford reports that the AHS Green Club worked with he and Parks Manager Nicole Johnston on a 32nd Street Swamp native planting project recently: 50 alder and 50 twinberry were planted.

Starbuck: very happy with the COA website.

Lunsford: ACFL Management Plan could be on a City Council agenda in May or June.

Wetcher: any updates on the Conservation Easement Program?

Lunsford: COA and Skagit Land Trust attorneys working on language updates.

Wetcher: emphasizing this is a clean up process of the easement documents. Cost of the easements needs to be updated. SLT wants to look further into what defines commercial use.

VII. Other Business: None.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:07PM

ACFL Maintenance Report FEBRUARY – 2021 by Steve Phillips

February 24, 2021

We had nearly finished cutting all the trees from the January 12 windstorm when, on February 12-13, it snowed. I feared this would cause 100 more trail-blocking downed trees for us, but other than adding high volumes of water to the already saturated forest, it didn't take too great a toll.

We chained off Erie Mountain Road in anticipation of heavy snow on Thursday, February 11. We did not reopen it until this past Monday, February 22. Although roads around town were safe just a few days after the snow, cool temperatures and overcast skies allowed certain parts of the Erie Mountain Road to remain slick and dangerous to drive. We did not close off the roads to Whistle Lake or Little Cranberry Lake due to snowfall.

During the week leading prior to the snow event, I used our department's box blade to smooth out potholes at Little Cranberry Lake, Trailhead 10, and Whistle Lake.

After most of the snow had melted, I spent some time re-establishing the waterbars on the west side of 311, where it drops steeply to 312.

Beavers continue to block the Heart Lake headwaters at the northern end of Heart Lake. Unblocking this has become an almost daily task for me again. The 32nd Street beaver deceiver continues to function well, but it was overwhelmed again on 2/17, with overland flow as a result of rain accelerating snowmelt. This was to be expected, and had nearly caught up by the next day.

Today I had some help from Brian and Sky (Parks) repairing a small cave-in on the asphalt section of the Little Cranberry Lake road. Tim Hohmann from the City's Engineering department showed up and offered some guidance. He approved of the rock check dams we had installed in the ditch. Per his suggestion, I also added rock and gravel to the shoulder to prevent future cave-ins. This task will likely be needed at least once a year.

Later this week, we will have some help from the Street Department and their specialized equipment in clearing the culvert between 32nd and 31st streets that helps keep the eastern end of Trail 107 above water.

Violations

I noticed some ATV tracks had made their way around the Whistle Lake gate during the snow. We are considering adding a few more boulders to prohibit this in the future.

Miscellaneous Good News

The south vault toilet unit at Heart Lake parking lot now has a brand new (2/1/20) toilet seat.

The skunk cabbage is emerging, and stinging nettle is rearing its ugly head. Spring is just around the corner!

We will be hosting the first work party in over a year (the last one was February 8, 2020, right before Covid shutdowns began) this coming Saturday, February 27. We look forward to cleaning litter from the shoulders of Heart Lake Road and extracting Holly and Evergreen Daphne from the woods north of Heart Lake. Join us! Right now the forecast is looking favorable.



An example of waterbar maintenance on Trail 311. When functioning properly, the waterbar diverts flow from the trail tread to a downslope location. Maintenance is done with hand tools: a McLeod and a round-point shovel.



Little Cranberry Lake during the foggy melt-off, February 16, 2021.

February 2021 Parks and ACFL Operations Administrative Report

Director Lunsford, Nicole Johnston, Dustin South and I made our annual lobbying trip to Olympia, virtual though it was. We had great meetings with Senator Lovelett, Rep. Ramel and Rep. Lekanoff's legislative aid, Kaylee Galloway. Each found time for specific discussions of our local park projects, grant funding levels in Olympia, and strategies for working with the homeless population. We look forward to continued work with these offices, and appreciate their accessibility.

Steve and I have been infusing more volunteer help into the ACFL. Of course, there are many regular trail users who perform all kinds of helpful anonymous tasks, as well as those who keep us posted with the maintenance needs they discover on their respective travels. We appreciate this very much, as well as the folks who have been working with us on specific tasks. We are also excited about our first official work party in the woods in over a year, scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 27th. Thank you to the Friends of the Forest for partnering with us on this one. Executive Director Asa Deane and I have been working toward a formalized series of volunteer trainings and work parties, and 2021 will reveal these as we move through the year.

I did attend the February Friends of the Forest Board meeting, and was able to provide some updates and answer some questions. I will be doing the same next week at their Annual Meeting.

Steve's Certified Arborist credentials continue to play a key role in working with our parks and woods neighbors. Winter winds have brought forth a handful of questions and concerns, and we have been able to respond with a site visit and resulting plan on several fronts.

We continue to work with our Washington Park campers on a variety of needs. In addition to a couple of successful programs with partners like the Anacortes Police Department, the Anacortes Family Center and our Planning Department, we continue to see camping revenue increasing for this time of year. Our team approach to the management of the campground keeps fresh perspective on park visitor and maintenance challenges, and helps improve our response to the constantly growing number of visitors.

Representatives from the local Rotary Club presented their Cap Sante trail and viewpoint project concepts at the February Parks Commission meeting. The information was well received and will be further discussed at the Commission's April meeting. I continue to work with Club members in refining the plan.

We were able to complete a long term Guemes Channel Trail negotiation with two home owners along the rail bed between "A" and "B" Avenue. This involves trading a street vacation for trail right of way. The process is now in the hands of the City Council. As of the writing of this report, I do not know when it next appears on their agenda.

Parks and Planning staff have been working on an upgrade for the West Beach steps at Washington Park. The railing suffered some recent winter storm damage. Hoping to have a plan ready for review in the next few weeks. Parks Crew did a nice temporary fix.

I am also working with Planning on a repair plan for trail #10, between #117 and #113, as well as some very preliminary discussion regarding the Little Cranberry "boat launch."

Just about everyone on our Parks Crew, along with celebrity volunteers, have been hard at work at Causland Park, upgrading the memorial plaza. This project will be a great tribute to those who given all.

We are preparing our plans for seasonal hires, as March is already next week. Some jobs should be posted today. We are looking forward to expanding the team for the “busy” months.

Most of us on the Parks & Rec team are working on getting the downtown street tree Christmas lights removed so we may proceed with a much-needed round of pruning.

Keeping a close eye on beaver activity, notching dams where we have permitted ability to do so.

As the City owns and manages two dams within the ACFL, the Department of Ecology has safety protocol required for each. You may remember the work done at the Little Cranberry dam in the mid 90's. This included tree and vegetation removal, the construction of a spillway and installation of a log boom. We do an annual inspection and send that to DOE.

The earthen dam at Whistle Lake has not been upgraded to these standards, and DOE has reached out to us to explore options for necessary safety upgrades. The dam, just north of Toot Swamp is crossed by trail #205 and is rarely noticed by most forest visitors. We are currently working with a consultant on some options going forward, and may have these ready for discussion at the March Forest Board meeting. It should be noted that Whistle Lake is still the backup water supply for the City.

Doing my best to help Steve out on a variety of trail projects, most still involving cutting windfall out of the way of trails.

Enjoyed another great Samish Nation / City of Anacortes hike in the ACFL with Denise Crowe. No matter how many years we have been hiking the trails, I always learn something new. This connection is greatly appreciated.

Faithfully Submitted,

Bob Vaux, Assistant Director
February 25, 2021