



Spokane County

PARKS, RECREATION AND GOLF
Doug Chase, Director

AGENDA

SPOKANE COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC)

Wednesday, May 11, 2022 at 8:00 AM

404 N. Havana St

Present: David Schaub, Tom Mackenzie, Mel Fowler, Doug Kelley, Eric Johnson (virtual)

Not Present: Eric Sawyer

Staff: Doug Chase, Paul Knowles, Julie Neff, Curt Chambers, Jamie Kelly, Rachel Hansen, Aysha Al-Hafian

I. Call Meeting to Order (Chair, Dave Schaub) 8:01am

A. Additions to the Agenda

None

B. Review and consider PAC minutes from April 13, 2022 meeting

Motion to approve: Mr. Kelley. Seconded by Mr. Mackenzie. Motion unanimously approved.

C. Welcome Rachel Hansen, Recreation Program Manager

Mr. Schaub welcomed our new Recreation Program Manager, Rachel Hansen.

Ms. Hansen stated that she has been with the Parks Department for about three months now. She comes from the Central YMCA as their Aquatics Director. Prior to that, she worked for the City of Spokane and oversaw six of their pools. She graduated from Eastern Washington University (EWU) and worked as a paraeducator for a short time, but aquatics has her heart. She is excited to be here and a part of the team.

Mr. Schaub asked how the staffing was going. Ms. Hansen replied that staffing is going great with aquatics as they are close to being fully staffed already. She mentioned that Liberty Lake Regional Park has been more challenging and could use more employees. Mr. Schaub asked what the minimum age for working out at Liberty Lake is. Ms. Hansen said that they just successfully adjusted the working age to 16 and up. For a while they were hitting a wall with an age restriction of 18 and up.

D. Determine location of June 8th “Special Location” PAC Meeting

Mr. Schaub asked what everyone’s thoughts were regarding the special location.

Mr. Mackenzie mentioned that both he and Mr. Kelley would be out of town for the next meeting due to traveling.

Mr. Schaub asked if there were any facilities or locations that the PAC Members should visit.

Mr. Chase responded that there are potentially some new trailheads that could be visited or the Latah Creek Clubhouse as it has just gone under renovations.

Ms. Fowler mentioned that she would be interested in seeing the upgrades at Latah Creek.

Unanimously approved (no motion). The meeting on June 8th will be held at the Latah Creek Golf Course.

II. Member's Report: (Chair, Dave Schaub):

Park Advisory Committee Members are encouraged to provide a brief report.

Mr. Kelley mentioned that the issue at Latah Creek Golf Course and the marker being down has been resolved. He played a round at Latah and then a city course and said there is no comparison. Latah Creek is in great shape.

Mr. Mackenzie played MeadowWood on Tuesday and had fun trying out the Finn Scooter Carts.

Mr. Schaub mentioned that this Saturday, Inland NW Land Conservancy is hosting Spring on the Rim up at Palisades Park. He extended the invitation to those in the room.

Ms. Fowler mentioned that the Parks Foundation also has a fundraiser event at Brickwest Brewing occurring on Saturday. Also, Terri Fortner is moving on as Executive Director of the Parks Foundation. Yvonne will be interim while they search for a new ED.

III. Bear Lake Regional Park Update / Phase 1 Shoreline Renovation Project (15 min) (Paul Knowles introduce, Julie Neff Presenter):

Mr. Knowles began by informing members that Bear Lake is one of three regional parks that the County owns and operates. It is located up North and has been owned since 1974 and is in need to some love. Ms. Neff has done a great job in taking this project from the ground up and has a grant application submitted to the RCO. Ms. Neff began her presentation that she shared with the Board of County Commissioners last month. ([See Presentation](#))

Mr. Kelley asked if with these large projects in the community that do not happen in a short time period, are there changes that will be made if inflation continues? Ms. Neff responded that they have done their best to build inflation into the budget.

Mr. Schaub asked about the removal of the gabion baskets and if they were originally put there due to erosion? Ms. Neff responded that before the gabion baskets, there was a timber wall. The intent is that once the gabion baskets are removed, the shoreline would be graded back and excess soil would be removed so that there will not be a drop off into the lake.

Mr. Schaub asked if the entire area would become open to park users and swimmers and if the swim area will be buoyed. Ms. Neff stated that yes, the shoreline would be open to swimmers. She also mentioned that at one point there was a swim area that was roped off with a floating dock. As of now, there is no intention of creating another roped swimming area, but a new floating dock may be placed in the water. Mr. Chase further explained that the buoys were put in when the County had lifeguards at Bear Lake. This was discontinued in 2009 and Mr. Chase does not anticipate that service coming back.

Mr. Kelley asked if the state stocked the lake with fish. Mr. Chase responded that yes, the lake is stocked.

Mr. Schaub asked if they had a day use or trail counter at the park. Ms. Neff responded that the highest number they saw in the summer was an average of 328 vehicles a day.

IV. Parks Operations Equipment and Vehicle Replacement (15 min) (Doug Chase introduce, Curt Chambers Presenter):

Mr. Chase began by stating that this was a monumental presentation as it has been 20 plus years in the making. There has been a need for over fifteen years to upgrade equipment that our Operations Division uses. Over the last couple decades, there were times where Parks worked with the Budget Office to put together a vehicle replacement plan without success. Mr. Chambers was given the opportunity to go back and put together a new plan which he is sharing in his presentation. ([See presentation.](#))

Mr. Schaub asked if this presentation has already been given to the Board? Mr. Chambers replied that yes, this has been presented twice to the Board and they have approved the plan.

Mr. Schaub asked if all of the Raceway proceeds would be used or just a portion of it. Mr. Chambers responded that this is the entirety of the proceeds after the remaining Raceway debt was paid off.

Mr. Mackenzie asked where they were going to lease lawn mowers from. Mr. Chambers responded that Toro would be their source for mowing equipment. Mr. Chase added that the municipal lease purchase reduces the overall costs by quite a bit and the County will wind up owning the mowers at the end of the lease.

Mr. Mackenzie asked if the golf courses could do the same. Mr. Chase explained that our courses have not, as they have been able to purchase their mowers. However, this could happen in the future. Mr. Mackenzie asked if any electric vehicles were being considered. Mr. Chambers responded that at this moment, the electric trucks cannot pull the weight that they are needing to pull. However, they may look at electric options for admin vehicles. He also mentioned that he could see them moving forward with electric mowers in the future as technology advances.

V. Director's Report: (Doug Chase):

A. Ballot measure update.

Mr. Chase mentioned that at the previous meeting, he was able to share the proposed ballot measure that encompassed a variety of projects that included improvements to Avista Stadium to bring it up to MLB standards. As of now, the ballot measure is on indefinite hold. Originally, they were looking at an August time frame, and it was discovered that the timeline was not feasible. Despite this, the County is moving forward with pursuing an architectural firm to create construction documents for Phase 2 only. The County is taking this time to explore alternative funding opportunities, including federal "earmarks" and State funding.

Mr. Chase further explained that he and Mr. Kelly have been reaching out to other MiLB teams that are in the same boat to see if anyone has figured out how to fund similar projects, and if so, how. County Parks is also taking the time to in these conversation to research how these kinds of leases are structured that might help inform an amended lease agreement for Avista Stadium when the time comes to amend and update that agreement.

Mr. Mackenzie asked if the delay of the ballot measure puts them behind the MLB timeline. Mr. Chase responded that yes, this does put them behind. Mr. Chase also mentioned that he believes the Spokane Indians will push to explore other funding options as well and there will continue to be discussions in the months ahead.

Mr. Kelly mentioned that this project will be interesting because this stadium is not the only one needing tens of millions of dollars.

Mr. Mackenzie wanted to clarify that the County Commissioners were not just abandoning the project. Mr. Chase responded that this is not the case. Unfortunately, now is a bad time to ask the citizens for a tax increase with inflation at a 40-year high.

Mr. Schaub asked if there are other communities looking to float a bond measure or if most are choosing a similar path to our County.

Mr. Kelly explained that they are focused on publicly owned stadiums. Some are floating bonds and paying them back over time using increased lease payments to cover the debt service. There is a team in New York where the city was able to cover all the stadium improvements. There is also another team in Ashville, SC who is toying with the idea of calling MLB's bluff. They are no where near where they should be in terms of the MLB-mandated timeline. For Avista Stadium, a master plan has been developed and Spokane County / Spokane Indians has clearly demonstrated intent towards completing the necessary improvements.

Mr. Schaub asked if the Board has asked the Parks Department to come back with new recommendations.

Mr. Chase responded not at this time. The Chair and CEO are aware that we are doing the research. Mr. Chase is confident that the conversations will be circled back to. The bond counsel that has helped advise shared his professional opinion that there is not a worse time to introduce this ballot measure.

Mr. Mackenzie mentioned that to his understanding, Phase 1, which included drainage at the field was completed. However, he heard that two games were cancelled due to water on the field /drainage. Mr. Kelly mentioned that there will still be rainouts, regardless of how good the drainage is. Mr. Chase added on there is only so much that any drain system can drain.

VI. Written Department Update: (Misc. 0-15 minutes) Time allotted for Questions/Clarification Advisory Committee Members may have associated with the "written departmental update".

Mr. Schaub asked if anyone had any questions regarding the written department update. He asked Ms. Hansen about staffing and that he noticed a disconnect between Aquatics and Liberty Lake.

Ms. Hansen replied that yes, her aquatics team is nearly full staffed. However, staffing at Liberty Lake Regional Park is crawling along. She has an onsite coordinator and some people for hospitality and her campground hosts. As of now, the campground is functioning well, but it does appear that more people looking for work want part time positions instead of full time.

Mr. Chase added that Operations is also having some hiring hiccups as well. Mr. Chambers explained that as of today, he could still use about a dozen more people. He extended four job offers over the week, and all were rejected. He would like more staff for out at Plante's Ferry and the general park system.

Mr. Kelley asked what the County was responsible for at Plante's Ferry since the Spokane Valley Junior Soccer Association (SVJSA) has been running it.

Mr. Chase explained that the Operations Division is in charge of base level maintenance. SVJSA has requested that they maintain the soccer fields only. This means we handle the rest, including irrigation and repairs. Mr. Chambers has put together three turf fertilization options for SVJSA, and they will reimburse us for the selected plan.

Mr. Schaub asked if Mr. Chambers is concerned that he will not be able to keep up due to staffing shortfalls.

Mr. Chambers responded that yes, this is a concern. He has thrown more staff over there to help, which includes skilled laborers, but this takes away from maintenance of other parks in the system.

Ms. Fowler mentioned that she has been out to Plante's Ferry every Saturday and does not see any concerns with the facility.

Mr. Kelley asked if Mr. Chambers has reached out to local colleges to see if there are other opportunities. Mr. Chambers replied that he has reached out to several as he has had luck doing so in the past. He also

mentioned that they have a digital reader out at Plante's Ferry that reads that they are hiring. He also has plans to hang banners and place notice out at trailheads, along with magnets to place on their vehicles.

Mr. Schaub exclaimed that he was psyched to see the new trail plan with the installation of trail markers out at James T. Slavin Conservation area.

Mr. Knowles responded that Ms. Neff has been working hard at this project with Washington Trails Association and Mr. Chambers to design and install the new signs. He also mentioned that Ms. Neff is also working on a trailhead expansion project out at Slavin, as it is seeing significant use which is resulting in conflict between trailers and cars.

Mr. Mackenzie asked if there was any resolution on the e-bike situation.

Mr. Chase explained that due to our park ranger only being able to hand out misdemeanors, there is still no resolution to the e-bikes. Mr. Knowles stated that changes to state law County Parks staff was hoping to see through did not advance out of committee. The Department will pursue this same legislation in the next legislative session.

Meeting adjourned at 9:32 am.

Next Regular Meeting: June 8, 2022; Location: Special Location: Latah Creek Golf Course, contingent upon COVID-19 sanctions.

***Purpose:** The purpose of the Parks Advisory Committee, (PAC) referred to, as the "Park Board" is to make recommendations to and advise the Parks and Recreation Director on matters concerning the operation and maintenance of the Spokane County park system.*

Spokane County Parks and Recreation Mission Statement

"The mission of the Parks, Recreation and Golf Department is to enhance the general quality of life for the residents of Spokane County by providing the highest quality and quantity of parks, recreation, open space, and related cultural opportunities given the available resources."

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) INFORMATION: Spokane County is committed to providing equal access to its facilities, programs, and services for persons with disabilities. The Spokane County Parks, Recreation & Golf Conference Room is wheelchair accessible. Individuals requesting reasonable accommodations or further information may call, write, or email Tim Hansen at (509) 477-5750 (TDD), 824 North Adams Street, Spokane, WA, 99260; or tchansen@spokanecounty.org. Please contact us forty-eight (48) hours before the meeting date.