



Clallam County Parks, Fair & Facilities Department

223 E. Fourth St., Suite 7
Port Angeles, WA 98362-3000

CLALLAM COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD Minutes of March 7, 2023, Regular Meeting

- Call to Order** President Peter Craig called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.
- Members Present** Roger Hoffman Peter Craig Peter Davis Bill Hughes
Candace Kathol
- Staff Present** Donald Crawford Melissa Earley John Graham Tom Reyes
Commissioner
Randy Johnson
- Previous Minutes** Bill Hughes moved to approve the minutes of the January 27, 2023, meeting, as written. Peter Davis seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.
- Correspondence Received** No correspondence has been received.
- Unfinished Business** No unfinished business at this time.
- Committee Reports** Park Board Application Review Committee:
Candace reported the committee recently reviewed applications for the board position vacancy. Ms. Anna Plager's application ranked highest among applications received. Peter clarified for the group the open position is due to Marge Upham's resignation.
- Staff Reports** Campground 2022 Revenue Report and Three-Year Trends:
Don gave an update regarding 2022 camping revenue received and three-year trend. The report is attached to these minutes. 2022 camping revenue at Salt Creek Recreation Area fell short of the \$450,000 goal by \$16,492. Similarly, 2022 camping revenue at Dungeness Recreation Area fell short of the \$250,000 goal by \$15,103. Finally, Camp David Jr camping revenue was \$39,845 short of the \$85,000 goal for 2022. Don explained that we experienced increased camping revenue in 2021 due to the parks reopening after Covid related closures. Revenue decreased in 2022 due to more options opening after Covid and recommended fee changes not being implemented.

2023 camping revenue goals include \$485,000 at Salt Creek Recreation Area; \$268,000 at Dungeness Recreation Area; and \$85,000 at Camp David Jr. The approved camping fee increases have been implemented as well as the new reservation system for Camp David Jr. Currently at Camp David Jr. two weeks in May and June have been reserved, the entirety of July and August have been reserved, 3 weeks in September and 1 week in October have been reserved.

Don went on to discuss Dungeness Recreation Area stating the park needs to have electric sites in order to generate the type of revenue enjoyed by Salt Creek Recreation Area. He stated the Board of County Commissioners have approved the implementation of water and electric sites however we are waiting for the road alignment project to commence because it would be easiest to lay conduits while the new road is being laid, then make plans over the next couple of years to complete the project.

Finally, Don discussed the possibility the Parks Advisory Board working with the Fair Advisory Board to increase camp site usage at the Fairgrounds in 2024. Currently there are approximately 50 sites at the Fairgrounds with water and electricity available, however those sites are only used during Fair and when a group reserves the grounds for a multi-day event.

Peter inquired as to the revenue received in 2021 and asked if the park managers were involved with the revenue projection. Don indicated he did not have that information with him, however it was previously presented to the group in January 2022, and stated he has monthly meetings with the park managers to discuss revenue status and goals. Peter also asked if the revenue projections are based upon the same occupancy rate as previous years. Don replied in the affirmative. Melissa reminded the group camp David Jr was closed for most of 2021 due to Covid restrictions and provided 2021 camping revenue totals as follows: of the \$73,000 budgeted for Camp David Jr., just \$4,678 was collected. Dungeness Recreation Area was budgeted to collect \$210,000 in camping revenue, however brought in \$258,544. Finally, Salt Recreation Area was budgeted to collect \$370,000 in camping revenue, however the actual camping revenue for 2021 was \$484,935.

Peter inquired as to the reservations currently booked at Camp David Jr., asking how many of the groups are youth related. Melissa responded that the strong majority of the groups reserving Camp David Jr are youth related.

Peter reminded the group of a comment from a previous meeting regarding a possible scholarship program for underprivileged youth to attend camp at Camp David Jr. and asked if there is an update on the subject. Don responded he has not worked on this project, but reported he has since learned that many of the groups who utilize Camp David Jr have their own internal scholarship programs available.

Master Plan Update:

Don indicated he has reviewed the notes provided by the Board and added them to the draft Master Plan. He stated due to staffing shortages he has

not been able to make as much progress on this project as he would have liked. Peter asked if the Board would be given the opportunity to make comments prior to the draft being finalized. Don assured the group they would indeed have such an opportunity.

Regarding Dungeness Recreation Area, Don indicated the Roads Department has set their strategic plan and received some funding, and plan to work on the road realignment in the near future however they are currently working on a few other capital projects.

New Business

Three Acre Site West of Lake Aldwell:

Candace Kathol reminded the group of Mr. Ed Bowen's comment at the previous meeting regarding the three-acre site west of Lake Aldwell and funding that was previously received by the county for future development of the site. She inquired if that topic should be included on a future agenda for discussion. Don responded that while we can put the topic on the agenda for discussion, we are five to seven years away from the project being at a point to make a decision as to its use. Commissioner Johnson indicated the most efficient way to ensure the topic is not forgotten is to ensure the plans for the site are included in the Master Plan.

Eagle Point Property:

Don reported the decision was previously made to not develop the property due to its size, shape, location, and grade. Don indicated an employee has expressed a desire to have the property leveled and install a picnic table. Peter recalled that when the property was acquired, its development would be limited rather than not developed at all. Don clarified he and the employee mentioned will be meeting in May to discuss installing a picnic table and perhaps bring in a few yards of gravel to make the area more usable, and will have more to report at the July meeting.

Third Camp Host at Salt Creek Recreation Area:

Candace requested an update on the previously mentioned topic of adding a third camp host at Salt Creek Recreation Area. Don indicated there is no cost associated other than a background check as it would be a volunteer. Bill Hughes asked why a third camp host is needed as he and Pete Davis are well capable of handling the camp host duties during their regular time in May and September. Don responded the Park Manager had requested additional assistance during the summer and late fall. Pete Davis reminded Don that he and Bill are there in May and September, when the camp is nearly full, and during those times they are able to handle the camp host duties without additional assistance. Don assured the group it would not

be a loss of a camping site to add a third host space. He also indicated he would be willing to have a meeting with the Board and park manager to discuss this topic further. The discussion continued to include the need to ensure the hiring of seasonal help. Don told the group of his recent efforts to recruit college students for seasonal help and include housing. His plan includes removing the queen bed from seasonal housing and replace it with bunk beds to house more than one out of area seasonal park aid (previously called seasonal park ranger)

Peter asked if the campground occupancy trend has changed in the last two years. John Graham indicated the attendance is not decreased and the park seems to be busy later in the season than in years past.

Park Board Review

Peter reminded the group of the intent and purpose of the Parks Advisory Board, indicating he does not feel the Board is utilized to its potential, and that its purpose is to be of service.

Credit Cards and Checks:

Peter inquired as to the decision to discontinue allowing checks as a form of payment at the campgrounds. Don responded that the number of NSF checks are significant enough to be problematic, the Sheriff will not pursue the NSF check writers, and the State Parks do not accept checks. Peter indicated that until we are at a point where we can accept credit cards in the parks, checks should be allowed as a form of payment. Peter requested the number of NSF checks received and asked that the issue be brought before the board for discussion and possible recommendation toward resolution. He also asked when we will have credit card capability. Don indicated there was nothing to report at this point, however the plan is to come before the board in the fall regarding expanding credit card capability at the parks in 2024 in an effort to reduce and eventually eliminate cash sales at the campgrounds.

Dungeness Recreation Area Master Plan:

Peter made mention of a comment made by Don at a previous meeting regarding the Friends of Dungeness Recreation Area and the plan to add electric campsites to the park. He recognized the comment was made in jest, however thought it suggests Don will not move forward with a plan that is in the best interest of the Parks overall if a group contests the plan. Don indicated the project was taken off the table prior to his arrival. Peter expressed concern that a great deal of staff time and tax payer dollars were spent on the planning of this project, and that the project was set aside without further discussion with the Board.

Robin Hill County Park Storm Cleanup:

Peter also discussed the state of Robin Hill County Park after the windstorm in November 2022, asking if Don has walked the trails at the park after the storm and since the logging has been done. He asked what staffing efforts were made to clean up the park prior to its reopening, and inquired if the Friends of Robin Hill were involved in the reopening planning.

Don responded the Parks staff were not instructed to take an 'all hands on deck' approach to cleaning up the park in advance of reopening, and that the Friends group were involved. He clarified that he notified the newspaper, had statements uploaded to the Parks website, responded to emails and phone calls regarding the status of the park. Peter indicated that he has had multiple residents contact him regarding the status of the park. He indicated he did some research and was not able to find any news on the park aside from the county website.

Don explained the damage that was sustained during the storm was exacerbated by root rot among many trees. As a result, any downed or hazard trees located 50 yards on either side of trails would be removed. The Parks department is in the process of applying for a FEMA grant to assist with the restoration of the park. He also working on a grant through the Washington Conservation for AmeriCorps staff to work on the trails.

Peter expressed concern that the Board was not contacted for discussion about the storm at Robin Hill. He implored Don to seek advice from the Board on these types of issues. Don responded that Peter is the President of the Board and can call a meeting. Peter indicated he has not been in the park because it has been closed to the public since November, and that as Parks Director, it would be Don's responsibility to contact the Board for advisory purposes. Peter expressed disappointment that the nearest affected residents were not contacted regarding the cleanup status, and that the Discovery trail and Robin Hill park trails were not cleared of debris prior to reopening the park, indicating volunteer efforts could have been initiated. Peter expressed the hope that a staffing effort to clean up the trails will be implemented soon. Don indicated he has put in a work order to staff to clean the parking lots and trailheads. Peter recommended the release of a press statement to several hiking/recreation websites and social media detailing the cleanup efforts at Robin Hill.

Director Review

Peter indicated over the last eight months Don has rarely requested input from the Board. He was reminded that Commissioner Ozias had previously stated how valued the Board's opinion was and wondered if that was only when it pertains to county codes, fee increases and other topics that require Board input. He went on to say that as a taxpayer, voter, park user, volunteer and board member, is disappointed that while the department has a great resource in its staff, he is concerned that they are not being listened to about the parks in general, and his observation has been that they are not.

Peter addressed Commissioner Johnson stating if the Board of County Commissioners is no longer interested in having a Parks Advisory Board, then the decision should be made to dismantle the Board. Commissioner Johnson responded that he finds great value in the Boards and their input, and respects their opinion, stating many of the comments made were valid.

Peter asked that reports be sent out to Board members ahead of time so that they have time to review and respond with substantive questions. He asked that the Board be addressed in a more meaningful way so that they can be of better service to the community.

Don indicated he is happy to hear from the Board if there is an item they would like added to the agenda, or if they have questions or concerns. He further indicated he has been especially busy as of late and has difficulty juggling responsibilities with staff being out of the office on medical leave in January and February. Peter reiterated that the storm event at Robin Hill was a big deal and more should have been done to notify the public. Candace indicated she would love to know more about what is needed at Robin Hill and suggested the Board may have other solutions or recommendations. Don encouraged the Board to not hesitate to reach out if they have questions, concerns, or suggestions.

**Public Comments
on
Non-Agenda Items**

Anonymous via Zoom:

Directed to Don Crawford, "What matters more to you, revenue and profit or the experience the public has at the parks?"

Don responded that both are equally important, as the parks must generate as much operating funds as possible in order to fund the upkeep of the parks. He added he's noticed there are areas where fee increases have not happened in several years.

Anonymous via Zoom:

Directed to Don Crawford: "From what you mentioned about park aids, have you already promised jobs to the college students you mentioned?"

Don responded that no jobs have been promised to anyone, rather they had been told to pay attention to upcoming job postings.

Ed Bowen:

Mr. Bowen is happy to hear the discussion regarding Eagle Point and would like to see a picnic table and sign installed at the site. He also suggested a land ownership evaluation be conducted. Peter Craig confirmed Mr. Bowen's assertion that there is not currently a sign on the water side of Eagle Point delineating its location.

Additionally, Mr. Bowen requested the Board not to wait five years to move forward on the planning/development of the Lake Aldwell property and to make use of the \$58,000 set aside for the planning/development of the site. He reminded the group there is not a campground in the area, and Lake Aldwell could be a solution to meet that need.

Adjournment

Candace Kathol moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:53 p.m. Bill Hughes seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Earley
Administrative Specialist IV