

VASHON PARK DISTRICT BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MEETING MINUTES

Ober Park, Conference Room, 7:00 pm

DATE: Tuesday, July 9, 2019

Commissioners attending: Abby Antonelis, Karen Gardner, Doug Ostrom, Hans Van Dusen, Bob McMahon (via phone)

Staff attending: Elaine Ott-Rocheford, Eric Wyatt

ISSUE	DISCUSSION AND OUTCOME	FOLLOW UP
Call To Order & Agenda Review	With Bob McMahon’s approval via phone, the meeting was called to order and the agenda was reviewed at 7:00 PM by Vice Chair, Hans Van Dusen.	
Public Comment	Captain Joe Wubbold: We had a great Low Tide Celebration on Saturday, with great support from the Vashon Park District, particularly Eric and Marshall, who were out there all day. We think that we had about 1,100 people, probably about half from off-island, and when events like this draw folks to Vashon, they patronize many island businesses. I got a note from somebody who took one of my tours and stayed in Keeper’s Quarters that says “...Point Robinson is truly a little treasure.” I bring up letters like this because this is the kind of response that we get for the lodging that we work so hard to keep up and use to provide the cash flow to keep Point Robinson going.	
6.25.19 Minutes; 6.21.19 – 7.4.19 Preliminary Vouchers	Karen: I move that we approve the minutes and vouchers. Doug: Second. Pass 5-0	Motion to approve 6.25.19 Minutes; 6.21.19 – 7.4.19 Preliminary Vouchers Pass 5-0
Lodgings Report	Eric: This report is a first for me. I have to report on the lodgings numbers being dramatically down for the first time since I’ve been managing the lodgings. Based on the report I’ve provided, you can see from the 2019 year-to-date compared to last year how many nights we were down. A couple of partial reasons for that are that Keeper’s Quarters A was shut down for three weeks while we were painting the interior, and we lost a week booking in Quarters B due to a furnace issue. The report shows what our rates are, followed by average island rental rates. I’ve checked free marketing data on a website called AirDNA, but haven’t yet paid to get more detailed information. I don’t think we’re far off the mark in terms of rental fees. As a reminder, we do offer a 15% off-season (Labor Day to Memorial Day) discount for islanders. Elaine: 219 active vacation rentals on Vashon is staggering. Karen: That’s what the problem is: competition. Eric: The next aspect of the AirDNA report shows that island occupancy rates were at 77% in August of 2018 and dropped down to 25% in February of 2019 (the month we had the snowstorm). Online rental bookings for Vashon show 62% through Airbnb, 21% through HomeAway, which is a parent of Vacation	

Rentals By Owner (VRBO), and 17% use both. The Park District utilizes VRBO, Airbnb and TripAdvisor, and I would estimate that roughly 1/3 of our reservations come through those websites. This page of the report also has a map of all the vacation rentals on Vashon, which helps illustrate why there are currently little to no apartments or houses to rent long-term.

Elaine: Eric did a lot of research on this, and the trend seems to be that people are turning their long-term rentals into Airbnb rentals, and they're making a lot of money doing it.

Eric: I suspect that the island is saturated with vacation rentals. Contact with other vacation home renters and local realtors point to the same suspicion. One home owner in the Point Robinson area stated that her numbers were also significantly down and she has noticed rates appear to be lower in recent months.

I have tried to track changes to Vashon's rental home statistics over the last three years without success:

- 1) VRBO won't provide data showing growth change over last three years.
- 2) The Washington State Department of Revenue (DOR) stated that they don't have the legislative mandate to track that metric.
- 3) The King County Assessor's Office stated it doesn't have that data and wouldn't know where to look.
- 4) John L. Scott's Susan Lofland stated she doesn't know of any realtors tracking that data either.

Some possible remedies include:

- 1) A recent change to accept Instant Bookings across all booking platforms. Previously, guests had to request the reservation and await our approval.
- 2) A shift of some marketing finances to West Seattle media venues, if affordable. Seattle itself isn't likely to be affordable with current budget constraints.

Doug: Shift finances from where?

Eric: For example, *Lighthouse Digest*, a national lighthouse magazine. If we want to get bookings up, we should try more local advertising.

Hans: Which West Seattle venues could we shift finances to?

Eric: Possibly *West Seattle Weekly*. The *West Seattle Blog* website.

Hans: The *West Seattle Blog* has a big reach.

Elaine: Maybe *Tacoma News Tribune*.

Karen: I think that when people want to come to Vashon, they go directly to see what's available on Vashon. Speaking for myself when I look for places to go, I don't look around and see an advertisement for something when I don't even know where it's at. I would go to VRBO. I don't think that advertising in a newspaper is that helpful.

Hans: Well, looking at vacancies, July and August are pretty much booked solid with only a few exceptions. Then it quiets down a little.

Eric: The numbers look fairly regular for summer through fall, but the cause of the financial discrepancy was the winter and spring of this year.

Hans: So as we develop our social media platform and email listserv, we can market internally. We can advertise what dates are available. I don't know if there's any interest in dropping the price to locals as we get two weeks out from a vacancy.

Karen: I know an example of a place that did that, and what they found is that everybody waited until the

	<p>prices went down. Eric: It dilutes the value of a property. Elaine: What about hotels.com? Eric: They're likely owned by HomeAway/Expedia, but I'll look into that. Captain Joe: I would also like to propose that we approach the military morale and recreation organization as a promotional vehicle through military newspapers in the area.</p>	
<p>Board Votes</p>	<p>Board Votes: <u>Surplus of VES restroom trailer</u> Hans: Motion to approve the surplus of the VES restroom trailer. Karen: Second. Pass 5-0</p>	<p>Motion to approve the surplus of the VES restroom trailer Pass 5-0</p>
<p>Levy Next Steps/ Communication</p>	<p>Elaine: I sent an email last week about a recent Beachcomber article about the average Vashon property value increase forecast has been released for 2019. The original forecast value was 8.6%, which is what we were basing our forecast projections for the next four years on. The article stipulates that the increase is actually 3.1% as of March of 2019. A 5.5% difference is quite significant. So I reran our forecasts at 3.1% as the total multiplier for the levy rate. Along with the other assumptions that have been agreed upon, at \$0.41 our cash flow is fine over the next four years, but the \$400k reserve goal erodes significantly by year four. A \$0.41 levy is not sustainable in the long run without making significant adjustments. Monies available for capital projects over the entire four years amounts to \$104k total. If we had an emergency, it does not get us far, and it barely scratches the surface of the \$218k we need for high priority projects. At \$0.45, our cash flow is fine, while maintaining a \$400k reserve over the course of the four years. Monies available for capital projects over the next four years is \$551k.</p> <p>Abby: I think that as stewards of the Park District we responsibly have to go for \$0.45. Doug: We're in a different situation than we were two weeks ago. Hans: I want to say that it would be really strong if it is a unanimous vote and a unanimous voice going forward. I think it is nothing short of the future of the Park District, and we have to be unified.</p> <p><u>November levy rate</u> Karen: Motion to approve a \$0.45 levy rate for the November election. Hans: Second. Pass 5-0</p> <p>Elaine: Now that we have decided our rate, we need to dial up communications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempting to organize a meeting between Karl Stetson, Abby, Hans, and Elaine • Doug – op-ed July • Elaine – op-ed for August (FAQ sheet) available for Strawberry Festival • Strawberry Festival materials • Facebook is ready 	<p>Motion to approve the surplus of the VES restroom trailer Pass 5-0</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email list is ready – I will forward my first letter for comment • Address Hospital District effects: Getting kicked back to \$0.41 has more concerning consequences – no initial effect to operations, but no capital projects. Depletes the Park District reserve over time. The issue of the Hospital District depends on what rate they choose. 	
Fire District Interlocal Agreement	<p>Elaine: Out of curiosity, I reached out to my contacts at King County to find out if any progress has been made on their negotiations with the Fire District. Interestingly, they informed me that their legal team determined that the RCW requirement only applies to properties with improvements, specifically buildings, not the land itself. The attached interlocal agreement was approved by the King County Council last month. I originally sent you a spreadsheet with our KC assessed building values on our associated properties indicating payments due of \$4,152 if we pay at Vashon Island Fire & Rescue’s current levy rate or \$2,900 if we pay at their proposed \$1 per \$1,000 of property value.</p> <p>This morning, an individual who receives our Board Distribution packet emailed me, pointing out that the library building is probably factored in to the Ober building assessment. We’ve confirmed that it is. I wrote to the King County Assessor’s Office to see if the two buildings are assessed separately, but for now, I went to the assessed value records and found the 2013 King County Permit value for the Library. This brings the fees to \$2,645 and \$1,847, respectively.</p>	
Ober Park Playground Grant	<p>Elaine: I received the revised playground cost estimate and A&E scope/fee revision from MacLeod Reckord. The changes from the original are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No change in footprint • No underdrainage • Three exercise station footprints but only two with equipment (1 ADA & 1 regular) <p>M/R scope includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Process • Finalize Design Development • Prepare Plan Set – Bid process & Permitting (SEPA/Wetland buffer issues) • Construction Admin/Project Management • As Builts <p>Cost savings provide for minimum \$19k (possibly more, depending on permitting) VPD funds to throw at this. The range, depending on contingency, is \$85k - \$104k. If approved, I will meet with the planning committee for final approval, fundraising plans, and an agreement to move forward with the grant. In order to sign the contract and get things moving, we would need a motion to suspend the rules.</p> <p>Karen: Motion to approve the Ober Park playground design and revised grant budget as presented, and \$19k being allocated to the purchase of playground equipment.</p> <p>Abby: Second.</p> <p>Karen: Motion to suspend the rules.</p> <p>Abby: Second.</p> <p>Pass 5-0</p>	<p>Motion to approve the Ober Park playground design and revised budget as presented, and \$19k being allocated to the purchase of playground equipment.</p> <p>Pass 5-0</p> <p>Motion to suspend the rules.</p> <p>Pass 5-0</p>
Staff Reports	<p>Elaine:</p>	

	<p>1) Agren Grant Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Construction on the Agren Field will begin August 5th. Remember, the grant is for \$250,000; this portion of the project is contracted at \$175k and will be completed by end of September. The goal is to level the sink holes, grade to a slight slope for improved drainage, and install new sod for a clean, weed-free surface. b. We determined that better light penetration will improve grass growth and drainage conditions, so the bid process closed yesterday for contracting with Matt Matthews, a local tree service guy. The project will thin out 10 trees off the first base line (mostly dead trees) between 8/1 and 8/5. c. We are now out to bid for the road and parking lot regrade part of the contract. d. We anticipate having approximately \$50k left of the grant so are having the contractor evaluate our irrigation system and recommend improvements. e. Decided not to do a perimeter fence, since this will turn the field into a dog park. <p>2) Point Robinson Modifications – Have been sent to the Department of Historical Preservation. We have not received a response yet. We thought we should start there because we can modify before sending to the Coast Guard if they have issues.</p> <p>Coincidentally, in keeping with the issue of not being allowed tours until we contact the Coast Guard (CG) with proposed modifications, we have been notified by former CG Waterways Management Specialist / Tribal Liaison / Lighthouse Coordinator who wants to tour the lighthouse with the CG curator and a CG Collections Manager to discuss the Fresnel lens. Their goal is to secure a loan agreement for the lens to ensure its safety, which has some pretty hefty requirements. We will have a meeting and report back.</p> <p>3) Village Green Entry/Community Chalkboard – The application for the permit is in at a cost of \$800. Ken reports that the initial enthusiasm the Vashon Island Growers Association (VIGA) expressed for fundraising has waned considerably. Ken is working with them.</p> <p>4) BARC Cement Pump Track – Since they did not obtain the King County grant, but do have the state grant and associated match funds, they are continuing fundraising to attempt to add Phase 3 elements to the design. You will see a skateboard raffle happening at Ruby Brink where island artists Pam Ingalls, David Eru (metal artist) and Brian Brenno (fused glass) donated their skateboard designs for a raffle to take place at the first Concert in the Park.</p> <p>5) Sailing Camp & Skate Camp – Both camps began yesterday. The first two weeks of Sailing Camp are fully booked, and the registration numbers are right on track from last year. This first year of Skate Camps had 16 people yesterday and 5 more registrations today.</p>	
<p>Adjourn 8:15 pm</p>	<p>Doug: I move we adjourn. Abby: Second. Pass 5-0</p>	

Minutes by: Marshall Murray