

**Sehome Hill Arboretum Board of Governors Meeting Minutes**  
**September 15, 2022**

1. **Meeting called to order:** John Tuxill, Steve Janiszewski, Kendra Bradford, Avinash Rahrurkar, Janet Ott, Wayne Galloway III, Joan Drinkwin, Grace Wang, and James Detke present. Joined by James Wepler, and Chris Ram. Robin Thomas, Sehome Neighborhood Association President, attended as a public participant.
2. Avinash R. raised adding a discussion item to the agenda on having a designated WWU representative attend Board meetings in the Facilities Director's stead, in the same way that Steve J. regularly stands in for Nicole Oliver (Bellingham Parks Director). Avinash R. and Steve J. agreed to discuss this option further.
3. John T. welcomed Avinash R., director of Facilities Management, as a new board member and Wayne G., assistant director of Building Services and Facilities Management.
4. Steve J. welcomed Chris R., the new Park Administrative Secretary for Park Operations.
5. **Review of June 2022 Meeting Minutes**
  - a. Steve J. noted Coffman Engineering was spelled incorrectly throughout the document.
  - b. Minutes moved to be approved with above changes by Janet O. with Kendra B. seconding.
6. **Existing Business – South Ridge Trail Reroute**
  - a. Steve J. relayed that Arlen Bogaards (Washington Trails Association) estimates there is a day or two of work remaining to complete the trail re-route at the southwest entrance to the Arboretum. Most of the remaining work involves decommissioning and replanting the old, eroded trail section and installing restoration signage. It may be possible to complete the work by the end of October, but planting will need to wait until the Fall rains begin and adequate soil moisture is present.
7. **Existing Business - Tunnel Mitigation**
  - a. James Wepler, Parks Project Manager (City of Bellingham) sent the project out for bid on July 13<sup>th</sup>. They had a pre-bid meeting on July 26<sup>th</sup>, with one contractor bidding, and the bid was awarded on August 4<sup>th</sup>. The goal is to begin work in early October.
  - b. The upper parking area will be used as a staging spot during the rock scaling. Three to four parking spots will still be available for the public. There will be clear access maintained to the cell tower at all times using the south trail. Contractor access will come from the eastern pathway. Most of the rock scaling will occur above the tunnel on the outside. Inside the tunnel, only hand tools will be used. Contractors will do some scaling with 10-18 yards scaled in total. Beyond the removal of selected trees that are growing on top of the tunnel, there will be no further disturbance to the area's vegetation.

- c. Joan D. asked about trail closures and timing. The trail on top of the tunnel will be closed during work, which will be finished by the second or third week in October.
- d. John T. expressed that some native shrub and understory species (such as Black hawthorn) may have their only occurrence in the Arboretum along the top of the ridge in proximity to the tunnel. James W. indicated there shouldn't be a need for further removal of vegetation beyond what has already occurred, and will reach out to John T. if more removal is contemplated. There will be mulch applied as a follow-up in areas along the tunnel edge and top where scaling is required.
- e. Avinash R. asked about the cost of the project. James W. reported the current estimate of total costs is \$66,000 which will be split between the City and WWU.

**8. Existing Business - Update on House of Healing (WWU campus Longhouse)**

- a. Kendra B. reported that the Steering Committee had two four-hour design meetings over the summer. The architectural and design firms involved are Jones and Jones, and Wellman and Zuck. Key players at the meeting discussed what the longhouse should contain, and decided on an education and cultural center. The building as currently envisioned would cover 1/10th of the designated site (the cleared, leveled meadow), excluding the longhouse access road and parking spots. The plan is to begin construction in June 2023 with a completion date of July 2024. The Steering Committee will meet at Northwest Indian College to discuss the design again soon. Kendra B. will distribute the list of committee members to SHABOG. The gross square footage previously discussed with SHABOG was just under 7,000 square feet, and this target has stayed the same.
- b. Joan D. asked about plans for future expansion of the House of Healing, as the Board has only approved the existing concept plan. Kendra B. reported that expansion is not going to happen soon. The University does not have additional funding sources, and any expansion would need to be funded as a separate capital project.
- c. James D. asked about parking. Kendra B. reported that the Steering Committee is planning on a few visitor spots, a drop-off area, and a few disability spots.
- d. Janet O. asked about the building covering 10% of the clearing area. Kendra B. clarified that this does not include parking.
- e. John T. clarified that the Board previously endorsed the concept of a campus longhouse sited in the Arboretum and approved a revision to the bylaws to allow the construction of a longhouse in the designated spot. Expansion beyond the designated spot would require additional consultation.
- f. Steve J. reported that the Interlocal Agreement will be updated, but it has not been done yet. The City plans to give a long-term lease to WWU for the site. Steve J. or Nicole Oliver will update the Board on this process at the next meeting.

- g. John T. has an understanding that the Board will continue to be involved in the project as more detailed plans become available, with Kendra B. and Avinash R. being the Board's representatives on the Longhouse Steering Committee.

**9. Existing Business - Upcoming Volunteer Work Party—Restoration and Trail Maintenance**

- a. Steve J. indicated that October 29th is the date of the next scheduled work party in the Arboretum. This work party will hopefully have three teams of volunteers focused on invasive removal, rehabilitation, and remediation of illegal trail building that has occurred near the Allen Street entrance to the Arboretum.
- b. Wayne G. reported that WWU would be able to have staff help with needed trail work in October.
- c. John T. suggested that Arlen Bogaards be consulted for the replanting efforts for the South Ridge Trail re-route to assure that the decommissioned section of old trail is fully obscured. Steve J. indicated that the City can put up restoration signs to indicate that rehabilitation is taking place in the area where the old trail was located.
- d. John T. will have students from his Ecological Restoration class attending the next SHABOG meeting to present proposals for class restoration projects in the Arboretum.

**10. Existing Business - Invasive species signage**

- a. John T indicated he has not received any further word from Olivia Taylor-Manning with follow-up language on invasive species. John T. and Grace W. will continue to keep this project in mind.

**11. Existing Business - Master Plan Update Process**

- a. Steve J. reported that the last Arboretum Master Plan update was over 20 years ago. There is not a uniform process for updating individual master plans for Bellingham parks. Instead, the Bellingham Parks and Recreation Open Space Plan can provide guidance for individual park plan updates, including the Arboretum . The Arboretum master plan currently has no information on interpretative features within the Arboretum. For this, there would need to be an interpretive plan that could be funded by the City Greenways Fund. One challenge is deciding who would be the project manager for an interpretive plan.
- b. Grace W. reported that WWU has a Sustainable Communities Partnership that potentially could connect a class with this kind of project and contribute funding.
- c. James D. noted that Kristi Park may be a good person to communicate with about this project.
- d. Grace W., Kendra B. and John T. will continue to discuss this in advance of a future Board meeting.

- e. Including students in the process of creating an interpretive plan would be beneficial for all parties. This could be in conjunction with professional consultants.
- f. John T. requested that all board members make an effort to review the existing Arboretum Master Plan in the coming months.

#### **12. Existing Business - CEDAR Repository**

- a. Joan D. has created an annotated spreadsheet of articles about the Arboretum. Joan D. and Kendra B. will continue to work on developing the CEDAR repository and Joan D. will circulate the spreadsheet with Board members for contributions and input.

#### **13. Existing Business - Forest Health in the Arboretum**

- a. John T. reported he was in contact over the summer with Dr. Rebecca Bunn (WWU Environmental Science Dept) and Dr. Marion Broadhagen (WWU Biology Department). They received a University summer teaching grant this year, and have continued to make progress on developing an undergraduate field research class addressing forest health in the Arboretum. John T will invite Rebecca and Marion to attend a future SHABOG meeting to provide more details on their plans.

#### **14. New Business - Incidents in the Arboretum**

- a. Incident #1: From details reported on 8/22/2022: An SUV drove up the alley located between Mason and Liberty Streets and on to the trail at 9:30 PM on Saturday night. Several residents in the neighborhood called 911. Bellingham Police Department responded and found the vehicle had driven up the trail into the Arboretum and got stuck/high-centered on a log. When BPD attempted to make contact with the driver, he refused to get out of the vehicle, threatened suicide, and told them he had a gun. BPD officers then retreated down the hill and left the area. They returned a few hours later to check on the man, however, he had left the scene and left the vehicle behind. BPD attempted to locate the registered owner of the vehicle in Maple Falls but could not confirm. They also called for a towing service to remove the vehicle. The removal has been delayed as of 8/22/2022 due to difficulty in securing payment. The City will work with WWU to repair the trail damage when the vehicle has been removed and be placing a bollard or large rock boulder to block the trail entrance which will prevent this from happening in the future.
- b. As of 8/24/22, the vehicle was removed. There is some minor damage to the trail tread, trees, and ground vegetation caused by the vehicle climbing approximately 100 yards up the trail, and by the extraction of the vehicle by the towing service.
- c. The work party scheduled for October 29 could focus on replanting and remediating this area, which has been heavily damaged. Steven J. does not have a report on the cost. The perpetrator was not arrested at the site and seems to still be

at large. The police reported the vehicle owner could not be immediately ascertained. It is not clear whether monetary compensation for damages caused might be received from the vehicle driver if they are identified and located.

- d. Incident #2: Steve J. reported on extensive graffiti that has occurred in the Arboretum. WWU crews have worked to remove graffiti, and will double-check and report back when all of it has been removed. This problem is not unique to the Arboretum and occurs all over the City. Particularly offensive graffiti can be reported to the police.
  - e. Incident #3: An illegal, unauthorized mountain bike trail was discovered under construction in the Arboretum. The Parks Department is working to identify who was responsible. Robin Thomas (Sehome Neighborhood Association President) reported that there is a bike jump at the intersection of the Allen Street connector and the Elderberry Trail. The City will put up signage that the trail is illegal and needs to stop. Steve J. has contacted Zac Miles and Claudia Murphy (Bellingham Police Dept), who should be able to take this case.
  - f. The bike trail needs to be closed and the affected area rehabilitated. Steve J. will reach out to Eric Brown (Whatcom Mountain Bike Coalition) to see if WMBC is interested in organizing a work party to rehabilitate the illegal trail, and help share that this type of trail building is illegal and looked down upon by most of the mountain biking community.
  - g. John T. brought up the possibility of improving signage about bicycles not being allowed in the Arboretum. Additionally, access points can be reconfigured to make sure that wheeled vehicles can't easily enter. Steve J. and Wayne G. will take a day to determine where signage needs to be updated, and where entrances may need to be changed.
15. Robin Thomas' public comment on behalf of the Sehome Neighborhood Association.
- a. Robin T. thanked the Board members for their care of the Arboretum and for their volunteer service on the Board. She noted that 1,492 residential units are under construction in the City of Bellingham and of these, 70%, or 1,047 units, are located within half a mile of the Arboretum. This population increase presents a new and unique challenge for the Arboretum, as it is likely to mean greatly increased public usage. The Arboretum Master Plan focuses on low-impact management of the Arboretum for its natural beauty as a native forest habitat, but Robin T. noted that with increasing public usage, this approach will need to shift. Already, substantial negative impacts on the native vegetation of the Arboretum can be noted, such as the degradation of fern grotto's resulting from bouldering activity by people. Robin T. respectfully requested that the Board plan more intently and more extensively to reduce and mitigate the impacts of increasing public activity in the Arboretum, in order not to lose its essential natural character valued by long-time Sehome neighborhood residents and many other people.

John T. agreed with Robin T.'s observations and the importance of the issues she raised, and on behalf of the Board thanked her for her comments.

16. Joan. D. moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:56 PM, with Kendra B. seconding.