

Sehome Hill Arboretum Meeting Minutes
October 20, 2022

1. **Meeting called to order at 4:05 PM:** John Tuxill, Kendra Bradford, Avinash Raurkar, Janet Ott, Wayne Galloway III, Joan Drinkwin, Grace Wang, Nicole Oliver, and James Detke present. Joined by Chris Ram, Gabe McGuire, Max Williams, Francis Neff, Kyle Hoffman, and Amir Couillard.
2. **September Minutes**
 - a. Broadhagen was spelled incorrectly in the minutes and should be changed to Brodhagen.
 - b. The minutes should be changed to reflect that Robin Thomas was speaking as a member of the public, not for the Sehome Neighborhood Association.
 - c. The minutes were approved with the noted changes.
3. **Existing Business - Tunnel Mitigation Project**
 - a. Nicole O. reported that contractors finished the de-scaling work on the tunnel, removing 16 to 18 yards of material using powered equipment and hand tools. Work finished quickly with little disruption to the Arboretum, and the geotechnical expert has approved the work that was done. The tunnel will continue to be monitored by the City and WWU. The wood framework used to block off the tunnel will be removed to allow pedestrian access. Bellingham Parks and Recreation shared that the tunnel has been renovated, and the Bellingham Herald wrote an article as well.
 - b. John T. asked if follow-up planting will be needed. Nicole O. reported that the contractors put up a fence to direct foot traffic, and have not indicated that additional planting will be required.
4. **Existing Business - House of Healing Longhouse Steering Committee**
 - a. Kendra B. reported that the Steering Committee met and recommended that the proposed design be approved. The contracted architect continues with the schematic design process. The Longhouse gathering hall will have room for at most 2,000 people. The total building will be less than 5,000 square feet. The architects are planning on designing to LEED gold standards. There recently was a small blessing ceremony at the site with a few members of the Steering Committee.
 - b. A geotechnical report determined the ground at the target site is structurally suitable for building and is not fill.
 - c. There is no formal lease yet between the City and WWU for the site, but they are planning on a November 7th approval date for an agreement. Construction of the Longhouse is expected to begin in October 2023 and be finished in 2024. In addition to the \$4.5 million provided by the state, another \$500,000 needed for the project has also now been raised.

- d. Avinash R. reported on the design, which will be a traditional “L” shaped building. The Steering Committee discussed covering part of the outdoor space, but has not come to a final decision. The design will continue to be developed.
 - e. Janet O. asked about parking, plans for which are not yet finalized.
 - f. Joan D. asked about the direction the outdoor area would face. Avinash reported that the front would likely face the road, but the exact positioning has not been finalized.
 - g. John T. asked whether the floor plan has been finalized. The general floorplan shape is somewhat final. The building as designed so far would take up about 10% of the site.
- 5. Existing Business - Master Plan Update Process**
- a. Representatives from the City are meeting with Western departments to determine the details of the lease agreement for the House of Healing site. After this, the Master Plan will be updated.
- 6. Existing Business - CEDAR Repository for Arboretum-related documents**
- a. No update at the moment.
- 7. Existing Business - Forest Health in the Arboretum - Research and Teaching**
- a. Discussion tabled for November.
- 8. New Business - Recent Incidents in the Arboretum (Vehicle/Bike Trail/Graffiti)**
- a. Nicole O. reported that Bellingham Parks and Recreation contacted the Whatcom Mountain Bike Coalition to help spread notice that bikes are not allowed in the Arboretum. They also contact WWU’s social media department. Parks is working towards sharing this notice in other ways as well, and is still working on the messaging. Parks has posted signage where trails have been built and where the vehicle entered. They have talked about these issues with other groups. Two game cameras are currently being used to collect data on the bike trail building at the site. WWU Facilities are continuing to work with COB Parks to remove graffiti on the Arboretum kiosks.
 - b. Joan D. noted that the signs put up immediately after the bicycle trails were discovered have already been destroyed.
 - i. Nicole O. reported that signs which appear less official may be more effective.
 - c. Joan D. asked if installing entrance gates that do not allow in bikes at trailheads could be possible.
 - i. Wayne G. reported that Steve. J was considering this option and is more open to this at this point. Wayne G. and Steve J. will be discussing this further next week.
 - d. Janet O. noted that the Jersey Street entrance designed to prevent bike access is no longer functioning as intended. She often encounters bicyclists in the Arboretum, and, when addressed, they claim that they are personally responsible in their

biking and not a problem. She is looking for suggestions on how to handle this, as they typically do know that bicycles are not allowed.

- i. Nicole O. reported that there is a lack of enforcement and that different methods will need to be used. Bicyclists are using walking trails more and more at City parks as the prevalence of bicycles increases. At some point, Parks and Recreation in tandem with other groups will need to develop a mechanism for addressing the ramifications of more assertive bicyclist behavior.
 - e. Kendra B. indicated she is not supportive of using the current trail entrance gate design that restrict bikes, as they also can restrict the size of people entering the Arboretum to enjoy trails on foot as intended.
 - f. John T. asked Nicole O. about the reaction of the WMBC to the outreach so far. Nicole O. reported that WMBC has independently hired staff to develop a trail etiquette program to educate on where mountain biking is allowed, and why it is important to only bike places where it is allowed. However this effort is primarily directed at improving cyclist behavior at established bike trail areas like Galbraith Mountain, rather than dissuading illegal biking at sites like the Arboretum.
 - g. Nicole O. would like to find ways to let students know that this behavior is not alright. Janet O. reported that she had talked with cyclists in the Arboretum who were commuting to WWU via the Arboretum.
 - h. Joan D. thanked Nicole O. for her work and the work of her staff on this issue. She also remembered that Steve J. in the past talked about how to confront people breaking rules in the Arboretum. We can talk about this at the next meeting when Steve J. is present.
 - i. Grace W. asked if we can invite Zoe Fraley, Western's social media manager, to the next SHABOG meeting. John T. would like to move forward with that.
 - j. Wayne G. also noted that University Residences would also be a good contact point for outreach to students.
9. **New Business - Upcoming Volunteer Work Party/South Ridge Trail Reroute**
- a. An invasive plant removal work party will take place near the main Arboretum entrance and is being organized by the Parks volunteer coordinator along with the Whatcom Million Trees Project.
 - b. The South Ridge trail reroute is scheduled to be completed in early December, including planting and blocking the previous eroded trail on October 29th, with a site plan meeting taking place beforehand on the 25th.
 - c. John T. asked if a Trail Reconstruction-in-Progress sign could be installed or should have been installed previously when the work commenced last winter/spring. Such a sign would make it clear the trail reroute is an official work project. Nicole O. will pass this along and determine if it is feasible to still put up a sign.

10. New Business - Student Ecological Restoration Class Project Proposals

- a. Students attended from an Ecological Restoration class offered jointly between Fairhaven College and the Environmental Science Department at WWU. John T. is co-teaching this class. The students presented the following proposals for restoration projects in the Arboretum this quarter:
- b. Project 1 - Garry Oak Planting
 - i. Suzy Moss, Gabe McGuire, Francis Neff, Connor Garrod, and Max Williams proposed a project to plant a small stand of Garry Oak in the vicinity of the main entrance to the Arboretum. Garry Oak is a native oak species in western Washington and there are none known in the Arboretum at present. This tree is culturally significant for Coast Salish people, who use the acorns and wood. It is also a keystone species that provides valuable habitat.
 - ii. The proposed site is 10 by 10 meters adjacent to a Douglas fir stand. The location currently has Himalayan blackberry present, which will need to be removed before planting. The group is targeting a density of one Garry Oak sapling per 3 square meters and 2 to 3 understory shrubs per square meter, with 3 to 4 native understory species in total.
 - iii. After the group performs a baseline soil measurement, they will select suitable native plants that typically grow in association with Garry Oak.
 - iv. Kendra B. asked about where the group plans on sourcing their plants and recommended Fourth Corner Nursery or Plantas Nativa. The group will consider both.
 - v. Janet O. asked about the planting timeline. Francis N. reported that early November would be the ideal target window for planting.
 - vi. Joan D. asked about the capability of the class to monitor the site. John T. reported that follow-up monitoring of the site is certainly within the purview of the class when taught again in the future. John T. was not concerned about watering the plants, but other Board members recommended following a standard watering protocol for native replantings.
 1. Wayne G. reported that Western's protocol is watering for the first two years and potentially the third year during the summer dry season. He agreed to have WWU Facilities be responsible for watering.
- c. Project 2 - Social Trail Decommission
 - i. Kyle Hoffman, Amir Couillard, Clay DuBois, Katherine Palmer, and Mikaela Keator proposed a project to decommission a social trail in the Arboretum. The site for decommissioning is located just off South

- Campus Way Trail and runs uphill about 27 meters. It is well-established for the first few meters and becomes less defined as it continues upward.
- ii. The project's main objectives are to prevent foot traffic, prevent erosion, reduce disturbances, increase native plant ground cover by at least 50% along the trail surface, repair compacted earth, remove invasive species, and increase public awareness about the effects of social trails.
 - iii. The project will first remove invasive species, till areas of compacted soil, and plant native species. The group will also plant thorny native plants (such as Nootka rose) at the head of the trail and place a log to discourage use.
 - iv. The group members will monitor the project before and after to determine the percent area around the trail that is bare ground, native, or invasive species.
 - v. The group asked the Board if they could put up signs about the trail restoration. Nicole O. thanked the students and reported that Ryan Robie could help in getting a sign put up. Amir C. noted that the sign could note the harms of social trails in addition to informing that the site is closed for restoration.
 - vi. Joan D. asked about where the trail goes. Kyle H. reported that the trail goes to hang-out spots, but does not appear to directly connect with other formal trails uphill.
 - vii. Janet O. thanked the students for their work and clarified that they are working on one trail only.
 - viii. Wayne G. reported that he and Steven J. are creating signage for their work on preventing and decommissioning social trails. The sign they create could be used at this site. John T. will be in touch with Wayne G.
 - ix. John T. noted that relocating Sword ferns has worked in the past. However, given the current late summer/early fall drought, this may or may not be a viable option this year, and would need more thought.
- d. Avinash R. noted that he was thankful for the students' engagement and asked how often students work on projects in the Arboretum. John T. noted that this class probably generates the most student projects in the Arboretum, but other student projects regularly take place there and require SHABOG approval.
 - e. Janet O. made a motion to approve the projects with Grace W. seconding. The Board voted unanimously in support.

11. New Business - Cellphone Tower Planting and Fencing

- a. John T. reported that the orange plastic fencing at the new cellphone tower site is no longer keeping deer or people from accessing the replanted area, and the plants look well-established. This fencing is ready to be removed. Nicole O. will pass this information on to Public Works.

12. New Business - Designating WWU as a Tree Campus

- a. Grace W. will put together talking points for the next meeting and come up with more information for the next meeting. Further discussion is tabled.

13. New Business - Meeting Modality Discussion

- a. In keeping with City of Bellingham policy for volunteer advisory boards, Arboretum Board meetings will resume in person moving forward. Avinash R. will book a location on Western's campus. There will be an option to attend via Zoom.

14. No public comments were made.

15. Meeting adjourned at 5:44 PM by Joan D., with James D. seconding.