



King County

Water & Land Resources Division
Department of Natural Resources & Parks
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MEETING NOTES

CEDAR RIVER COUNCIL

July 25th, 2017 – 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Riverbend Mobile Home Park Clubhouse
17410 SE Renton-Maple Valley Rd. #25, Renton, WA 98058

Meeting was called to order at 6:12 pm.

Riverbend Club House Update/Discussion – Josh Baldi, KC DNRP-WLRD Director

Josh Baldi, Director of Department of Natural Resources and Parks' Water and Land Resources Division (DNRP-WLRD), spoke on the current situation and possible future options for the Riverbend Clubhouse. Mr. Baldi cited problems with theft and vandalism at the site, prompting a need for increased security. Total facility upkeep costs the County \$20,000 per year, which he said is not in its budget. He said these are also primary reasons that DNRP's Parks division believes the site unsustainable as a facility. He noted DNRP recognizes the structure's importance to the local community, and presented several options for feedback.

Option 1, in near-term (at least six months), is for Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) and Parks staff to use nearby trailers for their operations until a suitable site for relocation is found, while the CRC uses the clubhouse as its venue. Option 2, if there is enough community interest, would be to convince King County Council (KCC) to invest in the structure long-term as a community resource. Option 3 is to disassemble and repurpose the structure at a different site. He added the Parks division is interested in developing a trail network at the site.

Jeff Neuner voiced a wish to maintain a County presence at Riverbend to deter area criminal activity. Mr. Baldi replied that once the project is restored and a trail network is established, there will still be a County presence at the site. Tom Beavers, WLRD Cedar River basin steward, said the Parks division also has interest in converting the site to a passive park space, such as parking or a heat shelter.

Several questions were posed about seeking public investment prospects for the clubhouse, or disassembling and reassembling it at another site. Linda Holecek with WLRD's Acquisitions unit explained that both WLRD's Parks and Rivers staff researched costs involved to rent the facility to the public, and determined too many resources were needed to manage the many issues involved. Mr. Beavers added that when Parks' entrepreneurial staff researched this option, no one expressed interest due to issues with the structure and location. He admitted that aside from the now-defunct Friends of the Cedar River organization, he didn't believe much community outreach was done. It was then suggested to approach entities like local schools or senior centers.

Tom Allyn asked for specific cost analyses to demolish the structure or disassemble/reassemble it, before the CRC could make a recommendation. Mr. Baldi said he could ask Parks to do a cost analysis, the results of which would be brought back to the CRC at a fall meeting. He added the Parks division should be interested in CRC feedback during their process of improving the site as a trail space.

Cedar River Closure Q & A – Josh Baldi, Kate Akyuz, DNRP; Dan Christian, KC Sheriff's Office

Mr. Baldi reviewed the County's involvement with the 12 current major logjams on the Cedar. The river is currently closed to all public activity, and the King County Sheriff's Office says all logjams must be cleared for it to re-open. One concern, Mr. Baldi said, is balancing public safety and preserving fish habitat, which logjams provide. If a logjam is removed, the removed habitat must be made up elsewhere.

Kate Akyuz with DNRP's Rivers section noted another problem is the public prefers floating the more scenic wooded reaches of the river best for salmon restoration and more prone to logjams. Yet another concern is if enough funding from various sources can be brought together to target this issue. Ms. Akyuz said one option being considered by the County, local tribes, and other users is a "reach-based" approach to the logjams, designating certain stretches of the river as open or closed to public use. But as there is no single unified funded body actively managing recreation on the



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Cedar, this would be difficult to implement. One citizen asked if the public could just be trusted to look out for their own safety. Dan Christian with KC Sheriff's Office replied that unfortunately not, as many public remain uninformed on river dangers and therefore people are getting injured or killed. Ms. Akyuz observed while there is resistance to more regulations, the public still wants and needs to be rescued. Janne Kaje of WLRD's Regional Partnerships Unit said the County has to ask what's being done to encourage responsible public behavior. Several questions asked why such a broad-scope closure of the river to all public activity, which has upset many locals. Mr. Christian admitted that decision occurred at a higher level of authority than he could speak for. Further public comment stressed a belief this closure is too broad and unenforceable.

When asked if King County is taking cues from other jurisdictions on how to manage similar river situations, Ms. Akyuz replied other jurisdictions actually come to King County to learn how to address these events. She said King County is the only major county with a "large wood" ruling, and the Cedar is unique among rivers due to its width and the size of its fallen trees.

Tom Allyn asked why the recent closures after nearly a century of open recreation on the river. Ms. Akyuz replied that the environment around the river has changed dramatically over past decades; as a result of trees maturing and being logged, more are falling in the river and creating dangers. Mr. Allyn asked if fallen logs could be reoriented to a safer configuration; Ms. Akyuz said this would result in lost or changed fish habitat. Jay Mirro proposed moving the logs temporarily in high-flow seasons (summer) and replacing them in the river in low-flow times (winter), to allow scour pools to re-form. Ms. Akyuz said this is theoretically possible, but Mr. Baldi noted the County is liable for anything that occurs afterward if they touch wood in the river. He further explained that in addition to balancing public safety and fish habitat, the County also must consider numerous laws including state, federal, and tribal. He stressed this situation could only be managed collaboratively between jurisdictions, and that the KCC, County Executive, WDFW, and tribes all need to weigh in on it.

Mr. Allyn suggested legislatively removing liability from parties involved in wood relocation/removal, such as the County, to prevent lawsuits. Ms. Akyuz said there was precedent for such a route, in the Forest Practices Act. She added that a state legislator several years ago proposed removing liability on flood projects, but was unsuccessful.

Updates & Announcements

- **WRIA 8:** Charles Ruthford reported from the latest WRIA 8 meeting, where a main topic was the current limbo for state and federal budgets. Many capital projects are held pending funding approval. Another topic was the Ballard Locks, and concerns about a drastic regional economic impact should a disaster such as an earthquake cause the Locks to fail. Mr. Ruthford said the 10-year WRIA 8 recovery plan draft was up for review and comment until September. Nathan Brown suggested forming a small subgroup of CRC members to compile questions and comments on the report for the main WRIA 8 council. Mr. Allyn, Steve Farquhar, Frank Urabeck, and Mr. Ruthford volunteered for that subgroup. Mr. Ruthford added that he has spoken to both Maple Valley City Council and Tahoma school district about possibly filling slots on the CRC.
- **Cedar River Clean-Up:** Mr. Brown reminded attendees of the next river clean-up event, August 12th at 8:00 am at seven locations along the Cedar. King County and several local businesses are contributing to the event, which will include a cleanup followed by a light lunch. Mr. Brown handed out informational flyers.

Public Comment Period

There was no public comment.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:54 pm.

Next Meeting(s)

September 26th, 2017, 7:00 – 9:00 pm – Riverbend Club House, Renton