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Mayor

# City of Langley

## PARKS & OPEN SPACE COMMISSION 2011 REPORT TO COUNCIL

### Overview

The Parks & Open Space Commission (POSC) was created in 2008 to replace the previous Parks Board that had been inactive. There are five (5) commissioners appointed to 3-year terms by the Mayor and approved by the Council. Two positions are held by people with professional credentials related to the Commission's work. The POSC led the updating and approval in 2009 of the Parks, Open Space and Trails Element (POST) of the Langley Comprehensive Plan. The POSC meets monthly, working on the priorities set in the POST element through an annual work plan.

### The Commission

<b>Members:</b>	Nancy Rowan, Chair; Cathy Waymire-Rooks; Gail Fleming; John Lawson; Tucker Stevens
<b>Staff Lead:</b>	Challis Stringer, Director of Public Works
<b>Staff Consultant:</b>	Kathleen Landel, Special Assistant to the Mayor

### 2011 Accomplishments

- 1. Generation Park Improvements:** Partnered with the Langley Community Club to add big swing. LCC raised money and organized the volunteer effort. The City wrote and received a grant through the AWC RSMA risk management program for the purchase of the playground bark.
- 2. Downtown Beautification:** Partnered with The Langley Garden Project and the Langley Main Street Association to support the organizing of five (5) work parties. Volunteers cleaned up beds and planted 400 primroses in the spring and 5000 daffodil and tulip bulbs in the fall. The Commission also hosted a discussion between Main Street, the Chamber and the City on coordinating fund raising and watering efforts for the flower baskets.
- 3. Middle Langley Project Development:** Initiated discussions between the City, Whidbey Watershed Stewards and the South Whidbey School District on creating a connecting trail from the Anderson/Bangston Park in The Highlands to Sixth Street. The next step is to identify funding sources for a boundary survey. Whidbey Watershed Stewards is currently working with middle school students on clean-up/restoration projects on the school property.

#### 4. Other Park Improvements Projects in Process:

- Add three (3) new signs to the entrances to Langley (Camano, Third Street, Saratoga)
- Add sitting benches to viewpoints at 4<sup>th</sup> and Park and 6<sup>th</sup> & Camano. Materials are secured and volunteers are being solicited.
- Expand and improve the visiting experience at the Cascade Walkway during the road work scheduled for 2012, and to integrate changes with the Second Street redesign.
- Add a metal sculpture donation "box" at the Boy & Dog Park designed by the advanced metals class at South Whidbey High School.
- Finalize a Langley parks logo design, being developed by a student, for future use on parks signage and communication materials.
- Pursue possible funding and/or landowner donation for two trail easements.

5. **Level of Service Assessment:** Developed an assessment tool and completed a benchmark assessment based on the Level of Service (LOS) standards in the POST Element of the Langley Comprehensive Plan. The Commission would like to present the assessment to the Council in January 2012. The assessment provides measure of how well the current parks, open space and trails system meets the standards set in the Comp Plan.

#### **Key Issues**

**Funding:** The General Fund is used to pay for the parks system expenses. The current budget allocation does not allow the City to begin to meet the Level of Service standards adopted in the Comp Plan. In the City's 2011 budget, \$10,000, comprising 1% of the General Fund, was allocated to Parks. Nearly 50% of this expense is for utilities and waste disposal. The primary funding needs are:

- Existing Parks Maintenance
- Parks Signage
- Trail Easements & Trail Building for a connected trails system
- Open Space acquisition funds

**Continued Collaboration:** The 2011 accomplishments were possible because of collaboration with organizations and the important work of volunteers. This allowed the City to stretch its resources to maintain and improve the City parks. It is important for the City to continue to encourage, support and appreciate these partnerships.

#### **Next Priorities**

1. Complete projects in process.
2. Support and encourage the ongoing downtown beautification partnership and work parties.
3. Develop a resident's/visitor's parks walking map.
4. Develop a parks system signage plan including a funding plan.
5. Support a grant proposal submission in 2012 to the Island County Conservation Futures Fund for a conservation/trail easement project.
6. Support other trail easement/trail connection projects.