

**DISCUSSION** on Halibut Point Rec public process  
and Assembly direction



# City and Borough of Sitka

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**Date:** 9/3/2015

**To:** Mayor Mim McConnell and Assembly Members  
Mark Gorman, Municipal Administrator

**From:** Michael Harmon, Public Works Director  
Gary Baugher, Maintenance and Operations Superintendent  
Lynne Brandon, Parks and Recreation Manager

**Subject:** Halibut Point Park Management

**Background:** Halibut Point Park is an important community asset and valued for waterfront, family recreation. Without an official State staff presence in the park there is a high potential for problems with bears, parties, illicit activity and vandalism. By default any issues that arise in the Park impact the City.

State Parks does not foresee returning their operations to Sitka. MOU's for management authority for Old Sitka State Historic Park, the interpretive area, and Castle Hill State Historic Site, have been signed with the National Park Service. These agreements will be in place through October.

The Administrator has had initial conversations with the Alaska State Parks Southeast Regional Superintendent, Mike Eberhardt, regarding options for the City to enter into a management agreement for Halibut Point Park. He is also trying to determine if it's possible to transfer the title to the land.

Additionally, Mark is exploring creative approaches to management of Halibut Point State Recreation Site that are revenue neutral for the City. He is interested in exploring a collaborative relationship with a non-profit or other entity that would run the volunteer maintenance program, collect and keep fees. Additional revenue generation options will be explored.

The Assembly requested that the Administrator consult with the Parks and Recreation Committee and hold a public meeting to determine publicly acceptable options for the management of Halibut Point State Recreation Site

**Analysis:** At the regularly scheduled Parks and Recreation Committee monthly meeting on August 13 and at a Parks and Recreation Committee hosted public meeting on August 26, management options for Halibut Point Park were discussed with the public. See attached summary and meeting minutes.

The Parks and Recreation meeting on August 13 was a general discussion and established the range of opinions regarding options for management of Halibut Point Park. Subsequently, staff synthesized the Committee meeting responses into two decision points with a range of

alternatives for the public to respond to at the public meeting. Public input on two discussion items:

- 1) What is the goal for the public use of the park?
- 2) What is a publicly acceptable direction for the management of Halibut Point Park?

The public meeting on August 26 resulted in the following general consensus:

- Although the status quo, with State management, is the preferred alternative this is not likely in the next few years.
- Overnight use in the park is acceptable but further public process as overnight use options are considered.
- The public prefers that CBS take over management authority for a limited amount of time, five years, but not transfer the title at this time. The arrangement can then be re-evaluated after five years.
- After CBS takes over management authority, there is support for exploration of other collaborative efforts to see if management by a non-profit or other entity is viable. This can occur over the next few months in time for the summer season and should involve a separate public process.
- It is a priority to get a host in the cabin.

#### **Attachments**

- Sitka Parks and Recreation Committee August 2015 draft minutes (not yet approved)
- August 26 Public Meeting Notes

**Notes from Halibut Point Recreation Park Management Meeting Discussion  
August 26, 2015 Sealing Cove Business Center, 6 p.m.**

ATTENDEES: Michelle Putz, Perry Edwards, Don Kluting, Jeff Feldpausch and Kay Turner from Parks and Rec, Lynne Brandon, Mike Scarcelli, Mike Eberhardt. Penny Brown, Brownie Thomsen, Marge Ward, Kara Knox, Ann Marie LaPalme, Sabra Jenkins, Marge Steward  
Scribe: Michael Scarcelli

**1. Public Use Options Intro**

- a. Status Quo – day use
- b. Day Use Plus
- c. Limited Overnight use (cabin, shelter, tent)

**2. Discussion on Public Use Options**

- a. Straight into fee structure (\$35, \$50, over 50 \$200, \$2500 with old system from picnic sites); will need re-evaluation
- b. Overnight would impact day use, some against that but general consensus that overnight would be acceptable. Should be a public process involved a determining the type of overnight use, where it would be located and the fees.
- c. Is there an outstanding need for more campsites? Is Starrigavan at capacity?
- d. Area for tenting considered but not as popular due to rainy climate
- e. Other camping opportunities and hike-in and cabin opportunities on road system listed as priorities in Sitka Outdoor Recreation Plan.
- f. Mosquito cove as alternative hike-in cabin site
- g. State Mike: When you put public use next to road system you could high use, and vandalism low
- h. Mosquito Cove has been considered for cabin concerns about vandalism
- i. Oversight of cabins is the main issue:
  - i. Heat option – propane vs. oil; have to provide firewood so trees don't get cut down
  - ii. Clean-up between groups
- j. Eagle Beach of good example of high use example and keeping management simple
- k. Seasonal Host or Live-in host keeps Starrigavan cabin functional
- l. Starrigavan Cabin 10K a year (260 days rented); \$157,000 investment.
- m. Overnight cabin sites at Eagle Beach: rented 340 days a year
- n. Increased fee for overnight-use and cabin (Michele)
- o. RV/Tent/Tiny Home (Michele)
- p. Could one of the low use picnic shelters be converted to a camp site?
- q. What is revenue cost ratio of tent or shelter (Revenue 300 x 50 =15k), is that worth investment
- r. Parks and rec: already deferred maintenance list, don't want more costs of maintenance
- s. Vaulted restroom needs replacement. It is 25 years old.

**3. Management Options Intro**

- a. Status Quo
- b. Management Agreement for Term of Years – limited
- c. Land Title Transfer
- d. CBS pursues management authority and coordinates with non-profit or other entity

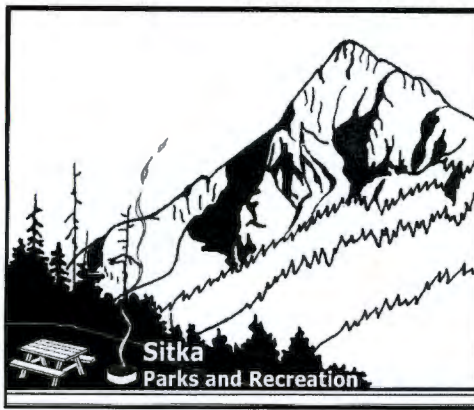
#### 4. Discussion on Management Option:

- a. Multi non-profit management of HPR (e.g. Sitka Trails, Moose/Elks, Sitka Sound Science Center) but need someone to coordinate
- b. Major Maintenance issues: who is responsible (how would bridge repair work?)
  - i. Legislative Process of Request by City
  - ii. Already long-list of deferred items
- c. With MOU with other entity questions arose: concerns about liability, cost, maintenance, insurance, shorter term to test water.
- d. Group didn't support Title Transfer
- e. Other State Park Opportunities (Castle Hill, Boat Launch)
- f. Try to Get PT State Park Ranger
- g. Don't prevent State from coming back to take over (i.e. take title)
- h. High Priority for City to use
- i. Look at Alternatives (Boat Launch, Starr, Castle Hill, Mosquito Cove)
  - i. Nobody stepped up at RFP step for Boat Launch
- j. Revenue for Boat Launch was \$15k
- k. State: needs to shut down infrastructure, only way to save it, is to lean on City for help and use.
  - i. Rent Salmon House
  - ii. HPR host? (probably not rent)
- l. Discussion Needs to have more concrete format of ideas with details to move forward on them (costs, revenue structure)
- m. To allow for broader discussion of public need more time/notice due to past week events
  - i. Wait one month
  - ii. Multimedia Notice: Use web, sentinel, radio, and social media to advertise to public
- n. Management Agreement with State:
  - i. Mike E., supports a loose agreement for term 1-5 years and can provide up to 40K
  - ii. Can happen quickly
  - iii. State in time crunch
    - 1. Deadline: freeze date to turn off water, etc.
    - 2. Process for Shutting down Salmon House and HPR
- o. General Support for Moving Forward towards Management Agreement
- p. State Parks Advisory Board
  - i. Prefers state remain as management
  - ii. But if not, then remain open
- q. Concerns About Fate of other sites and facilities (Castle Hill example)
- r. Discussion Again about limited Term Management Agreement to allow State to Return as preferred
- s. Host in Cabin to Preserve Structure and also allow passive management
- t. Formalize these different ideas, with details, and terms to present to public as ideal
- u. State wants to move forward with a management agreement and is open to giving loose terms and money (up to \$40,000) for 1- 5 years.

## Summary

The consensus of the group was as follows:

- 1) Discussion supported limited, trial, shorter term management agreement
- 2) Low to no asset investment
- 3) Utilize non-profit(s) or quid-pro-quo host to manage
- 4) Get a host in place as soon as possible
- 5) Formulate more detailed options/ideas/funding plan for presentation to public for consensus
- 6) Consider CBS management of Boat Launch and Starrigavan trails as well.



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## **SITKA PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE**

August 13, 2015 Meeting Minutes

Third Floor Conference Room, City Hall

Present: Chris Whitehead, Jeff Mossige, Jeff Feldpausch, Clara Whitehead, Kay Turner

Excused: Hans vonRekowski

Absent:

Ex Officio:

Staff: Lynne Brandon, Gary Baugher, Dan Tadic, Mark Gorman

Others: Ben Miyasato (Assembly Liaison), Brownie Thomsen, Marge Ward, Rebecca Himshoot, Kara Knox, Ann Marie LaPalme, Eve Grutter, Bob Hunley, Penny Brown, Barb Morse

**Approval of Minutes:** *(Motion: Whitehead): Approve June 2015 minutes. Passed unanimously.*

**Changes to the Agenda:** None.

**Correspondence:** None.

**Persons to be Heard:** None.

**Unfinished Business:**

**New Business:**

Election of Chair: *(Motion: Mossige): Nominate Jeff Feldpausch as Chair until the next election in January. Passed unanimously.*

**Discussion:**

Mark Gorman opened by saying that HP Rec is an important community asset and valued for waterfront, family recreation. After the State's de-funding of the local parks, the lack of staff presence City Hall has received calls problems in the park. Without an official presence in the park there is a high potential for for problems with bears, parties, illicit activity, vandalism exist. By default any issues that arise in the Park impact the City.

He updated the Committee members on the status of discussions that he has had with State Parks regarding potential for CBS taking over management authority for Halibut Point Park. The Starrigavan boat launch and trails are not currently a part of the discussion.

State Parks is willing to sign over management authority immediately and may include \$40,000 in funding for a public use cabin and will transfer a park vehicle. Mark said that he is proceeding cautiously and is investigating title transfer as well. To have the management remain revenue neutral for the City he is exploring collaborative relationships with a non-profit. SCS may be interested. One concept is to work with SCS who would collect fees would be collected, oversee the volunteers along with a volunteer host in the cabin and tiny RV homes would be built at the entrance for intern housing or revenue generation. Building a public use cabin in the park is

another idea for a revenue source. The goal is to establish a collaborative approach to keep park open and to enhance.

The Administrator would like to get feedback from SPRC members and also hold a public meeting before formalizing a proposal.

The following comments were made:

- The terrain and proximity to the highway make overnight use inappropriate
- Overnight use is incompatible with the day use
- There needs to be a discussion of cost of any new developments vs. the amount of fees generated (a business plan) to see if it is possible to be revenue neutral. Public use cabins are expensive to put in.
- What about restrooms?
- Questions regarding liability and insurance. Will the non-profit need liability insurance?
- Parking is already a problem
- Opposed to taking on additional infrastructure when the City isn't funding parks deferred maintenance projects and there's talk about closing playgrounds. The infrastructure sinking fund, although set up to include parks, isn't utilized for parks infrastructure maintenance.
- May be in favor of short term management authority with active SCS management May through September.
- Concerns expressed that the takeover may give State Parks a reason not to return.

Mark commented that service organizations may be able to take care of infrastructure by obtaining grants for the replacement.

- There needs to be a solid plan for how the park maintenance and infrastructure are going to be funded, including possible revenue sources, grants for infrastructure and how to manage more efficiently.
- Setting a precedent for State Parks to shed parks in other communities.
- Encourage State kick in "X" amount annually
- Don't transfer the title and make the management authority short term
- Increase fees
- Volunteers need to have oversight. Something needs to happen.

Although Committee member Hans vonRekowski was unable to attend the meeting he submitted the following comments:

As you know I will be out of town for our August meeting. I did however want to provide the members with some of my thoughts on the HPR Rec site proposal you sent out. Most of the ideas presented I think are fine but I wouldn't want to agree to manage the site unless the State agrees to provide the city title to the property. I think that providing housing in the existing house to a volunteer who could help operate and maintain the site is smart. I do not however feel that we should construct a cabin for public use. Halibut Point Recreation facility is a day use site and not a campground. I do not think camping here is compatible with the existing day use. Building a recreation cabin here would be expensive and the operation and maintenance of a recreation cabin is an expensive proposition. If the city is seriously thinking about doing this you should talk with Annemarie LaPalme at the Sitka Ranger District to get an idea what the expenses and challenges are with a recreation cabin so close to town. I also do not think it would be good idea for the city to compete with the private sector by with any type of short term rentals.



**Reports:**

- P & R Manager's Report –Tony Hrebar project was completed July 23. The end berms for the 100 and 200 and side berms between the 100 and 200 and the pistol range and the 200 are now full height. After removing the vegetation the inadequate height was obvious and it is really positive to rectify the problem. There is still money available to do some more drainage work and perhaps replace the shooting benches.
- Trails – Cross 4 & 5: STW is working on the Baranof Street connector, about 200 yards remain until the cemetery section is connected with the Pherson neighborhood connector. Herring Beaver: Herring Beaver repairs are complete. A lot of drainage work was done, a reroute at the waterfall bridge and the bridge was raised 3'. We have been working on a signage plan for the Cross Trail since all the mileages have to be updated on the mileage signs.
- Ballfields, Parks and Green Space Update – Jeff Cranson, Parks and Ballfields Specialist, has been doing a tremendous job keeping the ballfields in great condition. Sand has been added to Krueger and the turf is finally building up. More work is planned for the Men's Field at Kimsham to help with drainage. That project will occur after Mudball. No high school football this year. Community Schools - The School District didn't get any responses to the RFP for Community Schools.

**Comments:** None.

**Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 1:25 PM

**Next meeting:** Thursday, September 10 at City Hall.