

## Cathy Halka

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**From:** Bennett Knox  
**Sent:** Friday, June 7, 2024 11:47 AM  
**To:** Cathy Halka; Jed Holmes  
**Cc:** Christ Thomsen  
**Subject:** Parks Comments on Naming Ordinance  
**Attachments:** Proposed Naming Ordinance Review.docx

Cathy and Jed,

Christ and I have met to discuss and here are Parks comments on the ordinance. Also attached is a red-lined edit to the existing ordinance that highlights general edits, some of which are also listed below.

### **General concerns:**

Parks understands that the original intent of the proposed ordinance related to some of the more substantial new buildings/facilities in development and that inclusion of Parks was perhaps a secondary issue. Parks recommends that either its facilities be removed from this particular ordinance or the proposed ordinance be pulled for further discussion to receive consideration of impacts related to Parks. Parks offers the following comments for consideration:

1. The relative number of naming opportunities within Parks and the implications for naming changes would support its separate consideration similar to what is in place within WCC Title 12 Chapter 12.60 Road Naming System. That chapter provides a sound template, or example, as a model for the proposed code that could relate specifically to Parks and it would be prudent to follow a similar approach provides consistency in County Code.
  - a) Parks' strategy moving forward related to park master plan development is that these plans be crafted with an intent to create leveraging for external funding in the form of grants, but also private donations. Upcoming planning efforts include Hovander Park and Lighthouse Marine Park. It is expected that these plans will have multiple elements where naming opportunities in exchange for donations will exist. Some examples include general park areas (e.g., groves/gardens/trailheads), specific structures such as shelters/playgrounds, trails/paths, restroom facilities and other buildings. It is expected that pursuit of these opportunities as a way to supplement local funding with external funding will involve coordination with external partner non-profits (e.g., Whatcom Parks Foundation, Master Gardener Foundation). There is a need to consider whether the process as defined would hinder opportunities to attract due to the nature of upfront discussions and processes that are necessary to secure such commitments donors.
  - b) The Department has an existing Parks Advisory Commission which should have a defined role in consideration of naming and renaming parks and parks facilities.
  - c) We are generally concerned at the number of requests that we may will receive for renaming of parks, park facilities, and trail and the amount of departmental time and effort that might result from this ordinance. As drafted, this creates a very open process to submit proposals each of which would necessarily have to be vetted, no matter how serious or frivolous.

### **Should it be determined that Parks should remain within the current ordinance, we would offer the following comments/suggestions:**

- 1) Consider that the eligible Parks facilities be limited to 1) existing park names and 2) buildings

- 2) Recommend separate processes for naming new vs renaming County-Owned Public Building, Properties, Parks, and Facilities. These are starkly different activities and would have dissimilar criteria for consideration.
- 3) The Department does not currently have an internal policy or guidelines developed for naming new parks and trails, or parks facilities. It would be advisable for the Department to have this in place for any proposal that would come before the naming/renaming committee so that any proposal could be weighed against those guidelines in order to promote consistency. So, require department specific policies that guide naming conventions, or spell them out in a similar manner to WCC Title 12 Chapter 12.60 Road Naming System
- 4) It is critical that any proposal be weighed against is fiscal impact. Section 2.180.060 (should be .080) references that applicants would be financially responsible for the difference related to alternative signage, but name changes potentially require update of a number of other materials including park signage, kiosks, brochures, websites and these changes can have substantial costs in terms of materials and labor.
- 5) Consider that the committee recommendation for naming or renaming be unanimous as opposed to majority.
- 6) Provide criteria to be met before renaming may be considered
  - a. Considerations
    - i. Time elapsed between naming or renaming
    - ii. Specific categories of reasons a renaming may be required or proposed, e.g.
      1. Historical Reevaluation
      2. Diversity and Inclusion
      3. Recognition of Achievements
      4. Geographical or cultural changes
      5. Legal issues
      6. Community Consensus
- 7) Section 2.180.030 (first instance) stipulates that a request “may” be submitted by any county official, but not discussed is whether this process applies to any new facility that the county is creating.
- 8) 2.180.050 E. Requires a plaque, with a functional title, honoring those who contribute whenever there are multiple donors to a project. A plaque may not be appropriate in every situation. What if a donor wished to remain anonymous, or it applies to a trail where a plaque may not be appropriate. Also, are there thresholds for donation type or amount? Would a person that donates \$1.00 to a project be listed on a plaque? What about a person who makes no monetary donation but donates their professional services, or skilled labor, be included on the plaque. Suggest that plaques are appropriate for buildings.
- 9) 2.180.070 should be revised to require the asset managing department to specify appropriate signage. Public Works does road signs and they look very different from facilities or parks signs.

**Editorial/Content comments:**

- 1) Numbering for the ordinance is incorrect starting with 2.180.030
- 2) Need to include definitions of key terms: E.g., Building, property, facility
- 3) Section 2.180.040 (should be .060). In section C consider deleting the examples as the initial descriptors are clear enough and broad enough. Also, the examples in item C are not “tree species” rather they are common names for genus of species.
- 4) There appear to be inconsistencies in references to County-owned public buildings, properties, parks, and facilities throughout the proposed language. These references may be intentional. If intentional, they then seem arbitrary. This could be clarified through definitions. For example, 2.180.050 D. is references facilities being named for living persons and does not include buildings, properties, or parks.

Thanks!

-Bennett

*Bennett Knox*, CPRE, MEM (he/him)  
Parks Director

PROPOSED BY: BUCHANAN  
INTRODUCTION DATE: MAY 21, 2024

ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

**ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING WHATCOM COUNTY CODE CHAPTER 2.180  
NAMING COUNTY-OWNED PUBLIC BUILDINGS, PROPERTIES, PARKS, AND  
FACILITIES**

**WHEREAS**, Whatcom County officials desire to honor individuals with dedications and/or naming of certain County-owned public buildings properties, ~~parks,~~ and facilities; and

**WHEREAS**, no procedures or criteria currently exist for such naming and renaming of County-owned property; and

**WHEREAS**, there is a need to establish criteria and procedures for selection of names for such County-owned public buildings, properties, ~~parks,~~ and facilities; and

**WHEREAS**, there is an opportunity to address County goals for diversity, equity, and inclusion in the establishment of criteria for the selection of names for County-owned public buildings, properties, ~~parks,~~ and facilities, and honor historically underrepresented people making significant contributions to our community; and

**WHEREAS**, it is further the intent of this Ordinance to establish a process and criteria to name and rename Whatcom County-owned public buildings, properties, ~~parks,~~ and facilities.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED** by the Whatcom County Council that Whatcom County Code 2.180 Naming County-owned public buildings, properties, ~~parks,~~ and facilities is hereby established as shown in Exhibit A (attached).

**ADOPTED** this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2024

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council

\_\_\_\_\_  
Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

( ) Approved ( ) Denied

\_\_\_\_\_  
George Roche (by email 5/2/2024/ch)  
Civil Deputy Prosecutor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Satpal Singh Sidhu, County Executive  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Exhibit A

### CHAPTER 2.180 NAMING COUNTY-OWNED PUBLIC BUILDINGS, PROPERTIES, PARKS, AND FACILITIES

- 2.180.010 Purpose
- 2.180.020 Naming Committee
- 2.180.030 Process to Name
- 2.180.040 Naming Criteria
- 2.180.050 Renaming
- 2.180.060 Signage Style and Costs
- 2.180.070 Naming of Minor Items and Interior features

Insert "Definitions" section to define terms for the chapter.

#### **2.180.010 Purpose**

To establish the procedures by which Whatcom County-owned public buildings, properties, parks, and facilities are named or renamed by action of the Whatcom County Council. This policy does not apply to the naming of streets, ~~and roads,~~ parks, parks properties, or other parks related assets and infrastructure.

#### **2.180.020 Naming Committee**

A Naming Committee will be made up of three (3) members including the County Executive or their designee, the County Council Chair or their designee, and the Department Head or their designee from the department under the purview of the facility, building, or property.

#### **2.180.030 Process to Name**

A. Requests for naming ~~or renaming~~ shall be submitted to the Executive's Office in writing and routed for review by the Naming Committee. Requests for the naming or renaming of Whatcom County-owned public buildings, properties, ~~parks,~~ and facilities may be submitted by any Whatcom County resident, property owner, agency, business owner, or County official.

B. Written requests shall include the following:

1. The County-owned building, property, ~~park,~~ or facility to be named.
2. The proposed name.
3. Reasons the proposed name meets the criteria in section 2.180.040.
4. Evidence of written support from the person or group/organization being honored, if the proposed name relates to a living individual or existing group/organization.
5. A detailed biography of the individual or history of the group/organization nominated, presenting achievements and contributions.

The Naming Committee will evaluate the request for compliance with the criteria in

Section 2.180.040. A majority vote of the Naming Committee is required to make a recommendation to the County Council. The Naming Committee may decide to not forward a recommendation to the County Council.

C. If a proposal receives approval of the Naming Committee, the Executive or their designee will request an item be placed on the Council agenda to announce that a proposal was approved by the Naming Committee and publish a timeline by when all other naming requests for the specific County-owned public building, property, ~~park,~~ or facility to be named must be received.

D. The Executive shall cause a notice to be posted for a minimum of two consecutive weeks on the county website in accordance with the published timeline. The notice shall include general information about the County-owned building, property, ~~park,~~ or facility, the general location description, requests received for naming, and the deadline for additional nomination requests.

E. The Naming Committee will consider proposed names from all requests received by the published deadline and approve a recommendation to Council. The Executive or their designee will bring the Naming Committee's recommendation to Council for approval by resolution.

F. Following receipt of the Naming Committee's recommendation, the County Council shall schedule a public hearing on the Naming Committee's proposed recommendation. Following the hearing, the Council shall act on the resolution.

### **2.180.0430 Public Notice and Hearing**

Notice shall be provided of the public hearing at which the County Council will consider the recommendation of the Naming Committee. The notice of public hearing must be published in a legal newspaper of general circulation once prior to the date of hearing. The notice of public hearing must contain the proposed name, the street address of the site, the legal description, and list the date, time and place of the public hearing. The notice of public hearing shall be posted in a conspicuous place in the courthouse not less than 10 days prior to the hearing.

### **~~2.180.40~~ 2.180.050 Naming Criteria**

- A. County-owned public buildings, properties, parks, and facilities may be named after an organization, business, or person.
- B. Existing names of County-owned public buildings, properties, ~~parks,~~ and facilities in current use shall continue as named unless the County Council takes action pursuant to this policy to re-name such.
- C. The Naming Committee shall consider the following naming categories:
  - 1. Neighborhood or geographical identification, ~~for example Mount Baker, Nooksack, Southfork, Dakota Creek;~~
  - 2. ~~Natural or geological features, for example tree species like oak, cedar, spruce, fir or regional bodies of water;~~

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Commented [CT1]: The examples are not tree species. They are common names for genus of species.

- 3-2. ~~Historical or cultural significance, for example local leaders or significant events;~~
- 4-3. ~~Historically underrepresented groups or persons;~~
- 5-4. ~~Residents of the surrounding neighborhood;~~
- D. Facilities may be named for living persons provided that:
  1. They made a significant contribution and the donor stipulates naming of the facility as a condition of the donation; or
  2. The individual has made an unusually outstanding public service contribution, including one or more of the following:
    - i. Demonstrated continuous outstanding public service contributions over a period of 10 years; or
    - ii. Worked to foster equality and reduce discrimination; or
    - iii. Demonstrated outstanding public service as a community volunteer; or
    - iv. Individuals who have risked or given their life for the sake of others.
- E. In the event multiple donors contribute funds toward construction or acquisition, a functional title shall be given to the facility with plaques honoring those who contributed;
- F. No County-owned public buildings, properties, parks, or facilities shall be named for a public official while that official remains in public office;
- G. A facility may be named after a public official or private individual whether they are alive or deceased.

**Commented [CT2]:** Do "residents" need to have a specific contribution, significance, or importance? Can any resident name be proposed agnostic of contribution, significance, or importance?

**Commented [CT3]:** Why is this limited to facilities? What about buildings, property, or parks?

**Commented [CT4]:** This section requires a plaque when there are multiple donors. Thresholds for inclusion?

### 2.180.0650 Renaming

The renaming of County-owned public buildings, properties, parks, and facilities shall be in accordance with the criteria set forth in Section 2.180.040050. Renaming requires a vote of approval from the Naming Committee and Council approval by resolution.

**Commented [CT5]:** Quantify. Recommend a supermajority for renaming, such as 2/3 majority.

### 2.180.0760 Signage Style and Costs

Following Council's adoption of a name by resolution, the ~~Whatcom County Public Works-asset managing~~ department will specify appropriate signage. An applicant who wishes to have an alternative sign must submit a rendering for approval by the Naming Committee and County Council. The applicant will be financially responsible for the difference in cost of the alternative signage.

### 2.180.0870 Naming of Minor Items and Interior features of Facilities and Buildings

This chapter shall not apply to donor and naming recognition for minor items, including but not limited to benches, trees, refuse cans, flagpoles, water fountains, or the naming of interior building features and areas (such as meeting rooms, courtrooms or common areas of public importance such as the courthouse rotunda).

The County Executive shall maintain the authority to name individual rooms or interior features within County-owned facilities.