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Press Release

For Immediate Release

Contact: Matt Tyler

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Parks and Recreation Launching Planning Effort

A volunteer citizen committee has begun work on a twenty year plan for Jefferson County Parks and Recreation. The committee is organizing small group meetings called study circles, doing a survey, and holding focus groups.

One committee member emphasized that all the options are on the table. "This is not the kind of planning effort where the decisions have been made in advance" said Bill Tennent, committee member. "We are starting with a blank slate. All we know is we need to plan for the future. Some incredible natural areas, habitats, programs, and facilities are at stake here" noted Tennent.

According to Tennent, almost everyone in the County should be able to think of a personal reason to get involved with this plan. "Just think of how important Memorial Field, the P.T. Recreation Center, North Beach Park, Gibbs Lake Park, Beausite Lake Park, H.J. Carroll Park, Irondale Beach Park, Indian Island Park, Oak Bay Park, Lake Leland Park are, to name a few" said Tennent. "It is a whole system we are working with." he added.

The Jefferson County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board recomended the new plan and it was sanctioned by the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners on February 11th, 2008. In a letter to the Commissioners from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Liz Coker stated: "It is the opinion of the Jefferson County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board that a grassroots public process to determine both the demand for local parks and recreation and the means to meet it should be launched as soon as possible".

The letter also said: “It is our opinion that the study circle format will create an accurate representation of public opinion regarding County Parks and Recreation, a multi-level course of action, and a coalition to support the actions”. According to Coker, a ‘study circle’ is a series of four small group meetings. Each group has a diverse membership. “With the study circles, you want diversity, and you want people to feel comfortable enough to talk about what they really care about” said Coker. According to Coker the study circles will be lead by a trained facilitator. “We will also be providing a study guide. At the end we are having a big event where each group has a member stands up to tell the actions they recommend” said Coker.

The committee is seeking community members to be study circle ‘ambassadors’. Each ambassador would recruit study circle participants but they would not have lead the meeting because a trained facilitator is provided. Ambassadors are needed from the following areas: Brinnon, Quilcene, Chimacum, Port Hadlock, Irondale, Port Ludlow, Kala Point, Cape George, Port Townsend, and Gardiner. “We want to hold as many study circles as possible, each area can have several study circles if people are interested” said Coker.

Committee member Davis Steelquist said that all the partners of County Parks and Recreation should be given a voice in the process too. He noted: “Focus groups are great for connecting with your partners and learning what they want. Organizing focus groups with the organizations like the Little League, or the School Districts and other community partners is essential”.

“We need to do this planning project so we can be good stewards of our parks and programs, now and in the future” said Trevor Huntingford, Committee Member. “The public has a very, very real opportunity to shape the future” noted Huntingford.

Richard Hull, committee member, said there will be lots of opportunities in the near future to get involved and learn more. “Watch out for more information about the study circles, the survey, and the focus groups or just give us a call or send an email with your input about the future of Jefferson County Parks and Recreation” said Hull. To get involved please give a call to 385-9129.