

VASHON PARK DISTRICT (VPD) BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MEETING MINUTES

Teleconference and In person, 7:00 pm

DATE: Tuesday, October 10, 2023

Commissioners attending: Josh Henderson, Keith Prior, Bob McMahon, Sarah George, Hans Van Dusen.

Staff attending: Elaine Ott-Rocheford

ISSUE	DISCUSSION AND OUTCOME	FOLLOW UP
Call To Order – Review Agenda	<p>Josh called the meeting to order at 7:00 and reviewed the agenda.</p> <p>Hans: I would like an update on the Coast Guard lease.</p> <p>Elaine: I assume you mean getting financial help and the status of the lease? I have reached out to Beverly twice. I have not heard a word back. Next time I will copy the commander.</p> <p>Bob: Nothing from Captain Joe?</p> <p>Elaine: I thought he is traveling.</p> <p>Hans: Let's put it on the next agenda.</p>	
Public Comment		
Tramp Harbor Dock	<p>Elaine: At the last meeting, you had further questions for the engineers regarding the 90% design:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Regarding the slanted handrail, you asked if it could be a slight slant you could still put a coffee cup on yet still help with water not pooling? Yes – can slant to 2%. The timber will be slightly treated. 2) You were still concerned about their use of the word “assume” when referring to the vaults for storm water. You wanted confirmation that we would not have surprises about this down the road. There are 2 vaults: Vault 1 – will be fully removed due to the new bulkhead. They have confirmed that KC has no record of the vault; further confirmation will occur at the time of the building permit approval. In the meantime, they will mobilize equipment to look inside the vault to make sure there is no pipe, hazardous material, etc. Vault 2 – is part of the KC seawall. This is what we will use for storm water. KC will receive the storm water report to approve at the time of the building permit submission. So the building permit will drive the confirmation about the vaults. 3) Picnic area – will the new bulkhead be secured to the failing pilings of the picnic area? Would it behoove us to extend the wall? This will be more detailed on the 100% drawings, but the new sheet pile bulkhead can stand alone to support its own load. They will connect to the picnic area pilings but will “do no harm.” 	

	<p>Bob: And we are not addressing the picnic area with this project?</p> <p>Elaine: Correct. It was estimated to cost \$300k, so you all decided against it. I did add it to the CIP.</p> <p>Kell: There are jersey barriers inset and running along there. Is there any reason those can't be shifted water side 3 feet?</p> <p>Right now on the plan there is one handicapped spot and 4 parking spots. If they extended it over, they can get 3 – 4 more parking spots all the way across the front.</p> <p>Elaine: As far as they are concerned, they are done with phase 2 of the design. The 100% design will be at the time we move to Phase 3, which will be after we have secured grant and fundraising funds. I have confirmed with RCO that a 90% design and no building permit is sufficient for grant applications. We will have all the environmental permits and DNR approval by the time of the grant applications.</p> <p>KPFF warned about the volatile construction market and their concern about material and labor cost increases between now and construction in 2026. The \$2.8 mil is in 2023 dollars. Assuming KC's forecasted inflation rates between now and 2026 are correct, we will need \$3 mil for this project. With the 90% drawings, the contingency was reduced to 10% and will be zero with the 100% drawings.</p> <p>With the RCO grants, the good news is one of them now goes up to \$2 million but with a 50% match. So, for a \$3 million dock, we would need a \$1.5 mil award with a \$1.5 mil match. It does not reimburse engineering costs. We still need the other grants to provide the match. I recommend:</p> <p>ALEA \$500,000</p> <p>WWRP \$500,000</p> <p>KC \$1,000,000 (we will probably get \$800k tops, if anything; this is highly competitive)</p> <p>LWCF \$1.2 million</p> <p>ALEA matches WWRP; WWRP and KC match LWCF. We should still fundraise. If we have to put in any funding, the most we can afford is \$200k according to the CIP. If we have more money over the grant awards, perhaps we can do the picnic area!</p>	Action Item
9.26.23 Minutes; 9.23.23 – 10.6.23 Preliminary Vouchers	<p>Hans: Motion to approve the 9.26.23 Minutes and 9.23.23 – 10.6.23 Preliminary Vouchers.</p> <p>Bob: Second.</p> <p>Pass 5-0</p> <p>Keith: Whenever you get a bid from Roggenbuck that we have to approve, I need to recuse myself from that. His son is a relative and father is a long time friend. Was he the contractor on the septic?</p> <p>Elaine: No, but he was on the Wingehaven Road. I imagine he will bid on the Pt Rob road project next summer.</p>	Motion to approve the 9.26.23 Minutes; 9.23.23 – 10.6.23 Preliminary Vouchers Pass 5-0
Priority Gym Use	<p>Elaine: We have access to three gymnasiums at the School District – one at each school. Eric has scheduled indoor pickleball Sunday mornings, and Monday/Wednesday evenings in the Chautauqua gym. The floors are marked and prepared for use. We can't move this very easily. Youth basketball is coming into season, which will take one gym. Youth Soccer is currently in season, and now there is a new year-round youth baseball academy. When it rains, all these sport groups want to practice in the gyms, and there often is only same-day notice.</p> <p>The sport groups have contracts with us during their season to where they pay per player and get 2 practices and one game per week in their fee. Per policy, they get <i>scheduled</i> priority use of facilities over adult activities. That said, many parents use youth sports for childcare and have factored these practices into their come-home-from-work plans.</p> <p>The problem we're facing is, when free adult drop-in pickleball is scheduled, and it starts pouring down rain, the sport groups want unscheduled gym time that might bump the pickleball players. This happened once, and the pickleball players were furious.</p>	

	<p>We looked into alternatives for pickleball – like use of K2. We are talking with the landlord about space needs, which looks like it might accommodate 2 courts. We don’t know the cost at this point.</p> <p>In the meantime, who gets priority? This really boils down to a policy decision. And if it is youth sports, does it make sense for Eric to make indoor pickleball available if it can be canceled at a moment’s notice? We do have long standing adult paid reservations with many people attending – like Andy James paid pickleball and the Hispanic indoor futsal Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Eric proposes that we revise our policy to align more closely with the Commons Agreement that limits the ability to override existing bookings to a 30-day window. But rain is really driving this.</p> <p>Bob: What about that covered area outside Chautauqua. Is that available?</p> <p>Elaine: Sometimes. I know VYFS uses it daily – probably until about 6. I don’t think it is big enough for pickleball.</p> <p>Bob: I was thinking more about the outdoor activities.</p> <p>Elaine: Basketball uses it sometimes.</p> <p>Hans: The challenge is the slick surface if it gets water on it. It’s not good for soccer or pickleball. Also, people like to go there to shoot hoops with their kids. It is perceived as a public resource. Basketball should be all indoors – that is a done deal. Soccer prefers to be outdoors. If it rains too much for soccer to be outdoors, it is our preference that they not be on the fields. Hopefully, that only happens a few times where we don’t want them to damage the fields. They might just have to cancel. Then the baseball academy would need to be indoors.</p> <p>Elaine: Their preference is to be outdoors. This is not scheduled indoor use. Indoors only if it rains.</p> <p>Hans: Fortunately, this should not be very often. Either way, somebody is going to be upset; it’s a question of who we choose to get upset. I think the youth sport group has a stronger argument. They have a contract that says they pay for two practices a week and a game for four months. They would expect to get that. The pickleballers are not paying a dime but enjoying a vibrant, healthy life as we want for them. Their argument is less strong. The policy should be that we warn them in advance. That is where I am leaning. We are giving them a lot of sessions – 3 days a week all year. It would help if we tell them now that this is a chance.</p> <p>Elaine: I think the coaches make a determination of their needs in the morning, because they have a lot to coordinate.</p> <p>Bob: They need to know way in advance.</p> <p>Hans: That would be the respectful commitment. We only cancel due to rain, and we only cancel with 4 -6 hours notice.</p> <p>Josh: So the rationale is really because they are paying.</p> <p>Elaine: That, and cancelling practice creates a big problem for the families. Logistics concerning kids is more complicated.</p> <p>Sarah: Also, there is longevity with the youth sport groups, whereas drop in pickleball is pretty new. Kids are practicing for games – there is an agenda. Is Eric running into this with other drop in activities?</p> <p>Elaine: So far only pickleball. This is new for them because of the rainy season. They were outside during the summer. If the K2 space materializes, we will consider doing other indoor activities. It could be pricey.</p> <p>Josh: Pickleball is scheduled Sunday morning, too. That shouldn’t interfere with sports. Can we expand the Sunday slot to show we are making an effort to accommodate?</p> <p>Bob: I would think if K2 materializes, we should consider the pickleball players pay a fee to offset the cost.</p> <p>Josh: Were any of them asking if they paid would they get priority?</p> <p>Bob: We don’t want that, because we don’t have room for them.</p> <p>Elaine: Nobody has asked for that.</p> <p>Josh: I agree we shouldn’t leave the kids out in the rain, but I would like to show the adults that the Sunday morning slot won’t be subject to competition.</p>	<p>Action Item</p>
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	<p>Elaine: So it sounds like what I'm hearing is that we are leaving the policy as is – that youth sports takes priority over adult activities.</p> <p>Hans: We should tell them of this – by noon. The Districts should decide by noon if fields are going to be closed, so the user groups should be notified by then. I hadn't thought about the Baseball Academy in all this. Soccer doesn't mind the rain, but baseball could be zero tolerance. We'll have to see how that plays out.</p>	
Point Robinson Barn - Grant	<p>Elaine: Like the houses, the Pt Rob barn is in really bad shape with dry rot, needs to be painted, and needs a new roof. Eric found a grant for \$25k offered through the Dept of Historic Preservation specifically for barns, but it requires a 50% match. The estimate for the barn without the roof fix is \$41k. The roof estimate is expected next week. Regardless, we would like your approval to apply for the grant for \$25k, knowing that the match will be at least \$25k. If the roof is too expensive, we can stop at \$20,500 with a safety net in case the barn is in worse shape than meets the eye.</p> <p>Bob: This leads us back to the Coast Guard discussion, because this is not maintenance. This is the deterioration of a building that should not be standing. There is no definition of maintenance in the lease.</p> <p>Hans: I move to approve the DAHP barn grant application for \$25k with a 50% match.</p> <p>Keith: Second.</p> <p>Elaine: It's due next week.</p> <p>Sarah: Motion to suspend the rules.</p> <p>Bob: Second.</p> <p>Pass 5-0</p> <p>Motion: Pass 5-0</p>	<p>Motion to approve the DAHP barn grant application for \$25k with a 50% match. Pass 5-0</p> <p>Motion to suspend the rules. Pass 5-0</p>
Strategic Plan	<p>Elaine: At the last meeting, we came up with our vision statement. From that, I provided suggested goals and strategies. Hans refined and added.</p> <p>Bob: I was happy to see that all the priorities aligned themselves with the vision statement.</p> <p>Elaine: I hope this means we have our goals and strategies!</p> <p>Sarah: I thought #6 needed some tweaking – "Lead with Environmental Stewardship." It feels limiting. I'm happy to work on that.</p> <p>Hans: 6.1 is related to electric mowers (O&M), and 6.2 is related to solar panels on the Ober office (Capital). You're referring more to 6.2? You think it's narrow in its potential scope?</p> <p>Sarah: Yes.</p> <p>Josh: Elaine has been asking us to keep this moving, so can you tell us when you think you will have that completed?</p> <p>Sarah: I'll work on it tonight.</p> <p>Josh: I would be fine with 6.2 if we just changed the word to "prioritize."</p> <p>Sarah: I'm fine with it as is. It just depends on what we want to get done in the next 6 years. We have a policy.</p> <p>Elaine: Our policy says that this is what we're going to try to do in our purchases, etc. It's not specific.</p> <p>Josh: Let's change it to "prioritize."</p> <p>Elaine: Hans also suggested having a simple overarching phrase that provides a front of mind, simplified statement of our primary reason for existence? Like a 'tagline' or 'brand' or 'north star' (or 'vision'). For example we could have something like <i>"Inspiring vibrant lives through engaged community"</i> or <i>"vibrant lives for a vibrant island"</i> or <i>"connecting an island through healthy lives"</i> etc</p> <p>Bob: Where would this appear, exactly?</p>	

	<p>Hans: The question is the utility of it – how useful would it be? In terms of visualizing it, you would probably be on our web page or under Vashon Park District as our logo. It should be what we are really trying to achieve.</p> <p>Sarah: It's a brand promise. What is at our core?</p> <p>Hans: Some entities utilize a north star tag line as their vision. That would not be us, because we have already decided our vision.</p> <p>Josh: It's like a micro branding. As I was reading it, I was thinking why is there no mention of parks in here? In his examples.</p> <p>Hans: The process could be that we germinate on this and discuss at the next meeting.</p> <p>Elaine: Also Hans provided a survey summary, which will be great for laying into the Strategic Plan. I will take it to my staff, and it will be great for the narrative. I don't know how much more you want to discuss this.</p> <p>Hans: The two big things that this drive are CIP and Recreation Programming. With the budget, we will discuss the CIP. We will try to keep this front of mind. On recreation programming, perhaps we should have a substantive agenda topic in January. You and Eric can come up with your plan for 2024 while digesting this. Then present it to the board. CIP is usually about 5 years. Rec Programming is more like 1-3 years. Update the Rec Programming Plan. Our input would be what we also hear from people.</p>	Action Item
2024 Budget	<p>Elaine: It is budget time. I took an initial stab at 2024 based on regular operational needs and a few extra asks from staff. All detail was provided in the budget notes.</p> <p>I also provided forecasts out to 2029. The important thing about the forecasts is capital projects for the long run relative to 2024. The good news, AV is positive up to 2029, so our levy dollars increase. The bad news is AV dips 11.43% in 2029 where we lose about \$300k of our levy dollars. Also, in 2027 and 2028 AV is positive but less than 1%, so those increases will be .43% and .86% respectively. 2028 is a new levy cycle, so that should be considered in all this. 2029 is a good example of how we just can't seem to get ahead.</p> <p>Bob: So we are limited to a high of 1% increase, but we can go down, as well.</p> <p>Elaine: That's what happened in 2010 with the VES Fields project – the perfect storm of lost levy revenue in the middle of a large capital project. I did the forecasts hand in hand with the CIP plan, since asset preservation needs has been one of our primary focuses. Every year, one of the big goals is stable cash flow – literally laying out when certain projects can be done, so cash flow is positive. The other goal is ending each year with minimum \$400k in reserves. In 2029, we will be below \$400k. That is a big thing to consider even now. Should we lighten up on CIP now and the next years in anticipation? Or do we think about going for a higher levy rate in 2028? These are strategies we should be thinking about in 2024 – it is our responsibility to do so.</p> <p>Generally, for 2024, the big things are: Levy dollars are @ \$1.9 mil, up from \$1.5 mil.</p> <p>Hans: On the levy question, I think it is appropriate to project a 1% increase per year for the 4 years rather than .43 and .86. It's just fiction. My experience in this region is that real estate values have gone through the roof except when the real estate market completely collapses. I think it's prudent to expect 1% increases. Then our levy ends in 2027 for 2028. The board in 2027 will choose to do a slight increase, since they will understand that 1% isn't enough to cover staff cost increases, etc. They won't be like the Fire District and do anything huge, but we have to make it up. My guess is they will choose a 5 – 10% increase that is reasonable at the time. That huge a drop in 2029 seems like total fiction! For 2028 and 2029, we should think about what the future commissioners will ask for and get from the voters. Just this year we got a 20% increase – from \$1.5 mil to \$1.9 mil. The same thing will hopefully hold true. I would just put in a number in 2028 – 1%, 1%, 1%, 10? 7? And then 1%.</p>	Action Item

	<p>Elaine: Do know that I did do an element of that for 2028 based on the KC AV forecast, which happens over and above the 1% increases year to year – what that reset looks like. It was only about \$100k.</p> <p>Hans: She also assumed continuing 45 cents in 2028. It might be a smaller or bigger number.</p> <p>Bob: What will cost of living be doing in the meantime? That will be a lot more.</p> <p>Elaine: If necessary, you'll have to boost the levy rate. This is the tough thing about doing forecasting – we only have the information we are given. Obviously, in 2027, you will have a good sense for the reality of the need for the next levy cycle. The information we have suggests that we remain conservative in planning capital projects – that's what I am suggesting here.</p> <p>Bob: Which forces us to continue to push them out, push them out, push them out.</p> <p>Elaine: And this is why we talk through the budget process. You can decide otherwise about the capital projects.</p> <p>Hans: I recommend we pick a number – the percentage increase for 2028 and use 1% for the prior years. Inflation is projected to be between 2.5 – 3%. So four years of that is 10 – 12%. Meanwhile, you're going up 3%, so let's say 7% as our fictional number for 2028. So, 1, 1, 1, 7, 1.</p> <p>Josh: Will anyone see this other than us?</p> <p>Elaine: It goes on our website, so maybe a few people. I did not do a user fee increase for 2024, since we did 5% last year. In these forecasts, I am doing 5% every other year.</p> <p>Bob: I was going to suggest that.</p> <p>Hans: Let's do 5% every other year.</p> <p>Elaine: The inflation rate used was the KC rate of 2.8% in 2024. Wages were at the 2023 inflation rate of 5.31%. I'm working on developing a wage schedule, but it's a cumbersome project. I'll try to have that for the next meeting if that would aid in your decision making. For the most part, we are still under the industry. Most agencies have a step schedule and COL.</p> <p>Hans: I would be interested in looking at the 6 month CPI rather than just looking at August.</p> <p>Elaine: It is annual.</p> <p>Hans: It's annual, but it's August vs August. It doesn't incorporate other points. We gave a 9% increase last year.</p> <p>Elaine: All the future ones are following CPI, so they are @ 2.5%.</p> <p>Josh: Last time we talked about following CPI – or a cost of living adjustment being tied to CPI – is that compared to other governments? People don't get 14% increases in COLAs. Last time, you said people are really talking about not being able to make ends meet. Is that still an issue? What is staff saying?</p> <p>Elaine: I have one who still is the same – has lots of financial concerns. I haven't heard from anyone else, to be honest.</p> <p>Hans: Last time, too, we acknowledged that we weren't necessarily trying to match it to CPI. We were trying to make up the prior bucket. We weren't really setting precedent for matching CPI.</p> <p>Elaine: I communicated that to staff last year. So, Josh, were you going with a directive for me to see what other agencies are doing?</p> <p>Josh: I think that would make sense to get a survey of what other jurisdictions are doing. I know the county is talking about a 3% COLA, and the city was talking about 1%. I would be shocked if anyone is doing 5%.</p> <p>Elaine: It would be great to confirm what the county and city are doing. With everything else, there are no other big changes in operations – no new staff; same layout with maintenance; we'll be having a commons committee meeting next week to discuss the commons fee; nothing different in programming.</p> <p>Hans: We'll talk about rec programming in January, but for budget purposes, no significant increases.</p>	
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Elaine: Right. Increases are basically inflation. At the pool, Randy had some specific asks in tools and equipment. On the CIP for 2024, we start with the Agren irrigation controller that was struck by lightning. I was concerned about the BARC building renovation with the grant how it was going to affect cash flow, but it works just fine. We would like a security gate at BARC, because people are starting to camp in there now. With the new pump track, KC required plantings that are difficult to water in the summer, so we need an irrigation line. The northend community board needs to be replaced desperately – it is a safety hazard with the wood rotting and no safety rail. This is a real quote we received from a contractor.

Hans: I’m tempted to trash it.

Bob: Do we have any evidence at all that people actually look at that?

Hans: In the survey, it didn’t register. We asked how people like to hear from us. It’s hard to say if people registered the north end board as a bulletin board. We actually have two – that’s the bigger one. We have one at Ober. For \$44k, I’m an advocate for tearing down the north board. The users told us they don’t use it.

Sarah: People may not have understood the question on the survey.

Josh: I think of a bulletin board like what’s outside Café Luna. I think we’re making an inference that bulletin board registered with all the respondents in the way we intended it to be.

Sarah: I look at it all the time. People may not realize how much they look at that.

Hans: Bob and I have spoken. What do the rest of you think?

Bob: We shouldn’t be encouraging people to be reading bulletin boards when they’re driving.

Hans: The culture of safety!

Elaine: And it’s not safe for staff.

Josh: I bet people will be upset if we tear it down.

Hans: It’s a landmark.

Bob: In order to rebuild it, we have to tear it down. We just leave a little space before we do so and see what people say.

Sarah: I like that. See if anyone notices it’s missing.

Josh: Do we own the land it’s on?

Elaine: Yes.

Keith: For \$44k, I’m not sure we get that much value. I’m not sure the community gets much value out of it.

Hans: We could go with the policy that we tear it down and look for future funding to replace it. A try-it-and-see political approach. You advocate that we tear it down rather than letting it fall apart.

Elaine: We don’t want it to be junky. If it is being used, it is unsafe. The things that hold the letters are getting wonky. Are you thinking we tear it down this year and see what happens?

Hans: It sounds like the board consensus is we don’t budget rebuilding it right now. You can take as long as you want to tear it down – you can do it next month or in two years. It’s your safety call.

Bob: Anything that goes up again should be digital, so staff doesn’t have to climb up there. Maybe a bulletin board on wheels.

Sarah: I think you’ll be surprised how many people look at it. It advertises the concerts. It’s a reminder for a lot of things. But \$44k for a sign is a lot.

Elaine: I guarantee this will be all over Vashonites. We will do some social media blasts before we do anything.

Sarah: Put it on the sign – “Is this worth \$44k?”

Elaine: The Fisher Pond building insulation – Shawn is really wanting this. It’s so cold in there in the winter.

Bob: That is important.

	<p>Sarah: Having that insulated should be better for the tools that are in there. Batteries don't like to be too cold.</p> <p>Elaine: They will be more productive if they can work in there in the winter.</p> <p>Elaine: The negative value on the pool is the return from this year on the pool grant items. You know about the Pt Rob parking lot – I'm hoping we get grant money for the upper lot, and we'll have to pay for the road and the lower lot. The QA bath and entry restoration I hope to have a \$25k grant for; the other \$18k will be out of pocket.</p> <p>Bob: Regarding the road and parking, is there any pressure on KC to upgrade the rest of the road?</p> <p>Elaine: Not that I'm aware of, but I have noticed it is bad.</p> <p>Hans: You can call and ask. There is an office here you can call and ask.</p> <p>Elaine: That x – we hope to have a grant for new picnic tables.</p> <p>Bob: Some of the parts you can use to fix the others.</p> <p>Elaine: We will remove them all. They are all in bad shape.</p> <p>Hans: Do people use the ones on the bluff? Is it worth having tables out there?</p> <p>Bob: Oh, yeah. People use them.</p> <p>Elaine: We desperately need to replace the dugouts at VES. They didn't use pressure treated wood and are falling apart. Then potential pickle ball and dog park. Sylvia was here at the last meeting. She was asking for the \$25k for the County. I mentioned the possibility we partner with the county, but that gets complicated. And we have pickleball we need to think about.</p> <p>Bob: What does "VES back field" mean?</p> <p>Elaine: Somebody suggested that back field behind the softball field for pickleball if it was fenced.</p> <p>Hans: We received inquiries from Baruch. He gets that fundraising may be necessary. We said the sites discussion is most important – what those might be and what they might support. That would be easier to fundraise around. Maybe we should discuss this at a meeting in the near future. In the meantime, you can discuss sites with staff and what costs might be.</p> <p>Elaine: The other location we have discussed is BARC in the front – even where Edan Reframed is. The person who put that in is a UW professor, no longer on Vashon. I have spoken with her a number of times. She is always delighted when someone wants to do a volunteer cleanup, but not much comes of that. Now it's a weed patch.</p> <p>Hans: I think those are the best two unless you can come up with a third one. Paradise was another option.</p> <p>Elaine: Baruch thought that would be too shady and would get lots of needles.</p> <p>Hans: Maybe flush out BARC and VES. If there isn't a vested party for the garden, maybe it just goes away. If there is, maybe we find a new spot for it. Like down below.</p> <p>Elaine: Another area at BARC is out past the bowl.</p> <p>Hans: Isn't the 9th hole there? Future agenda topic – identify best sites.</p> <p>Elaine: We'll hopefully get a grant for an electric truck and trailer. And \$25k for a rec programming truck – the one we have is on its last legs. They use it to haul sign boards and lodging supplies, etc. If we had a place to plug it in, we would love an EV.</p> <p>Hans: Could we install one here or at Fisher?</p> <p>Elaine: It would have to be here for this staff.</p> <p>Keith: Or get a hybrid. I get 49 miles per gallon out of mine.</p> <p>Hans: Is an EV charging station something we should put in the capital plan?</p> <p>Bob: And that would be at the maintenance building.</p>	
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<p>Adjourn 9:00 pm</p>	<p>Sarah: Motion to adjourn Bob: Second Pass 5-0</p>	

Minutes by: Elaine Ott-Rocheford