

Parks director to step down after 20 years

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After serving 21 years as the director of the Vashon Park District, Wendy Braicks announced last week that she will step down from the position this fall.

In a letter released Friday and posted on the park district's website, Braicks said she had a goal to stay with the district for 20 years and feels that now is the right time to move on.

"I have a great sense of accomplishment when I reflect on my years with the district," Braicks wrote, recalling how she's seen the district evolve in the two decades since it began with her as its only employee.

Under Braicks' direction, the district has grown to employ 15 people year round and more than 50 during the summer months. The agency that began largely to manage the use of sports fields now incorporates 18 parks, as well as several recreational facilities such as a pool and kayak center.

The district also now works with local stewardship groups to protect natural areas, runs a vacation lodging program, manages the Point Robinson lighthouse and oversees a number of camps, classes, sports teams and annual events.

Braicks will leave the district as it undertakes two of its largest projects to date — a new fields complex by The Harbor School and an outdoor skatepark at the Burton Adventure Recreation Center. Both, Braicks said, are on solid footing, making it possible for her to step down.

"They are big projects, but we're always doing something," she said. "I don't imagine there would be a time when there isn't an interesting project going on."

Bill Ameling, who has been a park district commissioner for two decades, described Braicks as an excellent director who always worked well with the existing board to achieve the district's goals.

"We all learned together and went through a lot of ups and downs. ... She never had her own agenda; she never pushed her agenda on the board," he said.

Ameling said the park district will announce the opening of the director position next month, and the district's five-member board will act as the search committee.

The board, he said, will consider both on and off-Islanders. It hopes to fill the position by Sept. 1.

Braicks said that although she isn't ready to retire altogether, she's looking forward to finding a new career with a slower pace.

"Something with a little less responsibility, and maybe not quite the time commitment," she said.

Susan McCabe, program coordinator at the park district, said that though she's pleased for Braicks, she's sad to see her go



Wendy Braicks
Courtesy Photo

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and believes the position will be a tough one to fill.

"I firmly believe from my close exposure working five and a half years with her that this park district is what it is because of her. ... She's had a wonderful attitude about getting things done, and she's gotten a heck of a lot done," she said.

To ready Wendy Braicks' farewell letter, visit www.vashonparkdistrict.org.

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