

City of Ashland
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
TRAIL MASTER PLAN UPDATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
May 5, 2017

PRESENT: **Parks Commissioners:** Mike Gardiner, Jim Lewis
 Additional Committee Members: Luke Brandy, David Chapman, Torsten Heycke, Stephen Jensen and Jim McGinnis (10:25)
 City and APRC Staff: APRC Director Michael Black (10:27); Chris Chambers, Forestry Division Chief (10:16); APRC Interim Parks Superintendent Jeff McFarland; GIS Analyst Lea Richards; APRC Minute-take Betsy Manuel

ABSENT: APRC Executive Assistant Susan Dyssegard

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Chapman called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. at 51 Winburn Way, Ashland OR.

II. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chapman reported that review and approval of the Minutes had been postponed until the next regularly scheduled meeting on May 19, 2017.

Jensen questioned the outcome of a discussion held on April 21, 2017 about scheduling meetings. The discussion involved a continuation of the twice-monthly schedule as originally agreed upon, or a change to once per month. The rationale was to bolster attendance when the summer months were especially busy for several of the TMP Committee members.

Jenson noted that the proposed Minutes indicated that after discussing the pros and cons, changes to the current meeting schedule had remained undecided. McFarland noted that the busy summer season impacts those with responsibilities outdoors.

Lewis suggested approving the Committee's final decision by vote.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

a. Open Forum

Jim Falkenstein, 540 Lakota Way in Ashland, was called upon to speak. He stated that he had recently photographed the Nevada Street wash from the air - using a drone. He indicated that the TMP Committee might find visual records from the air helpful, particularly when discussing trail access points and other pertinent data. Falkenstein noted that he would be pleased to volunteer any photographs or video of interest obtained in this way.

There followed a brief conversation regarding the efficacy of drone footage as members observed Nevada Street drone footage. McFarland commented appreciatively about other trails depicted by Falkenstein's drone online.

Lewis reviewed the video, noting areas under the jurisdiction of APRC. McFarland pointed out rights-of-way. It was agreed by consensus that the video was useful.

Richards expressed a concern about the legal implications with regard to the use of the drone in airways within City limits. She stated that the City could provide photos that were produced in 2012 upon request.

Falkenstein outlined Federal regulations for using a drone, noting that Federal Agencies might also impose rules for use. Local jurisdictions could restrict drone use as well.

Falkenstein was thanked for volunteering to provide drone video footage, but no agreement was reached for additional video. Falkenstein invited those present to view his website at ashlandtrails.com.

V. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

McFarland complimented APRC Executive Assistant Susan Dyssegard, Promotions Coordinator Dorinda Cottle and GIS Analyst Lea Richards for their work establishing a website for the Trail Master Plan Update Committee (TMP). The website displays working documents of the TMP – agendas, minutes, maps and informational data to assist the TMP and alert the public about the work in progress.

Chapman announced that further discussion regarding meeting schedules would become an agenda item under **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. TMP Schedule

Brandy advocated for continuation of the twice-monthly schedule, explaining that transitioning to one meeting per month would delay completion of the Master Plan. He noted efficiencies for committing to twice monthly – less time wasted in catch-up details, fewer stops and starts and so on.

It was agreed by consensus that the schedule would remain twice monthly.

b. Review and Discuss Bear Creek Trail Corridor

McFarland reported that an in-depth discussion about options for extending the Bear Creek Trail Corridor had been conducted at the last meeting. Since that time, the Greenway Foundation Board had decided to hire a consultant to determine the most advantageous route or routes, thereby negating the necessity for that type of review by the TMP Committee.

McFarland stated that the new plan would include a TMP review and approval of the consultant's final report. In reply to a question by Jensen, Gardiner stated that the Greenway Foundation Board along

with other interested agencies, such as the Ashland Public Works Department, had set up a fund some time ago to hire a consultant for an alternative routes analysis if needed. He stated that the Foundation's goal was to determine the most advantageous way to extend the Greenway from Nevada Street to North Mountain Park. The preference was a crossing of Bear Creek accessed via Nevada Street. Since that time, plans for a Nevada Street crossing has become tenuous at best, making it advisable to rethink the alternatives. Gardiner noted that other crossings were now under consideration, making it necessary to hire a professional advisor. He stated that the consultant's analysis would help to determine the most feasible crossing, what easements would need to be secured, what the impacts would be on public lands and a variety of other relevant factors.

Richards asked whether the consultant would contact private property owners. Gardiner replied that the scope of the project was still under consideration and the financial arrangements were not finalized. Gardiner explained that APRC was currently negotiating a land acquisition that might impact the start of the trails at the Dog Park. He noted that APRC was currently negotiating with a private property owner who was considering development opportunities and the outcome might affect the options available for trails. There followed a brief discussion about the various properties in that area.

Jensen asked for clarification of TMP involvement. McFarland stated that the TMP would review plans outlined by the consultant. Black noted that the consultant could be scheduled to meet with the TMP Committee to lay out the alternatives under advisement. Once the consultant has a final recommendation, the information would become a part of the Trails Master Plan. McFarland added that the consultant would benefit from review by the TMP Committee, because of the expertise of TMP Committee members.

In reply to a question by Brandy, Black stated that the Greenway Foundation works to provide matching funds for grants and/or other sources of funding for the Greenway expansion. He noted that the consultant would identify areas appropriate for bridge crossings, and any environmental issues that might be of concern. Once thoroughly vetted by the consultant and others including the TMP Committee, the consultant would design the actual trail. Easements, floodway and riparian areas and other hurdles must be addressed prior to designating a preferred option.

Jensen inquired about the process with regard to contacting private property owners. Black stated that he would direct contact and negotiations with private parties as well oversee the proposed scope of work of the consultant.

Gardiner noted that an informal process of working with people who could engage property owners in conversations about a particular easement or other land action could help to move the process forward. Black added that APRC and the TMP do not have to wait for the feasibility study should an opportunity become available. He explained that the acquisition of property or easements was not an orderly process and while a plan might prioritize one route over another, other priorities might develop based upon the availability of land. He noted as an example, the ongoing negotiations with the Mace family about a land acquisition or an easement that would benefit the trails system.

Gardiner stated that temporary solutions might be put in place – such as an on-street option for the Nevada Street crossing that might be employed until redevelopment of an area leads to a more desirable opportunity in an adjacent wilderness area. Lewis agreed, stating that a trail that includes an on-street portion might not be optimal, but it eliminates the heavy cost of a creek crossing. McGinnis talked about a potential trail that includes county property as well as City property as an option. Gardiner stated that Jackson County (the Greenway Committee) and APRC (Parks) would work together to achieve a suitable outcome.

Black added that the Greenway might have a strong preference that differs from APRC's perspective. He advocated for both sides, noting that each entity has a goal to achieve. For the Bear Creek Greenway Foundation, it is an extension of the Greenway to Emigrant Lake County Park along the creek, whereas APRC might have additional objectives to provide connectivity and a transportation option for Ashland residents. In this case, the goals are complementary and the City of Ashland and the Greenway Committee could work toward a beneficial outcome for both.

McGinnis commented that it was apparent that at least one of the options would be complementary. Gardiner agreed, noting that the complementary route, while not completely along the creek, could provide an alternative for connectivity to North Mountain Park in the meantime.

Chapman indicated that the goal for the TMP would be to look at options further away. Black affirmed the goal, commenting that the consultant would be more narrowly focused on Greenway connectivity. McFarland noted that APRC would concentrate on properties listed on the map as 17, 26, 29, 31 and 33.

Lewis talked about the potential for property along the creek adjacent to property number 27. He stated that the parcel was slated for eventual residential development. Lewis relayed that the creek area was in the floodway, presenting an opportunity for a trail because development would be curtailed in that area.

Richards offered to bring a planning map depicting a trail in the area under discussion. McFarland highlighted the Verde Village connection to the right of the Dog Park as planning action that alerted Parks to the potential for a trail in the area.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

a. Review and Discuss Wrights Creek and Ashland Creek Corridors.

McFarland stated that the discussion about the Wrights Creek Corridor and the Ashland Creek Corridor would act as a “workshop” with TMP Committee members contributing their knowledge about the area.

Black suggested that questions for discussion include how the corridors should be utilized - whether reference points should be narrower in scope or expanded – and whether there were existing trails or properties that could alter the potential for a new trail. Easements should be identified as well as other

relevant items. Black asked about new information that would update the corridors listed in the Master Plan and whether the updates should be general in nature or specific.

Black introduced the maps, indicating that they include property lines and depict parcels owned by APRC as well as properties where easements are held by APRC. Richards noted that the Wrights Creek map outlined the Billings property – an area where the owner of the property has indicated a willingness to consider a trail easement. The trail begins with an easement on the Billings property south to North Main. There were several options for connectivity continuing south. Continuing east the trail could provide further connectivity if easements could be secured.

Black stated that APRC has recently purchased the Hitt Road property. McFarland identified areas of interest such as a connection from Birdsong Trail to Hitt Road and continued connectivity via a pedestrian loop along the Hoffman and Neuman properties. Heycke noted that Mr. Hoffman was originally willing to grant an easement but subsequent family events had stalled further progress.

There followed discussion about the Talent Irrigation Ditch (TID) Trail, now known as part of the Acid Castle Rock property and connections to the Granite Street Trail and the Hearts Trail ultimately ending at Lithia Park. Chapman talked about a twelve-mile trail further out – west of the Wrights Creek corridor. In that area, the trail loops along the creek to Ashland Mine Road.

The Ashland Creek corridor was also reviewed. Black talked about an extension of the Park that was currently owned by APRC and potential opportunities for securing easements along the creek. Brandy commented that trails in the area could provide connectivity to Helman school – providing a safer route to school as well as more direct access.

The cost of a pedestrian bridge was briefly considered. McFarland noted the high cost of a bridge that must meet multiple Agency requirements. When a creek is involved, a hydrology study typically becomes necessary. He stated that the bridge must be engineered to handle flooding without obstructing the floodwater flow. McFarland detailed other solutions for managing floodways and creating connectivity. McGinnis asked about a drawbridge type of bridge that could swing up and out of the way in a flood situation.

McFarland outlined the properties that have been acquired since the Trail Master Plan was developed. He talked about the Creek to Crest trail route, noting that it was a creative temporary solution in creating connectivity until a more desirable route could be established.

McGinnis suggested that the TID Trail corridor might be a good Agenda item for the next meeting. Richards stated that she would present the TID Trail divided into two maps, given the length of the trail and the crossings involved.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Dyssegard, Executive Assistant &
Betsy Manuel, Minute-Taker
Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission