

City of Ashland
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
TRAIL MASTER PLAN UPDATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
December 1, 2017

PRESENT: **Parks Commissioners:** Jim Lewis, Mike Gardiner
 Additional Committee Members: Luke Brandy, David Chapman, Torsten Heycke, Stephen Jensen, Jim McGinnis
 City and APRC Staff: Director Michael Black; A F & R Division Chief-Forestry Resource Chis Chambers; APRC Interim Parks Superintendent Jeffrey McFarland; Forestry Division Supervisor Jason Minica; GIS Analyst Lea Richards
 APRC Minute-taker: Betsy Manuel

ABSENT: None

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

 a. November 3, 2017

Motion: By consensus vote, the Minutes from November 3, 2017, were approved as presented.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION & GUEST SPEAKERS

Chapman introduced guest speakers Sue Newberry, representing the Transportation Commission, Kevin Caldwell, City of Ashland Senior Project Engineer, Ashland Public Works, and Julie Smitherman, City of Ashland Water Conservation Analyst.

Newberry stated that she was interested in trails and the linkages that trails provide as a part of Ashland's Transportation Systems Plan.

Caldwell noted that the City of Ashland was planning a project that would pipe approximately two miles of the TID ditch underground. The City owns a public utilities easement throughout the project area with coverage extending from Terrace to Starlight streets. He said the easement does not carry with it an automatic pedestrian easement, with the exceptions of segments where the City has obtained trail easements or where the City owns the properties along the ditch. He offered support for a collaboration between APRC and the City of Ashland to obtain additional pedestrian easements.

Caldwell noted that the project was in early stages. Once a designer was chosen, property owners would receive notice about the project. There followed a brief discussion about the benefits of piping the ditch. Caldwell explained that a loan was received from the City of Ashland Water Quality Division to improve water quality in Ashland Creek. Water conservation was also a priority and piping the ditch was estimated to save approximately 30% of water lost due to evaporation and other causes. Project construction completion was estimated as May of 2019.

Chambers stated that the back side of the proposed covered ditch would remove a valuable water source for forestland trees. In times of drought, large trees sometimes become stressed and die – creating a fire hazard between residences. He asked if there was a way to mitigate the effects to protect the trees. He suggested the establishment of a small mitigation fund for homeowners to offset the extra costs to water the trees. Caldwell replied that the consultant was aware of the issue and would be looking for ways to decrease the impact. Smitherman stated that heavy equipment would be needed in the canal, necessitating removal of some of the trees but protecting the remaining trees.

There followed a brief discussion about the trees. Smitherman stated that the City would offer assistance to property owners with trees that might be affected. McFarland talked about his experience with drought conditions and the impact on trees – particularly pines.

In response to a question by Lewis, Caldwell said a group of people were working on water conservation outside the City's jurisdiction – that included additional piping along the irrigation ditch.

Chambers highlighted commentary from a landowner on Granite Street who expressed concern about wildlife using the canal as a water source. He asked about the development of an alternative water source that could be accessed safely by wildlife in such a way that they would not be drawn further into Ashland's downtown core.

McFarland suggested that the City develop an initiative to inform people about the project, including the potential to gain trail easements through the TID area. He talked about some of APRC's successful efforts to mitigate concerns for homeowners where trails are perceived to be too close to private property. The gravel or granite surface road slated for the topside of the covered pipe would be 10 feet wide, leaving room on both sides for plantings that could shelter landowners from passersby. McFarland stressed APRC's willingness to work with landowners to mitigate the impact of a hiking trail. He said APRC was actively seeking trail easements in such cases.

In response to a question by McGinnis and one by Richards about possibly purchasing trail easements, Black noted that estimating costs for easements was challenging because of the lack of comparisons. He stated that the cost of building a road is somewhat comparable, but property owners rarely value their land in that way - usually they have a sale price in mind. Black talked about agreements where APRC has paid full market value for an easement in exchange for ownership of the designated parcel when the parcel changes hands.

Lewis said the Trails Committee—and by extension APRC—supports the idea of piping the water. He emphasized the importance of being proactive in seeking easements that would facilitate public access for trail connectivity. There followed further discussion about acquiring easements and meeting homeowners' expectations. It was noted that TID was responsible for the water while the City was responsible for maintenance in the areas where easements are granted. Smitherman noted that water quality was a priority given the high degree of contamination.

In response to a question by Jensen, Heycke detailed the process used by Ashland Woodlands and Trail Association (AWTA) to collaborate on potential trail easements. Once a possible trail route was identified, a letter of interest was sent to the property owner, followed by a phone call and a meeting if there are interested parties. Heycke noted that typically people did not ask for remuneration – either they were willing to grant an easement or they were not.

Project timelines were discussed. Caldwell noted that once a design consultant was hired, people along the two-mile stretch would receive notice. Lewis stated that APRC should prepare to move quickly at that time to ascertain the possibilities for easements. McFarland noted that Minica would spearhead the effort. McFarland stated that the Master Plan chapter about the TID Ditch should be updated to include information about the project. Caldwell agreed to provide the particulars.

IV. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

- ***Editing the Trails Master Plan Document***

McFarland stated that the plan to use the editing power of “Google Docs” had been delayed and might be denied altogether. The City was concerned about the potential for hacking the City’s websites through a back door of the software. Black noted that the City would want to be in control of the program, including management of the passwords. Richards stated that City policies prohibited the use of outside software and/or use of personal Google accounts for City business.

Chapman asked about alternatives for editing the Master Plan. Jensen relayed experience in updating the 2016 Ashland Forest Plan that was edited through an exchange of emails. Black commented that coordinating edits with various people making changes to documents over email was difficult.

McFarland stated that the City had asked for additional time to determine the best way to proceed. He noted that Committee members were acting as representatives for the City in their work.

Black highlighted the security issue and a records issue in determining next steps. Chapman asked about violating public meeting laws. Black indicated that there were nuances in the laws that governed transmissions but that he was not optimistic that permission would be granted to use an outside source for the Trails Master Plan Update project.

Jensen suggested emails as an alternative. Black agreed, stating that Jeff or Jason should be copied when drafts were edited. Brandy indicated that there were challenges to keeping track of changes. Jensen replied that a protocol should be set up. McGinnis advocated for date-sensitive tracking.

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- ***Finish Chapter Narrative Writing Assignments.***

McFarland referred to the sign-up sheet for chapter narrative assignments. McGinnis asked about timelines. McFarland explained that the group would review drafts as they were completed.

- ***Set up Google Docs Examples – Torsten Heycke***

Edits using Google Docs are prohibited at this time. APRC will explore alternatives and report back at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- a. ***Review Cascade-Foothills Chapter Narrative – David Chapman***

Jensen expressed concern about an alternative for group editing. Heycke replied that he did not recommend editing for grammatical issues until the narrative was written. He counseled that initially, the focus should be on trails rather than format. McFarland added that using the format present in the original Master Plan would provide continuity and could function as a template for new corridors as well as modifications of the original document. Heycke noted that the existing formatting structure was awkward when writing narrative for the Eastside and Westside Forestlands but doable. Chapman reported that he was not as good about following the

format in his write-up. He stated that he was unsure about the scope or scale that should be covered. He envisioned the space between Butler Creek Road to Highway 66 to Grizzly Peak – what routes could be developed, what the terrain was like and where the opportunities were for connectivity. He stated that he would convert the narrative into the agreed-upon format once completed.

Richards stated that visualizing the space as Chapman had done would help to define mapping in the area. She commented that she needed to know what the boundaries were as well as details about trails already in existence.

Further discussion focused on future possibilities for undeveloped areas.

Gardiner reported that the Bear Creek Greenway Foundation was close to choosing a preferred route to Emigrant Lake.

McFarland stated that a general description of the areas might be all that could be completed at this time when so much was unknown about where the future trail connections might develop.

Brandy noted that large areas that were not yet developed would overlap into other Chapters. He indicated that the Eastside was almost more about regional trails than the Cascade Foothills. Brandy suggested that tracts of land could be described and the possibilities for trails detailed in the narrative. Brandy agreed to cover Regional Trails.

McGinnis noted that the narratives should also include the future availability and possible acquisition of properties for connectivity.

Jensen advised that some criteria be established for inclusion into the expected outcome sections. Chapman agreed, stating that if there was no vision, one would not be considered. McGinnis proposed collectively reaching agreement regarding the specific vision for a particular area.

McFarland agreed, stating that a discussion of potential side corridors that the Committee had identified would fit into existing Chapters. Jensen suggested that the existing topic of linkages could be renamed Linkages and Side Corridors. McFarland reiterated that the tables for existing documents and notes could be integrated into the document as well. In response to a reference by Heycke, McFarland stated that Committee members would receive an editable document of the original Master Plan. He noted that if needed, a Subcommittee could later be established that could review the edits and put them into a final form. Jensen and Brandy volunteered to take on the Executive Summary and perform a review of the chapter narrative rough drafts. He explained the importance of developing an overarching voice. He stated that they would begin the process of polishing the narratives and collating Chapters.

A process was agreed upon where Committee members would write the narratives and submit them to Jensen and Brandy for review/polishing. The document would then come before the Committee as a whole for final approval. It was agreed that expected outcomes would be called “Hopes and Dreams” for reference purposes but would be re-named at a later date for further clarity.

Brandy suggested that Chapter vision statements become concise within each Chapter and the expanded details reported in the Regional Trails Chapter. Other decisions addressed photos, links to maps and possible technical issues like embedding a link as an object. McFarland stated that any photos submitted to APRC could be saved in a folder as a resource for consideration/inclusion into the Master Plan. Themes could be decided later if they were thought to be helpful. Brandy suggested forwarding photos with names, dates and other pertinent information along with a brief description of the photo. He advocated for the establishment of a bibliography.

VII. UPCOMING MEETING DATE

December 15, 2017 @ The Grove, Otte-Peterson Room, 10:00 a.m.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:43 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Manuel, Minute-Taker
Trail Master Plan Update Committee
Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission

These Minutes are not a verbatim record. The narrative has been condensed and paraphrased at times to reflect the discussions and decisions made. Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission Subcommittee meetings are digitally recorded and are available upon online.