

City of Ashland
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
TRAIL MASTER PLAN UPDATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
September 29, 2017

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

ABSENT: **Committee Members:** David Chapman, Jim McGinnis

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Jensen called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. at 51 Winburn Way, Ashland OR.

II. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. August 11, 2017

Motion: Gardiner moved to approve the Minutes of August 11, 2017. Brandy seconded and the motion carried.

b. August 25, 2017

Motion: Gardiner moved to approve the Minutes of August 25, 2017.

Richard referred to Page 2, Map 1 noting that the reference to "*Jackson Street*" should be to *Jackson Road*.

Chambers asked that his title be changed to AF & R Division Chief-Forestry, Chis Chambers.

Motion: Gardiner moved to approve the Minutes of August 25, 2017. Lewis seconded and the motion carried as amended.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- *Open Forum*

Jim Falkenstein of 540 Dakota Way, Ashland, OR. was called forward.

Falkenstein commented that there were a number of parking areas at trailheads that had not been officially designated as such and had no official parking. Falkenstein referred to the Trails Master Plan,

Objective B2 Chapter II under the heading Trails Access and Connectivity, which said that it was an objective to: "Provide parking at major trailheads." Falkenstein suggested that parking locations should be specifically listed in the Master Plan. He stated that in those instances where private property owners allow parking, signage should say thank you.

Kristi Mergenthaler of Southern Oregon Land Conservancy stated that one possible trail to consider would be in an area in Siskiyou Mountain Park called the Mad Hatter. She noted that the area was steep and therefore lesser known.

Mergenthaler noted that she could be a resource for the Master Plan, particularly for the section describing flora and fauna, or in undeveloped areas such as the Cascade Foothills.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was none.

NEW BUSINESS

- a. *Review and Discuss Additional Trail Corridors*
 - i. Western Forest Lands
 - II. Eastern Forest Lands

Jensen proposed further discussion regarding the nomenclature used for areas that have not been specifically named. He stated that finding names for these places was difficult and he and Chair Chapman recommended that descriptive identifiers be eliminated and new areas identified by location.

Discussion began with references to a large area on the East side called the Imperatrice Property. In response to a question by Jensen, Lewis noted that the Imperatrice Property would be listed under Cascade Foothills because of the location of the property. Lewis commented that the name came from the original land purchased by the City of Ashland, and a myriad of documents referred to the land by that name. Richards talked about references in mapping, indicating that the Imperatrice Property would be just one property in the area called the Cascade Foothills. Brandy concurred, noting for example that corridors could be developed within the property.

Gardiner noted that the map referred to the "West Side" rather than Western Forest Lands or West Side Forest Lands. It was agreed by consensus that the areas under discussion would be called West Side Forestlands and East Side Forestlands.

Richards stated that the map depicted trails that were not considered sanctioned trails. These trails revealed traffic patterns – where people go when hiking or traveling by foot. Some are well used such as Mystical, Misdemeanour and others.

Heycke noted that there was a trail currently under construction in the watershed called Rickety. The trail begins at the junction of Horngap and 2060 and connects to the 200 Road.

McFarland talked about the tables that were being prepared that document ideas about future trails: what is known, suggested corridors or side corridors and other pertinent details. Most of the detail captured either within the Master Plan itself or as addenda might include information from the tables.

Brandy suggested incorporating the information into the Master Plan itself. There followed further discussion about how best to update the Master Plan for future use without losing information that might or might not be helpful. Jensen talked about the judgment calls regarding integrated information versus information that is too nebulous or the timelines too far into the future for inclusion. He gave the example of Otis Street and the potential opportunity to connect with the Billings Ranch. He stated that he would not want that lost in notes because it could become an acquisition. McFarland talked about reviewing the tables to determine whether the data should be set aside or incorporated into the Master Plan. Lewis talked about the value of strategy and tactics when considering connectivity. Gardiner stated that the more information included in the Master Plan, the more guidance there would be.

Discussion focused on the role consultant Mark Mularz would play in compiling the work completed by the Committee. Jensen recommended that the document be as complete as possible, with the consultant completing the editing and polishing it for the final presentation. In response to a question by Jensen, McFarland stated that the Master Plan would function as a reference for APRC when trails include potential easements. The Master Plan would also be helpful as a resource for establishing goals and objectives.

Lewis talked about the development of Railroad Park and the need for reference materials as an example. In that case, the document that was pertinent was the City's Comprehensive Plan. He stated that information in the plan strengthened the case for development of the park – establishing a rationale for moving forward. McFarland added that the Master Plan details historical data and promotes transparency so the public is informed – particularly if private property is involved.

West Side Forestlands

Lewis talked about connectivity with Hitt Road, noting that some sections of the trail were under Forest Service jurisdiction and some sections were privately owned. McFarland noted that much of the land in that area was owned by one property owner, even though it was several tax lots.

Ostrich Peak was identified as private property and trails to the Peak are unsanctioned. In response to a question by Jensen, McFarland noted that the easements were needed to convert unsanctioned trails to official trails for connectivity. Richards stated that Ostrich Peak could become a destination trail if property owners were willing to work with APRC to create sanctioned trails.

Lewis proposed mention of the unsanctioned trails in the Master Plan so that the public would know that working with homeowners was an integral part of the trails process.

There followed a discussion of the various tax lots within the West Side Forestlands. It was noted that unsanctioned trails were prevalent traversing private property. Heycke asked whether unsanctioned trails should be acknowledged in the Master Plan. He stated that doing so could encourage the creation of additional unsanctioned or “rogue” trails. McFarland suggested that references in the document could focus on plans to build trails rather than plans to convert rogue trails to sanctioned trails. Brandy agreed, stating that references do not have to be specific out of respect for private property owners who may or may not be willing to provide easements.

McFarland stated that the newly acquired Hitt Road should be listed as a priority. He detailed existing trails that connect with Hitt Road. McFarland also described the importance of Hitt Road for trail connectivity in Ashland’s watershed.

Heycke stated that there were several rogue trails that were built upon old road beds – resulting in trails that are in good condition. He indicated that mountain bikers in particular travel on Mohie Trail to Hitt Road. McFarland noted as an example one homeowner’s property that has multiple trails. APRC worked with the homeowner to develop one route that traverses the property. This plan gave hikers a legitimate trail to travel and the homeowner an opportunity to block unsanctioned trails through his land. McFarland explained that arranging a win-win for property owners was standard protocol for Parks. He listed several ways to mitigate a trail running through private property, including neighborhood meetings.

It was agreed that a disclaimer should be included in the Master Plan that discourages the establishment of rogue trails. Jensen stated that a list should be prepared of trails that are not sanctioned but that are earmarked for future development. Richards suggested that property owners be consulted **in advance** of any proposals for future trails. Chambers noted that the Master Plan should also not contain depictions of rogue trails that are on private land. He proposed that broad areas be highlighted, and that references to trail development be vague. Chambers suggested that Hitt Road be considered as an exception. McFarland relayed that Hitt Road is an important priority and it also traverses private property. Chambers advised that the proposed trail be outlined only in the areas owned by APRC and on Forest Service land with no notations where the road crosses private land.

There followed discussion that focused on experiences with unofficial trails. Richards stated that City maps could not contain trails on private property unless it was an emergency situation. Heycke cited an example of a trail called Toothpick that was not sanctioned but was recorded on any number of maps. He noted that today’s technology is easily accessed and a trail overlay could be depicted on a Google map.

Gardiner inquired about how best to approach private property owners. McFarland replied that there was no pre-determined process. Depending upon the circumstances, the appropriate agency initiated contact. Chambers agreed to contact the property owner along Hitt Road to determine how best to identify trails in that area.

Heycke talked about the Wonder Trail – a trail where the land is owned in part by the Forest Service and in part by the City. He stated that the City part has not yet been properly routed. The Forest Service side is scheduled for development this fall or during the winter. Heycke explained the process of creating a new trail – stating that development of the route could take up to a year to complete. McFarland highlighted another step in the process for trails in the forested areas – ones that requires an application for the trail that is submitted to the Forest Lands Commission for approval. Heycke stated that the City portion of the Wonder Trail was more complicated because of tentative plans that call for the trail to end at a location slated for a new water treatment plant.

Chambers stated that another potential trail in the West Side Forestlands is the area where the TID trail converges with the Ashland Creek Estates. He stated that the area was very controversial given that the trail was originally supposed to go beyond the subdivision but no route was established. Instead, rogue trails developed. Brandy suggested going around the subdivision along the ridge. Heycke noted that rerouting the trail had been considered and an easement obtained but the funds were appropriated elsewhere. McFarland agreed, stating that the Bird's Nest Trail was also affected. Because the plans for the subdivision were changed without notice, the trail does not go anywhere.

Brandy proposed a section in the Master Plan addressing parking at the trailheads. He stated that there were places where trails met neighborhoods, creating a conflict. Signage sometimes includes no parking signs in populated areas created by the homeowners. It was agreed that the Master Plan should refer to parking with as much clarity as possible.

Brandy also proposed changing the name of the Central Bike Path to the Central Path. He stated that the change in nomenclature could be phased in over time. He stated that in his opinion, the reference to a bike path does not adequately describe all the uses for the trail. Gardiner stated that the City most likely used the name because of connectivity and inclusion in the TSP. Jensen suggested further discussion about the issue.

It was agreed by consensus that the next meeting would be held on October 20, 2017.

AJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Manuel, Minute-Taker
Trail Master Plan Committee of the 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