

MINUTES – APPROVED
ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION (APRC)
Trails Master Plan Review Subcommittee
November 29, 2021 – 11 a.m.
Electronic Meeting

Present:

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: APRC Commissioner Rick Landt, APRC Commissioner Leslie Eldridge, City of Ashland Councilor Stephen Jensen, Ashland Forest Lands Commissioner Luke Brandy, Jeffrey McFarland, Ashland Woodlands & Trails Association Torsten Heycke, David Chapman, Brooke Hansen, Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association Member Casey Botts

APRC & CITY STAFF: APRC Director Michael A. Black, City of Ashland Fire Department Forestry Division Chief Chris Chambers, City of Ashland GIS Specialist Lea Richards, APRC Open Space Supervisor Jason Minica, APRC Executive Analyst Dorinda Cottle

PRESENTERS: Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association Member Ian Cropper

Absent:

Ashland Forest Lands Commissioner Priscila Franco

[View recording of meeting](#)

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[Trails Master Plan Review Subcommittee Meeting – November 1, 2021 Minutes](#)

Motion: Chapman moved to approve the Minutes from November 1, 2021 as presented. Botts seconded.

Vote: The vote was all yes.

III. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

None

IV. PUBLIC INPUT

[Written comments](#) were received and have been posted online, in addition to [staff comment](#)

Joanne Eggers made the following statements during the meeting, regarding the proposed mountain bike trails on the east slope of Lithia Park:

- She strongly supports the Lithia Park Master Plan and wants to respect the values of Lithia Park and protect it as it is
- She pointed out that the Lithia Park Master Plan suggests making more defined trails along Glenview St and Winburn Way, and potential land acquisition along Glenview. In the guiding focus, the document recommends supporting the slowest mode of travel, which of course is pedestrians
- She does not want to see mountain bikes on the east slope, and feels it would be a challenge to police for APRC and the Ashland Police Department
- She stated that building a trail on the east slope for mountain bikers could set a precedent for other user groups who may want their own trail

- She hopes this proposal will be removed from the list of considerations

V. CONTINUATION OF REVIEW AND QUESTIONS OF RVMBA (ROGUE VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKE ASSOCIATION) PROPOSAL (View [meeting packet](#) for background information and for the RVMBA Proposal, *City of Ashland, Sustainable Mountain Bike Trails*)

- Black announced that City of Ashland Councilor, Stephen Jensen, is now part of the Trails Master Plan Review Subcommittee, as a voting member of the group
- The RVMBA Plan contains 10 proposals – Six (6) proposals are directly related to APRC managed lands; the other four (4) are on COA lands
- Botts clarified there are three (3) more proposals; however, he will not present on one of them, which is Acid Castles, because RVMBA does not have a proposal for this property at this time
- Botts presented on the following proposals at this meeting:
 - **South Ashland Connecting Climb and Downhill Trails**—This proposal addresses neighborhood connectivity, user experience and tourism. [View the proposal](#)
 - RVMBA would like to disperse traffic to the southside of town to reduce pressure on the trails system. Currently, nearly 100% of mountain bike traffic exists the watershed in the Lithia Park area
 - Dispersing traffic would help with neighborhood connectivity, trail sustainability and user experience
 - Currently, most riders do not utilize the White Rabbit Trail in Siskiyou Mountain Park (SMP), because it is steep and not optimized for bikes, and is a shared multi-user trail. Cropper pointed out that the grade in some places on Whiter Rabbit is 15 to 20% and can be a dangerous to ride on or even hike on
 - Botts stated that the subcommittee will need to decide if the focus of this proposal is neighborhood connectivity or to increase tourism, as this would affect the final outcome
 - Botts presented the following proposed options for the eastside of SMP, in particular in relation to the White Rabbit Trail:
 - DOWNHILL OPTION A – White Rabbit becomes a bike optimized, bike only downhill trail from Lookingglass to the bottom of Cheshire Cat, with a Park St exit. This would require removing steps on the White Rabbit trail and reducing the gradient in some sections
 - DOWNHILL OPTION B – Create a new trail that goes around White Rabbit to the north. This trail would also have a Park St exit
 - CLIMB TRAIL OPTION A – A continuation of the [SMP Climb Trail](#) (presented at an earlier meeting on [October 20, 2021](#)). The climb trail would be extended to White Rabbit and would cross the Mike Uhtoff trail. Work would still need to be done on White Rabbit to address the steep gradient
 - CLIMB TRAIL OPTION B – Create a new trail on the northside of White Rabbit. There is also the possibility of this trail being a multi-directional trail due to good sightlines
 - Botts presented ideas for the upper/westside SMP, the area west of Lookingglass on White Rabbit
 - Bring in the unofficial Fenceline Trail, which would then bypass the undesirable sections of White Rabbit. This could allow for connectivity to the proposed new trail to the north of White Rabbit, for example, with riders exiting on Park St
 - Continue the proposed Downhill trail (DOWNHILL OPTION B, above) all the way across to the west, to the White Rabbit Parking Lot
 - Botts then presented different sample outcomes by combining different ideas
 - Landt expressed concern about the Mike Uhtoff trail crossing the White Rabbit trail twice, and could there be an opportunity to change this? Minica and McFarland explained that the reason for this was terrain-based and recommendations from geologists created boundaries that effected the design, and some of the area was deemed for wildlife only

- Minica addressed the idea of making the Fenceline trail an official trail, and pointed out that historically APRC tries to keep trails away from private properties with potential or existing trespassing problems
 - Brandy said his biggest concern is mountain bike poaching on the Uhtoff trail and unofficial trails close to private property. He would like to see all mountain bike trails on one side or the other of the Uhtoff trail to prevent mountain bike poaching on Uhtoff
 - Botts pointed out that mountain bike poaching is a symptom of the problems with the current system. Implementing parts of the plan would effectively end this issue
 - Chambers said he thinks of these issues in layers: wildlife (SMP is under a conservancy easement), recreation, fire management, vegetation, geology. He would like to put these layers on a map. Some of the areas in SMP will not be useable for trails. Generally, for wildlife species and biodiversity conservation, you want to try to put everything in the smallest area as possible to avoid disturbances; keeping trails to a corridor, for example, where you leave larger tracts of undisturbed areas, as people and dogs have an impact on wildlife. And lastly, safety for riders. Extraction of injured people can be challenging. Attempting to keep hazards down is important
 - Eldridge stated that we have an opportunity to make SMP safer, the terrain more stable and reduce erosion
 - McFarland stated that White Rabbit was built in early 90s according to how it was to be built as described in the original McCormick [Ashland Forest Plan](#), using portions of existing fire roads and creating new trail sections in between. White Rabbit was designed to be a multi-use trail for single-track bike, hiking and limited equestrian. He pointed out that White Rabbit is part of the Creek to Crest trail route that goes from Ashland to Mt Ashland and the Pacific Crest Trail. McFarland said he does see areas in SMP that could be improved, including the steeper sections of White Rabbit. McFarland also mentioned the area north of Cheshire Cat on the lower downhill section (OPTION A) in SMP, and a geologist had reported this area to be a significant landslide hazard area in the WUI (watershed user interface). It is also an area actively being used by the Pacific fisher, and it is close/leads to private properties/neighborhoods (community layer) with no public throughway/exit. Black stated this gives RVMBA a good idea of what to prepare for as far as concerns, and to be better prepared with all of the layers in mind
 - Cropper added the importance of all of the layers, and stated he would like to see a list of concrete concerns
- **Imperatrice Property**—This land addresses regional connectivity, user experience and tourism. [View the proposal](#)
- Botts pointed out on the Imperatrice map that the land below the TID (Talent Irrigation District) is currently leased for grazing
 - Concepts for the property include:
 - Dual slalom track
 - Loop trail
 - Connection to Grizzly Peak (an easement would be needed)
 - Opportunities for events
 - Botts stated that some of the ideas generated in a conceptual trail plan by the City and APRC, and ideas from groups like AWTA (Ashland Woodland and Trails Association) could be worked into the proposal by RVMBA
 - Black provided background on Imperatrice. The land is currently City of Ashland property and APRC has been in negotiations with the City to discuss if the property should remain City land or be managed by APRC

- Eldridge said that it seems the City of Ashland Council and the Ashland Chamber of Commerce are interested in the tourism aspect of mountain biking and trail development. It seems this particular project would be focused on events and tourism and it seems appropriate for the City to be involved with this. Black said one of the layers with this proposal is the wastewater treatment plant. The issue is more with land below the TID, than it is with land above the canal. The key to this will be the exact location of the dual slalom and how it relates to any future plans the City of Ashland Public Works Department has for this property
 - Hansen asked if the loop trail would accommodate other types of racing, like short track or cyclocross, as an additional draw for tourists? Botts said the area is large enough and there are examples of other cities with tracks that encompass different racing styles
- Landt suggested that the group meet in person next, and before that meeting, all subcommittee members complete a questionnaire. The goal of the questionnaire would be for the group to find common ground and decide where to focus their energy. Landt clarified that the next meeting would be more conceptual and from there the group will form small working groups. The subcommittee decided to meet on December 14, 2021, at Noon, at the Butler Memorial Bandshell in Lithia Park
- Jensen said from a City Council standpoint there has been a concern about process and identifying the specific steps in getting a new trail actualized. Black stated that he and Chambers are working on a draft MOU that will address the process

Action Items:

- Landt and Eldridge will develop the agenda/questionnaire for the December 14 meeting
- Chapman, McFarland and Heycke offered to help APRC Board of Commissioners, Landt and Eldridge, in the development of this process

VI. ADJOURNMENT – Meeting Adjourned at 12:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
 Dorinda Cottle
 APRC Executive Analyst