



***Minutes* FOR A MEETING OF THE
ASHLAND FOREST LANDS COMMISSION**

Tuesday, April 12th, 2011

5:30PM to 7:30PM

**Siskiyou Room, Community Development Building
51 Winburn Way**

- I. CALL TO ORDER: 5:30 PM**
Dan Maymar, Marty Main, Chris Chambers, Nadine Leskowitz, , Chris Iverson, Jeff McFarland, Gary Pool, John Williams, Deborah Gordon, Albert Pepe, Tracy Harding, Stefanie Seffinger
- II. INTRODUCTIONS:** Welcome New Parks Commission Liaison
- III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** March 8th meeting
M/S Iverson and Williams to approve minutes as submitted.
- IV. PUBLIC FORUM**
- V. ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA**
Moved Public Outreach Plan, map project to the first item. Others as indicated.
- VI. BUSINESS**
 - A. Public Outreach Plan—Watershed Map Project Text
Williams has been working on the last details of the design for the back of the map text. He'll submit the final PDF file to Chambers for plotting the poster size version onto photo paper. Williams proposed using the USGS topo map as a watermark for the background. The topo map would not be readable or intended for navigation use. The topo map was favored by the commission and others so Williams will get it done and email it around as a final version and to Chambers for the poster size print.
 - B. Earth Day Event Planning
Chambers will email about the booth location with other booths adjacent.
 - C. Trails/Recreation Policy Development
Tracy Harding from Rogue Valley Farm to School is sponsoring their second annual fundraiser event, a trails event for runners and bikers. They'd like to keep the event in downtown and would like the trails portions to go on City lands, but currently those trails (BTO and Waterline) are not officially designated trails. Tracy and Deborah are considering alternate routes based on feedback from the City saying that the trails aren't authorized for event use and there's a process underway to decide which trails are going to be authorized and how to approve requests for special events.

Williams had to leave, but gave his support to the proposal to have the trails authorized for the event in September. The event plan is a six leg relay that would include the running section up through Lithia Park, City land, private land, and Forest Service. The event has brought in funding for the Farm to School program and built community around it. McFarland commented on the Parks Dept discussion about trail use and the additional liability assumed when an event is granted permission on City lands. Gordon said that the event has its own insurance and covers land owners who are included in the race course. Iverson asked if the BTO trail has ever had work done on it. Main agreed with McFarland that the trail has never been maintained due to its unofficial status. McFarland would evaluate and upgrade the trail to make it official in the future including water bars, line of sight, erosion, specific elements for the agreed upon use, steepness, signage, to name a few. Seffinger asked what the potential downside is for a singles use event. McFarland thinks the event use would encourage further use. Seffinger asked about potential geologic issues. Main answered that the City at one point fell trees across the BTO trail to close it, but it was opened again. If the current trend continues of increased use, we'll get to the point where resources are degraded and impact the land, in a municipal watershed where the usual mode of management in other municipal watersheds is to keep people out. Recent management for fire safety and forest health has opened the forests to more trail use. Main explained that there is a downside to the use of the forests and we need to acknowledge the downside to the increasing use through a process to develop a responsible policy. Iverson asked who was the body that sanctioned the current authorized use. McFarland said the Fire Department originally gave the OK for the BTI to be improved for public use, although it was an unauthorized trail before that. Parks did work to close and reroute parts of the BTI and Main's company has done work to close other unauthorized trails in conjunction with Parks. Chambers was sure that there was no formal process for sanctioning the trail. Geological studies in the area have severely limited the management options on particular drainages in the BTI area due to homes located in drainages. Gordon offered to include information about the watershed at race areas, and in the race information packet no matter where the runners go. There isn't a flyer currently developed but one could be produced for this effort. Seffinger asked if the geological analysis might be partially paid for by the event. Iverson suggested the event be proposed with the insurance issue to the City Council as a way to bring the issue to the forefront. Karns commented that the insurance is one part of the issue and didn't think that approval would be granted until the policy is in place. Iverson made a motion that the commission embark in an effort to create a trails policy. McFarland offered that the Parks Department has an existing trails plan that can be referred to. Seffinger has noted increasing conflicts between hikers and bikers and the increasing erosion. Maymar asked what The commission would like to do to move ahead. A question was posed asking what trails are affected, such as Toothpick. Chambers explained that the trails above on Forest Service land are under a separate but related planning effort to study trail use and impact looking to create new trails

proposed by users. McFarland explained that the Ashland Woodland Trails Association is working on a proposal with a draft due at the end of April to the Forest Service. The AWTA has raised money to help fund the environmental analysis for the trails plan. The Forest Service's efforts will need to go hand in hand with what the City decides. The trails analysis showed that some trails are unsustainable, particularly Jabberwocky, which empties into City land and the Waterline trail, which is unauthorized currently. It is one of the few trails that skirts the water treatment plant and reservoir, which need to stay off limits. Maymar asked if the Forest Service trail study included any City trails, and McFarland wasn't sure. Maymar then asked if a study could be done on City trails. Pool would like to see a document that addresses the issues with trails and perhaps lists any agreements between the City and Forest Service. McFarland said that although there has been a lot of work jointly approved, there isn't a formal agreement. Iverson suggested finding a past process that led to certification of trails on City land. Chambers said that there wasn't a formal process and there may not be any notes to review. McFarland said the first step to reviewing trails would be a geology review of the area to see what issues are present before a trail could be approved or improved. A feasibility study might be a good and cheaper first step. Karns would like to see a larger view taken of this project to give context and direction. Chambers suggested looking at the Ashland Forest Plan and other Forest Lands Commission documents to see how the efforts were organized and what background information can be taken from them. The Parks Trails Master Plan would also be a good resource. Pool said that the current commercial uses would not be compatible in upper parts of the watershed and yet we're considering the same thing here. The question was raised about user fees and how events and commercial uses are permitted and fees charged by the Forest Service and if that could be charged by the City to create a maintenance fund. Iverson would like to see the AWTA proposal as soon as it's available to start giving input on the Forest Service trails plan. He'd like to see a checklist created of issues that can be addressed. It might take a couple meetings to really define what needs to be done. The Forest Service process will be extended due to the environmental analysis (NEPA) process they will need to undertake. Pool suggested going into it with the watershed and its values as a priority and then assess how trails are compatible, rather than setting out to approve trails. The commission can look at the current map of trails to see what trails on City were assessed and an idea of how many are out there. At least to use the same process and standard that the Forest Service used to evaluate their trails. Seffinger would like to develop a starting point for the effort. McFarland suggested taking on what is possible at this point and not dependent on the Forest Service, plus what's physically possible in the watershed with ownerships and use patterns. There is another proposal made by the AWTA to create a hiker only trail in the BTI trail area. The issues are the same with that proposal. Iverson would like to identify the stakeholders that need to be involved in this process including City departments, Forest Service, user groups, and interested public. Karns and McFarland will guide an effort to identify next steps and gather information.

D. AFR Project Update including Community Engagement

Chambers explained that draft prescriptions for tree thinning (or density management) have been circulated for review among partners, Forest Service specialists/biologists, external experts, and the three person Implementation Review Team the AFR partners have asked to review major steps in the AFR planning process. The Implementation Review Team was out today with the AFR partnership to see the translation of the prescriptions in the watershed. Sample flagging was used to show which trees could be thinned based on the prescription direction. There will be a public review to follow in a few weeks and then a similar review process for block 2 as actual tree marking is undertaken once the prescriptions have been certified by the Forest Service. Trees won't actually be thinned until next spring. Seffinger asked about removal of any products that have economic value. Chambers answered that although certain trees do have value and will be sold, the value is not expected to make up for the cost of their removal via helicopter, a method used to protect fragile soils. The actual return or degree to which the project will be subsidized, depends on the value of wood on the market, which is being affected by low housing starts in the United States, but inflated by demand from China at the moment. The projection is for there to be a net loss of money to get the ecologically appropriate work done. Other aspects of the AFR project work include monitoring of spotted owl prey such as squirrels and woodrats, tracking of Pacific fishers, and community engagement work. Work on the ground right now is limited to crews that are making burn piles from small trees and brush that was thinned recently. There will be more work on the ground in May or June. Public tours will be advertised soon.

Motion was made by Iverson to adjourn the meeting at 7:30. Pool seconded and all ayes marked the close of the meeting.

- E. Update on City lands controlled burn planning
- F. Ashland Water Advisory Committee Update
- G. Commission 3-Year Goals progress

VII. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

VIII. REVIEW AND SET COMMISSION CALENDAR / NEXT MEETING

- A. Next Regularly Scheduled Meeting: May 10th, 2011

IX. ADJOURN: 7:30 PM

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Public Works Office at 488-5587 (TTY phone number 1 800 735 2900). Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to the meeting (28 CFR 35.102-35.104 ADA Title I).