

City of Ashland
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
TRAIL MASTER PLAN UPDATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
October 20, 2017

PRESENT: **Parks Commissioner:** Jim Lewis
 Additional Committee Members: Torsten Heycke, Stephen Jensen, Jim McGinnis
 City and APRC Staff: AF&R Forestry Division Chief Chis Chambers; APRC Interim Parks
 Superintendent Jeffrey McFarland; APRC Forestry/Trails Div. Supervisor Jason Minica, GIS
 Analyst Lea Richards
 APRC Minute-taker: Betsy Manuel

ABSENT: **Parks Commissioner:** Mike Gardiner
 Committee Members: Luke Brandy, David Chapman
 APRC Staff: Director Michael Black

I. CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chair Jensen called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. at 1195 E. Main Street, Ashland OR.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. September 8, 2017
- b. September 29, 2017

Amendments to the Minutes of September 8, 2017:

Page 3, Paragraph 7: *Tolman Creek Corridor does not follow Tolman Creek.*
Should be: *Tolman Creek Corridor does not follow Tolman Creek Rd.*

Page 1 Attendees: *Jim McGinnis (11:22)*
Should be: *Jim McGinnis (10:22)*

Motion: Lewis moved to approve the Minutes of September 8, 2017, as amended. McGinnis seconded and the motion carried.

Amendments to the Minutes of September 29, 2017:

Page 2, Paragraph 2: *Kristi Mergenthaler of Southern Oregon Conservancy (SOLC) stated that one possible trail to consider would be in an area in Siskiyou Mountain Park.*
Should be: *Kristi Mergenthaler of Southern Oregon Conservancy stated that one possible trail to consider decommissioning would be the Mad Hatter Trail in Siskiyou Mountain Park.*

Page 5, Paragraph 2: *McFarland agreed, stating that the Bird's Nest Trail was also affected.*
Should be: *McFarland agreed, stating that the Hearts Nature trail was also affected.*

Page 4, Paragraph 3 *“Mohie” Trail*
Should be: *Moai Trail*

There followed further discussion regarding the value of tying the Master Plan to other official plans to bolster a proposed action. Lewis referred to research that strengthened the rationale for development of the Railroad Park – pointing out that references in the Comprehensive Plan validated the proposal for a new park.

McGinnis stated that he would like to add future discussion about the undeveloped land on the opposite side of the railroad tracks.

Richards asked for clarification of a statement made by McFarland that listed Hitt Road as a priority. She stated that the City has not acquired the property. Lewis noted that there was a section of Hitt Road that was newly acquired by APRC. Chambers added that connectivity would be a priority given that there were two or three properties between Hitt Road and Forest Service trails. It was agreed that the statement would be amended to read “McFarland stated that Hitt Road should be listed as a priority.”

Motion: Heycke moved to approve the Minutes of September 29, 2017, as amended. McGinnis seconded and the motion carried.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

McGinnis asked for a discussion regarding the undeveloped land on the north side of the railroad because of the potential for connectivity with the Imperatrice Property. He stated that in his experience, proactively developing ideas for possible trails in the area could be factored into plans for development resulting in a more favorable outcome.

There followed further discussion about a focus for the land along the railroad. McGinnis suggested inviting a representative from the Planning Department to participate. Jensen concurred, noting that the Master Plan was specific about interfacing with other Agencies and the process included integration with other plans. Trails Master Plan objectives could become part of the planning process when appropriate.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Westside Forestlands (new area)

Chambers met with a private property owner on the west side about the unofficial trails that traversed private property near Hitt Road. The owner stated that he was willing to consider granting an easement for a designated trail to replace the unsanctioned trails. Chambers suggested that further discussion would be appropriate with a limited number of participants (with a representative from AWTA, APRC Forestry Division and the AF & R Forestry Division) to talk about a path forward that would suit the landowner. The property includes the Hitt Road Corridor, the Moai Trail, the Mystical Trail, and Ostrich Peak, among others. Chambers stated that discussion should emphasize the importance of Hitt Road in terms of connectivity and forest management. In response to a question by Lewis, Chambers indicated that Ostrich Peak was a

destination that the property owner might want to address, given the number of people who currently hike in the area.

Richards asked about an agreement to manage the debris along the trail or trails. Chambers replied that AF & R had been providing fuels reduction services. Jensen asked about concerns regarding increased traffic if a sanctioned trail were to develop. Chambers explained that the number of people would probably not change significantly because of the difficult terrain.

Heycke commented that mountain bikers sometimes travel in the area and maps for cyclists were beginning to include unofficial trails that are on private property. Lewis noted that sanctioned trails based upon the preferences of the landowner would help. Historical uses and landmarks including the Mystical Trail and the Fell on Knee Trail (an old roadbed that traverses City property and Forest Service land) were discussed.

Jensen asked about governmental jurisdiction and the types of agreements available. Chambers replied, stating that specifics would depend upon the outcome of negotiations with the property owner. He stated that the City owns a portion of the west side. Prevention of residential development would be critical to fire suppression efforts. McFarland stated that the original Trails Master Plan states that APRC would be the primary entity for trails development and property acquisition. Lewis noted that in some cases, the City would own the land but APRC would provide management and maintenance services.

It was agreed that a meeting would be set up with the west side landowner who owns property between the Forest Service lands and APRC's section of Hitt Road to see if an agreement could be obtained for a sanctioned trail.

2. Vandalism Update

McFarland reported that a person who had been taking apart burn piles had been arrested. He was subsequently released and McFarland raised a concern that the perpetrator would continue to vandalize trails and block forestland management. McFarland asked that the Committee be aware of the potential for vandalism and report anyone who seemed to be damaging trails or sabotaging events held on trails. Chambers emphasized that the perpetrator's actions could harm those on the trails.

3. Data Organization

McFarland initiated discussion about how to organize updates and new information. The two tables that were created were designed to (1) segregate data points and establish priorities for the Committee to incorporate into the Master Plan, and (2) to record information that would be helpful internally when future trails, property acquisitions and easements were under consideration. Table 2 also contained oral and historical data that could be used internally to move projects forward.

Discussion regarding how best to refer to private lands was reviewed, with Lewis suggesting references by tax lot number and McGinnis proposing that the general location of properties be referred to in broad context. McFarland noted efforts to protect the privacy of landowners.

It was agreed that the framework for organizing the Trails Master Plan would be finalized at the next regularly held meeting.

McFarland talked about upcoming assignments to rewrite the existing Master Plan and craft new chapters. It was agreed that a Glossary would be provided and trailhead parking addressed. Kristi Mergenthaler volunteered to work on recording the flora and fauna in new areas.

McFarland stated that he would present a list of all chapters—both existing and new—so that Committee members could work on the chapter or chapters of their choice. Final decisions to be made included the status of side corridors. Lewis suggested further review of the connectivity within the corridors that might assist with categorizing side corridors. Other areas that should be considered were HOA trails in residential developments and the undeveloped railroad property. Jensen proposed that the Central Bike Path could provide the structure to identify new areas of connectivity.

Lewis spoke optimistically about collaboration with Ashland's Planning Department, noting that the updated Trails Master Plan would document the potential for trail development. McGinnis recommended that red flag alerts be incorporated into the City's GIS system triggered by the Trails Master Plan. Richards stated that the Transportation Systems Plan incorporates trails data as well. She noted that a GIS overlay could be created depicting red flag areas, but it was unknown whether Planning would integrate the information. Lewis commented that the pre-app process for planned developments included notifications to all pertinent Agencies, and feedback was expected, depending upon the impact of the development on Agency plans. Jensen proposed that the pre-app checklist include APRC notification. Minica noted that monthly meetings are held at the Planning Department where current activity is reviewed and agency participation is encouraged. McGinnis proposed that the Master Plan address the need to collaborate with other Agencies, so that consideration of forestlands took place when projecting or planning future growth.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Review and Discuss Additional Trail Corridors

b. Eastside Forestlands (new)

Chambers noted that a large part of eastside trail development depends upon the City's decision to utilize the existing water treatment plant or build a new one. He stated that trail traffic was particularly dense in that area, but citizen feedback indicated satisfaction with the existing trails and in particular, the new Jabberwocky Trail.

McGinnis noted that the multiuse trail was dangerous because of the terrain and the use by cyclists as well as hikers. Chambers agreed, stating that development of a new trail below the waterline had been under consideration but the geology of that region was not conducive to trail development. Chambers stated he would re-approach Public Works about that trail area and discuss any viable alternatives. McGinnis pointed out a quiet area close by that should remain undisturbed. Heycke stated that there were no plans to develop one area near the Snark Trail, primarily because the area contained spotted owl habitat.

Chambers introduced a block of private properties, noting that the Alice in Wonderland Trail traversed three private properties. Heycke highlighted easements that were in place – stating that they were below the Alice in Wonderland Trail.

Chambers indicated that the White Rabbit area was a popular trail that should become a priority. He also stated that Hitt Road's connection to Acid Castle would be beneficial particularly for fire suppression access. There followed further discussion about prioritizing other eastside areas.

Heycke cited a recent article in the *Ashland Daily Tidings* that intimated the City would be purchasing all of the property where Alice in Wonderland is located. Contrary to the article, Chambers noted that much of the property is privately owned and Alice and Wonderland could be shut down. Heycke stated that one property owner has prohibited races in the area and therefore a portion of the trail race route was along the 2060 road. In order to re-join the Alice in Wonderland Trail route, racers must enter via a driveway and the turn there is sharp enough to be a safety hazard.

Chambers noted that arranging priorities should go beyond asking APRC to acquire land. He suggested instead that the question be: "How can we acquire these properties through various means?" For example, there are grant opportunities through a program for community forest acquisitions. Forestland trusts focus on properties in the public domain. In response to a question by Jensen, Chambers noted that SOLC was involved with land acquisitions and ecological maintenance in areas that the Forest Service has invested in for restoration or fuel reduction. Chambers stated that in his opinion, restoration was an important element in trails management as well.

Lewis indicated that property owners typically want to develop their properties and the question then becomes how to protect the forestland interface. A portion of Ashland's forestlands are under Jackson County jurisdiction and one solution for preventing residential development would be to acquire the properties for the City instead. Lewis stated that the Master Plan should include a discussion of the dual benefits to the trails system - the trails themselves and the limiting of residential development in sensitive interface areas. Jensen suggested listing the reasons for targeting certain areas as priorities.

McFarland explained that APRC owns two parallel trail easements running below/along the Alice in Wonderland Trail, across two of three private properties. But without gaining further connectivity to the trail or the road, the easements dead-end at the third property. In response to a question by McGinnis, McFarland stated that the steep terrain limits where trails could be responsibly built along the hillside. Geology studies had revealed unstable terrain (headwalls) in certain areas below where the trail easements have been obtained. He noted that APRC had been attempting to work with property owners in the area for many years without complete resolution. In addition, the APRC Real Estate Subcommittee determines the balance between land acquisition for trails and other responsibilities such as APRC development. Trails or trail easements are important, but not always the first priority.

Chambers pointed out the Elkader Street area connection, noting that property along the interface was highly developable and acquisitions for trails might be difficult to obtain. He advocated for trail connectivity

in the Waterline Road/Morton St. to Ivy Street area. McFarland stated that there was not yet a trail easement through that area, which covers approximately 18 acres of land. APRC owns just one acre above Liberty Street, along the TID Ditch Trail directly below that 18 acre piece. Chambers proposed flagging the area so that Planning can consider incorporating trails prior to development. Richards offered to create a map depicting eastside properties that are considered priorities. Jensen proposed that a City planner be invited to participate in crafting language that would outline the potential for trails in the area.

McFarland discussed the Creek-to-Crest Trail Route. The route begins along Bear Ck. Greenway at the Dog Park and runs through town, then goes up through the forest interface, all the way up to where it joins the Pacific Crest Trail by Mount Ashland. He stated that the route splits, and there are two different signed routes through town that come back together just above the Upper White Rabbit parking area at Caterpillar Trail: one route runs along Central Ashland Path and cuts up through Siskiyou Mountain Park along White Rabbit Trail. The other route comes through downtown and up the road through Lithia Park and then up the 2060 Rd. To join again above Upper White Rabbit trailhead/parking area at Caterpillar Trail. He noted that all of the land in Siskiyou Mountain Park/Oredson-Todd Woodlands is conserved with the assistance of SOLC and therefore inappropriate for certain types of recreational development due to the conservation easement guidelines. McFarland talked about other constraints prohibiting development of a downhill trail for mountain bike racing. McFarland relayed that there are two trail easements in place – the Clay Creek Loop Trail easement and one on the other side of that tax lot. The issue there is that the trail easements were not granted in perpetuity and the property ownership has recently changed hands. Minica stated that the new owner was building a house on the property and might or might not want to continue to grant the trail easements.

Heycke highlighted a trail called the 2020 that is near Siskiyou Mountain Park. He stated that the homeowner allowed the AWTA to build the Lizard Trail on a portion of his property.

Jensen asked that McFarland present a framework for the new document at the next regularly scheduled meeting. The proposed framework would then be reviewed and refined in preparation for the final update of the Trails Master Plan.

VII. UPCOMING MEETING DATE

a. November 3, 2017

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Manuel, Minute-Taker
Trail 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.