



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

Tuesday, March 8th, 2011

5:30PM to 7:30PM

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

I. CALL TO ORDER: 5:30 PM

Craig Gorson, Jeff McFarland (Parks Dept), John Karns, John Williams, Greg Lemhouse, Chris Iverson, Gary Pool, Chris Chambers, Tony Kerwin, Marty Main, Dan Maymar.

II. INTRODUCTIONS

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: January 11th meeting (no meeting in February due to lack of quorum) Motion made to approve January minutes by Iverson, second by Williams, all ayes.

IV. PUBLIC FORUM

V. ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA

Parks commission has been unable (to date) to appoint a liaison to the FLC.
Lemhouse and Williams will communicate with Parks commission about the liaison.

VI. BUSINESS

A. Trails/Recreation Policy Development

The Ashland Woodland and Trails Association proposed a hiker only trail near the existing BTI trail. The route was flagged and mapped as a proposal to Parks and the City. The trail is in a sensitive area for geology, access to the water treatment plant, and wildfire risk. McFarland has worked on the existing BTI trail over the years along with a volunteer who's spent hundreds of hours improving the trail over the last 3 years. The trail is a key route for recreation and major recreation events through the area. Bikes have been in conflict with hikers on the BTI due to heavy use by both groups, and limited use by horses as well. McFarland said that Parks and Public Works and Fire Dept met and agreed that the Forest Lands Commission should serve as a clearing house for proposals such as this new trail proposal. There are other issues including parking, the City water supply line. The BTI itself was not a planned trail, it was installed without OK from the City and later adopted as an official trail. The downhill bikes that are more common now are much more dangerous than the older, lighter bikes. Kerwin agrees with the idea for the pedestrian trail but thinks that the pedestrian trail should be the BTI and that bikes should be re-routed instead. McFarland explained that there are other trails on City land

that are being used and have never been approved, which are the waterline trail and the BTO trail. Someone needs to decide whether or not the trails need to be decommissioned or made official. The access to the water plant road from both trails mentioned above is an issue and a concern from Public Works. In addition, the Freeriders Association has approached Jeff to create a bike park close to the City. The popularity of biking and associated events is increasing and bringing money to Ashland. Other “parks” such as this proposed one are under development elsewhere in Oregon. The AWTA is helping with a process to develop and approve a trails plan for the watershed—mostly on Forest Service land. McFarland handed out the Parks trails plan that was developed several years ago, but does not explicitly cover the City forestlands. Iverson asked about developing a mountain bike infrastructure and encourage a split of trail traffic. McFarland suggested consulting with a geologist to see if the trail is even possible. Karns suggested getting ahead of this issue by collaborating with multiple stakeholders to develop a protocol for all trails development due to the interest, budget involved, and standards that can be coordinated with the Forest Service. Williams agrees with the others, and supports getting a plan in place to manage recreation. Gorse supports the effort as well. Trails have come up as an issue in many venues. Kerwin asked if there is a budget for geological studies and Karns said maybe we could ask the AWTA to fund it. Pool asked about a coordinated approach from Mt Ashland on down to the city. There is significant traffic from Mt Ashland into the watershed, and additional traffic from town who bike uphill and then back down. Main asked about the private land in the area. McFarland said there is no agreement with private owners for trail access/easement. They could close the Alice in Wonderland trail at any time, which would cut off the main access to the BTI trail and lower Alice on City property. McFarland mentioned the Forest Service effort (with AWTA) to study the entire trails situation in the watershed, but this doesn’t include the City trails. Williams suggested working on the proposal for the hiker alternate trail near BTI. McFarland said that Parks has been trying to separate trail traffic on upper Siskiyou Mt Park for various reasons, and has been somewhat unsuccessful in places due to bikers destroying signs. Design has to be considered to discourage bike use by being above and not as inviting as the hiker trail—steps can help discourage bikes as well. Chambers explained the existence of the fire ecology interpretive trail along the Alice and BTI trails with fixed signs and maps as part of the signs. Abandoning the BTI trail to be biker only would abandon the interpretive trail. Main said that the perspective of recreation in a municipal watershed should be heavily analyzed and considered at the large scale, watershed level. The soils and resources in the watershed dictate limited and possibly no recreation if you were looking at it with a blank slate. Portland’s watershed is not open for recreation and their soil is much less erosive than ours. The issue is much larger than just a trail—one trail often leads to many others and without a policy in place we can’t take actions to close pirate trails. Williams supports pursuing the hiker only trail and a bike park to keep bikes away from the upper watershed and support the growing demand of mountain bikes. McFarland said the issue is difficult and hard to

grasp all of the issues, especially private land access being taken away (Alice in Wonderland trail), Forest Service decisions on trails leading into City lands. Main commented how the lines on the map don't mean anything to many processes on the landscape, but we need to consider decisions not in isolation, but in concert and aware of, adjacent processes and decisions. The work in the AFR project will be opening the forest, possibly encouraging more trail use and unauthorized at that. Gorse said that the process sounds like the AFRCAT committee that created the plan that lead to the AFR project is in order for the trails issue. Main said that safety is a concern of trail users he has spoken with out in the field. Iverson suggested making this a priority for the Forest Lands Commission. Lemhouse suggested the FLC taking on the bulk of the detailed work before bringing the issue to Council, who are busy already. Kerwin would like to bring in the major stakeholders in the next FLC meeting.

B. Public Outreach Plan—Watershed Map Project Text

Williams will send out the watershed text and design via email for comments to be reviewed by the commission for next meeting, in order to finalize it for Earth Day.

C. Earth Day Event Planning

Iverson reminded the group that we wanted to have a blow up of the finalized watershed map in poster size. Also need several hundred color copies and black and white copies for coloring (for kids). **Chambers will help coordinate and staff the booth** in conjunction with the AFR partners.

D. AFR Project Update including Community Engagement

Lomakatsi was able to burn about 130 acres on Winburn Ridge – piles that were left over from the AWPP project. There are still some 300 acres more to burn and partners are waiting for the window to materialize. Lomakatsi also finished thinning work on 150 acres in block 1 and the partners reviewed the work on the ground. Main just finished writing the initial draft commercial density management prescriptions for thinning in block 1. Lemhouse asked when we might be implementing the helicopter thinning work. Main explained that the partners decided to split the work into two entries with the first one being spring of 2012. Lemhouse suggested a good campaign to inform the citizens about what happens in this project when a helicopter is flying logs out i.e. there is a thoughtful approach and the result is an intact forest. One of the reasons for splitting the helicopter thinning into two projects is market volatility to smooth out the ups and downs of the market, which means more or less acres that can be treated depending on a loss or gain of money. The market for helicopter logging is difficult even to find a good company. Blocks 1 and 2 will be included in the coming year's work with a big effort to get public comments and tours to see marked trees and understand the prescription. Main commented that the City has done this work (helicopter thinning) on its own lands already and that could serve as a good example of what the result will be in the AFR project. Chambers commented that the Winburn parcel management plan (ratified in 2009) could be implemented alongside the AFR project to capture economy of scale having the AFR

project with more acres and sharing move in costs. Market values and costs will dictate how the City could move forward on the Winburn project. The City will have to spend nearly 30,000 dollars to prepare the Winburn parcel for that opportunity, but will realize savings that could make up that amount.

E. Update on City lands controlled burn planning

Williams asked about a recent burn the day before and Chambers commented that it was the Parks Department burn in upper Lithia. Signs have been purchased and used in the area of burning and have been successful in reducing the number of calls to the Fire Department (911). Chambers explained the hiring of a prescribed burn consultant in the next week to help advise the City for burning work in AFR and on City lands. The consultant is Tom Murphy, a former BLM employee with extensive experience with burning. Main explained the City's approach to hazard reduction and the need to introduce fire on the land to do fuels maintenance for the City. One of the places we'll look at is the trail around BTI as a strategic location. Main asked the commission for input on burning a high profile location.. Lemhouse would like Staff to get info out well ahead of prescribed burning on City lands so the public knows what to expect. Chambers said that the BTI will have to be closed for 2-3 days for the burn to take place and post fire hazards to be evaluated before the trail opens. Main said we have to be cautious since trails that come out of the Forest Service land come onto City property into the burn units and there will have to be a coordinated closure of trails. Commissioners supported burning on the BTI trail with ample notification of trail users and education. The window for burning is March into May with consideration for burn conditions and smoke management priorities as well. Implementing the burn will reduce future maintenance costs that would otherwise be done by hand and was already done by hand once in the area proposed for burning in the past couple years. Albert Pepe spoke in favor of prescribed burns as described above, and with ample notification of the public regarding trails closures.

F. Ashland Water Advisory Committee Update

The committee is meeting regularly and has voted to recommend piping the TID ditch from the south end of town to Terrace St. This would get rid of the contamination issue from dog feces, and issues of leakage.

Adjourned—7:30 PM.

G. Commission 3-Year Goals progress

VII. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Kerwin and Maymar are considering not reapplying for their positions after next meeting when their terms are up.

VIII. REVIEW AND SET COMMISSION CALENDAR / NEXT MEETING

A. Next Regularly Scheduled Meeting: April 12th, 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).