

MINUTES OF MEETING

Parks, Open Space and Trails Advisory Board – July 22, 2020 Barber Park Education and Event Center

MEMBERS PRESENT: Hilarie Engle, Chris Miller

VIA WEBEX: Chuck Vertrees, Kari Kostka, Emily Reaves, Scott Frey

STAFF PRESENT: Mike Edwards, Candy Hahlbeck

OTHER: Brent Moore; Development Services via Webex, Commissioner Patrick Malloy via Webex

INTRODUCTION:

C. Miller called the meeting to order at 12:02 p.m. No conflicts of interest were declared by Advisory Board members.

H. Engle moved to approve the May 27th minutes. C. Miller Seconded. Motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS

ERIC GRACE – LAND TRUST OF THE TREASURE VALLEY:

Eric has been doing land trust work since 1997. When he was in college, his family was doing conservations easements on their family land. He realized this was a great way to work on the land protection side of conservation without working for a public agency. He is drawn to more of the private land protection side. After college he wasn't sure what he wanted to do so he went back to school and got a degree in land use planning. He then got a job at the Land Trust as an intern and was the first staff person on the Genesee Valley Conservancy. In 2011 he moved to Sandpoint, Idaho from western New York. He ended up with the Kaniksu Land Trust with a staff of 1 when he arrived to a staff of 6-7 when he left in late 2018. Eric was drawn to the Treasure Valley for personal reasons. When the previous director moved on, Eric jumped at the chance to join the Land Trust of the Treasure Valley.

The Land Trust was formed on 1996. Concerned citizens were seeing what was happening to their communities in terms of development and realized that a land trust can be an effective mechanism to help balance conversation with the growth that is happening in the community. A group of local people realized there wasn't a land trust in the Treasure Valley, so they came together and formed this private, not for profit organization. To date they have done 6 conservation easements totaling 355 acres. Those are scattered through out the Treasure Valley the furthest being in Payette County. There is also an easement in Canyon County and a few easements in Ada County. They also own land, Harrison Hollow which is the 59 acres near Healthwise, as part of Hillside to Hollow Reserve. This property was scheduled to be turned into a storage facility. In 2010 the Land Trust raised the money through a capital campaign and purchased this property for \$300,000.00. This was integrated with the Boise City's Open Space and Levy project where they were purchasing the additional Hillside to Hollow land which was 270 acres. Combined, the Land Trust and the City's property is about 300 acres. It's one of most used open space amenities they have in the Boise area. They also own a 50 acre piece of property on the east end of Eagle Island called the Perkins Nature Reserve. This was gifted to the Land Trust by land owners who didn't want to see this land developed. This is generally not open to the public because of an access issue users need to go through Idaho Concrete. They do restoration work and try to get a handle on invasive species.

The Land Trust does a lot of nontraditional land trust work. They do quite a few trail easements, either revocable or irrevocable, successfully negotiating access opportunities with private land owners. Some of the more well know trail easements would be Cartwright Ridge were there is an easement with the Little Family. This connects Cartwright Road to Hidden Springs.

There's also trail easements up at Bogus Basin, one of which is called Entrance Exam. This trail accesses the Stack Rock area. Entrance Exam will be decommissioned because the Forrester Service has built the new access point to access Stack Rock. In addition, there are trail easements with Avimor and the Grossman Family in the Dry Creek area.

Trail easements are a great way to connect people with nature in partnership with the Ridge to Rivers network. While it's not permanent land protection, he feels its worth while to put his energy towards the trail easements, particularly as the community is growing at such an alarming rate.

The Land Trust also has some Land Management Agreements. They work with the community of Hidden Springs who owns 700 acres of open space that has a conservation easement granted to Ada County. The Land Trust partners with Hidden Springs and acts as their Open Space Manager helping them with trail design, invasive species control and other restoration projects. They do that with the Cartwright Ranch Community as well as the Grossman Family.

The Land Trust has a robust education program employing an AmeriCorps member who has been in front of 700 students in 38 different classes talking with them about volunteering to plant sagebrush and other types of native vegetation. They plan to continue this program.

Partnerships include Boise River Enhancement Network (BREN), Golden Valley Audubon Society and others.

Tim Breuer had built a strong organization with deep roots and loyal support. This had primarily been focused on the Boise area. Now they want to take that success and grow so that they are doing more conservation projects in their service area. They operate from Mountain Home to Ontario, Marsing to Garden Valley to Emmett. Their focus has primarily been in the core Treasure Valley area. The Land Trust needs to increase its efforts so they can provide a balance to the growth. They are not anti-growth. They are pro community.

M. Edwards inquired if the Land Trust will continue to focus on trail development or the actual easements and setting aside land. E. Grace responded that the Land Trust does easements that gets them access to the land as well as trail building. M. Edwards inquired if the Land Trust is using students to replant areas where the habitat is poor? Also, our department manages Hubbard Reservoir which is owned by Department of Lands. The habitat is horrible. We need to do Sage Brush planting for habitat and to allow for native plants to survive. E. Grace responded that questions about where restoration work will happen next was a bit above his pay grade, but the priority would be for the properties that the Land Trust owns and manages but that it is also a partnership with BREN and the Golden Valley Audubon Society. He's not sure how the decisions are made as to which locations they work on. He will get back to M. Edwards with an answer.

H. Engle inquired if the Land Trust is running in to issues with County Commissioners seeing some of the tax dollars lost. E. Grace responded that there hasn't been any push back yet because they have yet to complete a land protection project. The erosion of the tax base is always a concern for County Commissioners, but he thinks it's a bit of a red herring because it's a loss of future potential revenue.

C. Miller inquired what percentage of his time does he spend dealing with government agencies versus NGO's versus private land downers. E. Grace responded that there is a staff of 5 right now. Chris Roe is on the ground doing the restoration work with the conservation land owners making sure the land they own is being managed appropriately along with providing some education. 100 percent of his time is spent working with schools and partners. There is also an outreach person that handles the newsletters and fundraising. She doesn't have much interface with the elected officials. Eric's job is to be the outward face of the organization. For the last 18 months he has been spending a lot of time meeting people and understanding the needs. 50 percent of this time is with the current supporters. 25 percent is with land owners and dealing with new projects and the remaining 25 percent is communicating with partners and the community who are interested in doing this kind of work.

M. Edwards added that he has a history working with the Land Trust. SWIMBA donated \$20,000.00 to the Land Trust for the Harrison Hollow development. With Development Services' help, we are starting to look at trail easements as big developers come in. M. Edwards is currently working with Dry Creek Ranch. He's not sure if this is an area where we could partner with the Land Trust but there is room for discussion. Connectivity is a real issue with the development that is happening. There are

times when private land owners don't want to work with government entities. If we could work with the Land Trust to bridge that gap, we could all come out with positive outcomes.

C. Miller inquired if Eric had had a chance to meet with the City of Boise committee in charge of the Foothills initiative funds. E. Grace hasn't had the chance to present to this committee but has an almost weekly conversations with Sarah Arkle with the City of Boise.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

Hubbard-S. Frey reported that he was contacted by the Audubon group and they were asking if there were developments there. There weren't but there were some things we were looking at for the future. One is the Management Plan. Another item is that he had done some investigating regarding habitats for Monarch Butterflies. He has submitted a concept to S. Koberg. Part of this concept is identifying sections of the property where there is Milkweed which is a key habitat and food source for the Monarch Butterfly. M. Edwards added that the northeast section of the park already has a lot of Milkweed, but he would like to see more. There is also a lot of Hounds Tongue out there which Mike's crew has removed some of.

Oregon Trail-H. Engle, E. Reaves would like to get together with M. Edwards to see where they are at. H. Engle would like to go out again and do a survey to get a better representation of who is using the Park. E. Reaves added that there had been sighting of rattlesnakes out there.

Bike Park-C. Miller created a handout to remind everyone where they were at. C. Miller and K. Kostka met when the subcommittee was first created. They set objective for what they wanted to accomplish. This has since evolved over time. The approach to the objectives was twofold. They started shortly after M. Edwards did his survey at the Bike Park. They felt like they didn't need to repeat this effort, but rather build off it. Based off conversations they had with M. Edwards and S. Koberg regarding the needs at the Bike Park, they started have having conversations with people they identified as being key constituents. These people included people who represented different parts of the mountain bike community. The first people they met with were City of Eagle employees who work at the Bike Park. They are also trying to speak with trail runners and people who live near the Bike Park. They were making great progress until COVID-19. They are going to start trying to schedule Zoom meetings with these folks. The group he is most concerned to hear from are the local residents. They have tried reaching out to local HOA's but haven't had any response.

OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS COORDINATOR REPORT:

M. Edwards will email his presentation out to the group.

ADJOURNMENT

C. Miller adjourned the meeting at 1:17p.m.