

**Joint Meeting of Missoula County Open Lands Citizen’s Advisory Committee (OLC) and City of Missoula
Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC)
September 21, 2017
Minutes – Draft**

OLC Members		OSAC Members		Staff	Others
<i>Present</i>	<i>Absent</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Absent</i>		
Max Bauer Jim Cusker Andy Hayes Caryn Miske Betty Oleson Ron Schlader Steve Siebert Sharon Sweeney Alicia Vanderheiden Heather Wills	Jock Conyngham Anne Dahl Juanita Vero	John Smith Robert Erickson Gerhard Knudsen Regan Whitworth Eric Anderson Bert Lindler Anna Noson	Deke Tidwell Janet Krivacek Alexis Gibson Daniel Spencer Kevin Verlanic	Kali Becher Lisa Moisey Laurie Hire Elizabeth Erickson	University of Montana College of Forestry & Conservation Students

A. Call to Order and Roll Call

Alicia called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

B. Approval of Agenda

Heather moved to approve the agenda, Ron seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

C. Approval of OLC Meeting Minutes – August 17, 2017

Betty said she submitted a clarification for her comment on page 4. Ron moved to approve the minutes with Betty’s corrections, Steve seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

D. Approval of OSAC Meeting Minutes—July 13, 2017

Gerhard Knudsen moved to approve the minutes, Bert Lindler seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

E. Public Comment on items not on the agenda

There was no public comment on items not on the agenda.

F. New Business

1. Background and update on Clearwater Project – Chris Bryant, TNC

Chris Bryant, from The Nature Conservancy (TNC), gave the group an update on the Clearwater Project. See his presentation [here](#).

Chris started by explaining how TNC works and gave some background on TNC’s presence in Montana.

Chris talked about TNC’s forest acquisitions and land transfer history, and that TNC is still figuring out what to do with some of the property and what should be retained long term. Their land transfers have involved both private and public landowners. For the first several years of the Clearwater Project TNC staff has been doing outreach in the communities to see how the land has been used and what the future of the land could look like. They did

start work pretty quickly with the Forest Service to clean up the checkerboard ownership pattern of the neighboring lands.

The group told Chris that he should keep both boards informed of the political challenges TNC may face and how individuals can help support TNC in the political realm.

The Liberty Fire burned around 7,000 acres and TNC staff checked in frequently with the incident commands during the fire. TNC is not very concerned about the damage caused, and some of the burned area may actually benefit from the fire.

Chris talked about the conservation easement partnerships with TNC in the area in which a conservation easement is placed on TNC held land at time of transfer. Most of the easements are held by Five Valley's Land Trust and some were presented to OLC for Open Space Bond funding. He talked about the partnerships on the Mount Dean Stone project that could be used as a model for other projects in the Blackfoot. TNC doesn't know who the ultimate owner of Mount Dean Stone will be.

Chris gave an update on the Bonner Hill Open Space Bond project. TNC is ready to donate the 104 acre property behind the Elementary school to the right conservation related party as long as it benefits the Bonner Milltown community.

Chris talked about the other projects happening with different partners, and said there are a lot of opportunities for community based recreation and involvement. In response to a question on public access, Chris clarified that most of the conservation easements don't allow for public access, which is up to the landowner. TNC staff tries to not sell land to private landowners that would limit public access.

Chris said the Montana Forest Legacy project was a huge risk for them, but once they found successful partnerships, the other major purchases, like the most recent acquisitions, were easier to make.

The group talked about the timber activity on the property and road access to the land. Chris said TNC has been contacted by groups requesting opening more roads on the land. TNC has said they are willing to work with organized groups who can commit to maintaining the roads, and noted that so far no group has been able to come forward with a plan that could work. TNC has been successful in being ready to jump at opportunities as they come up.

The group asked if the TNC land conveyed to DNRC falls under the State Education Trust Lands. Chris said it does, and there is a fairly complicated formula of who the beneficiary is of the trust funds from those lands. If certain sections go to particular organizations, there may be very specific conditions and restrictions to how the land is used. Heather talked about conditions that were set up when land was exchanged in Potomac, and said it was a community driven effort to make those arrangements happen.

Chris talked about the potential future for forestry and fire in the area, and that wants to encourage larger tree growth and focus on ecology and not economics. Paying for the tools to accomplish their goals is another challenge. Alicia asked if there is a fiber agreement in place for any of the Clearwater Project lands, and Chris said there is not.

Elizabeth talked about the history of the early City Bonds and the community's shifting goals in how to use the funding, where the 1980s people wanted to protect view sheds and overtime additional values were identified to protect, such as wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and working lands.

G. OLC/OSAC updates

Elizabeth updated the group on OSAC's projects over the past year. The Oxbow Cattle Bond Project was the most recently approved project, and there is close to \$320,000 left in the City's portion of the bond.

Ron Erickson talked about some of the more exciting projects OSAC has done over the past year. One project was to help complete the Milwaukee Trail where they bought part of a bridge which will contribute to making the connection happen in the near future.

Alicia explained to the group that over the last year there were a few joint City-County projects which spurred some discussions at OLC about how the funding was split, the overall process, and other opportunities. She asked if any similar conversations happened during OSAC meetings. OSAC members said they saw those projects as exciting and different in part due to the additional funding contributions. Many of the opportunities that come before OSAC are projects that may not ever come back or if they do, they would at a much higher price.

OLC members asked if OSAC would remain intact when the City's bond funds run out. Ron Erickson said they haven't fully addressed that question yet. OSAC members said their board was created by City Council and it would be up to them to decide if the board would continue. OLC members said they have a community outreach and education subcommittee that works to do more beyond recommending funding on bond projects.

OSAC members talked about their relationship with the Conservation Lands Advisory Committee and the input that committee gives on potential acquisitions made by the City.

The members talked about how bond funding could be used and if it would be possible to set funding aside for ongoing maintenance.

H. Communications/Questions

1. Staff Communications

Kali and Elizabeth talked to the group about a joint City-County Project. Elizabeth said the plan that governs the work done by OSAC to vet their projects needs to be updated. City and County Staff have been working together to look at the process to update this plan and others regarding three main areas – Parks, Trails, and Open Space. There will be small working group created to go through the 2006 Update to the 1995 Open Space Plan and essentially do an audit on what needs to be updated. The goal is to have a completed update done by the spring 2018; but the plan would be looking forward about 10 years. The plan would basically include land within City limits as well as County land within the entire Missoula Planning Region, but would not include public lands.

2. General Communications and Questions

Sharon said they are getting ready for their annual craft fair for the end of November.

Betty said the M2Green owes 1.2 million in back taxes and Missoula County has put a lien on almost everything but the land. The school and fire district will be getting around

\$500,000. The EPA and DEQ will be visiting the site in October to tour the mill before the Community Advisory Group meeting.

Caryn added that there is some concern about the monitoring effort going on at the site. Caryn also talked about this summer's aquatic invasive species issues and the drafted rapid response plan. The Flathead Basin's funding is being cut by 100%, and they will be working with CSKT and the Blackfeet to see how they can remedy this cut. New staff has been added and should make good improvements to the program if the politics are removed from the equation.

Heather said archery season has started in Potomac and the elk have been returning to the area. The National Cattleman's Association had their national convention in Billings. One of the panels talked about relationships between producers and consumers and how producers are changing how food is produced and sold.

Alicia said the new principal in Potomac is on the ground and already making changes.

Andy said the run they do every year in Evaro was canceled, but they will be doing a work day at their community center at the end of the month.

Max said the army and the fires are gone, but almost all of the roads on the south side of Hwy 12 are closed.

Jim talked about the fires and said he is still sheltering a horse refugee. He noted that the government does have some emergency funds that could be applied to certain parties. The USDA has identified who would qualify for those funds and has sent letters to those people.

I. Upcoming Agenda Items

J. **Adjourn**

Meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.