

OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
ABBREVIATED MINUTES

September 10th, 2009  
4:00 – 5:45 pm

**Present:**

Bob Clark  
Karen Knudsen  
Adam Liljeblad  
Jeff Stevens  
Gary Knudsen  
Ethel MacDonald  
Ginny Fay, Park Board Rep

**Absent:**

Peter Bugoni  
Mary Manning  
Maureen Hartman  
Jed Little  
Tim Aldrich

Also Present: Jackie Corday, Open Space Program Mgr, Jim Berkey (TNC), Morgan Valliant, Conservation Lands Mgr, & Jim Habeck

**Final Evaluation of TNC 216 acre Marshall Canyon Property**

The OSAC fieldtrip and Rough Cut for this project was in June. Subsequent to that, Jackie sent a list of questions via email to OSAC that members wanted answered prior to the final evaluation and several members added more questions to that list. Jim Berkey, Andy Kulla (USFS), and Vickie Edwards (FWP) provided answers to the questions that Jackie forwarded to OSAC.

Jim Berkey updated us on the timber situation. He said that TNC decided that it would not require any timber to be cut from the 216 acres and thus would release this parcel from the 10 year timber supply requirement. Ginny asked if Jim thought that the property should be thinned for fire management purposes. Jim said that TNC's timber expert felt that some thinning of the dense smaller trees should occur, but that it wasn't necessary in the short term.

Gerhard asked what is the worse case scenario if the City doesn't buy the property. Jim said that, though the USFS is interested in ownership of the parcel, they currently have no funding available for this acquisition and, further, the parcel ranks below other parcels they would apply any available funding towards. TNC's most likely second choice would be to sell to a private buyer. The sale would be subject to a conservation easement that would probably allow 1-2 home-sites. He reminded everyone that there is no easement agreement for the spur road to the blue gate on the east side of the City's open space, and thus the private buyer could cut off access from that point. Gerhard then asked about just purchasing the easement from TNC and Jim said he had no idea if TNC would be interested. It would decrease the value to the property for a sale to a private buyer.

Gerhard wanted to discuss what would be the problems with having another house or two on the property. Morgan said that he would worry about ATV use since it would be very hard to monitor from the backside and private property owners would have the right to keep the gate open at the bottom of the hill where the former Plum Creek gate is located. That gate effectively keeps out all motorized traffic. He also mentioned that private owners could snowmobile all winter long, which could be very disturbing to wildlife. He mentioned that the Jumbo Elk herd don't heavily use the acreage currently, but that could change in the future. Rural homeowners usually have 1-2 dogs, which will also disturb wildlife.

Ginny asked how would the status of the road change if the City owns the property – her perception was that the City would not be able to keep the former Plum Creek gate closed. Jackie stated that if and when the property becomes public, that doesn't mean that the City can't control the road. The gate would remain in place – no motorized vehicles except the USFS and the City would be allowed.

The issue of the price then came up. Jim indicated that TNC will sell the property for \$400,000, approximately half its estimated value, but also wants the City to cover the survey costs needed in order to sell it separately. Jackie stated she expects this to be well under 10% of the purchase price and that if it should go above 10%, she would come back to OSAC for another evaluation for expending more funds.

Tim Aldrich, Mo Hartman, and Jed Little submitted their final evaluation forms prior to the meeting since they were not be able to attend. Mary Manning submitted hers the following day as she was also not able to attend. Adam Liljeblad abstained from voting due to his ties to the Montana Legacy project. The project received a majority of member support to move forward to Council, but did not have unanimous support as two members did not score it high enough to pass.

### **Spooner Creek Ranch - Miller Creek**

Members visited the 207 acre Spooner Creek Ranch that RMEF has proposed to obtain a conservation easement upon in August. The ranch is located in the upper Miller Creek Valley about a 20-25 minute drive from the Hwy 93 & Miller Creek Road intersection (approximately 12 miles). RMEF requested funding as follows: \$175,000 from the County O.S. Bond funds, \$25,000 from the City O.S. Bond funds, and a \$1,600,000 landowner donation. OSAC members unanimously gave the project passing scores and thus it will move forward to Council soon.

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 pm with the next meeting date scheduled for 4:00 – 5:30 on Thursday, October 8<sup>th</sup> at Currents.