

OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ABBREVIATED MINUTES
February 10, 2011
4:00 – 6:00 pm

Present:	Jenny Tollefson	Maureen Hartman	Absent:
	Jed Little	Tim Aldrich	
	Bob Clark	Beth Hahn, Park Brd Rep	Gary Knudsen
	Ethel MacDonald	Bert Lindler	
	Jeff Stevens	Adam Liljeblad	
	Mary Manning		

Also Present: Jackie Corday, Open Space Program Mgr, Pelah Hoyt & Greg Tollefson (FVLT)

Jacobs Property in East Missoula – Final Evaluation

Pelah Hoyt from Five Valleys Land Trust informed us that FLVT is reducing the request for City of Missoula Open Space Bond funds by \$20,000 (from \$100k to \$80k) because of constraints and opportunities associated with the proposed trail route in the vicinity of the shooting range owned by Western Montana Fish and Game Association property (WMFGA). Under FVLT's original proposal, the WMFGA would grant a public trail along the northern boundary of the shooting range they operate as a condition of purchasing a portion of the Jacobs property from FVLT. The City and County's preferred route for this trail segment is north of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) rail line, so the route along WMFGA property was intended to serve as a back-up trail connection in case the preferred route could not be secured. FVLT has now turned their focus to the trail route north of the BNSF line for the reasons enumerated below:

- The boundary between the WMFGA and BNSF properties in the vicinity of the proposed trail is unclear as it appears that some WMFGA improvements are located on BNSF property. If the WMFGA were to grant a trail corridor within their current legal boundary the road, fence and a portion of their 300-yard shooting range would have to be moved to accommodate a trail that would meet necessary standards. Shifting this infrastructure to accommodate a trail would involve considerable expense. Even if the boundary fence was accurately located, establishing a trail corridor as originally conceived would present substantial challenges and costs, including the relocation of the 300-yard shooting range, the road, and the parking area for the range.
- A user-created trail is currently located along the boundary between the WMFGA and BNSF properties. Formalizing this user-created trail is undesirable for several reasons. The user-created trail's location near a steep cut and active rail line could endanger users. In addition there is a potential for conflicts among trail users and shooting range users. Addressing BNSF's liability concerns and the potential for user conflicts between the trail and shooting range would require that a tall fence be installed along both sides of this trail segment which could be both unpleasant and unsafe for trail users.
- In addition to the City and County's interest in locating the formal trail on the bluff north of the BNSF rail line, this location would address BNSF's safety and liability concerns by getting trail users far from the active rail line. It would alleviate the WMFGA's concerns related to potential conflicts between trail users and shooting range users and it would require considerably less in terms of costs related to relocating the existing improvements on the shooting range.

These shared interests create an opportunity for all parties to work together to secure the City and County's preferred trail route on the northern edge of BNSF's right-of-way. Five Valleys and the WMFGA will agree to work with the City of Missoula to negotiate with BNSF to secure trail access under the railroad bridge at the end of the Kim Williams Trail and to secure a trail easement along the northern border of BNSF right-of-way. Since the WMFGA would not be granting a trail easement along their property as part of their purchase of a portion of the Jacobs property, the sales price to WMFGA will increase to \$125,000 and the request to the City of Missoula has decreased accordingly to \$80,000.

Pelah informed us that FVLT is planning to implement weed management on the property this spring prior to transferring the property to FWP.

Members then discussed the merits of this project in relation to the evaluation criteria – the conservation values of wildlife and bird habitat with its combination of open grassland meadow and forested hillside, the critical link that it provides to extending the Kim Williams Trail, the wildlife corridor or choke point that the property represents along the Clark Fork River corridor, and the preservation of a distinctive geological form (remnant Holocene terrace).

Members unanimously scored the project high enough to recommend to City Council approval of the project. Mary asked Tim to send the draft OSAC support letter out to all members for their in-put before forwarding it to Council.

Open Space Updates

Legislative Session – This session has been very hard on FWP (attacks on their budget, programs, funding sources) and many environmental laws are proposed to be weakened. Fortunately, unlike the 2009 session, none of the draft bills to weaken conservation easements have made it to a hearing, so it looks like time will run out before they can be introduced.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm with the next meeting date scheduled for 4:00 – 5:30pm on Thursday, April 14th at Currents.