

OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ABBREVIATED MINUTES
May 10th, 2012
4:00 – 6:15 pm

Present: Mary Manning Ethel MacDonald **Absent:** Gabe Millar
Tim Aldrich Adam Liljeblad
Bert Lindler Matt Barnes
Jeff Stevens Gary Knudsen
Jed Little Beth Hann, Park Brd Rep
Jenny Tollefson

Also Present: Jackie Corday, Open Space Program Mgr, Morgan Valliant, Conservation Lands Manager, Peter Nielsen, Missoula Water Quality District Supervisor & Jim Habeck

Rough Cut & Final Evaluation of 66 Acre Parcel off Deer Creek Rd

In March OSAC visited a long narrow 66 acre parcel triangulated between I-90 to the north, the railroad tracks and the shooting range to the south, and Deer Creek Rd to the east purchased by a local developer, Dave Edgell, in late 2006 who planned for fairly dense housing. He has now offered to sell it to the City knowing of our interest in extending the Kim Williams Trail. This parcel represents the best location for the approximately 1 mile section between the current ending point of the KW Trail and Deer Creek Rd.

Morgan, Jackie, and Dave Shaw visited the property subsequent to the OSAC fieldtrip to confirm the desirability of purchasing the parcel as opposed to just purchasing a trail easement and to confirm the trail connection. They reviewed the trail connection plans prepared by TLI and determined that in fact a good trail connection can be made from near the end of the Kim Williams Trail that would pass through BNSF property and MDT right-of-way and then connect to the western tip of the Edgell property. Jackie informed members that a major break-through was achieved recently in negotiations between the City and BNSF for this critical connection between BNSF and the Edgell property. The City and BNSF have agreed to the terms in the license agreement after a long process of negotiation for the RUX trail project. We will still need to submit the complete official application package to MRL and BNSF, which will likely take several months for the RRs to review and approve. Parks has already obtained the MDT Encroachment permit to bring the trail connection through MDT right-of-way next to I-90.

Morgan stated his support for buying the whole parcel due to the opportunity to relieve recreational pressure from other higher conservation value open spaces such as Mt. Jumbo. He said that the Deer Creek parcel is a good fit for single-track running and mountain biking trails and could possibly also support other uses such as Folf, archery, bird dog training, and a cycle skills course. A discussion of what could be appropriate for cycle cross/bike skills ensued, especially considering the fact that 2006 Open Space Bond funds would be used and thus will limit more "developed" recreation uses as opposed to the 1995 bond. Morgan noted that he has to dismantle user-made bike jumps every year in the forested slopes of NW Mt. Jumbo and other open spaces and that maybe this property could help alleviate that to some degree if some jumps could be approved here. Morgan also noted that although the flat area on the eastern portion of the property has been over-grazed and is weedy, the remainder of the property is in fairly good shape with lots of native grasses and forbs in addition to the usual weeds that could fairly easily be controlled. Some thinning of the younger trees in the middle portion of the property would also be needed.

The alternative to purchasing the parcel is purchasing a trail easement. Jackie has already mentioned this to the owner, but has some doubts that he will sell just the easement. Jackie read a statement of support for buying the whole parcel from Parks Director Donna Gaukler: "Relieve pressure of recreation use on existing large tracts of OS/Conservation Lands of Jumbo and Sentinel where preservation of habitat and wildlife is the priority. If obtained, Parks would maintain the area for its existing and natural elements, while carefully planning for varied and specialized recreation use and a series of loop trails to support special uses. (See Master Parks Plan Ch 4, Goal 1.1 and Pg 4-12 Trail Projects and 4-13 Recreation Projects). The landscape of the site, including topography, views, and vegetation is very

conducive to several unmet needs in the community. Some of these needs include the following – cycle cross, archery, mountain bike skills/challenge course, natural surface running and walking trails and loop trails, disc golf, numerous dog related activities, and youth outdoor recreation and nature based play. It is very likely not all of these needs can be met by this parcel, but many can be accommodated with thoughtful planning."

Peter Nielsen with City/County Health Dept also voiced his strong support for acquiring the parcel, foremost for the KW Trail connection, but also for the other loop trail opportunities that it presents by acquiring the whole parcel as opposed to a straight and narrow trail easement along the south border. Peter said that the Health Department supports the trail extension and loop trail because both will promote increased physical activity and health in the community. He also said that the Milltown Redevelopment Working Group strongly supports the connection of the Kim Williams Trail to the new Milltown State Park. He reminded members that this parcel is within the Sewer Service Area and that it was specifically bought for fairly dense residential development.

Jim Habeck also spoke in favor of acquiring the whole parcel. He noted that its mix of old, young, and dead trees and open meadows provides a good mix of habitat for wildlife. He would rather see the whole parcel remain as open space with the mix of recreation uses mentioned than another housing development.

Jackie then went over the appraisal report completed in late April. The appraiser, Tom Stevens, assigned a value of \$760,000, or over \$11,000/acre, which Jackie stated she believed was way high for the property given the Jacobs 65 acre parcel kitty corner to the subject property appraised at \$300,000. She informed members that she felt \$450,000 was a reasonable justifiable offer for the property and then explained a couple ways she arrived at that figure. The Stevens appraisal used the Jacobs parcel as a comp, but stated that a huge upward adjustment was needed due to the impact of the many power line and gas line easements across the middle of the Jacobs parcel and because it is bisected by Deer Creek Road. Jackie showed members a detailed survey map of the Jacob's parcel which indicated approximately 8 acres being obsolete due to the power line easement (including the Yellowstone Pipeline easement) and about another 10 acres are greatly impacted by the road, shooting range, and narrow configuration. Subtracting those 18 acres out of the \$300,000 value brings the per acre price up to approximately \$6383/acre. Applying that per acre value to the Edgell parcel brings its comparative value to around \$415,000. In a conversation with the Jacob's appraiser, the impact of the road bisecting the parcel was noted as significant and that the Edgell parcel would be worth more just based upon that reason alone, but did not say how much as it is very subjective without comparable comps. Jackie also noted that the average of the two appraisals is \$530,000.

Based upon the user groups that could benefit from the purchase of this property, there are increased opportunities for financial partnerships beyond the usual ones. For example, Run Wild Missoula and a couple biking groups could possibly contribute in addition to FWP (RTP grant) and FVLT. Jackie said she would like to target using approximately 2/3s bond funds and 1/3 "other" funding. The proposed funding for the project would be as follows:

2006 O.S. Bond	\$300,000 (but up to \$350,000 if other funding didn't come through or higher negotiated price)
Run Wild Missoula	\$50,000
FVLT	\$20,000
Bike groups	\$30,000
RTP Grant	\$35,000 (Jackie since found out that the 2012 cycle of grants won't be awarded the funds till next year, so we can apply for the money for trail building, but not the purchase since we'd like to close in 2012)
MRL	\$10,000 (these next 2 were added after taking out the RTP grant)
Shooting Range	\$10,000
Other Fund raising	\$30,000 (this number was doubled after taking out the RTP grant – it is likely the most
tenuous	of them all since it will require a huge time investment for staff and
volunteers)	
EQUALS	\$450,000

After discussing all this additional information, members then completed the Rough Cut Evaluation, which the property unanimously passed, and then moved onto the Final Evaluation. Jackie provided members with the Innate Characteristics Matrix for Trails and for Conservation Lands. The Trails Matrix criteria fit squarely with the proposal,

but the Conservation Matrix was more of a challenge since this is the first time OSAC has considered a property like this and thus a long discussion took place with members ultimately unanimously scoring the project just high enough to pass. The reasons members stated they supported purchasing the whole parcel included: 1) a much better trail experience can be achieved by being able to use the whole parcel for placement of the trail verses a narrow strip on the southern boundary; 2) The open meadows and large Ponderosa pine near the middle of the property will provide a very nice place to stop along the trail and enjoy a rest/picnic spot; 3) creating partners with user groups for funding the purchase will create partners for the next bond; 4) there appear to be several opportunities to alleviate increasing recreation use and demands on other higher value conservation lands by re-directing and expanding some uses here.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm with the next meeting date scheduled for 4:00–6:00pm on May 8th at Currents.