

**STEAMBOAT SPRINGS TRAILS COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

September 4, 2019

The meeting of the Steamboat Springs 2A Trails Committee was called to order at approximately 12:02 p.m. on Wednesday, September 4, 2019, in the Crawford Room, Centennial Hall, 124 10th Street, Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

Trails Committee members in attendance were: Chair Pete Wither, Dan Bonner, Gavin Malia, David High and Harry Martin. Absent: Landers, Marr.

City staff members present were Assistant to The City Manager Winnie DelliQuadri and Open Space and Trails Supervisor Jenny Carey. Brendan Kelly represented the US Forest Service. Kris Middendorf represented Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Eric Meyer and Aryeh Copa represented the Trails Alliance. Kyle Pietris and Laraine Martin represented Routt County Riders.

Approval of Minutes: July 17

Harry Martin moved to approve the July 17, 2019 meeting minutes. Gavin Malia seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes: August 21

Bonner clarified that Bonner, Martin and Landers opposed the final motion regarding considering 18 and 11 as equivalent to the hiking only trail on the Lower West Summit network as described in the STA document, although the minutes indicate that Landers seconded the motion.

Dan Bonner moved to approve the August 21, 2019 meeting minutes as amended. Gavin Malia seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2020 Budget

Winnie DelliQuadri: There's a substantial carry-forward based on the amount of money you are not spending this year, however, given that you don't have a lot of options for next year and we're still in process on some of those dollars, I did not go through the effort of figuring out what that would be at this point because you don't need to know that yet. But we are tracking it, and I can get that to you at the end of the year.

The requests for funds are coming from the US Forest Service and the City with Howelsen Hill Directional and the Walton Creek Hotel Connector.

For 2021, 2022 and 2023, we'll have \$1.8 million for you to spend. Kent put together a spreadsheet for the total costs of everything in the current Mad Rabbit proposal including the trailhead amenities; that is \$1.83 million, which includes some of the stuff that's being asked for this year. If we had the opportunity, we would want to spend about \$50,000 planning Core Trail South. We wouldn't even know what the cost would be until there was a plan and we had alignment, but we don't have an easement so we don't currently have the option of doing that.

Other eligible projects that you had previously expressed you were not interested in funding, I would like you to tell me that again. Because if you are interested in getting information on any of these projects or reviewing them, I need to begin working on those budget estimates.

High: I don't know whether the Emerald Trailhead at Blackmere has ever been resolved other than being down by B&K.

DelliQuadri: This is listed as an issue in the PROSTR Plan that was adopted by City Council in August. It was just identified that there is an issue and there needs to be planning around that issue because the neighborhood is not interested in having a trailhead in the neighborhood.

Martin: It was very expensive, right?

High: \$350,000, I thought.

Malia: It looks to me like our future funds pretty closely match projects that we have already approved, so putting other things in queue doesn't seem appropriate unless something comes off that list.

High: I believe it's been considered a priority but without any direction. It doesn't seem like it's a big enough issue where they mind people parking at the end of Blackmere or the beginning of Blackmere.

DelliQuadri: If you were interested in doing something up there, the process would be for you to tell me that; I can approach Parks and Rec and ask them if they would be willing to engage in that planning process and how much it would cost; I could bring that budget figure back to you. There would need to be a planning process, and the resulting solution may or not be fundable by you depending on what it is.

Committee members did not want to move forward with any of the bulleted inactive projects.

DelliQuadri affirmed that the Committee would be able to come back to those at any time.

High thought the Blackmere Trailhead will probably resurface at some point.

Bonner: After everything we made eligible at our last meeting, I think there's a pretty good argument that Core Trail Extension West is in the original plan and is something that should be considered at some point. If there's 2A money left over, I think one of the best things we could do for the community is extend the Core Trail to the west where all the new neighborhood developments are going to happen. If we can possibly make that happen, I'd like that to be under consideration.

High: I think the question becomes does it satisfy the idea of tourism and heads in beds, which is the dollars that we're trying to spend.

Martin: I think it definitely does when you're looking at the people who go to Glenwood to ride that bike path or to Vail to ride the bike path to Breckenridge. It definitely brings in tourism. The complaint I get all the time is that the bike path is too short.

DelliQuadri: We would need to put it on the agenda to look at equivalent projects, much like we did at the last meeting. In terms of the Core Trail West, the City just submitted a planning grant. The challenge with Core Trail West is that we don't have an alignment and we don't have any easements; we would need both.

That grant would help us to work on the planning piece so that we had an alignment for that segment, which would determine what easements we would need. The City is in the process of figuring out funding for that. If that planning process was not funded by grant funds, I could bring it to you to see if you wanted to put some money into it.

We have the ability to do the Core Trail South to Legacy Ranch; it's just very expensive so we don't want to do it that way.

Martin thought it would be a stretch based on the ballot language.

Malia wondered about the feasibility.

Committee members asked for this project to be added to a future agenda for consideration.

DelliQuadri: I need to get some guidance from the City attorney.

US Forest Service Request:

Brendan Kelly: This is kind of a team effort between both me and Rita Bennett now. We have a few different requests based on the timeline on which we think the NEPA is going to play out. We are hoping to get to a draft environmental assessment by March. Then it would be a 30-day comment period. This is all TBD as we get specialist input. Once we receive comments back, it would lead us to a draft decision notice in May. Because the Buffalo Pass trails were objected to as well as the amount of interest in this project, we assume the same thing will happen with this project. There would be a 45-day objection period. That draft could potentially be released in July. Because we're projecting we won't know anything by mid-summer, we're not trying to start construction this coming summer. I have a couple items that would be late summer that we could start on if the proposal were to fully go through.

Some of these other items are rap-up:

1. Buffalo Pass Touch-Ups: Going up to Buff Pass to make corrections once we get riders on those trails: \$9,000
2. Complete NEPA: Staff time; funds to facilitate the objection process; any unused funds would be carried into future proposals and implementation.

There are three trailheads identified in the Trails Alliance proposal. Two out of the three we would have to come out with a final decision in the Mad Rabbit proposal to start implementing them, but the West Summit had a decision in 2014 from the Winter Trailhead Management project. We didn't implement it because we didn't have the funds. It includes a bathroom, parking area, grading. That is one of the trailheads that is included in the Mad Rabbit proposal. We were asking you to fund that construction with this line item.

Martin: If the latest NEPA fails, would this be a waste of money?

Kelly: Through CDOT and other input, it was identified that we want to pull the winter trailheads from the side of the road to this location. With Dumont Lake and some of those projects it was all the same idea. This would be the new winter trailhead, and those pull-outs would be for semis or overheating or things like that. So this would be the new winter trailhead as well as for the summer if someone pulls off to go to the bathroom or walk out in the woods.

High: Does that fall under our purview if we could end up funding a winter parking area that isn't a trailhead in the summer?

DelliQuadri: It is in the Trails Alliance proposal. The reason I asked Brendan to bring it is because I asked him to bring anything that they might be able to construct next year, because from a City process, it's easier to have this all go in the budget with the budget book and just be approved with the budget in terms of what you guys are wanting to fund. Just because you want to fund it doesn't mean the money automatically flows; I still have to contract with the Forest Service. When I do that, the contract amendment actually controls when the money can flow. So you guys could say this is what we want to fund knowing that I'm not going to contract with Brendan for work that would happen in the summer until spring, typically. It takes a while. We could do two contract amendments for two sets of money. So if you want to fund something like that in 2020 if the NEPA passes, it's easier if you decide that now. You can put that caveat in there, and I can follow that direction with the contracting process. It's significantly easier to know what you want to do within the budget as opposed to constant add-backs to City Council.

Kelly: The next two items are similar. They would set us up for FY '21. Once we had a decision, we could do these two line items if there was a decision to build those trails, and it would set us up to have contractors start right away as opposed to needing a bunch of planning time to lay out the trails and clear out some of the routes.

Contract Prep and Survey: That would be flagging out the trails and making any adjustments to get around special features. If we can get all those done at the end of next summer, the following year a contractor could start construction right away.

DelliQuadri: If we did this, we're hopeful that in 2021 the Forest Service would be able to bid more of the trails so we can get more of them constructed in that one year.

Kelly: Old Highway 40 Prep: This would also be an item where we would use these funds with Rocky Mountain Youth Corps to clear a trail corridor and prep everything so a contractor can show up and start building trails.

Bonner: In Part B, the final grading/surfacing of that trailhead, I didn't think that was ever anticipated to be done with 2A funds. Was it?

Meyer: The bathroom and signage was; it's a little bit grey outside of that. I think it says "and improvements."

Kelly: This is stuff we'd do with any of our trailheads to make it a sustainable trailhead. That's just my request.

Bonner: I guess I struggle with it a little bit because with the Trails Alliance proposal we thought we were going to make improvements at the top of the West Summit and just add some restrooms and signage. I thought the Forest Service, once they decided to move that trailhead, would build the trailhead and the parking area.

Martin: I thought we talked about funding it a long time ago.

High: We did. We were talking about a kiosk and bathrooms; we weren't talking about building a parking area.

DelliQuadri: What is required for that parking lot in order for the trails in the NEPA to be built?

Kelly: It's got to have a toilet, a kiosk, and any signage needed for parking. We try to provide at least a minimal level of tread service to park on. Having a gravel parking area does that.

City Trails:

Jenny Carey: The idea is extending NPR downhill directional to the base of Howelsen. This would need to go through our public process this winter. The number \$65,000 I think is probably a little high. But we would put that out to bid and build it next year. Mile Run will be done this fall and provide better two-way access.

Meyer: This is almost the same line that we proposed going up. That never went out to bid because the cost was estimated somewhere between 4-\$900,000. I don't think those estimates were anywhere near accurate. I still think the downhill route really should be on the current Robby's Cut. It's wide, safe, just like everything else. You could add a few features and be done with it. The uphill route would then be open year-round. I think this is a major problem going forward.

DelliQuadri: I believe the goal was to make sure that you had an uphill path that was wide with certain safety clearances for youth. The challenge was that the City as the land manager had those criteria for an uphill path. That's why it was designed the way it was. The difference is this is being designed as an intermediate downhill trail, which is very different in terms of the requirements and fall areas.

Martin: A lot narrower.

High: So if you turned it into a two-way road-style with both uphill and downhill traffic, you're going to increase...

DelliQuadri: You're going back to the design that the City would require for something like that, which is what you paid for the design of.

Malia confirmed that the work on Robby's Cut/Mile Run this fall is for widening and a couple new cuts to remove the steepest grade heading up.

Malia asked the cost of that; DelliQuadri said \$20k was allocated and Carey said they have received bids far below that.

Malia: To Eric's point, there does seem to be something bizarre in how you can do that section for less than \$20,000, which supposedly meets City standards, and this other one costs \$900,000. It seems like those standards are wildly off from each other.

DelliQuadri: That was put in a long time ago not necessarily to be a bike trail.

Carey: I can't say that the 900 is correct; maybe it is a little high; but it's a much different build.

Malia: Unfortunately, we have to defer to the land manager who said those are the requirements for an uphill trail. We have to meet this design standard, so our hands are kind of tied as far as an uphill version of this trail. Whether they chose a standard that's crazy or not, it's their land.

High: I recall a substantial amount of retaining wall and widening and maybe an additional switchback to meet a minimum grade that was just insane. I think it's very easy to try to compare the two, but it's probably not fair. They're probably two completely different designs. I seem to remember looking at that engineer's presentation and thinking that looked like a lot of work; whereas this is cutting into a hillside with features; it's probably apples and oranges.

Malia: So we can't consider making this two-way because we'd have to go back to that proposal, and we don't have \$900,000. So it seems like it's really the only option of downhill or nothing on that section.

Wither: There's been some improvements on that trail already with those switchbacks coming up from the bottom where that high school race is going to be occurring this weekend. That makes it more of an uphill access trail than it was before.

Malia confirmed that this falls under Howelsen Hill Directional Phase II from the original proposal.

DelliQuadri: The idea was to not dump people out in the middle of uphill traffic or Mile Run. This doesn't do that perfectly for the beginner trail because it's a multiuse bidirectional trail, but we need that with Robby's Cut. But it does at least begin to handle the problem for the intermediate trail.

High: It would be nice to have information about the original proposal from the engineer so people can look at that as Option A and Option B because I think you're probably going to get a lot of comments similar to Eric's, which is: Why not make that a two-way trail?

Wither: And that original design was more like a road – wide with a very easy, shallow grade.

High: It may be worthwhile for you to look at that if you haven't already.

Pietris said RCR agrees with the proposed alignment.

Walton Creek Hotel Connector:

DelliQuadri: You just funded additional dollars for design to try to extend that through the City's land to Stone Lane connector. That goes to City Council on September 17, so I do need one of you to attend for that. The previous design when it was shorter and cut through the two hotel properties was \$181,000, so I completely arbitrarily said let's do a 250-\$300,000 placeholder for it, knowing that you're not coming close to your \$600,000 for next year and that even if you say \$300,000, whatever is not spent goes back into your reserves for the following year. This is the cost with no easement – just keeping it on City property. If we get an easement, great.

High: Does this include signage and benches and all that?

DelliQuadri: Typically, we try not to do a ton of benches, but yes, it would include a hard-surface trail and signage.

High: I feel like that should be more than what we provide on the Core Trail; it should be hotel user friendly.

DelliQuadri: Part of the trail construction cost includes trail counters. Until we do the planning, we won't have a solid cost estimate.

Cedar Beauregard, Keep Routt Wild: Considering a lot of these in-town trails require easements, is there a taskforce or someone that's working for the City negotiating these easements or proposing them or contacting property owners?

DelliQuadri: We do a ton of easement acquisition through Public Works for all of our streets and sidewalk projects, so they do that with the City staff attorney. Parks and Rec for some of their projects will need easements; I've worked on a lot of those. This particular easement would be under Public Works using our in-house attorney pulling in outside attorneys when they need to. It's a lengthy process.

Beauregard: I understand. So many of these are contingent on that. Wouldn't it make sense to allot some funds for a staff person to contact or negotiate?

DelliQuadri: We have that through Public Works. As a city, we don't condemn; we only for the most part work with willing property owners. So if someone is not willing, we are not as a staff taking that back to Council to ask for condemnation because our council has been very clear that they are not fond of condemnation in any sense of the word.

Beauregard: I understand and agree with that. It seems like we could offer some cookies or some future land use propositions or something.

DelliQuadri: We're not allowed to offer future land use propositions because we cannot bind a future city council to any future decision making. Really what we have the ability to offer is money up to the appraised value of whatever the easement is. With the Fish Creek Underpass Trail, the easement was the big hold-up there. We're paying full market value for that easement. It's just that a lot of property owners have no desire to have an easement on their property because it is a permanent thing that restricts their future ability to use the property in some different way. While some studies out there show that trails add value to your property, other people are concerned that it would diminish the value.

High: It's an unknown.

Beauregard confirmed that City Council could approve purchasing something for over market value.

Pietris: You guys were talking about taking the Core Trail west. We're definitely for that. Harry made a good point about tourists. My parents come here and ride the bike path every day from one end to the other. That's a good angle to try to get that done.

Meyer: It was originally in the Trails Alliance proposal but was removed early in the process by City Council and the Accommodation Tax Committee before it went to public vote.

Discussion:

Bonner reiterated his concerns with funding the parking area on the West Summit Trailhead.

DelliQuadri: The challenge would be: Moving forward, what does the Forest Service require before they're willing to build a trail? What are they going to require of that parking lot and that trailhead before they're willing to open up the trails in that Mad Rabbit NEPA, and what are the options for getting that done?

High: When we approved the parking for the Ridge Trailhead, did we decide that was different? Or was that the same?

Bonner: That was very specifically in the Trails Alliance proposal. In some of our first meetings, we heard that those West Summit parking lots were not going to be the long-term parking areas for recreation at the West Summit. In my recollection, the Forest Service was moving that parking area a half mile to the east, and we would do improvements in that area. But I thought the Forest Service would be doing the parking lot.

High: That was CDOT's requirement, I think.

Meyer: There would probably have to be some gravel work and grading done at Ferndale and definitely at the Forest Entry parking lot. I think that lot is getting nixed and shifted to the top end of the Old Highway 40 Trail. The West Summit can probably get shifted down the road a little bit because it's still the West Summit Trailhead. I don't remember if it's just bathrooms and kiosk or that plus additional stuff.

Bonner: With all the money we're spending on Forest Service land, I'd like to see them come to the table with some improvements and not have us fund 100% of it. That's really what my objection comes down to.

Kelly pointed out that the Forest Service will be inheriting future maintenance costs.

DelliQuadri said Forest Entry and Ferndale proposals included language for a parking lot.

Meyer: The budget piece doesn't call out for gravel improvements at West Summit. It looks like the restroom budget comes in way under the 80 that we put in. The total budget was 109.

DelliQuadri: It does say it's based on land manager final planning and approval process as does everything under the Forest Service. There are triggers in the East Highway 40 Access Control Plan, including the shutting down of the Highway 40 parking lots. What triggers the shutting down of those lots and the requirement to move to off-highway parking for the West Summit? Once you get a certain amount of use, you have to move.

Kelly will get more detail on that.

MOTION

Gavin Malia moved to approve \$32,000 for completing Mad Rabbit NEPA, \$9,000 for Buff Pass Wrap-Up to be immediately contracted after approval, as well as \$65,000 for NPR Intermediate Extension and \$250,000 for Walton Creek Hotel Connector for a total of \$356,000. Dan Bonner seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

MOTION

Gavin Malia moved to approve \$93,000 for Rabbit Ears Trailhead Improvements, \$40,000 for Mad Rabbit Contract Prep Survey and \$32,400 for Old Highway 40 Prep to be contingent upon the results of the NEPA study and confirmation of project approval by the land manager. David High seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Open House

DelliQuadri: Typically you do an open house in the fall to talk about what has been accomplished during the summer as well as to engage people in whatever planning process the Forest Service is doing. Because the NEPA is likely to be released in early December with the comment period extending through January, I am curious as to whether or not you still want to do a late November-December open house or if you wanted to set a date in January so it overlaps with the public comment period.

Malia: I don't know how useful it will be in December.

High: It seems like it would be helpful to engage the public in the comment process. Does the Forest Service have any interest in a joint open house?

DelliQuadri: I met with Tara about it. She was supportive of aligning our open house with the public comment period to try to get community engagement.

Committee members agreed on January 15.

Trail Maintenance Fund

DelliQuadri: Over \$500,000.

Wildlife Habitat Improvement Fund

DelliQuadri: We are beginning to try to pull together a group of folks that would be happy to share information about that -- much the way we kicked off the Trails Maintenance campaign. If you are someone who would be willing to talk to 5-10 people about it or you know someone who would be interested in doing that, please let me know.

High and Malia mentioned the fact that Keep Routt Wild board members had said they would be interested in helping with this.

DelliQuadri: We're moving slowly on that because we want to make sure that there are not any ongoing controversies around the Mad Rabbit NEPA.

Routt Recreation Roundtable

DelliQuadri: They had their first meeting; they're going to be meeting quarterly. The steering committee has met; I believe each member of the steering committee are going to be helping fund it next year. I think it will take a couple of meetings for the processes to become understood and work as well as they need to and for the group to get a handle on whatever issues they're going to be addressing.

Project Updates

- Fish Creek Underpass is under construction.
- Walton Creek goes to City Council on the 17th for their approval of your recommendation.
- Robby's Cut is on schedule for construction this fall.
- Spring Creek Alternate Trail should also be finished this fall. They're looking for a name for it; it's a challenge to mesh the City's and Forest Service requirements for naming. It goes to Parks and Rec Commission September 11.
- Buff Pass: Brendan Kelly: There's three weeks left on Soda Creek construction. We're looking to do Buffalo Billy's this fall as well, weather permitting. Gem is finished.
- NEPA: Brendan Kelly: We have received all the comments for our last comment period, and we're putting those together trying to work towards a draft EA hopefully by January.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Keep Routt Wild expressed support for Howelsen Hill Directional Phase II and offered any assistance.

DelliQuadri: That will go through Parks and Rec Commission. Having Keep Routt Wild show up to those meetings would probably be helpful.

Next Meeting: November 6

Adjournment

Gavin Malia moved to adjourn the meeting at 1:33 p.m. Harry Martin seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

MINUTES PREPARED, REVIEWED AND RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY: Timothy Keenan and Winnie DelliQuadri. Approved this 6th Day of November, 2019.