

BENTON COUNTY NATURAL AREAS & PARKS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
January 11, 2012

Meeting Minutes

Park Board Members: Tom Bucht, Bob Chilton, Phil Hays, Denise Nervik, Janine Salwasser and
Ellen Tappon
Staff: Jeff Powers, Mary Simpson

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS -- None

III. BUSINESS

A. Review & Approval of November 9, 2011 Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Edits: page 3, section C, 1st bullet: 501C3 corrected to 501(c)(3); page 3, section D, 2nd bullet: 'completing' corrected to 'competing.'

The November 9, 2011 meeting minutes were approved unanimously with the edits.

B. Report from Friends/Foundations Subcommittee

- Ellen indicated that the original Friends' *Mission Statement* handout shared with the Commissioners on Dec. 14 was somewhat "wordy;" an edited version was distributed to the advisory board for review. Ellen noted that Commissioners' feedback included recommendation to be clear about where the group is going, and to utilize people with name recognition. The Commissioners also recommended working with Benton County's Public Information Officer (PIO). Introduction of the Friends' group should probably coincide with rollout of the Comprehensive Plan.
- The subcommittee has begun working with the Calapooia Watershed group, has contacted Benton Soil & Water District, and will likely contact Cascade Pacific RC&D.
- The group discussed other key groups and organizations ("natural collaborations") to receive feedback about the Friends' *Mission Statement*, then pull together a formation session, with focus on groups outside of Corvallis.
- Phil reported that the Corvallis Parks & Recreation advisory board is working on their own friends' group. It was felt that the possibility of a single City and County friends' groups is not feasible, particularly for interests/groups outside Corvallis.
- Janine indicated that priority projects identified through the Comprehensive Plan rollout and outreach, should be chosen for support by key people.
- It was noted that the subcommittee will have to continue efforts until a Friends' board of directors is selected. Ellen indicated that the Commissioners want a draft Friends' timeline by the end of January.
- Jeff reported that the Final Draft of the Benton County Natural Areas and Parks System Comprehensive Plan has been distributed to stakeholders and partner agencies; and copies were distributed to the advisory board. Jeff indicated that comments on the Final Draft are accepted until February 10, noting need for input on broad perspectives. The goal is for BOC adoption of the Comp Plan by the end of February.
- Jeff indicated that we will work with the County Public Information Officer (PIO), Rick Osborn, for county website and newsletter information about the Comp Plan and rollout.

- C. Report on Recreational Trails Program Grant Submittal - Interactive County Trails Website
- The group reviewed a joint letter informing Oregon Parks and Recreation (OPRD) of Greenbelt Land Trust (GLT) intention to submit a Recreational Trails Grant Program (RTP) grant proposal, requesting \$60,000 towards a total \$80,000 project to develop an interactive and comprehensive trails mapping system for Benton County.
 - Jeff indicated that support would be leveraged against funding committed from stakeholders Benton County, Oregon State University, Greenbelt Land Trust and the City of Corvallis; representatives of each agency signed the intention letter, and have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that demonstrates a strong partnership commitment and common vision for this project. He also noted that Benton County, Corvallis and OSU have nearly completed a synergistic process of linking their Trail Geographic Information Systems (GIS).
 - Additional grant support is being pursued through local foundations, in addition to \$2,500 committed by Benton County Health Department, through the Healthy Active Community Environment (HACE) initiative, promoting trails as an outlet for youth activities. Additional grant support letters will be presented from partnering groups and agencies.
 - The stakeholders contracted with *The Other Firm LLC*, a nationally-known, Portland-based software development company whose work has resulted in a number of successful projects. Phase I is complete, including research and development for establishing the project's website platform.
 - The appropriateness of local maintenance for trails was emphasized, preferably accomplished between partnering agencies.
 - Phil noted that modifying various agencies' maps may be difficult, so initially there might be a website that links all agencies and their own maps. Eventually there should be one comprehensive site for all needed information, with the key being uniformity (all maps using the same key systems and "speaking the same language"). Phil indicated that the system could also be used to identify sites whose information otherwise isn't accessible to the public.
 - Janine indicated that the proposed \$80,000 project could be only a beginning, that more money may be required to actually complete such a project. She noted that a statewide project (rather than county focus only) might be preferred.
- D. Report on Proposed Campsite/Park Facility On-Line Reservation Software
- Jeff reported that both the Fairgrounds and Natural Areas & Parks Department need online reservation system capabilities. \$9,000 Capital Improvement Project (CIP) funds are allocated for Biennium 11-13 reservation software. Jeff noted staff and budgetary efficiencies to be gained, particularly with the great demands on limited staff resources.
 - Jeff indicated that research has resulted in the need for two separate reservation systems: one for campgrounds and the other for facilities (such as Beazell Forest Education Center). No single reservation system was found to adequately cover both campgrounds and facilities.
 - Jeff noted that Linn County Parks and Fairgrounds, as well as State Parks, utilize the online "Leisure Interactive" software for camping reservations. Training and support are included as part of the "Leisure Interactive" service. Additional service fees will be absorbed through charging a per transaction reservation fee (in addition to the actual campsite reservation fee).

- Benton County Fairgrounds purchased “Leisure Interactive” software for camping reservations, and “Event Pro” software for facilities’ reservations. Our department will purchase and utilize “Leisure Interactive” software for Salmonberry Campground after the 2 cabins are constructed and ready for use (the system will also be used for reserving upgraded RV sites), aiming for late summer 2012. A County Opportunity Grant for Salmonberry Campground rehabilitation and improvements, including electricity for 13 RV sites, overlay/paving, infrastructure, river access trail and ADA accessibility, is in approval process, to receive \$47,290. Since most summer 2012 Beazell Forest Education Center reservations are already scheduled, the department will begin utilizing “Event Pro” software prior to taking 2013 reservations (one year in advance).
- Cross-marketing opportunities (providing information about area trails and other resources) will be investigated. Janine emphasized having easy, online access to as much information as possible.

E. Grants/Projects

- Jeff reported availability of Request for Proposals (RFP’s) for timber management services at Beazell Memorial Forest, Fort Hoskins Historic Park, Fitton Green Natural Area and other sites. He indicated that *Trout Mountain Forestry* (formerly *Individual Tree Selection Management*) has been the department’s timber management services contractor for several years. He indicated that all work will conform to Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification standards and practices, which enhance forest health and are sustainable over time. Proposals must be submitted by 3:00 p.m., January 30, 2012. The chosen company will contract with Benton County, with work to begin soon after contract approval for the 2012 season. The contract term is effective through June 30, 2014, with three (3) additional, 2-year extensions of the contract possible, assuming satisfactory completion of work and agreement by both parties.
- Jeff reported that the first Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) report is due in March 2012. Efforts are made for all HCP-related work to be transparent, including public outreach, restoration, and partnering with watershed councils. Related work by private landowners is waiting for Development Department Code changes (in process).
- Jeff reported on a Regional Trails (public) Meeting scheduled Sat., January 14, at Lebanon Hospital Healing Garden Room, hosted by *Build Lebanon Trails* and *Linn County Parks*. Presentations will be made by Benton County Natural Areas & Parks, Linn County Parks & Recreation, Build Lebanon Trails, Sweet Home Community Trails, Oregon State Parks, US Forest Service, Albany Parks & Recreation, Oregon State University/College Forests, Corvallis-to-the-Sea Trails, Corvallis Parks & Recreation, Lebanon Community Foundation, and Greenbelt Land Trust. Jeff indicated that he will provide a Powerpoint presentation, including Comprehensive Plan and Trails Master Plan components.
- A preliminary conceptual drawing of the Palestine Church location behind the Clubhouse was reviewed. Jeff noted that parking is facilitated, including ADA access to Clubhouse and restrooms, and preserving views to the east. He indicated that Indiana limestone from the renovated OSU Education Hall will be donated by Pro Bark, to be foundation blocks for the church facility. Janine indicated that United Campus Ministry and interfaith groups might offer volunteer assistance as needed.

F. Other Business

- Denise inquired if the advisory board could support the railroad right-of-way (Bailey Branch) and connectivity from Corvallis to Monroe and Hull-Oakes Lumber. It was

noted that the rails to trails possibility is conceptual only, and the Commissioners want to preserve options for the future. The railway line is currently being utilized by a private company. Endorsement of the Comprehensive Plan shows consistent support of potential trails and connectivity. Janine suggested waiting for rollout of the Comprehensive Plan, and involving further conversations with Monroe area residents. Denise requested that the advisory board watch what happens with the railroad line, and not do anything until an appropriate time.

- Phil presented photos of the fenced-in radio/transmittal buildings located on top of Marys Peak, noting about ½ acre enclosed by fencing, surrounded by intensely scarified ground outside the fence in a declared “special interest area” meant to protect the area. The “special interest area” is subject to rules that also govern Wilderness areas. Phil indicated that no environmental impact statement or public process preceded the ground outside the fence being scarified and bulldozed, which resulted in elimination of native plant populations, micro habitats and a unique butterfly species. He noted that trees along the roadway were cut back, though for no apparent reason. The group discussed possible impacts on the area’s previously phenomenal wildflower displays, and effects as a Native American site. Possible Homeland Security requirements were discussed, as well as whether site restoration is feasible. The group felt that the fence should not be removed, though something needs to be done, to prevent similar occurrences. Siuslaw Waldport District office is responsible for the site. It was noted that gross mismanagement occurred, either by or through the project manager and/or contractor. The group agreed that Marys Peak is a “county resource” within “our back yard” though the land is federal jurisdiction. Consensus was to summarize and list specific perceived violations, to be forwarded to the Commissioners with advisory board recommendations.

Ellen Tappon moved that the Board of Commissioners should obtain relevant information and educational materials about violations that occurred during fence installation on Marys Peak. The advisory board recommends that the Board of Commissioners join with interested partners and agencies to converse with Forest Service leadership about what occurred and why; that the people of Corvallis and Benton County are notified about all future plans in Marys Peak Special Interest Areas; and that all management plans be followed by the Forest Service. The advisory board also recommends encouraging full mitigation for all damages. The motion was seconded by Janine Salwasser, and was unanimously approved.

IV. ADJOURNMENT -- The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.