

BENTON COUNTY NATURAL AREAS & PARKS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
October 12, 2011

Meeting Minutes

Park Board Members: Tom Bucht, Bob Chilton, Phil Hays, Tom Kirch, Denise Nervik, Randy Rasmussen, and Ellen Tappon
Staff: Jeff Powers, Al Kitzman, Mary Simpson
Guests: Pat Cochran, Benton County Budget Officer

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

II. COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS -- None

III. BUSINESS

A. Review & Approval of September 14, 2011 Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

The September 14, 2011 meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

B. Discussion of Potential Foundations, Friends Groups, County Trust Fund Options

- Phil introduced Pat Cochran, Benton County Budget Officer.
- Jeff noted that Phil has extensively researched establishment of a friends group or foundation. He indicated that the NAPD committees (Park Board, Jackson-Frazier, and Fort Hoskins Historic Park) have discussed options and opportunities, particularly in relation to specific projects.
- Phil indicated that a friends group was established a few years ago, though waning commitment and time to allocate by the few interested persons resulted in dissolution.
- Pat Cochran emphasized that regardless of what the group is called (friends, foundation, etc.) the underlying legal framework is 501C3 status, including bylaws, board of directors, and tax implications. He noted that people will donate to government entities, especially for specific projects, though might be more comfortable giving to a friends' group or foundation.
- Pat indicated that Benton County has several trusts, or trust funds, the largest being Beazell Memorial Forest Trust Fund. There is also an estate-endowed trust set up by the donor specifically to maintain the Courthouse, and smaller trust funds set up for various purposes. The Natural Areas & Parks Department has also utilized the Jackson-Frazier Wetland Trust Fund, Fort Hoskins Trust Fund, and Trails Trust Fund. The County manages the trust funds, and can take contributions. Pat noted that an expandable trust fund merges accounts.
- Pat noted that one can research 501C3's on the internet, and a good information source is the Secretary of State Corporations Divisions, which has links to Departments of Revenue, Justice, etc., for administrative implications and legal aspects that must be considered.
- The Benton County Fair Foundation is an example of a group associated with the County. It was noted that requirements for government contracts are more stringent than for "friends groups" or foundations (for example, Fair Foundation construction of the Fairgrounds building that now has solar panels). Pat noted the Fair Foundation works closely with the Fairgrounds department; the group is targeted, focused and strategic with interested board members, who are active fundraisers. He noted that most Fairgrounds

efforts are project-based. He indicated that the Fair Board pays an accountant to do annual reports and tax forms.

- Pat suggested that we could consider using a friends' group for outreach, with a County trust fund to manage money/donations that are tax deductible. The group may still want to create at least some of the formal structure to "practice" the process (bylaws, etc.) that are modeled after the group's goal. A lot depends on what you're working towards. Basically, create the opportunity, then be ready for that opportunity.
- Even with a quasi-formal organization, be clear and strategic about what it is and isn't. The group should be independent of the department. However, staff can be a member of the board, like the Fair Manager is a board member of the Fair Foundation.
- Pat noted that bylaws need to be set up so they'll be supported, and should distinguish what you do from other similar groups. Figure out how to tap into people who want to do something, but aren't sure they want to work through government or departments; be clear about relationships. Don't box in the group with bylaws; differentiate between "friends" and government.
- Pat emphasized creating (via internet) a shopping list that donors are interested in; align interest with needs. For example, Jackson-Frazier Wetland interests could establish an endowment for boardwalk and/or interpretive signage replacement. Identify potential donors, particularly large donors. He indicated: be clear about what your goals are; pick a board that is passionate and can make connections (family, historical, etc.). Pat noted that our department has received many diverse requests for donations and memorials. He indicated that there was once a Courthouse catalog for memorial benches, planters, etc. that would have plaques in memory of someone. He also indicated the endowment established by an elderly lady who loved the Courthouse – an "expendable trust" that can be used, and doesn't need to retain a minimum amount of funds.
- Tom Kirch indicated that we need a compelling argument for folks to want to give and show support.
- Discussion: What projects are most suitable for "friends" group and what are most suitable for government entity; ways to differentiate between friends and government.
- Phil suggested that the Commissioners could create a "blue ribbon committee" to work on legal framework to transfer money from friend's group to county; if chosen carefully, should have an excellent board of directors. Need way to utilize interest and passions of outlying areas (Monroe, Alsea, North Albany) to increase reach.
- Discussion: City/County issues – tend to get in the way, rather than working together on similar projects and issues. Good to have interlocking 'directors' from both friends groups, for formal relationships with common areas and focus; need facilitators to keep groups active.

C. Review of Cliff Hall (Kings Valley) Property

- The Cliff Hall property in Kings Valley comprises about 70 acres, bordered by the Luckiamute River, with Price Creek and Maxwell Creek running through the property. Cliff is looking for a successor for his property, which he has owned since 1995. He wants to hand off the property to an agency (or combination of agencies) that will continue site use and maintenance as he has done. There is a well-kept historic residence on the site, along with historic outbuildings and orchard. The house has been restored with cultural sensitivity. Cliff Hall has planted 30,000 trees on the property, including plantings along Maxfield Creek. Kings Valley Charter School has used the site extensively for tours and research, and Cliff wants to maintain that association with/for

the charter school. He envisions cultural resources around the house and buildings, and there is historical interest in the house and outbuildings. He also wants people to use and enjoy the historic house.

- Al indicated that many groups, including Greenbelt Land Trust, Luckiamute Watershed, Benton Soil & Water, NCRS, and Benton County, are collaborating towards combined site management and enhancement. However, there is currently no revenue source to maintain the property. A potential endowment through Cliff Hall has not been discussed.
 - The group discussed possible revenue options, including agricultural purposes, camping, some type of easement of renting the house (either Caretaker or renter option or as a rentable wedding site). It was noted that the site would be applicable for outdoor or field schools, assuming site management and supervision were adequately arranged. None of the property is currently being farmed, though some habitat restoration has occurred..
 - Jeff indicated that the Beazell Forest Education Center cannot meet the extreme demand for weekend wedding dates, particularly during the summer months and into September. He noted that the Center needs to have additional educational uses.
 - The group emphasized that Benton County has 2 large, unique sites located in Kings Valley, and with no additional revenue to manage the site, we should not consider taking it on. Phil indicated that some source of revenue is required for site management; an endowment could potentially help carry out restoration.
 - Ellen inquired if the site provides something unique, and would the site augment or dilute our resources?
 - Phil noted that our approach to this property should be similar to negotiating with Fred Bezell --- an endowment is needed, and it has to pay for itself. This discussion needs to take place with Cliff Hall.
 - The group agreed that the property is worth pursuing, especially with complimentary uses, including Beazell Memorial Forest and Beazell Forest Education Center, and with cooperative efforts by various agencies.
 - A motion was made to encourage Benton County to continue dialogue and discussion for collaborative, partnering efforts with the Cliff Hall property. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.
- D. Finalize Natural Areas & Parks System Comprehensive Plan
- The group received 9/17/11 draft of the Benton county Natural Areas and Parks System Comprehensive Plan Update for a final review. Jeff noted that photos will be incorporated in order to “dress up” the document, and other edits (font, etc.) will be made to make everything crisper.
 - Jeff distributed the proposed final steps for review, including 10/12/11 advisory board review; staff edits and incorporation of photos; distribution of draft plan to Stakeholder Agencies for review and comment; review plan and stakeholder agency comments with Board of Commissioners (BOC); and BOC adoption of the plan.
 - Proposed stakeholder agencies include: City of Corvallis Parks & Recreation; Benton County Community Development; Benton County Public Works; Greenbelt Land Trust; Healthy Kids/Healthy Communities; Siuslaw National Forest; BLM Salem District; City of Albany Parks & Recreation; City of Adair Village; City of Monroe; City of Philomath; and Linn County Parks Department. The group added the following to the proposed list of Stakeholder Agencies: North Albany Neighborhood Association (NANA); Alsea Community Effort (ACE) group; and OR State Parks.

- Ellen indicated that it would be good to “make a splash” with final introduction of the document. Jeff noted that we will work publicity through Benton County’s Public Information Officer (PIO).

E. Grants/Projects/Budget Updates

- Jeff reported on our application to State Parks for a County Opportunity Grant (state-administered portion of RV fees) for Salmonberry Campground improvements and rehabilitation. The department received CIP funds to build 2 rental cabins at Salmonberry Campground.
- The grant project will leverage funds (through force account labor and CIP cash) proposed to accomplish the following: install 50 amp electrical service to 13 RV spur sites; install additional overflow and tent camping parking; install pavers to ADA RV spur picnic table/fire ring area with connecting trail to ADA River Trail; install pavers on River Trail from Restroom to Alsea River; remove treated lumber and install concrete block retaining wall for pavers on 5% slope River Trail section; overlay all campground roads, spurs, and parking with appropriate chip seal and asphalt coating; establish native riparian plants along River Trail retaining block wall; and install new and updated signage as needed for project completion.
- Jeff noted that having the paved ADA River Trail/path may help get funding for the potential fishing/viewing platform.
- The group discussed the possibility of having a sanitary dump at Salmonberry Campground. Jeff explained that we don’t have the drainfield capacity, and can’t provide a sewer drop without adequate water source (the well likely would not provide enough water). It was determined that having electricity available for campers should be adequate, even without water and sewer. They discussed the possibility of considering a longer camping season, particularly with addition of the cabins. Jeff noted that the 2 cabins will max out the provisions of our conditional use permit.

F. Other Business

- The group discussed friends and foundations approaches, including state and federal approval. It was noted that **stating the purpose** is critical, and the importance of need to have dedicated, interested people.
- Ellen noted the need to decide how the group wants to proceed, such as forming a subcommittee, which would formulate ideas and decide where the group is going. Phil, Ellen and Randy volunteered to be on the subcommittee, and noted that Janine would probably be interested (Jeff will contact her). Ellen indicated that there needs to be a connection between the group and the department.
- The subcommittee will report to the advisory board at the next (November) meeting.
- Jeff reported that Al Kitzman will retire as Parks Superintendent in December. After several R&R weeks off, Al will work in a part-time, temporary position with resource management and Habitat Conservation Plan.

IV. ADJOURNMENT -- The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 p.m.