

**STEAMBOAT SPRINGS 2A TRAILS COMMITTEE
MINUTES
March 23, 2022**

Call to Order:

The hybrid meeting of the Steamboat Springs 2A Trails Committee was called to order at approximately 12:03 p.m. on Wednesday, March 23, 2022, in the Crawford Room, Centennial Hall, 124 10th Street, Steamboat Springs, Co as well as online via Zoom.

2A Trails Committee members in attendance were: Vice-Chair Scott Marr, David High, Dan Bonner, Harry Martin, Gavin Malia, Jason Landers and Rich Tucciarone.

City staff members present included Assistant to The City Manager Winnie DelliQuadri. Brendan Kelly represented the US Forest Service.

Approval of Minutes: June 16

Dan Bonner moved to approve the September 1, 2021, meeting minutes; David High seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Recognize Pete Wither

The Committee recognized Pete Wither for his contributions over ten years. Wither said he was very disappointed to not be reappointed to the Committee. DelliQuadri presented Wither with a wool blanket to thank him for his service.

Election of Officers

Scott Marr nominated Dan Bonner to serve as Committee Chair. David High seconded the nomination. Dan Bonner accepted the nomination.

The group nominated Gavin Malia to serve as Vice Chair. Gavin Malia accepted the nomination.

The nominations were approved unanimously.

2022 Budget Update

DelliQuadri: DelliQuadri reviewed the budget handout and noted that funds unspent include \$88,539 for Mad Rabbit, \$250,631 for Highway 40 Lodging to Walton Creek, \$70,582 for Buff Pass, and \$45,529 for Spring Creek Alternate, all of which were carried over to the 2022 budget. I think the only thing left in these green items is to purchase some trail counters, then those dollars could be unallocated to those projects.

Yellow items are items that still have work to be done. Blue items have dollars that were never allocated or were put back in the pot because the project was under budget. The total currently allocated to yellow and green is \$401,330. Likely \$95,000 of that can go back to being unallocated. We've got \$973,000 carried forward.

For 2022, you allocated \$58,000 for the Whistler Area Connections planning. You have \$542,000 on which you've not made any recommendation to Council. Then, there's the full 2023 allocation. So, there's \$2.574 million total that hasn't been spent, and out of that you've got roughly 2.2 million that you'll have to make a recommendation to City Council on.

One of the things that is not listed is: In the 2020 or 2021 budget, you had made a recommendation to Council that we fund these three things contingent upon the Mad Rabbit NEPA approvals. While that is a budget approval, it was long enough ago that the dollar figures are no way accurate. I think it would be significantly better to start from scratch with everything in the Mad Rabbit NEPA. The last time we got numbers for that was three years ago, 2019.

MOTION

Scott Marr moved to unallocated the funds previously approved for Mad Rabbit items, contingent on completion of the Mad Rabbit NEPA. Harry Martin seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Martin asked what happens if the Forest Service does not approve trails on Rabbit Ears; DelliQuadri said the group would need to re-examine the Trails Alliance proposal for other possibilities.

DelliQuadri: We continue to work on the Core Trail South and trying to do something there. The new property owner is trying to do a PUD development of the property, which requires that he have some sort of community benefit.

Marr pointed out that this is outside the city limits.

DelliQuadri: Through the planning process, the County has solicited our input as to what might be a good community benefit. We said a trail easement. The property owner rejected a prior easement offer.

DelliQuadri thought the Committee would probably receive more info on that as well as the Mad Rabbit NEPA process at approximately the same time. She also noted that the Whistler Area Connections planning process would give the Committee solid numbers.

Bonner noted that the funding could be spent beyond the mandated 10-year period for 2A Trails.

DelliQuadri: My goal would be that you allocate it to projects so it's not just sitting there allocated. If it's the Forest Service, we can contract with them for the full amount, meaning that it's encumbered but knowing that it will take more than a year to build everything. That's fine. The funds are restricted unless there's a vote from the community to remove that.

Mad Rabbit NEPA Update

Brendan Kelly, US Forest Service: Currently, we are working through the final stages of drafting the EA. The next step is to go out for a public comment period. We're trying to do that this spring on roughly an April timeframe. It's a 30-day comment period, then following that we would review comments. There would be a draft decision after we've gone through all the comments and made any adjustments that are needed. Then, there's a 45-day objection period after that, which gets us into the main part of the summer. Then, there's an objection review period of another 45 days. So, the final decision for the project is looking like at the earliest next fall.

We'll be holding some public meetings in the public comment period.

DelliQuadri was concerned that if the process goes into fire season, resources may again be deployed elsewhere.

Kelly said he was on the same page.

Kelly: Once we do the public comment period and come out with a draft decision, that sets a formal timeline which fixes the periods for each process.

DelliQuadri: When will you have initial budget estimates for all of the trails in whatever you have in the NEPA.

Kelly said the most up to date information would be available in the public comment period.

DelliQuadri: But do you have any construction budget estimates for the trails in whatever you release? When will you have those?

DelliQuadri stressed the importance of the Committee receiving an implementation proposal with an estimated budget so they can use that figure in their decision-making process.

Kelly said that shouldn't be a problem and that the estimate should be available in the public comment period.

DelliQuadri and committee members suggested a meeting in July to discuss this.

High: Have there been any challenges in this process that you did not anticipate?

Kelly: There's a variety of perspectives on what the final product of this proposal should be and controversy surrounding that with some of our partner organizations. We're just trying to do our due diligence of making sure that what we're coming forward with is the perfect way to move forward and that we're listening to all perspectives. Once we release the draft EA, we're releasing our preliminary analysis of the project, and that will go to the public.

DelliQuadri: I really appreciate the Forest Service doing a really robust NEPA process. I think that has been really important. I appreciate the Forest Service partnering with the City on this and being that land manager who is identifying what is really needed and going

through a robust process to balance all those things that you as a land manager have to balance.

Project Updates

Hotel Connector:

Scott Marr asked if he should leave the meeting; committee members said he did not need to because this item is only informational.

Emrick Soltis, City Engineering: I believe this project is going out to bid within the next month or so. We're trying to coordinate efforts with the owners of the two hotel sites in addition to the workforce housing Fairfield.

Bonner: Do you think we can count on construction this summer?

Soltis: That's what we're planning for. Obviously, recent prices are a lot higher than anticipated. I'm sure we all were anticipating that, but not to the extent of what we're seeing. So, that may be a challenge, but we're still trying to move forward with construction this year.

DelliQuadri asked when the project would go out to bid.

Soltis: The plan was for either March or April, so bids would probably open sometime early-mid May.

DelliQuadri: So, you guys might want to schedule a meeting for late May or very early June in case Emrick has to come back and ask for some additional funding for that particular trail.

Marr: When I did my additional development, I had to pay for my trails. Since there are people doing development out there, it would be nice if they got asked the same thing that I was asked – pay for your own sidewalks.

Soltis showed the currently proposed location of the trail and access road.

Soltis showed the areas that will use soft surface versus concrete.

High said he was disappointed that it's taking this long to construct a route people can use rather than walking along Highway 40.

Whistler Area Connections

Soltis: We're currently under contract with Baseline Engineering for design efforts. That includes the Walton Creek segment between Village Drive and Whistler and the segment along Whistler between Athens and Sparta Plaza. We were trying to shoot for the design of Chinook Lane, but due to budget constraints, we are only getting a survey and field work. The plan is for this segment to receive that survey work and CAD drawings and that we

perform the design in house. Given the available time that we do have, this design may come at a later time, but at least we do have the survey for us to provide that.

We just received the conceptual designs for these segments, and we're going to work with Baseline to dial these in a little bit more, then approach the property owners to coordinate those efforts. It's pretty apparent that we will be needing construction easements in certain areas.

Martin: I live on Willowbrook Court, and I'm part of that association.

Trail Maintenance and Wildlife Habitat Fund Updates

DelliQuadri: Trail Maintenance Fund has \$907,128, so we are really close to meeting the million dollar goal. We still have two or three years left, so I feel confident that we will meet it.

DelliQuadri said that the Forest Service got some of those dollars to do a crew.

Kelly: We're in our fourth or fifth year of getting grants allocated. We have multiple land managers requesting money: City, BLM, Forest Service, state parks. This has allowed more projects to get accomplished on different land managers' areas.

Our team has been doing trail maintenance, cutting trees off all the trails, doing all the drainage and addressing emergency situations like last year's rockslide on Mad Creek Trail. We had to do a bunch of work to basically re-establish the trail. Then we had special projects like replacing the bridges and things. We did get a grant again for about 1.5 trail crew members for this year. That crew is also working with partners. For example, we work with Routt County Riders to do a cut day on June 16 so we can get the trails open as quick as possible.

Another unique thing that's happened this year is Friends of The Wilderness donated \$10,000 to Yampa Valley Sustainability Council, and it's coming through that agreement to fund a wilderness ranger to go to the Zirkels, Flat Tops and Sarvis Creek.

DelliQuadri: The original concept that we had was that it would fund trail crews, so it is starting.

Marr asked if RCR could apply directly for that; DelliQuadri said it would have to go through the land manager.

DelliQuadri: Wildlife Habitat fund has \$125,318, so that has gone up a little bit. I have not been involved in that granting process. I do know that as with the Trail Maintenance Fund, they are doing grants every year. It's really small initially, and then as the fund grows, the grants will grow. Last year, the City got funding to do some temperature monitoring in the Yampa, but I'm not sure what the funding went to this year.

Landers confirmed that the fund also supported the installation of the gates on Buffalo Pass last year.

Routt County Roundtable Update

Kelly: We have some different work streams going on. One of our main work streams is that we are doing a GIS mapping exercise to look at different management across land manager boundaries, so we're combining the land management plans for BLM, Forest Service, City, State land into one overarching GIS tool that shows conservation and recreation resources. We would be able to look at where projects fit within that context, and it helps aid in conversations regarding recreation and conservation management.

We also have a destination management group. We're working on getting a grant to potentially install a webcam at the Dry Lake Trailhead. That would allow people visiting particularly in wintertime to have real-time footage of the parking lot so they can see whether it's full before they drive up there. We're trying to cut down on overall traffic and remove some illegal parking that happens up there because people could prioritize going to other locations. We're working with the Chamber on the website to host that. That site would also show different locations to go to if Dry Lake is full. We're coordinating on a number of projects, including Mad Rabbit.

Bonner asked about an estimated completion date for the webcam.

Kelly: I believe it's going to be this coming fall. It's being contracted out to a GIS specialist group, so I'd have to verify what the timeframe was that they agreed to in that contract. The group has just started doing some initial outreach to land managers to figure out what types of information they could bring into GIS and then compile it. They're still in the phase of trying to figure out exactly how that tool is going to get set up and then what layers are going to get inputted into it.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None.

Next Meeting Date

DelliQuadri suggested late May, early June because if the Hotel Connector trail comes back significantly over budget, the Committee would need to decide whether to provide additional funding and make a recommendation if so. That recommendation would need to go to Council, which will take some time. She thought the sooner the Committee started that process, the more likely the trail would be built this summer.

Bonner suggested late May because the NEPA draft should be available then as well.

Committee members agreed to meet on May 25.

DelliQuadri asked committee members to let her know of any other items they want on the agenda.

Other Business

High asked Kelly about the Buffalo Pass Road project.

Kelly: We're in the objection period for that project. Once that concludes, we'll come out with the final decision. Some of the funding to implement that project has been secured but not 100% of it. Once the final decision is released and we secure the rest of the funding and get a contract in place, then it would get implemented. So, likely not this summer because of the funding component.

Another question I've been getting is about the Dry Lake Campground Improvement project. The NEPA planning and engineering/design are done, but we are waiting on securing the full funding. We have about half of that money as well. We're working with a preliminary contractor to implement potentially part of that project. We're trying to expand the campground from 8 sites to roughly 30 and improve the flow for the trailhead so trucks and trailers can flow better through that parking lot.

Adjournment

David High moved to adjourn the meeting at approximately 12:47 p.m.; Marr seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

MINUTES PREPARED, REVIEWED AND RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY: Winnie DelliQuadri. Approved this 31st Day of August, 2022.