

**HELENA OPEN LANDS MANAGEMENT**

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**SUMMARY**

**January 14, 2020**



|  |  |
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| **GENERAL MEMBERS** | **City-County Parks Board**  |
|[x]  Betsy Ross |[x]  Ross Johnson |
|[x]  Eric Sivers |  |  |
|[ ]  Karen Reese | **Helena Citizens Council**  |
|[x]  Brian Barnes |[x]  Nick Sovner |
|[ ]  Mark O’Keefe |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **City of Helena Staff**  | **ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS** |
|[x]  Brad Langsather, Open Lands Manager | **Helena Tourism Alliance Representative** |
|[x]  Kristi Ponozzo, Director, P & R, Open Lands  |[ ]  Andrea Opitz |
|[ ]  Jennifer Schade, Recorder |  |  |
|  |  | **PPLT Representative** |
|  |  |[x]  Nate Kopp |

**LOCATION: City-County Building, Room 326**

**TIME: 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm**

**Call to Order**

* Chairman Eric Severs called the January 14, 2020 HOLMAC meeting to order at 5:31 pm.

**Welcome/Introductions/Visitors Tony Zammit, Helena Rotary Club**

**Minutes Approval**

* With no noted corrections, Ross moved to approve the December 2019 HOLMAC minutes as presented. Nick seconded. Motion carried.

**HOLMAC Action Items**

**New Business**

Mount Helena ADA Trail Proposal – Helena Rotary Club Presentation – Tony Zammit, President Elect

* Tony Zammit asked to speak regarding a presentation made by the Helena Rotary Club in 2019. Rotary reached out to the City of Helena’s Parks and Recreation Department in early 2019 to begin discussing the potential of building a new ADA-compliant trail that starts at the Mount Helena Trailhead parking lot. The proposed trail would travel north and slightly west to a vantage point that provides panoramic views of Helena and the Helena Valley, including the downtown area, the Cathedral, Carroll, and the Capitol. This new trail would be roughly ½ mile in length (map included in packet) and have a grade of less than 2%. The trail would be composed of granite and be ADA compliant. The trail will maintain a 60 to 80-inch bench (to accommodate two passing wheelchairs) for the length of the trail. The terminus area will have ADA benches and an ADA-compliant picnic table.
* The Rotary Club is hoping to allow for future expansion to the west of the trail that maintains ADA-compliance.
* One of the main principle goals of this trail is to provide access to Helena’s Open Lands to more people.
* After discussion with Brad, Tony presented what a budget might look like:

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| **ESTIMATED BUDGET:** |
| $8,500.00 | Decomposed granite surface material (includes delivery) |
| 5,000.00 | Bridge across draw |
| 6,000.00 | Excavation and surface material spreading |
| 750.00 | Benches for terminus (delivered) |
| 500.00 | Signage |
| **$20,750.00** | **TOTAL ESTIMATED COST** |
| -800.00 | Committed funds from Helena Rotary Club |
| **$19,950.00** | **TOTAL FUNDING NEEDED** |

* Tony added that he is aware of an additional source that may defray some, if not most of these costs.
* As you are likely aware, there have not been any new trails in Helena Open Lands due to a moratorium on construction imposed by the City Commission. However, with the revisions of Chapter 7 of the Open Lands Work Plan nearing completion, this proposed trail has become a strong candidate for the first trail to be built under the new process.
* Nate asked what the logic is of where the terminus is located. The area in question is a flat area that provides a good outdoor recreation opportunity with a good vantage point. Brad added you would have the opportunity to get all the way down to LeGrande with one big switch on the west end.
* Nick asked if this route uses any existing foot paths. Brad stated it would utilize some of the trail along the reservoir tank. After that, portions of it would be new-cut construction.
* Brad added that we do want to get a handle on the social trails in this area.
* Kristi asked if Tony has worked with any ADA groups to ensure compliance. Tony stated he did his own research and has not reached out to any groups. Helena Rotary would not be opposed to doing this. Kristi told Tony that the city does have an ADA Compliance Coordinator. Her information is as follows:
	+ Ellie Ray, ADA Compliance Coordinator
	+ eray@helenamt.gov
	+ 406.447.8491
* Brad added there is also the opportunity with this project to move the kiosk in an effort to make it accessible. If you go up the first knoll, we have a trashcan and picnic table with we can also make accessible.
* PPLT has had similar conversations about this trailhead. Nate supports this opportunity. He added he agrees with Nick’s sentiment in trying to limit new trails. Eric stated he thinks it will be an attractive route that consolidates a lot of the social trails.
* Eric added that it would be a good idea to add some interpretive elements to a trail like this.
* Brad stated he anticipates we will get comments as you will be able to see this trail from a distance. There isn’t vegetation and we are not tucked behind rock-out crops. This will be more visible than Saddle Drive as granite has a reddish hue. It was then suggested we use crushed gravel, but Brad stated crushed gravel does not meet ADA specifications. When the time comes, we can ask that the ADA Compliance Coordinator look at other options besides granite.
* The Rotary Club has identified some good funding sources. The Rotary Club has 50 members. Many have expressed interest in volunteering for part of this project. MCC could be utilized in this project as well.
* Nate stated that PPLT has received feedback on the 10-Mile Creek Park on the west side of town. The parking lot is a road-mix and what appears to be pretty packed down material is actually very challenging for folks in wheelchairs. Nate then encouraged Brad and Tony to visit with the ADA Compliance Coordinator before proceeding with the project.
* Nick then asked what the count is for ADA parking spots at Mount Helena. Brad stated he believes there are three ADA spots. Nick asked if we should consider adding a couple more spots. Brad agreed that eventually this parking area may need more capacity.
* Betsy – with all the conversations and plan updates this past year, what is our protocol in moving forward on a proposal like this. Does this need to go into the work plan that goes to the commission?
* Part of the discussion this evening is to talk about some upcoming projects that will go through our new public process. The new public process has not yet been defined yet, but the open lands update is only awaiting that process. These projects will be the test to push through the new process to give the public opportunity to comment on them and perhaps we can get feedback on this trail. This will be separate from our work plan. Special projects like this will be looked at through the public process.
* Kristi stated we did that the Chapter 7 Rewrite to the commission last week for an update. They gave us direction that they want to see public involvement spelled out in the plan. We committed to having a more specific public outreach plan by June 2020. They wanted to see all of that before they approve Chapter 7. There are some user groups (Montana Bicycle Guild, Helena Hikes and Helena Trails Alliance) who will provide us recommendations on the public outreach plan. The group is evaluating the public outreach plan used by Helena Citizen’s Council. We will also be looking at other state processes that are similar to NEPA and MEPA (National Environmental Policy Act and Montana Environmental Policy Act) that already have defined processes in place. We will also be running these larger projects through the EA (Environmental Analysis) checklist that we recently developed.
* When asked how many ADA-compliant trails we currently have within our system, Brad stated one. He added it is only a seasonal ADA trail as we are unable to plow it. We can’t have a paved trail in accordance with our 2004 plan. They would be accessible for approximately six months.
* Ross asked Tony if there is a timeline for Rotary. Tony stated that ideally it would be great if we could break ground this summer. The moratorium on new construction would have to be lifted. The need is not going away.
* Kristi recommended the Rotary Club present this to the ADA Compliance Committee (information included above).
* All major trail projects will go through the public involvement process and will have to go to the commission for approval.
* Nate stated this is an awesome project!

2020 RAC Grant

* Brad stated we are going to have a cycle of the Missouri River Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) grants this year. The due date for proposals is February 3, 2020. The project Brad proposes we enter into (similar to the partnership agreement like we did at Park City) except now we will shift to the Old Shooting Range. In the near future we will have a new trail coming from Brooklyn Bridge down through crossing Tucker and coming into Entertainment. This trail will bring more use to the Old Shooting Range Trailhead. In that light, Brad would like to bring that trailhead up. Another standard along with this project should include some electronic monitoring there because we have a lot of issues at this trailhead. We will need to get signage out. The idea is to put a restroom, similar to what we did at Park City, at the Old Shooting Range trailhead. The forest service partnership will be similar to what the Forest Service did at Park City in that their match contribution would include weed work on Rodney Ridge. We will look at this as a two-agency system as the trailhead is on city property, but Rodney Ridge is on Forest Service property. Brad will also be looking at re-grading the parking lot surface as well. We might add an ADA accessible picnic table in this area as well. We already have a garbage receptacle and mutt mitt station at this location.
* Brad will be working with the Forest Service in the next couple weeks to get this proposal ready. The RAC grant will be for the restroom. At Park City, the grant covered the restroom and surfacing and city match was administration and labor. In this instance, Ales and PPLT both contributed to that project.
* The grant will most likely look at facility excavation and some materials. We have the equipment to do some of the work.

2020 Montana Recreational Trails Grant

* The application for this grant is due this month. Brad has not identified a Recreation Trails Grant project and is open to suggestions. He will need that information in the next week.
* Brad stated in reviewing Tony’s presentation, there is enough information identified for the ADA trail. We can probably get the funding for the Old Shooting Range project. Nate reiterated that the project at the Old Shooting Range is a great project. Nate added that the Montana Rec Trails Committee is aware that we are in a moratorium and that maybe we should sit out this year.

DeFord Trailhead Improvement Project and the Lime Kiln Trailhead Improvement Project

* These last two items were on the work plan that had been approved before the moratorium was put into place.

**DeFord Trailhead Improvement Project**

* The first item was to address the parking situation in middle DeFord. We are having a capacity issue at this location. The current parking area reaches capacity in the spring, even during the week. In referring to the map provided, Brad stated that people have been parking to the south where there is a little width. Brad placed a red square on the map where people have developed a trail that ties into DeFord. We can develop a similar parking area at that location that would handle the overflow. Initially, we discussed expanding the existing parking area, but one of the homeowners was concerned about people backing into his driveway. The homeowner asked Brad to look at the area to the south where people are already parking. Brad’s verbal agreement to the homeowner is that we will look at that; however, if that reaches capacity, we may need to go back to the original plan of expanding the existing area. We did agree to place boulders in the grassy area where people are currently parking.
* Brad’s idea is to size the lots very similar. We will use the rail fence and place a trash receptacle and mutt mitt station at the second parking area as well.

**Lime Kiln Trailhead Improvement Project**

* The other project on the 2018 work plan was doing something at Lime Kiln where we have the water tank access road. The situation there now is often times there will be three vehicles parked there and people can’t get turned around. So what they do is drive up the road and turn around in peoples driveways. It is not a safe situation and Brad’s thought is to go into that hill and put a retaining wall in and get more distance for people to turn around. This isn’t a big expansion on where people are parking – it will just make it easier for people to turn around. It will also make it easier for us to plow snow there.
* We would need to coordinate with the streets department (and perhaps the county) on both projects. We would need their approval on Davis as it is a city street. Lime Kiln is at the edge of the city limits.

**Reports from Subcommittees**

Open Lands Department

* We have another low income fire distribution event this Saturday. We have been taking material from LeGrande over to the Saddle Drive Barn. Volunteers will split and distribute the wood on Saturday.
* The Folf group has their winter event at the Folf Course on Saturday as well.
* We have a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the balance of the forestry work on the new Whyte property at LeGrande. These proposals are due next week.
* We are looking to hold a community meeting out there to discuss fuels work we will be doing on the property. We will also start a very general discussion on potential future recreation planning for this piece of property. We don’t have designated trails on this property yet.
* We may or may not get all trail maintenance done on the LeGrande property this year. We will embark on our first phase of weed control.
* Whoever our partner is on the trail maintenance will take on most of the maintenance items.

**Public Comment**

**Next Meeting Date: February 11, 2020**

**Future Agenda Items:**

**Adjournment:**

**ADA NOTICE**

The City of Helena is committed to providing access to persons with disabilities for its meetings, in compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Montana Human Rights Act. The City will not exclude persons with disabilities from participation at its meetings or otherwise deny them the City’s services, programs, or activities.

Persons with disabilities requiring accommodations to participate in the city’s meetings, services, programs, or activities should contact Sharon Haugen, Community Development Director, as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to arrange for the requested accommodation, at any of the following: Phone: (406) 447- 8490; TTY Relay Service 1-800-253-4091 or 711 Email: citycommunitydevelopment@helenamt.gov, Mailing address & physical location: 316 North Park, Avenue, Room 445, Helena, MT 59623.