

MINUTES
OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS BOARD
REGULAR SESSION
December 7, 2021
530 East Main St. Aspen, CO 81611
Zoom Video Conference

OSTB Present:

Graeme Means Dist. 1	Howie Mallory Dist. 2	Amy Barrow Dist. 3	Michael Kinsley Dist. 4, Chair	Wayne Ives Dist. 5
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Staff Present: Gary Tennenbaum, Kim Arensdorf, Paul Holsinger, Jessie Young, Liza Mitchell, Dale Will, Janet Urquhart, Carly Klein, Leslie Lamont, Richard Neiley

BOCC Present: Kelly McNicholas Kury

Others Present: Halle Zander, Glen Horn

Media Present: Jason Auslander, The Aspen Times

Michael Kinsley called the meeting to order at 8:39 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Howie Mallory motioned for the OSTB to approve the 11/04/2021 regular and executive session minutes. Amy Barrow seconded. Motion passed (5-0).

North Star Parking

Gary Tennenbaum stated that within the 2020 adopted North Star Management Plan an action item was listed to address parking issues and create a licencing agreement with Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). Staff has worked with consultants to create parking design options and estimates for the Board to review, he said.

Carly Klein explained that the OST Rangers have been dealing with a very high volume of visitors and parking issues along Highway 82. Staff is working with CDOT and engineering consultant SGM to find solutions to parking and access.

Klein noted that the project goals are to improve vehicle and pedestrian safety. Improvements will require:

- Formalizing parking areas and points of ingress and egress
- Buffers from the highway
- East of Aspen trail realignment
- Gravel resurfacing or asphalt paving

- Fence installation
- Signage
- Barrier/buffer from the highway
- Limited removal of trees to manage parking or improve vehicle sight lines

Klein provided the project timeline, stating that in June 2021 OST acquired the CDOT ROW signed lease agreement. Currently staff is at 60% design development stage. The next steps are for the OSTB to review and approve plan direction, Pitkin Planning and Zoning review of location and extent application, then release the project for bids.

Klein explained that during public outreach for the Management Plan a total of 118 comments were received. Public comments included:

- Support for limiting use
- General support for parking concepts
- Concerns that at peak times the parking will still overflow into the right-of-way
- Concerns about causing problems elsewhere
- Support for strict enforcement, concerns about using the beach as a launch site/putting more pressure on the beach
- Safety concerns specific to the takeout at the pedestrian bridge

Klein noted that a lot of the Ranger's time in the summer is spent on parking issues at North Star. Areas for improvement include the Takeout and Pedestrian Bridge, North Lot / Wildlife Viewing Platform, the Beach and South Gate.

Klein provided existing conditions at North Star:

- **The Takeout – Loading Zone:** Currently no designated parking is available in this area. Prior to 'No Parking' and 'Loading Zone' only signage, anywhere from 30-40 cars were counted on busy summer days.
- **North Lot / Wildlife Viewing Area – Designated Parking Area:** Peak use at the north lot may see as many as 8-10 cars in a space that has been built to accommodate 6 vehicles.
- **The Beach – Informal Pullout:** The Beach Gate pullout is also often lined with vehicles. During busy summer months, as many as 10-14 vehicles can be found parked within the highway right-of-way with the footprint of the informal parking continuing to expand
- **South Gate – Designated Parking Area:** Based on spot-count observations collected by the OST rangers, the South Gate lot sees approximately 10-13 vehicles on busy summer days. There is enough space to accommodate approximately 24 vehicles if parked efficiently.

Klein explained that the pedestrian takeout shoulder currently only fits two cars and the grade change is an issue. CDOT requires 4 ft. shoulder and 5 ft. barrier, she said. The proposed solution is 3 designated loading spaces with an asphalt shoulder, concrete valley pan, and a 6 inch vertical curb. Additionally, the East of Aspen Trail would be realigned to improve safety and reduce grading. Amy Barrow asked if the proposed plan includes improvements to river access. Yes, Klein said. She explained that a boulder retaining wall would be built by the trail to reduce grading and prevent erosion. Graeme Means suggested stop signs for bikes at the pedestrian bridge.

Klein stated that the parking improvements to the North Lot / Wildlife Viewing Platform would create 9 parking spaces and 2 oversize vehicle parking spaces. The parking spaces would be delineated with wheel stops and striping, she said.

Klein explained that there is currently no formal parking at The Beach. Proposed option 1 would build up to 14 spaces with angled, head in parking. Option 2 would consist of 8 spaces for parallel parking. Tennenbaum noted that the Rangers support the head in parking design. Howie Mallory asked about the capacity at The Beach with respect to the experience. Klein explained that there is a variety of recreational uses from this location. Barrow agreed with option 1, stating that it is a heavily used area.

Klein stated that the proposed improvements to South Gate would provide 23 parking spaces, with limited tree removal. She noted that the goal is to get more people to park at South Gate and provide bike racks and an OST Kiosk. Jessie Young explained that the East of Aspen Trail would be realigned as currently it goes through the parking lot which is an awkward interface. Barrow noted that the issue with the realignment of the trail provides a very sharp turn on the east side of the lot. Klein explained that staff can work with SGM on that design.

Mallory suggested potential paid parking in the future to manage traffic.

Michael Kinsley suggested that the Board hold a site visit in the spring to view areas suggested for parking improvements.

Land Use Referral – Highland Bavarian Lodge and Ranch

Tennenbaum noted that the OSTB discussed the Highland Bavarian Subdivision in 2020, however there are now new owners of the property with new changes to the application. He stated that the application will be brought back to the Board at the January 6th meeting.

Paul Holsinger provided the previous application site map, which included a conservation easement on the east side of Castle Creek Road, a trail easement adjacent to Conundrum Creek Road, and overlook trail and Ranch Parcel conservation easement. He explained that the conservation easement on the east and the trail easement along Conundrum Creek Road will remain the same, however the overlook trail was removed. The new application has the Ranch Parcel conservation easement in two defined activity envelopes to encompass the main residence / historic structures and a barn with caretaker dwelling unit. A conservation easement encumbers the land outside the activity envelopes (the “North Ranch Conservation Easement” 8.575 acres). An additional conservation easement encumbers the land south of the main residence / historic structures activity envelope (the “South Ranch Conservation Easement” 10.474 acres).

Leslie Lamont explained that the new owner has been working with Suzanna Reid on the historic designation of the Highland Bavarian Lodge.

Glen Horn, the applicant’s representation, stated that an interpretive sign will be placed at the North Ranch Conservation Easement.

Barrow asked what development pieces are envisioned. Holsinger stated that the barn will be moved to the North Ranch parcel with an access road. Mallory asked what the size limit the barn would be. 5,000 sq. ft., Holsinger said. He noted that staff will come back to the Board with updated images for development.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Michael Kinsley motioned for the Open Space and Trails Board to enter into executive session for in accordance with CRS 24-6-402(4) (a)(b) and (e) for the purpose of discussing acquisitions, attorney consultation and negotiations at 10:04 a.m. Amy Barrow seconded. Motion passed (5-0). Patty Clapper motioned for the Board of County Commissioners to move into executive session with the Open Space and Trails Board. Francie Jacober seconded. Motion passed (5-0).

JOINT OSTB – BOCC WORK SESSION Commissioners Meeting Room; 530 E. Main St., Aspen

OSTB Trustees Present: Michael Kinsley (Chair), Amy Barrow, Graeme Means, Wayne Ives

BOCC Present: Kelly McNicholas Kury (Chair), Steve Child, Greg Poschman, Patti Clapper, Francie Jacober

Staff Present: Gary Tennenbaum, Jessie Young, Carly, Klein, Kim Arensdorf, Paul Holsinger, Liza Mitchell, Dale Will, Schuyler Clay, Jon Peacock

Others Present: Elise Osenga, Aspen Global Change Institute

Media Present: Grassroots TV

Kelly McNicholas Kury called the joint work session to order at 12:00 p.m.

The entire joint work session meeting video is available from this link by selecting the meeting date: <https://pitkincounty.ompnetwork.org/embed/sessions/233965/bocc-work-session-12-07-2021>

Aspen Global Change Institute (ACGI)

Tennenbaum explained that that OST has been working with AGCI for the past 10 years to place soil monitoring stations throughout Pitkin County and on Open Space. The project helps show soil moisture effects on vegetation and habitat across multiple ecosystem types.

Elise Osenga explained that ACGI is a long term research program to advance understanding of mountain hydrology and ecology. Additionally, long term research is important to show climate change. She noted that temperatures are rising in Pitkin County. ACGI role is to gather information through the Roaring Fork Observation Network. This helps build community among researchers and across watersheds to provide decision relevant data. The goal is to determine how to protect forests in the face of rapidly changing climate she said. Soil moisture is essential in plant survival and plays a role in fire and flood risk.

Osenga explained that in 2012 Pitkin County, City of Aspen and Aspen Center for Environmental Studies (ACES) provided support to initiate soil moisture monitoring locally, and the first station was installed in Sky Mountain Park. The collaboration and research has continued to grow to today, which includes 10 field stations, 6,200-12,080 ft. elevation span, and across 9 ecosystem types. Osenga noted that community connections remain central to the program.

Osenga stated that ACGI gathers ecological context including:

- Modified Whitaker Plots (8 sites): plant species diversity and abundance
- Tree surveys: species identification and basic health/mortality assessments
- Participation in external programs (e.g. the Watershed Biodiversity Initiative)

Osenga provided data from the Sky Mountain Park monitoring stations. This reflects the importance of snowmelt in the spring and summer/fall rainfall for soil moisture. She explained that dry soils go hand in hand with fire risk, noting the recent large fires in the valley relating to the drought. ACGI collects data relating to soil moisture depth and capillary failure point for plant species and soil type/texture. Drought stress leading to mortality relates to the duration/severity of the drought, previous health of the plant, and other environmental factors (e.g. insect or fungus).

Osenga provided data on the mature big mountain sagebrush and the capillary failure point along Brush Creek. The data represented the soil moisture content at different sagebrush root depths and the point at which soil water pressure experiences a 50% capillary failure. Liza Mitchell explained that the monitoring data collected from ACGI has been very helpful for the sagebrush restoration (test plots) project, and will help determine success rates over time.

Redstone Park Improvements

Tennenbaum explained that the objective today is for the Boards to review the Redstone Park Improvement plan and determine whether to keep it in the 2022 budget, as well as whether to utilize the County's park dedication fees to assist with funding.

Young stated that Pitkin County purchased the Redstone Park parcel in the 1970s, and in 1999 the parcel was formally adopted into the OST portfolio. Redstone Park Redstone is a historic stop along the West Elk Scenic Byway, a 205-mile loop beginning in Carbondale. According to CDOT, the intersection of HWY 133 and Redstone Boulevard sees an average daily traffic count of 1,800 vehicles.

Young provided the Redstone Park project timeline; the project began the summer/fall of 2020 with a public survey, idea generation, and formed a steering committee. The draft plan was reviewed by the OSTB in February 2021, and was released for public comment. Currently staff is working on final construction documents and anticipated costs for bid.

Young provided a current map of Redstone Park. The Park's uses include a children's' playground and swings, access and views of the Crystal River, picnicking, winter ice skating, summer concerts, a handful of community events and private weddings/reunions, as well as a

bathroom stop. OST worked with the community and put up the matching funds to obtain a GOCO grant to build the current playground and acquire the Meredith parcel to the north in 2009.

Young explained that proposed improvements align with the direction supported by the Steering Committee and public comments staff collected through an online survey. Common themes from public outreach included: “less is more,” emphasis on preserving the natural and rustic character of the park, and the need to balance the active and passive uses. The primary changes focus on improving access and circulation, replacing and enlarging the shelter/gazebo to serve community events and summer concerts, and improving/incorporating the northern/Meredith parcel into the park.

Klein explained that additional improvements to Redstone Park to include:

- Earthmoving to lift the sinking picnic table made of marble, level the lawn and picnic/event area.
- The northern parcel will be improved to accommodate the community run ice rink during the winter and a passive lawn area during the summer.
- Surface parking improvements and remodel of an existing shed.
- Improvements to the existing levee.
- ADA access to the bridge connecting to Elk Park.
- Limited tree removal for the gazebo and ice rink, which will be replaced with strategic onsite plantings.
- Stone steps will be incorporated at the playground access area.
- Shed relocation and constructing a concrete foundation.

Kinsley recommended caution with regard to specific tree removals. Young explained that the tree removal topic was raised by the steering committee and discussed. The project will include the removal unhealthy trees and replace with more strategic placed new trees, as well as facilitating better connections along the Park.

Klein provided the investment costs which includes: demolition, earthwork, construction, playground and site furnishings, planting and irrigation, and erosion, traffic control and maintenance. Total costs: \$536,402.

Greg Poschman asked if electric car charging station would be included in this plan.

Tennenbaum explained that staff is looking into charging stations at OST properties, noting that Elk Park would be a good site.

Patty Clapper asked about ongoing maintenance for upkeep of the proposed new features.

Tennenbaum stated that OST already funds the maintenance of the bathrooms and lawn work, which is administered by Redstone Community Association. He noted that the new irrigation system will be more efficient.

Means asked about the future capital projects and funding ramifications, specifically for the Redstone Boulders site. Tennenbaum stated that for the Redstone Boulders site the plan is to incorporate access to the property/trail. There is no plan to create a park there, he said.

Ives commended efforts of the steering committee and design work, and expressed community support of the project.

OSTB and BOCC provided support for the project and to utilize the park dedication fees.

BOARD ACTION

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ADJOURN

The OSTB and Joint OSTB-BOCC meetings of December 7, 2021 adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

Approved:

Attest:

Michael Kinsley

Michael Kinsley, Chair
Pitkin County Open Space & Trails Board

Kim Arensdorf

Kimberly Arensdorf
Pitkin County Open Space & Trails
Administrative Specialist

2021.12.07 OSTB BOCC Joint Regular Minutes_Approved

Final Audit Report

2022-01-12

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