

MINUTES
OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS BOARD
REGULAR SESSION
January 6, 2022
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, Jessie Young, Liza Mitchell, Carly Klein Janet Urquhart, Paul Holsinger, Kim Arensdorf, Dale Will, Leslie Lamont. Ellen Sassano, Richard Neiley

Others Present: Glen Horn

Media Present: Halle Zander – Aspen Public Radio, Matt Bennett – Aspen Daily News

Michael Kinsley called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Howie Mallory moved for the OSTB to approve as amended the 11/18/2021 OSTB Retreat and 12/07/2021 OSTB & BOCC Regular & Executive Session Minutes. Graeme Means seconded. Motion passed (5-0).

Agriculture Lease Policy and Process

Paul Holsinger noted that there were a few public comments with regards to the Agriculture Lease Policy update. A clarification in the Policy stated that OST would exhaust all holistic methods of weed mitigation before using chemicals, he said. Additionally, there will be annual staff reviews with leasees to ensure they are still in good standing and a suitable fit for the land.

Howie Mallory commented on a letter the Board received from Cathy Markle, specifically on how OST's Agriculture Program can assist local private farmers. Tennenbaum stated that the new Agriculture Specialist position that was approved by the Board will be available for all farmers in Pitkin County to utilize, and connect them to Colorado State University (CSU) resources. The reason for this Policy update is to make the bid process transparent to local farmers, he said. Holsinger stated that staff can reply to Markle and let her know of assistance programs to help specifically with fencing and ditch improvements. Graeme Means stated that Markle's letter brings up the issue of fairness with subsidies for local farmers. The Agriculture program helps to create markets for products that all local farmers can utilize, and meets the standard of the greater good, he said. Wayne Ives stated that the program is similar to the Forest Service offering grazing rights for some farmers. Ives compared the agriculture subsidies to

affordable housing. He stated that while there is not enough subsidized housing for everyone, there is some offered to assist the local community. Amy Barrow noted that by adding the Agriculture Specialist position we are applying funding to assist private farmers with resources. There are also advantages that private land owners can take part in that OST leasees cannot, she said.

Mallory asked about funding for the Agriculture Tool Library. Holsinger explained that OST does fund the Tool Library program, and is available to OST leasees as well as other local farmers.

Board action below.

Halle Zander and Matt Bennett left at 9:40 a.m.

Glassier Agricultural Lease Amendment and Extension

Holsinger explained that the Glassier Open Space Management Plan included an action item to pursue irrigation efficiency projects, and a budget was adopted to install center pivot irrigation. After discussing funding options with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), OST would need to extend Marigold's Livestock CO.'s lease (Areas B and F) by ~15 acres and extend their lease for 1 more year for them to apply for funding, which would reduce the amount needed from OST and allow more area to be irrigated. Holsinger explained that the new center pivot irrigation system will extend and improve the infrastructure at Glassier.

Holsinger commented that the new system will irrigate more efficiently and extending the irrigation area with half of the water that was previously used. Additionally, the system will have a stub out so that in the future it can be utilized for irrigation improvements to benefit wildlife areas.

Holsinger noted that the item will be brought to the BOCC for review. Staff recommends that the OSTB recommend to the BOCC to amend and extend the Marigold Livestock Co. lease, he said.

Mallory commended the irrigation improvements. He asked for clarification on funding of the project. Holsinger explained that staff does not have final costs, however OST budgeted \$200k and there will be funding assistance from NRCS for roughly half of the system costs. The Colorado River District is also interested in assisting with funding, he said.

Mallory asked what is planned to be produced the lease areas. Holsinger stated that currently grass/hay is produced and with the new system it will expand from soil improvements.

Barrow asked if there will be any issues with the topography of the land. Holsinger stated that the center pivot design will be able to handle the terrain. Additionally, there will be habitat improvements on the parcel.

Mean asked if there are any neighbor concerns or objections with the project. Tennenbaum explained that this project was approved through the Glassier OS Management Plan update,

which went through an extensive public process. Holsinger noted that staff did have conversations with the neighbors regarding the project and there were no objections.

Liza Mitchell commented that there are habitat improvements integrated with the irrigation improvements.

Board action below.

Land Use Referral – Highland Bavarian Lodge and Ranch

Holsinger stated that OSTB discussed the original Highland Bavarian Subdivision on May 7, 2020. During this discussion OST staff and board were in support of the property owner's application and the conditions of approval, which included;

- Conservation easement over the property east of Castle Creek Road (the "Castle Creek Parcel")
- Conservation easement over a portion of the Mesa Parcel adjacent the Highland Bavarian Lodge and grounds (the "Ranch Parcel").
- Trail easement over the Castle Creek Parcel of the Highland Bavarian Subdivision that would provide access to an overlook and the White River National Forest (the "Highland Bavarian Overlook Trail") and \$25,000 for the construction of the trail and fabrication of an interpretive panel.
- Trail easement adjacent to Conundrum Creek Road as it travels adjacent to the Mesa Parcel.

Holsinger noted that the property was sold and the new land owner has submitted a revised application. The new application includes the following:

- Conservation easement over the property east of Castle Creek Road (the "Castle Creek Parcel"). No change from previous proposal.
- Trail easement adjacent to Conundrum Creek Road as it travels adjacent to the Mesa Parcel. No change from previous proposal.
- Ranch Parcel Conservation
 - Previous proposal agreed to encumbering 7.8 acres of land north of the expected building envelope and would be amended to encumber the land adjacent the Highland Bavarian Lodge and grounds once an activity envelope was established (an additional ~5 acres). Conservation easements over the portion of the Mesa Parcel north of the activity envelope (North Ranch Conservation Easement) and south of the activity envelope (South Ranch Conservation Easement).
 - The new proposal has defined two (2) activity envelopes to encompass the main residence / historic structures and encompass 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).
- Highland Bavarian Overlook Trail is not being offered due to privacy concerns from Namuranch.

Glen Horn discussed the relocation of the existing barn, he noted that the owner is concerned with the proximity of the barn to the main residence. After discussions with Community Development it was determined that the North Parcel would be best location to relocate the barn as it doesn't impact the views from Conundrum Creek, he said. Leslie Lamont agreed that the new barn location doesn't hinder the scenic value. She stated that staff has worked to minimize the disturbances of the new road access to the barn.

Lamont noted that the current owner has worked with Suzanna Reid to get a historic designation of the Lodge. Additionally, more land is being proposed to conserve than the original application, she said. Holsinger explained that within the new application there is an additional conservation easement on the South Ranch, which protects the natural vegetation. Staff recommends to further that conservation easement north along the Castle Creek riparian area, he said.

Lamont stated that losses in the new application are the trail and overlook. Holsinger stated that staff recommends visual access to the lodge as a public benefit.

Means asked about the owner's plan for the clearing on the Mesa Parcel. Horn noted that there is an activity envelope and site plan for the Mesa Parcel which includes; a free market homesite, and a barn and caretaker unit. Tennenbaum clarified that what is being reviewed today is what has changed from the initial application that was previously approved by the OSTB.

Ives recommended that the Castle Creek Conservation Easement only allow low impact agriculture.

Ives asked if the terrain allows for a trail coming in from the South Parcel, though Forest Service land. Tennenbaum stated that if the terrain allowed a trail in that location it is a viable option, but would be subject to the Forest Service NEPA review. Horn stated that there are issues with parking and access from Castle Creek Road.

Means asked about wildlife considerations within the application. Holsinger explained that the conservation easements will include the baseline condition report and look at wildlife and habitat considerations. Horn stated that it was determined that there is no critical habitat on the parcels, and that it is mostly transitional wildlife.

The OSTB requested a site tour to view the plan for the barn relocation. Tennenbaum stated the OSTB can conduct a site visit which will include story poles and provide further referral comments before the application is reviewed by Planning and Zoning on February 1.

Holsinger clarified that staff and the Board has recommended the following:

- Support of the Castle Creek Parcel CE and the Conundrum Creek Trail Easement.
- The North Ranch CE that the easement boundary be extended.
- The South CE include the riparian area along.
- Visual access to the historic lodge.
- OSTB site visit to review the barn location.
- Expanding the size of the CE on the Mesa Parcel.

Board action below.

Castle Creek Caucus Master Plan

Jessie Young stated that Community Development has been working with the Castle Creek Caucus (CCC) on updating the Castle Creek Master Plan. Ellen Sassano explained that the County Master Plans are advisory documents used primarily for elected officials to help direct land use policies. Young stated that OST utilizes the caucus plans as a tool which has helped to guide acquisitions and trail projects. Future OST projects will be evaluated for compatibility with caucus master plans when reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission in Location and Extent reviews, she said.

Young commented on the existing conditions for the Castle Creek area including the following OST assets:

- The Castle Creek Trail
- Recreation easements for both trails and river access. OST has been working as opportunities present themselves to connect easements along Shadow Mountain and the western side of Aspen Mountain to facilitate an eventual connection from Aspen to Midnight Mine Road along old road/trail platforms.
- Castle Creek Valley Ranch
- Stirling Cooper Open Space
- Cora May

Young mentioned that one of the updates to the CCC Plan is the recommendation to rezone public lands within the planning area to the RS-G (Resource-Government) zone district. She stated that the Plan references protection of the rural character and natural resources of the valley. OST strongly supports efforts to minimize the disturbance impacts of new development to protect the natural resources and scenic values of the area.

Young explained that OST acknowledges the need identified within the plan for a multi-jurisdictional effort to address recreational use within the Castle Creek Valley. There is a long term goal of utilizing OST acquisitions to facilitating future trail connections to public lands, she said.

Young stated that the Nordic Plan proposes to study the options/feasibility of a Nordic trail alignment from Aspen to Ashcroft. Additionally, the privately run Ashcroft ski area is noted as a potential addition to the Aspen-Snowmass Nordic Trail System.

Young explained that in regards to roads and bike routes, the Plan stated objective is to “Keep the rural character of the Caucus Area intact by maintaining the County roads in their current condition allowing minimal improvements as necessary for safety.” A recreational need is to “Investigate the cost and feasibility of installation of a wider shoulder or path along Castle Creek Road for bicycles to improve safety in critical areas, and reduce bicycle/vehicle conflicts, but don’t improve/widen the road to the extent that rural character is changed and/or vehicles travel faster because the road is wider”.

Means noted support of OST staff comments. He stated that the existing conditions is missing the Ashcroft Ski Touring as a current use. Means recommended that the biodiversity plan be considered to be utilized in the Plan. He recommended limiting commercial use within the Plan. Issues with ATVs and snowmobiles should be addressed.

Means asked if the lower end of Castle Creek, specifically the Meadowood subdivision, is to be excluded from CCC, and the effects of that separation. Sassano stated that initially the CCC was part of the Maroon Creek Caucus. When they were split it was determined that the upper areas were considered more rural, whereas the lower areas (including 7th Street and Meadowood) were considered more urban areas. She noted that Community Development met with Castle Creek residents and it was decided that it makes the most sense to separate out the lower portion of Castle Creek into its own urban growth planning area and potentially its own Caucus.

Mallory noted that in recent years there has been significant recreational and economic activity changes, specifically with the increase in ebiking, therefore the Master Plan should acknowledge those changes. Additionally, he recommended that the Plan include more specifics on recreation easement access.

Mallory asked what the expectation for traffic and parking management with the interface of Castle Creek with Little Annie's and Richmond Ridge Master Plan areas. Sassano explained that there has been a lot of discussion on the impacts of Richmond Ridge recreation on the Castle Creek side due to the ski area. Staff has determined that the issue needs to be addressed in both the East of Aspen Master Plan and the Castle Creek Master Plan, so it is acknowledge that informal and commercial recreation uses are heavily tied together in the Richmond Ridge area. Parking and recreation impacts will be addressed in the Plans, she said.

Kinsley referred to the draft Plan implementation to "Prohibit new water impoundments and diversions above Conundrum Creek, such as ponds". He suggested revising that to allow for beaver habitat.

Tennenbaum stated that staff can revise OST's referral comments on the Castle Creek Caucus Master Plan and re-review with the Board at the February 3 meeting.

BOARD AND STAFF COMMENTS

Mallory commented on the recent incident regarding multiple Car/Elk accidents on Highway 82. Tennenbaum stated that the Watershed Biodiversity Initiative's (WBI) final report they are analyzing where the accidents are happening. The area where the incident took place is under Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) jurisdiction, however OST and the BOCC need to work with them for solutions, he said.

Barrow referred to an article about food production with regards to solar fields. Tennenbaum noted that OST will be working at Emma Open Space with utilizing the space under the solar panels for agriculture.

Tennenbaum commented on holding a North Star Board site visit to review the parking improvements. The date for the Highland Bavarian Lodge and Ranch site visit will be set after the story boards are placed, he said.

BOARD ACTION

Agriculture Lease Policy and Process

Wayne Ives motioned to approve the Agriculture Lease Policy and Process. Amy Barrow seconded. Motion passed (5-0).

Glassier Agricultural Lease Amendment and Extension

Howie Mallory recommend to the BOCC an amendment and extension of the Marigold Livestock Co. lease. Wayne Ives seconded. Motion passed (5-0).

Land Use Referral – Highland Bavarian Lodge and Ranch

Graeme Means motioned to recommend a site visit to review the barn location, visual access to the historic lodge, and review the conservation easement expansion on the Mesa Parcel. Howie Mallory seconded. Motion passed (5-0).

ADJOURN

The OSTB meeting of January 6, 2022 adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Approved:



Michael Kinsley, Chair
Pitkin County Open Space & Trails Board

Attest:



Kimberly Arensdorf
Pitkin County Open Space & Trails
Administrative Specialist

2022.01.06 OSTB Regular Minutes_Aproved

Final Audit Report

2022-02-14

Created:	2022-02-14
By:	Kim Arensdorf (kim.Arensdorf@pitkincounty.com)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAscnnEWi93kZgYf5191rVD2_8ztgwuqsd

"2022.01.06 OSTB Regular Minutes_Aproved" History

-  Document created by Kim Arensdorf (kim.Arensdorf@pitkincounty.com)
2022-02-14 - 7:41:04 PM GMT
-  Document emailed to Michael Kinsley (michaeljkinsley@gmail.com) for signature
2022-02-14 - 7:41:20 PM GMT
-  Email viewed by Michael Kinsley (michaeljkinsley@gmail.com)
2022-02-14 - 7:45:13 PM GMT
-  Document e-signed by Michael Kinsley (michaeljkinsley@gmail.com)
Signature Date: 2022-02-14 - 9:09:46 PM GMT - Time Source: server
-  Agreement completed.
2022-02-14 - 9:09:46 PM GMT