

MINUTES
OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS BOARD
REGULAR SESSION
August 4, 2022
Zoom Video Conference

OSTB Present:

Graeme Means Dist. 1	Howie Mallory Dist. 2 Not Present	Amy Barrow Dist. 3	Michael Kinsley Dist. 4	Wayne Ives Dist. 5, Chair
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Staff Present: Gary Tennenbaum, Jessie Young, Carly Klein Liza Mitchell, Janet Urquhart, Paul Holsinger, Kim Arensdorf, Dale Will, Ryan Quinn, Richard Neiley

City of Aspen Staff: John Spiess, Matt Kuhn, Brian Long

Others Present: Ian Long, Barbara Long, Polly Ross, Gordon Whitmer, Rob Bluenell, Bill Argeros

Media Present: Anna Meyer – Aspen Times, Megan Tacket – Aspen Daily News

Wayne Ives called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Gordon Whitmer commented that he has been mountain biking since 1982 and currently needs the assistance of a class one ebike. Whitmer stated that he wants to continue to ride on single track trails but has been denied in Pitkin County. He asked the Open Space and Trail Board to consider class one ebike use. He recommends to allow ebikes on single track trails from dawn until 10 a.m., and from 6 p.m. to dusk, as it is low time use for bikers on the trails and would provide limited conflicts.

Ian Long, a 5 year class one ebike mountain biker, stated that mountain bike parks do not have conflicts with ebikes. It is the next generation of mountain bikes and the speed limits on class one ebikes remove conflicts, he said. Long noted that many other mountains allow class one ebikes with success. Older people and people with disabilities should be allowed to mountain bike, he said.

Polly Ross, commented that she suffers from asthma, and that ebikes allow her to continue to mountain bike. She noted that while using a class one ebike uphill the max speed for her is 7mph. Rental ebikes going to the Maroon Bells is a huge issue, these bikers are not going to use single track trails, she said.

Barbara Long, a full time resident since 1979, explained that she had a hip replacement and the ebike makes it possible for her to still get on the hill.

Rob Bluenell stated that he would like to continue to ride the trail with family and friends, and can do that with an ebike.

Wayne Ives commented that the Board is aware of the ebike issues and will be discussed with other land management partners in the future.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Michael Kinsley moved for the OSTB to approve the 06/07/2022 OSTB & BOCC Regular and Executive Minutes, and the 07/12/2022 OSTB & BOCC Special Meeting for Site Visit Minutes. Amy Barrow seconded. Motion passed (4-0).

Penny Hot Springs

Jessie Young explained that the adoption of the Penny Hot Springs Management Plan in March 2020 included action items to improve trail access to the springs, work with CDOT to address parking issues along Hwy. 133, and improve the functionality of the parking area. Additionally, staff has been working with CDOT to acquire a ROW lease agreement, which was achieved in 2021, she said.

Young explained that collaboration with the Penny Hot Springs Steering Committee is critical in working to ensure that river access is sustainable and compatible with the natural area. Young stated that the project vision is “To protect and preserve the natural environment and future use of Penny Hot Springs in a safe and environmentally sustainable manner that is compatible with the location’s natural setting and that encourages respect and stewardship”. The steering committee members summarized the attributes of Penny Hot Springs the public values most, which include:

- Natural and Undeveloped Experience
- Accessible
- Scenic and Peaceful
- Connections to Wildlife and Nature
- Community Spirit

Young stated that the Penny Hot Springs Management Plan action items will enhance parking, access and visitor experience. These action items will include:

- Interpretive signage
- Pullout organization
- River access improvements and bank restoration/stabilization
- Work with CDOT on Delineating a “No Passing Zone”
- Restroom Facilities

Carly Klein provided the project timeline:

- March 2020: Management Plan Adoption
- 2021: CDOT ROW signed lease agreement
- Today: Review schematic design (30%), with 3 design options, and provide direction for the public survey
- Next Steps: 6 weeks of public outreach, including public meeting, community survey and outreach events. Crystal Caucus, RCA and Healthy Rivers and Streams Board meetings. Steering Committee comments. October 6th OSTB review and selection of preferred concept.
- Fall 2022 / Winter 2023: Design Development

Young provided the visitation and use at Penny Hot Springs, noting that during busy times the area may see as many as 40 people along the riverbank. Users represent a wide range of ages and interests including soaking at the hot springs, fishing, picnicking, nature viewing, and climbing access.

Klein stated that despite limited parking there is still high use and can reach the capacity of 21 vehicles. People end up parking in unsafe areas, therefore limiting parking would cause safety issues, she said. The widest point of the site from the side slope to the highway is 33 ft., and the informal pullout provides a shallow area for parking from the edge of the highway. The current access trail to the river and hot springs is steep, unstable, eroding, and icy in the winter, she said. There are erosion issues due to drainage into the streambank. Klein explained that the design process helps determine how to not adversely affect the hot springs.

Klein provided the design alternatives for improvements to the site:

- Alternative 1: Trail Access Improvements (Estimated Cost: \$105,000)
 - Approximately 21 parking spaces
 - Lowest cost alternative
 - Installing Rip-Rap trail stabilization at two small sections of the embankment to support steps at two points leading down to the hot springs
 - Access: dirt path with rock steps and handrail
 - Install fence at parking edge, boulders could frame the existing parking area to direct visitors to the improved route.
 - Without retaining at the top of the slope, investments to improve the parking area or streambank are not recommended due to erosion.
- Alternative 2: Head-in Parking (Estimated Cost: \$600,000)
 - Realigned parking configurations: 19-23 spaces
 - Repaved parking surface
 - 4ft retaining wall to achieve a level parking platform and prevent further erosion of the parking surface
 - Streambank stabilization
- Alternative 3: Angled parking (Estimated Cost: \$750,000)
 - 9 parking spaces
 - Repaved parking surface
 - Informational kiosk
 - Improved access trail
 - 4-6 ft. retaining wall
 - Streambank stabilization
 - 3 ft. buffer from Highway 133
 - Defined points of ingress and egress with the addition of a guardrail buffer between the parking area and the highway

Klein stated a public comment that was received from John Armstrong stating “I recommend that staff move forward with Alternative 2. Safe access to the river is paramount. Without improvements to the parking area I feel that the stakeholder process will still have achieved very little of its goals for highway safety, environmental stabilization and user health.”

Michael Kinsley asked if there is a record of accidents. Klein explained that accidents are minimal.

Amy Barrow asked if two access paths are needed. Klein stated that there are safety concerns with user issues needing another exit. Barrow noted that Alternative 3 is the safest option, however it does not seem feasible with the limited parking.

Graeme Means noted that the stream health and safe access to the hot springs is very important, as well as keeping the informal structure of the pools. He recommended to eliminate Alternative 3 due to costs and limited parking. Wayne Ives agreed, however he recommended to display in public outreach that Alternative 3 was looked into and removed from consideration due to safety concerns and reduction to parking.

Ives noted that the steering committee recommended to install an emergency phone landline at the site.

Maroon Creek Multi-Use Trail

Gary Tennenbaum explained that OST staff has been working with the City of Aspen on an improvement project for the Maroon Creek Trail alignment which connects to Moore OS. The City of Aspen Parks and Open Space Department is seeking to provide the Pitkin County OSTB with an update regarding the Maroon Creek Multi-Use Trail. Additionally, requesting support for partnering on the project, and furthering the design of the trail in preparation of construction in 2023, he said.

Matt Kuhn noted that Maroon Creek Trail project is the largest new segment of multi-use trail for the City of Aspen since Cemetery Lane.

John Spiess stated that the goals of the meeting are to provide an update on the current schematic alignment for the Maroon Creek Multi-Use Trail, and the City is looking for OSTB support on a partnership.

Spiess provided the trail characteristics and design parameters:

- Surfacing: Paved surface that will be cleared of snow in the winter
- Width: The trail will meet ADA accessible guidelines, including a maximum 5% grade where practical
- Separation from Road: Provide safety and comfort for all user groups by providing separation from Maroon Creek Roadway where possible
- Minimize Impacts: Prioritize alignments that have the smallest impact on the existing conditions
- Winter Maintenance Considerations: Trails that are continuous with road surface or directly adjacent to lowed surfaces are very difficult to maintain and should be avoided where possible

Spiess explained that the study area is divided into four segments.

- Section 1 - Aspen Chapel to Alberta Moore Drive
 - Directly adjacent to the Moore Open Space. This segment of the trail is separated from the road with a landscape buffer. Originating at the Highway 82 roundabout the trail will connect to the park and ride level as well as the chapel bridge level.
- Segment 2 - Alberta Moore Drive to ARC service entrance

- The City has been unable to obtain an easement on the S&J property. Additionally, due to difficulties in developing alignments on the school district side of Maroon Creek Rd. staff are considering shifting the road to the east so that the addition of the trail can occur within the City Right of Way. The roadway realignment would have a total length of 1,020 linear feet with an average horizontal shift of 7ft. There will be a 6” curb, however no actual barrier between the road and trail. The trail will pull away from the road at crossing diagrams for safety purposes.
- Segment 3 - ARC service entrance to ARC bus stop
 - To accommodate both the existing trail and the proposed trail, the final segment of the wooden bridge will be rotated slightly towards the ARC and the two paths will be separated by a wall until they are connected just north of the existing bus stop.
- Segment 4 - ARC bus stop to Highlands Trail
 - The proposed alignment moves the pathway to the east side of the parking lot which will separate ARC users from trail through-traffic. To fit the trail within this area the design suggests reducing the parking stall lengths by 2 ft., creating ‘compact’ parking spots.

Spiess stated that the contract amount for the completion of Phase 1 of the Maroon Creek Multi Use Trail is \$122,530. An additional \$150,000 is appropriated in the 2022 budget, and these funds will be used for the remainder of the project survey and construction documents. An estimated cost was submitted by OTAK that anticipates a total project cost \$3,964,704, with trail construction at \$2.8m. Staff are seeking partnership funding opportunities for the construction phase, and in discussion with Pitkin County Open Space and Trails staff feel a contribution of \$500,000 would be in line with other partnership projects both the City and County have undertaken.

Kinsley provided support of County funding for the project.

Means stated that this trail project is highly important and needed. Access to Moore OS over the pedestrian bridge with regards to eBikes, etc. needs to be regulated and need to be clearly signed, he said. Additionally, speed issues for road biking downhill need to be addressed.

Barrow stated that currently the Aspen Chapel intersections are dangerous, and the connection piece is a challenge. She noted the importance of a partnership with Pitkin County.

Ives provided support for the partnership as well as moving the trail off the school campus.

The OSTB supported adding funding to the 2023 budget for the Maroon Creek Multi-Use Trail project.

North Star Budget Supplemental

Tennenbaum stated that the 2020 North Star Nature Preserve Management Plan included an action item to define and improve parking areas providing access to the Preserve. He noted that

compliance at North Star has improved this year with the help of the Rangers, Forest Protection Officers, and ACES Naturalists. With that there have been less complaints by the adjacent homeowners, he said.

Klein explained that the bid for the parking improvements is approx. 1.3m. This includes scope of work for all four access areas; the Takeout/Pedestrian Bridge, the North Lot, the Beach, and South Gate. Comments made by the OSTB at the January 26 site visit were incorporated as well, she said.

Klein noted that the staff will meet next week with the contractors to look into cost savings with modifications. For example modifications/reduction in signage (currently listed at \$200k), and modifications to materials/paving could potentially reduce costs by \$150k, she said. Additionally, the Board could opt to take out improvements at North Lot as the parking currently functions fine with the head in parking spots. Klein stated that staff has pared down to minimal options at all sites to reduce costs.

Means commented that the informality of the North Lot is suitable and recommended to potentially eliminate that option. Klein commented that the pros to that are cost savings considering it currently works, however there are only three years left before that parking area needs to be repaved. Additionally, the public might request that all areas are improved at the same time, one and done efficiency, she said. Kinsley agreed that informality of North Lot is desirable.

Barrow noted that the OSTB has previously discussed making the area safer/improved, and would be remiss to take off one piece of the puzzle as it will be more expensive in the future. Tennenbaum explained that the North Lot will not be a dramatic change from the current conditions.

Means noted that every dollar spent on infrastructure is taken away from other Open Space.

Ives supported including North Lot in the improvements for efficiency purposes.

Board action below.

BOARD AND STAFF COMMENTS

Tennenbaum commented on this summer's visitor use study for recreation management. The user survey showed that 94% of trail users participated. Staff has partnered with the City of Aspen, Town of Snowmass and Town of Basalt to contribute to the survey. Additionally, the study is utilizing mobile data. Tennenbaum stated that staff talked with CPW about collecting data across the state. Staff will apply for grant funding this fall. We are considering what counties to include in the coalition, and trying to avoid analysis paralysis, he said.

Means asked if staff should request a contribution from City of Aspen for North Star improvements. Tennenbaum stated that staff can keep this in mind, however the City would have difficulties including that into their 2023 budget.

Means mentioned the Board Retreat, and recommended looking at the OST fund and philosophically look at priorities. Utilizing the new tools from the Watershed Biodiversity Initiative (WBI) and the Aspen Valley Land Trust (AVLT) Strategic Conservation Plan to see how that would apply to the OST program. These tools would help the Board to think about landscape-scale conservation and how to be more targeted with tools, he said. Tennenbaum stated that staff discussed conducting joint meetings with other local land management boards to see their priorities as well. He said staff can start providing more details on the work plan in the next couple months. Barrow commented that hot topic items, such as ebikes, need to be discussed with other land managers. Ives suggested having joint board meetings in the next 6 months, and then having an OSTB retreat in the spring. Tennenbaum stated that staff will discuss timing and topics and get back to the Board.

Kinsley expressed concern with social media posts that may appear to market places like North Star. Tennenbaum stated that all social media posts informational and for safety purposes, however staff can reassess content.

BOARD ACTION

North Star Parking Improvements Budget Supplemental

Amy Barrow recommended that the Board of County Commissioners approve the North Star Parking Improvements Budget Supplemental, with acknowledgement of a divided Open Space and Trails Board vote on the inclusion of North Lot improvements. Graeme Means seconded. (4-0).

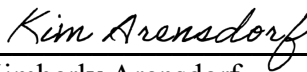
ADJOURN

The OSTB meeting of August 4, 2022 adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

Approved:


Wayne Ives (Sep 8, 2022 15:47 MDT)
Wayne Ives, Chair
Pitkin County Open Space & Trails Board

Attest:


Kimberly Arensdorf
Pitkin County Open Space & Trails
Administrative Specialist

2022.08.04 OSTB Regular Minutes_Aproved

Final Audit Report

2022-09-08

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