

Heritage Land Bank Advisory Commission Meeting

Thursday, February 22, 2024 at 1:30PM

Permit & Development Center
4700 Elmore Road, Anchorage, Alaska 99507

or via Microsoft Teams and Telephone

MINUTES

- I. **Call to Order and Statement of Procedure** – Chair Marshall called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm.
- II. **Roll Call, Introductions and Disclosures**
 - a. Chair Marshall, Vice Chair Flynn, Commissioners Charnon, Chmielowski, Hansen were present. Commissioner Oswald was excused. A quorum was established.
 - b. Director Tiffany Briggs, Land Management Officer Emma Giboney, and Contractor Nicole Jones-Vogel were present from staff.
- III. **Approval of Agenda and Minutes**
 - a. February 22, 2024 Agenda
Charnon moved, Flynn Seconded, and the item passed unanimously.
 - b. January 25, 2024 Minutes
Charnon moved, Chmielowski seconded, and the item passed unanimously.
- IV. **Director's Report**

Director Briggs let Commissioners know that staff will update Commissioners on the process for the HLB Work Plan as items are moving through the process.
- V. **Presentation:** Timothy Glassett, Statewide Avalanche and Artillery Program Manager from the State of Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, will be presenting a proposed Interagency Explosive Storage and Heliport development near HLB land in the Girdwood Valley.

Mr. Glassett, Statewide Avalanche and Artillery Program Manager, provided a presentation regarding Heliports and Explosive Storage as part of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Avalanche program. The program is in a state of flux due to modifications in artillery use to manage avalanches. Avalanche Hazard Index and Mitigation Options Assessment will be implemented with several partners. Howitzer (M101A1 105mm) is almost one hundred years old and the military support is waning to maintain this weapon. Utilization of the weapon is staff intensive taking personnel away from other critical needs

like plowing the Seward Highway. Seward Highway ranks the highest for avalanche mitigation need. Mr. Glassett provided an overview of long-term and short-term measures for mitigating avalanche risk. The Program is working towards Remote Avalanche control Systems (RACS), which is a gas mixture that detonates, initiates an avalanche. They are placed at the avalanche starting zone. Drone mitigation is a potential future tool.

Mr. Glassett provided an overview of plans for an Explosive Magazine Storage Site and Heliport Draft Set near Girdwood adjacent to HLB properties. MOA Planning has informed the project that they will need a rezone and then a Conditional Use Permit for the site. The FAA is in support of the project. The project would likely generate 30 flights per year compared to the Girdwood Airport which hosts 30 flights per day. The site is a former DOT&PF gravel pit. Access to the site has been challenging; however, access will be resolved in partnership with the Alaska Railroad. It was noted that this project would not impact future needs of the Girdwood community regarding access. The same issues remain with reuse of the site as a gravel site and that proposed use is currently not supported by the Alaska Railroad.

Mr. Glassett stated that they plan to start work this summer reestablishing access and earth work to level the area in preparation of the site and then the rezoning effort will begin.

Girdwood Fire Department is in support of the project at this time.

Chair Marshall asked if there was any process that HLB specifically needed to be involved with for this project and Mr. Glassett stated that there is not, he was there to just educate the Commission as HLB land surrounds the proposed site.

Chair Marshall asked about the 30 flights and if that met the needs of the Department, which he stated that it did meet the needs.

VI. Proposed Action Items and Public Hearings

- a. **Resolution 2023-03:** Recommending approval to withdraw from the HLB Inventory and transfer to the Parks and Recreation Department, HLB Parcels 2-127 through 2-136, legally described as W2SE4SW4 SEC 3 T11N R3W, Lots 1, 5, 6, 9, 10, 14, 15, 18 SEC 10 T11N R3W, and E2E2NW4 & E2W2NE4NW4 SEC 10 T11N R3W, S.M., and to amend the 2023 HLB Annual Work Program.

The Public Hearing was opened.

Shirley Ryan, Resident

Ms. Ryan requested that 2-127 is not over-developed and is done responsibly. Concerns about wildlife, fire access, Little Survival Creek impacts, and general impacts to private

property. Ensure that the whole park development does not negatively impact people, Enstar swale, or wildlife.

Melinda Holtan, Resident

Ms. Holtan voiced concerns regarding the public noticing process. Ms. Holtan is supportive of the park but discouraged by the community engagement of the process. And is disappointed by the process. Fire concerns by park users and park user access. Thoughtful collaboration and input from neighbors of the proposed park is requested. Concerns with dog feces is a major concern for water quality. Roads receive extremely limited maintenance and are not highly developed.

Molly Welker, Resident

Resident of Tideview, big fan of Great Land Trust. Curious about the Master Plan and the timeline and how the community will be involved. Road maintenance is a continual challenge in this area, steep, gravel and unmaintained roads that is a huge concern. Fire and Police access is a concern due to road status. Questioned if any wildlife monitoring has been completed. Ms. XXX listed the wildlife she is aware of in the area. What will the Great Land Trust involvement be and will horses be authorized in the area?

Will Hiles, Resident

Currently concerned with trail being shown on his property. Discouraged with park user behavior related to trash and animal waste and does not wish to have this occur on his property. Concerns with access points and increased traffic. It is a treat to see the wildlife in this area and is concerned with an overuse of human activity pushing wildlife activities out of the area.

Sam Warner, Resident

As a child he advocated for trails and community members stated 12-years old start parties and impact wildlife. He stated that trails are what makes Anchorage special and kids can play outside. Confident that this space can be special and provide a place for adults and children to play. He lives nearby and is all for it.

Ann Rappoport, Rabbit Creek Community Council

Rabbit Creek Community Council is supportive of the project. She stated that it is difficult to get neighbors to the meetings and they have been involved in this project for quite a while. The watershed value is critical and Potter Marsh is part of the state critically identified area. The Potter Valley Land Use Analysis identified this as a long-term goal for limited development and environmental needs. There are limited parks in this area, Moen Park is nearby, but this is much larger. People outside of our neighborhood will likely park at Moen Park and the new parking lot the State developed at Potter Marsh. Fire and access will always be a challenge given the topography in the area.

Ann Rappoport, Resident

A nearby resident and walks the site frequently and stated that the wildlife in the area is special. Her daughter testified to the Anchorage Assembly when she was 6 and she is 31 now.

Kat Jensen, Resident

This will be a great addition to the Hillside and Anchorage and wonderful for the Marsh.

Diana Van Vliet, Resident

Lived in the area for 30 years and is excited for this park. Walks the property daily and feels spoiled and willing to share it with all of Anchorage. It is a protection to the Marsh and wildlife corridors. Over the years development has been discussed and prefers this outcome. She felt parking and access will be challenging but are resolvable.

Chair Marshall closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Charnon stated the concerns the community raised should be elevated to Parks and Recreation. Tanya Hickok spoke to the Commissioners about how Park Master plans are developed. Chair Marshall asked about sign up for alerts regarding the Park Master Plan. Ms. Hickok stated that once the property is in Parks and Recreation's responsibility a timeline will be better known for how the project will move through the process.

A member of the public voiced interest in testifying on the topic. Chair Marshall reopened the Public Hearing.

Brett O'Bray, Resident

Lives adjacent to 2-127 and creeks run through his property. He loves parks and realizes that this land acreage is large. 2-127 is surrounded by residential lots and most residents do not wish to look at park goers. Requests the Park Master Plan focus on the other parcels and not HLB 2-127. The roads are not maintained, steep, and concerns about traffic. Concerns about people coming into his yard from the trails. Is supportive of the watershed, but concerns about pet waste into the Marsh. Does not agree that we need another park and wishes to keep it out of the residential area.

Public hearing closed, again.

Commissioner Chmielowski moved to approve Resolution 2024-03, Commissioner Charnon seconded.

Chair Marshall asked if there was any further discussion. TC stated that he spoke to the process. Commissioner Flynn, thanked staff for the presentation and the community members should voice their concerns with Parks and Recreation. Chair Marshall asked for a timeline and Ms. Giboney described the timeline.

Roll call vote was conducted, resolution passed unanimously.

- b. **Resolution 2024-04:** A resolution of the Heritage Land Bank Advisory Commission recommending Assembly approval of the 2024 HLB Annual Work Program and 2025-2029 Five-Year Management Plan.

Ms. Jones-Vogel provided an overview of the Work Plan process and described the comments in the table, went over the HLB Staff added comments, and proposed amendments to the Work Plan. It was recommended that Commissions identify any specific comments that they wished to discuss by number. There were no immediate sections that the Commissioners wished to discuss.

Public Hearing was opened.

Julie Raymond-Yakoubian, Girdwood Resident

Comment No. 14 - asked for clarification of the trails approval process. Asks for HLB to clarify what the process is for the trail approval process as it is of high interest to the public.

Comment No. 28 - Strongly supports the natural burial project and strongly supports the quick disposal of parcel 2-156 (is on the board for Alaska Natural Burial).

Comment No. 31 – concerns regarding the proposed development in Girdwood and wishes that the mission response needs to be amended and fully reflect the entire HLB mission statement in the response.

Comment No. 59 – requested timeline for HLB staff action related to the Girdwood Nordic Ski Club.

Comment No. 81 – requested that criteria be provided for time limits being placed on resolutions and suggested an upper limit.

Deb Essex, GNCS, Resident, Vice Chair Girdwood Trails Committee

Provided a timeline of the background starting in 2006 when HLB commissioned the Winner Creek Trails Feasibility Study. In 2007 the report was completed and suggested 17 KM to build Nordic ski trails. In 2008 the Girdwood Nordic Ski Club was formed. HLB contributed the first \$50K, 2009 easement was granted, 2012 trail opened, 2014 the GNCS began the second phase of the nordic ski trails vision, in 2017 HLBAC approved Resolution 2017-09 approved the 20-year easement, 2018 GNCS set up a pre-application meeting with the Planning Department, 2019 the Urban Design Commission requested

that Girdwood complete a Trails Plan. The Girdwood Trails Plan is before the Assembly for final approval on 2/27/2024. The RFP that was issued in 2021, did not mention the resolution 2017-09 which is in direct conflict with the trails alignment. All the work that has gone towards this effort for trails yet all the planning documents in place do not suggest residential development on this section of HLB Parcel 6-011.

Ms. Essex asked the following questions. If portions of 6-011 are sold to a private entity, will resolution 2017-09 be included in the transaction? Will a trail corridor to connect the south valley trails to the north valley trails be provided in the development as shown on upcoming Girdwood Trails Plan? Will a trails corridor continue to have free public access? What assurances will non-profits have, such as GNSC, that approved resolutions will remain in the HLB Work Plan? Within policy page 36 HLB addresses land use compatibility. Has HLB addressed safety, airport traffic, noise abatement of the Girdwood Airport? Has HLB considered dedicating 6-011 to ensure trail connectivity as an investment? With the proposed Pomeroy development, will this put Girdwood trails on hold for another 10 years?

Ms. Essex expressed her appreciation for the HLB Staff, Commission, and Pomeroy's commitment to transparency.

Amanda Tuttle, Resident

Ms. Tuttle introduced herself as a 20-year Girdwood resident, owner of Coast Pizza, and a property owner in Old Girdwood.

Comment No. 2 - the HLB mission needs to be updated and the duties and responsibilities of the Commission need to be updated, explicit, and referenced throughout the document. Two of the three comprehensive goals are to protect the environment and community from natural hazards - the definition of environmental sustainability.

Comment No. 3 - the HLB response of compliance with Title 25 for public notice process is inaccurate and supporting documentation is available to suggest HLB is in fact not in compliance with public noticing requirements. 25.40.030 Section A, "substantial" is a key word. Section B "calculated" there is no calculated effort to reach the majority of community members because Girdwood does not have a local newspaper. The most effective way would be community fliers or on the local radio station. There is no record that any HLB land activity has ever been broadcast on the local radio station. This information should be expressed within the Work Plan and not reference code sections.

Comment No. 4 - a proper environmental assessment has not been done in the Girdwood Valley at the watershed level. It is HLB's responsibility to complete an environmental assessment. Per 25.40.025. Ms. Tuttle's time elapsed and as she wrapped up she stated that HLB is not in compliance with federal regulations related to a levy owned by HLB in Old Girdwood.

Rachel Bernhardt, Board President Alaska Natural Burial

Alaska Natural Burial is interested in 2-156 for a natural burial site and requested expediting a disposal for natural burial use. There are substantial benefits both ecologically and socially. Anchorage cemetery is nearly full. Alaska Natural Burial has the best chance with least amount of tax payer input. The only other cemetery than Anchorage Memorial Park is a private cemetery with prices 450% higher than those at Anchorage Memorial Park. Many residents belong to faith groups that require burial over cremation and those residents may be priced out of the cemetery market in the near future. Cemeteries are not flashy or fun projects however they are necessary community needs. Alaska Natural Burial has been coordinating with HLB since 2021 and requests this project become a priority project. Please keep this project in the Work Plan.

Krystal Hoke, Resident

Ms. Hoke stated that she is a volunteer with Girdwood Community Land Trust which formed in 2021. Upon formation GCLT submitted an application to HLB for disposal by ground lease for HLB Parcel 6-076. The project did not get much traction until Assemblymember Zaletel proposed AR 2023-40 and HLB submitted the report with financial incentives for disposal of HLB land for housing projects to non-profits. GCLT meets with HLB regularly and GCLT just today issued a Request for Information to the Builders Council meeting. We are asking for specific things looking at environmental constraints – this summer California creek has started meandering and the flooding concerns are more real. Looking forward to a 55-year lease though GCLT would prefer a fee-simple disposal. GBOS and LUC have passed a resolution of support of this project along with several hundred people in Girdwood who are in support. Thank you for including us in the Plan.

Mike Edgington, Resident

Mr. Edgington stated his responsibility is related to Housing as a GBOS Supervisor and would be speaking from that perspective, but not representing GBOS.

GBOS comments were submitted and appreciated the response to all of the comments. Wanted to point out Comment 35. The HLB response was a sensible approach to reach the same goal and appreciated that.

Comment 95 – limitations on what HLB can do have been learned from the Holtan Hills project - this is a market-rate solution and provides all the same problems that Girdwood currently faces with housing challenges. Girdwood has had a higher percentage of housing development than the rest of the MOA; however, that has resulted in more empty or second homes. Noting that one, possibly two lots to transfer to a non-profit is further than HLB has ever gone with development conditions. Other mechanisms such as transfer of land to GVSA that allow greater flexibility and tools to implement development of land consistent with community needs.

Jennifer Winegard, GBOS Supervisor/Land Use Supervisor

GBOS comments that were submitted during the Public Review process were a unanimous decision by GBOS. A couple things slipped through the cracks because of how Holtan Hills was brought up. Because Girdwood lost the most developable piece of land in the Girdwood Valley, Girdwood is scrambling to find solutions to the most pressing housing need, which is workforce housing and a broad spectrum of housing is needed in Girdwood. Girdwood is surrounded by HLB Inventory land; Girdwood cannot grow without working with HLB. Requesting land transfer to a Girdwood non-profit or the Girdwood Valley Service Area.

HLB Parcel 6-134 – general support for RV/workforce winter housing. It was not voted on by GBOS as a comment on the Work Plan, however, there was general support for it. Support Deb Essex's comments regarding trails comments.

Cathy Gleason, Turnagain Community Council President

Appreciate all the work that goes into the Work Plan and TCC follows the Work Plan annually and submits comments.

Comment No. 57 – 4-045, located in the TCC neighborhood area and is adjacent to Earthquake Park. The site has an encroachment with a private shed. The HLB Comment Response is in conflict with the Work Plan. This property seems like a natural space that should go to Parks and Recreation. Requests further information regarding Staff Comment Response since the Community Council wishes to see the parcel to go Anchorage Parks and Recreation.

Public Hearing portion closed.

Commissioner Charnon thanked staff for comments on housing. The discussions to address transfer of HLB property to GVSA or a nonprofit are critical discussions to have. 6-011 Alyeska Resort provided a presentation to the Girdwood Community. Three areas of development were identified. Daycare center, ice rink, employee housing on their private property. Described an 8 – 10-year development timeframe. Glacier View Development was their lowest priority compared to other areas. The proposed conflict would be in conflict with work that has occurred to date. Would cause user conflicts and impact Commission support for trail development in that area. Questions about the timing and scope of work is right and has concerns.

Commissioner Chmielowski moved, Vice Chair Flynn seconded.

Commissioner Charnon moved to amend the Work Plan on page 15 regarding a portion of 6-011 to read “defer disposal until adoption and approval of the Girdwood Trails Plan and the Girdwood Comprehensive Plan, and when those plans are approved any further discussion and disposal be consistent with those plans.”

Commissioner Chmielowski seconded. Questions were asked about timing of the plan adoption.

Roll call vote was conducted, the amendment passed 4:1.

Roll call vote was conducted, HLB Work Plan passed unanimously.

VII. Persons or Items Not on the Agenda

Amanda Tuttle, Resident

24.40.25C, Site specific land use study, information in the comprehensive not sufficient. Zero data for the Girdwood Valley watershed. A full EIS has not been completed, HLB has evaded all environmental review. It is HLB's responsibility. Tressel is outdated, HLB is owner of levee. They are not regulated or maintained locally – USACE regulates the levee. Environmental assessments have to be completed. It is the responsibility of the Commission to be taking care of this. You have to reevaluate this.

Krystal Hoke, Resident

6-134 – researching for RV park. Received a bid for a feasibility study for an RV park. 38K for feasibility study. Money will be spent on the feasibility IF it goes to GVSA.

VIII. Commissioner Comments

No Commissioner comments.

IX. Next Regularly Scheduled Meeting Date

Thursday, March 28, 2024 at 1:30pm in the Permit & Development Center (4700 Elmore Road 99507) or via Microsoft Teams and telephone.

X. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm.