



Minutes Final

Girdwood Trails Committee Special Meeting

Tuesday, January 18, 2022 7:00PM

Girdwood Trails Committee meetings are taking place on Teams thru March 2022.

GTC Voting members are defined as is any person eighteen (18) years of age or older who has attended one or more Trails Committee meetings in the last 12 months, and is:

- a) a current resident and/or property owner, business owner or designated representative of a non-profit association; and
- b) who has resided in, owned property in, owned a business located in, or operated as a non-profit association for the preceding ninety (90) days or longer in Girdwood Valley.

Attendance is verified through a sign-in sheet available at each meeting, or equivalent process.

The Girdwood Board of Supervisors, its committees, and subcommittees are subject to the Alaska Open Meetings Act as found in Alaska Statute 44.62.310 and Anchorage Municipal Code 1.25 - Public Meetings.

The Girdwood Trails Committee operates under the Girdwood Public Meetings Standards of Conduct.

Call to Order

Approval of January 18 Special Meeting agenda

Announcements & Presentations: None

Introductions: All attending are asked to introduce themselves for sign in purposes.

Members who will be eligible to vote at the next meeting are:

Andy Wallace, Robyn Wallace, Janet Kiland, Kerry Quade, Melissa Wuerth, Soren Wuerth

Carolyn Brodin explains that Public Comment is moved to the end of the agenda at Special Meetings in order for the group to focus on the topic of the Special Meeting.

Group discusses the status of the Girdwood Trails Plan, progress made and path forward. Community members found additional edits to the redline document; it will be updated and reposted.

It was originally intended that the Girdwood Trails Plan Subcommittee would work through the Public Comments, however GBOS did not fund the contractor's work with the subcommittee after completion of the Public Review Draft. As a result, GTC completed that task by adding special meetings in November and December and is now ready to address GTC members' edits to the plan.

Carolyn Brodin explains that there will be an opportunity to vote on the redline document at the regular GTC meeting in February. If the GTC wants to move forward with consideration of additional edits to the Girdwood Trails Plan, the items introduced tonight will move to Old Business for discussion and vote as amendments. This is consistent with the process explained at the outset of GTC consideration of the Girdwood Trails Plan.

The meeting began with approximately 40 minute discussion about whether these New Business items (GTC Member Amendments to the Girdwood Trails Master Plan) were allowed to be introduced at this point in the process of GTP development. There were several speakers presenting back and forth. In the end discussion was ended in the sake of time and group moved on with the meeting.

Next Meeting: Feb 1, 2022

Girdwood Trails Committee Agendas and minutes are available on line: <http://www.muni.org/gbos>

Old Business:

1. Introduction and discussion of draft Girdwood Trails Master Plan reviewing recommendations brought forward from GTC members

Carolyn provided this order for review of proposed amendments to the plan, in order to group similar items together.

Kate Sandberg withdraws her proposal as others are similar. Kate stresses that land designation for restricting use is outside of the authority of the GTC and the Trails Plan.

Below is a list of the proposed motions/changes. Maps are pasted below for context. Original larger format is included in the meeting packet. The meeting packet also includes the backup and additional resources for GTC to review for the next meeting, when these will be discussed further as old business:

- Proposed Motion: Vote to adopt the Girdwood Trails Master Plan as it is now (i.e. after incorporation of the votes on recommendations ending at the January 4, 2022 meeting), and add any new proposals that are voted on and accepted by GTC as an additional appendix to the Plan. (Raymond-Yakoubian)
- Proposed change: Title - Virgin Creek Falls Trailhead. Keep bullet points 1,2,3
Add bullet point 4: Upon completion of the study and review of the suggested alternatives by GTC there will be implementation of the preferred option. (Tenny)
- Proposed change: Add 3-5k loop class 4 trail north of T14. (Thomas)
See map below for rough drawing of this concept.

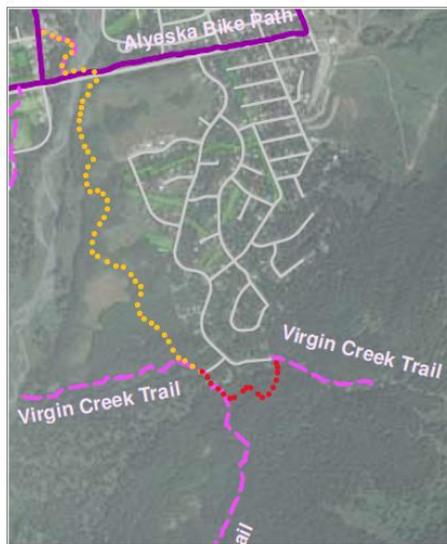


- Proposed change: Trailheads on residential streets should be pedestrian/bike access only (i.e., trailhead parking not allowed on residential roads). (Boone/Harrison)
- Proposed change: Differentiate between activities allowed during winter/summer in Areas for Primitive Trails/Natural Space Areas. (Boone/Harrison)

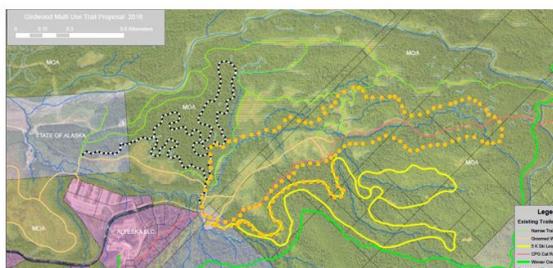
Question: Is this all Primitive Trails/Natural Space areas or one specifically?

- Proposed Motion: Vote to remove all primitive trail areas from the maps. (Essex)

- Proposed Motion: Vote to connect the Upper Joe Danich trail with the Virgin Creek Trail. (Essex). (see map below)



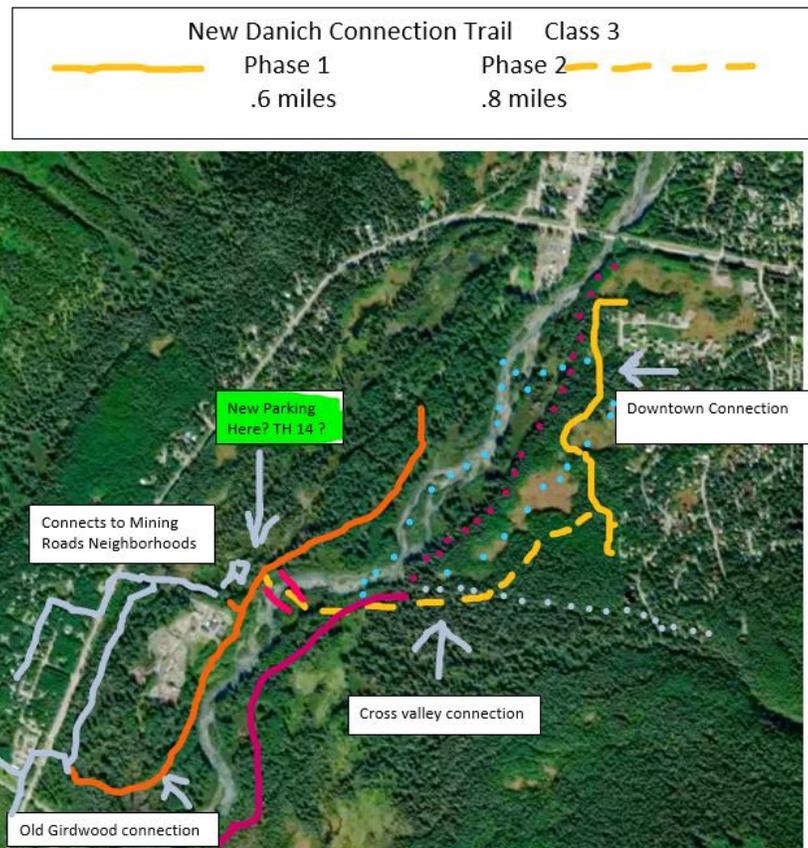
- Proposed Motion: add back an Upper Valley Connector from the Forest Loop to the CPG CAT Track near the CAT Track Bridge. (Essex)



- Proposed Motion: delete the “Primitive Trail Experience” paragraph on page 24 of the Master Plan. (Essex)
- Amend description of primitive trails as follows in red. (Thomas)

Areas for Primitive Trails: One way in which this plan improves the balance and diversity of Girdwood’s trail system is by identifying areas where primitive trails are desired. Areas that prioritize primitive trails without prohibiting other uses serve a variety of purposes, including both conservation and recreation, non-mechanized recreation activities like trail walking, running, hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, orienteering, foraging, wildlife viewing, education, solitude, and meditation are the primary uses.

- Proposed Motion: Add to the draft plan a new class 3 trail traversing parcel 6-036 and other nearby lands generally following the route that is indicated on the attached map. (P Crews)
- Proposed Motion: Add to the draft plan a new site to locate bridge 1. Remove from the draft plan the old location of bridge 1. Select the new location of bridge 1 to correspond with the southern termination of the trail described in motion 1. (P Crews)
- Proposed Motion: Add new trailhead parking #14 near the southern termination of the trail described in motion #1. (P Crews)



- Proposed Motion: Amend the approved recommended change of Natural Spaces description on P 35, **Areas For Primitive Trails** by adding the following sentence: **Primitive Trails should be routed or rerouted onto sustainable alignments and hardened when necessary to assure trail sustainability.** (P Crews)

Barb Crews provided a variety of amendments of text. These will be worked through with staff and contractor. The full list is below. This list of amendments may change to address content issues only at future meetings.

- **Amend T3:**
Build a trail connection in the uplands, where possible, between [the Lower Iditarod trailhead and Ruane Road](#) ~~California Creek and the Alyeska Highway~~. This new lower valley trail would provide a loop in the lower valley east of the Alyeska Highway, improving connectivity and providing an alternate, unpaved looped route for lower valley residents. The trail should be constructed to Class 3 Bicycle design parameters. ~~For the most ideal trail experience, the~~

~~utility easement should be avoided. Structures are permitted to traverse wetlands. The trail should be located on HLB lands zoned GOS.~~

- **Amend T5:**

*Construct an east/west trail connection in the lower valley between the Beaver Pond Trail and the Alyeska Highway Bike Path. This trail would allow users to access and exit the Beaver Pond trail about midway, creating a shorter option for those who do not wish to go the entire length of Beaver Pond trail. It would provide trail connectivity for residents of a possible future development of HLB Tract 18A. T5 would be constructed to Class 3 Biking design parameters. The trail alignment should use the existing Juniper Drive easement. If the trail is constructed before parcels 6-010 and/or 6-040 are developed, the trail and associated easement **may need** to be relocated when the HLB parcels are subdivided and developed.*

- **Amend T6:**

~~Provide a trail connection from the neighborhoods of the middle valley to town center. This proposed trail connection would provide a more direct trail connection to town center from the Alyeska Basin Subdivision by shortening the amount of time pedestrians and trail users would have to travel on roads. Avoid wetlands when possible. Boardwalk structures can be used where staying out of wetlands is not feasible. This trail should be kept outside of natural area 1 (NA1) using HLB land zoned GOS and/or GCR-1. Designed to Class 3 bicycle design parameters. Trail would tie into the Alyeska Hwy Bike Path after crossing under the Alyeska Hwy Glacier Creek bridge existing trails before crossing the highway.~~

- **Amend T7:**

Change the sentence from “...the trail...will be relocated...” to “...the trail...**may need to be relocated** ...”. Hopefully, possible future development will be anticipated during the trail design process so that relocation is not necessary.

- **Amend T8:**

*~~This trail is shown on many trail plans and forms a natural connection between the Beaver Pond Trail on the south, and the Iditarod on the north crossing Ragged Top Trail on the way. The route traverses an area of old growth rainforest, open marshes, small stream courses and waterfalls. The trail would require a bridge to cross over California Creek to join up with Beaver Pond Trail. This bridge could be built in coordination with the Girdwood Cemetery, whose Master Plan also shows a bridge in this area. This trail connection T8 would provide an important link in the Circum-Valley Loop. Trail would be constructed to Class 2 Hiking design parameters. The proposed route traverses HLB lands zoned both GOS and gR-3. If the trail is constructed before parcel 6-010, zoned gR-3 is developed, the trail and associated easement **may need to be** will be relocated when/if the HLB parcel is subdivided and developed. This trail is identified in the Crow Creek Neighborhood Land Use Study.~~*

- **Amend T9:**

Change the sentence from “...the trail...will be relocated...” to “...the trail...**may need to be relocated** ...”.

- **Amend T11:**

Add trail class in this trail description.

- Amend T12:**
This proposed trail creates an upland route ~~between Stumpy's Summer Trail and the Glacier Canyon Rim~~ between the southern ~~portion~~ and northern portions of Stumpy's Summer Trail. It would replace the sections of Stumpy's Summer trail that traverse the wetlands of Perpetual, Island, and Last Meadows. The trail would create a loop option for hikers on the Winner Creek and Snowcat trails. The proposed trail should be ~~is a primitive, non-mechanized trail~~ constructed to Class 2 Hiking design parameters. ~~Because the trail is located in an Area of Primitive Trails, bikes and other mechanized uses would not be allowed on the trail. The trail should be hardened as necessary~~ ~~would be unhardened as much as possible, however it could~~ ~~hardening is minimally allowed~~ to avoid braiding of trails, resource damage, and to achieve trail sustainability ~~if desired~~.
- Amend T13:**
 Add a conceptual version of the previously approved Forest Loop Trail that addresses the changes needed based on Alyeska Village development.
- Amend T14:**
 T14 is listed as 4 miles long in the Existing Trails chart on p. 20. The Draft Trail Master Plan says "improvements should be considered on both sides of Winner Creek trail" (p. 39). Then in the chart on p. 40, T14 is listed as 1.21 miles long. Does this mean that only 1.21 miles out of the 4 mile long trail are going to be upgraded from Class 1 to Class 4?
 Next to last sentence:
 On the north side of Winner Creek a separate, down route for bikes should be constructed separate from the multi-use T14 T13 and connecting MB3 to the bottom of the hill.
- Amend B3:**
Identify a location for a trail bridge to cross Virgin Creek. A bridge would provide a safe, legal, and sustainable connection between lower Virgin Creek and the Wagon Trail ~~and complete a loop in the lower Valley~~. This project must be pursued in concert with the Virgin Creek Access Study (TH4).
- Add B7:** (this is a new bridge that I propose be added to the Plan)
Construct a pedestrian trail bridge across California Creek as part of the T8 trail project connecting Beaver Pond Trail to the Toe Slope Trail. This bridge is also included in the Girdwood Cemetery Master Plan, so bridge planning and construction could be shared between the GTC and the Girdwood Cemetery.
- Amend TH5 & TH6:** (this is a variation on TH5 and TH6)
 Combine TH6 and TH5 (Kariolus) into a TH by the ballfields.
- RE: TH8:** (Beaver Pond Trailhead)
The Beaver Pond trailhead is often full. Implementing ~~other simple trailhead~~ improvements at other trailheads (Town Square, Girdwood PreK-8 School, Girdwood Cemetery, and improved signage and wayfinding), may reduce the demand for on-street parking in this location. As required, coordinate with AK DOT&PF to investigate the feasibility of an official trailhead in this location.
- Amend TH9:**
Pursue an official parking agreement with Anchorage School District ~~Girdwood PreK-8 School~~ to provide authorized trail parking in the dirt lot adjacent to the AWWU road. ~~this location~~. Install trailhead, wayfinding, and informational signage as authorized. A trail should be constructed that connects this parking lot to the Middle Iditarod trail. This new connector

trail should be located off of the AWWU road, given the planned development of the Holtan Hills subdivision. Perhaps this trail connection could be built as part of the Holtan Hills development.

- **Amend TH11:**
Propose an additional 30 spots at a minimum.
- **Amend Natural Space Description on Page 35:**
Areas for Primitive Trails: One way in which this plan improves the balance and diversity of Girdwood's trail system is by identifying areas where primitive trails are desired. Trails in these areas would be limited to class 2 standards unless use of trails within these areas warrants improved trail tread to protect the surrounding environment. Areas that prioritize primitive trails serve a variety of purposes, including both conservation and recreation, where non-mechanized recreation activities like trail walking, running, hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, orienteering, foraging, wildlife viewing, education, solitude, and meditation are the primary uses. Mechanized trail use, such as bikes or one wheels, is not authorized.
- **Amend language in NS1 (Virgin Creek Area of Primitive Trails) (NS2 and NS3 also should adopt this amendment):**
Create a natural space in the Virgin Creek area that is kept in its primitive natural state. Allowed uses include primitive, non-mechanized recreation activities like trail walking, running, hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, orienteering, foraging, wildlife viewing, education, solitude, and meditation. Mechanized trail use, such as bikes or one wheels, is not authorized. Trails in these areas would be limited to class 2 standards unless use of trails within these areas warrants improved trail tread to protect the surrounding area. Trails in the area should be kept to Class 1 and Class 2 Design Parameters. Trail boardwalk or bridge structures are authorized to avoid wetlands and streams. Signage should be kept to a minimum. Parking for this level of development would be required either via TH9, TH10, or TH2.
- **Amendment 1 to NS1:** (wording from the staff recommendation for NS1)
Recommend adjusting the east boundary of NS1 to include the Wagon Trail.
- **Amendment 2 to NS1:** (wording from the staff recommendation for NS1 with my modifications in blue)

The western boundary should be adjusted to remove the Lower Joe Danich Trail from NS1. This would allow the Lower Danich Trail to be upgraded to a Class 3 trail IF AND ONLY IF:

- B1 is ever built and
- a Class 3 connector trail from Lower Danich to Turin and/or Carlina Drive cul-de-sacs is built.

Because this connector trail would be a Class 3 trail within NS1, it would have to be granted an exception to the NS conditions stipulating primitive trails and no mechanized travel.

Upper Joe Danich would remain in NS1.

- **Amendment 3 to NS1:**
Construct a neighborhood connector trail (Class 3, bicycle design parameters) in uplands from the Turin and/or Carlina Drive cul-de-sacs to connect to T6, the Barren Ave to Alyeska Highway Connector. Because this connector trail would be a Class 3 trail within NS1, it would have to be granted an exception to the NS conditions stipulating primitive trails and no mechanized travel.

- **Amendment 4 to NS1:**
Bikes are allowed on the Lower Danich only during the winter.
- **Amend MB1:**
Provide purpose-built mountain biking flow trails (Class 2-3 bicycle design parameters) to the west of Abe's trail and Beaver Pond trail in the area between the California Creek drainages. This mountain bike area would alleviate user conflicts around the Abe's Trail/Beaver Pond/California Creek area. Beaver Pond Trail (out of trailhead 20) and a new built up track would be the up route for bicycle traffic and the proposed T7 Crow Creek Road to Beaver Pond Trail would be the down route. Design intent is to mitigate user conflict in this area to the greatest extent possible by providing purpose-built mountain biking trails and removing faster-speed bicycle traffic from multi-use trails built for hiking. Trailhead access for this area would be located at Town Center, the improved Beaver Pond Trailhead, Cemetery trailhead, or Girdwood Pre-K-8 School Four Valleys Community School.
- **Amend MB2:**
Provide purpose-built mountain biking flow trails (Class 2-3 bicycle design parameters) within and around the 5K Nordic Ski Loop. All trails in MB2 should minimize impacts to the Winner Creek Trail viewshed. Trailhead access to the area is from the Arlberg Trailhead, Alyeska Resort for resort guests, Alyeska Resort for the general public if a parking agreement is in place, and the Winner Creek Gorge Trailhead once the bridge over Glacier Creek at the Hand Tram is in place. Additional trails in MB2 will not be authorized until a parking agreement is in place, Arlberg is expanded, or another parking solution is identified.

Miscellaneous Questions and Recommendations

- **Amend Population description p. 13**

Population

The original people of the Girdwood Valley were the Dena'ina Athabascan who may have visited the valley used the land to trap, hunt, and fish. (in our research for the Iditarod signs, we learned that it is doubtful an Dena'ina lived in the Girdwood valley). The town of Girdwood was established by goldminers in 1896, and by 1906 had grown to 1500 goldminers and railroad workers. In the 1950's the population of the Girdwood Valley was low and mostly supportive of rail and (the ARR was completed in 1923) highway construction efforts after gold mining ended during WW2. As Alaska began to develop its resources throughout the state, the population began to increase. After the Alyeska Hotel was completed in the mid-1990's population growth slowed as development became constricted by lack of land and available local jobs. During peak times, population in the town can reach 4000 people – double ??? something's missing here!

- **Amend p. 15 with revised chart**



- Amend p. 16 to remove reference to the Hand Tram from the Existing Physical Conditions section.
- Amend p. 26 to remove references to the Hand Tram from the Connectivity section.
- Amend Access section:
Parking for trail access is available year-round at the USFS Ranger District Office, Beaver Pond Trail, Arlberg Lot and Moose Meadows Ski Trails. The following parking options are only accessible during summer: Crow Pass, Winner Creek Gorge, Middle Iditarod, and Upper Iditarod Trail, Upper Virgin Creek Trail.
- Amend p.35 as follows, under Areas of Primitive Trails description

One way in which this plan improves the balance and diversity of Girdwood's trail system is by identifying areas where primitive trails are desired. Trails in these areas would be limited to class 2 standards unless use of trails within these areas warrants improved trail tread to protect the

surrounding environment. Areas that prioritize primitive trails serve a variety of purposes, including both conservation and recreation, where non-mechanized recreation activities like trail walking, running, hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, orienteering, foraging, wildlife viewing, education, solitude, and meditation are the primary uses. Mechanized trail use, such as bikes or one wheels, is not authorized.

- Amend p. 40 to allow biking on the Toe Slope Trail.

Public Comment (3 minutes each):

Kalie Harrison: GBOS Special Meeting on Jan 24 at 6PM agenda begins with continuation of update on the status of the Girdwood Trails Plan. This discussion began at Regular meeting on Jan 17, however the meeting was required to end at 11PM before conversation had concluded. Meeting is noticed on the GBOS website, PO, Library, Community Center and on Girdwood Facebook page, Teams meeting link also included. Public may subscribe up for updates on GBOS and other committee events: www.muni.org/gbos

Adjourn 9:00PM