



Meeting Minutes DRAFT

Date: February 16, 2021—5:30– 7:00pm

Location: Via Zoom

Project: Girdwood Trails Plan Subcommittee Meeting

Girdwood Trails Plan Subcommittee Voting members are defined as Girdwood residents or property owners age 18 years or older who have been appointed by the Girdwood Trails Committee to be a member of this subcommittee.

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.

All meetings are recorded and available to public as part of the public record.

Attendance

Holly Spoth-Torres (GTP Contractor), Leah Buron (Huddle AK)

Committee Members: Ron Tenny, Deb Essex, Paul Crews, Carolyn Brodin, Jonathon Lee, Jessica Szelag, Christina Cope Hendrickson, Nick Georgelos, Amanda Sassi

Not present: Eileen Halverson, Brenden Raymond-Yakoubian

Municipal Staff Members: Kyle Kelley (MOA), Shelley Rowton (MOA HLB)

Members of the Public: Kalie Harrison, Barbara Crews, Brianna Sullivan, Shannon O'Brien, Debra Croghan, Kate Sandberg

HST calls for meeting to begin and starts recording.

R. Tenny opens meeting and asks for roll call.

Roll call given by HST

Meeting begins 5:30pm.

HST explains that the GBOS Code of Conduct for Girdwood Public Meetings will be discussed at the next Girdwood Trails Committee meeting. At that time, the Committee should decide how to adopt those policies.

OLD BUSINESS

Workshop-Continued Map Discussions: Upper Valley

HST

- Project intent of every project in each area – is the location correct? – What are the goals of the project? – what plan goals do the projects achieve?

- Trail class/designed use for new trails

Trail #8-Canyon Rim Trail

HST

- Currently Class 1-primitive trail
- Proposed Design-Class 2 designed for hiking
- Prohibited uses-dog sled, skijoring, biking

HST screens shares map of the Upper Valley and asks for discussion.

Discussion:

- Keep trail primitive, provides equitable balance, amazing viewpoints that allow for primitive recreational opportunities (bird watching, photography, etc.).

Clarification: This would be a reroute of the second half of Stumpy's summer trail out of the Meadows.

- Another comment in agreement to not develop #8 past a Class 1.
- Concern if a Class 1 trail it will not be sustainable and that users will begin to create social trails and there would be degradation to the area.
- The plan goals/values speak to "sharing", if the trail stays Class 1 there is a concern that it will be too exclusive.
- #8 should join up with #10. Suggested that the committee should consider adding trails at the south end of #30 (excellent ground for trails, need to consider this is a 20-year plan to accommodate future needs in that area).
- Support reroute of #8 trail for more sustainable trail outside of the wetlands, without getting too close to the canyon edge (based on prior Hand Tram discussion).
- Natural space zoning should be reduced in that area. HLB land feasibility studies show this zoned area as a recreational area and there is room to accommodate both Class 1 and Class 2 trails.
- Another comment in agreement that #8 trail stays primitive.
- Primitive trail users need a place and this is the trail to do that.
- If the trail is kept primitive GTC will need to address that there will likely be annual maintenance concerns.
- There are management tools in place to address trail maintenance before a trail project is approved, prefer this trail stays primitive.

Clarification: A reroute means providing new alignment and obliterating and revegetating old alignment.

Point made to consider the context before calling a trail a "reroute" vs. a new trail.

- There are portions of this trail that are not actual trail (game trails??), if the trail is placed on the map, work will need to be done to create one sustainable path.
- Trail has remained primitive because not many people know about it, if it is placed on the map there needs to be a plan to prevent damage to this sensitive area, which would mean making it a Class II trail.
- Suggestion to provide language on the map that this trail is meant to be primitive and not meant to accommodate heavy traffic.
- Keep trail out of wetlands, once people find the trail/it becomes more popular it is naturally going to become more defined, so should plan ahead for that. Class 1 limits the options for the future.

Trail #10/Natural Area #30

HST

- Asks for clarification about the idea to route #10 further west into #30? Also asks about the purpose of more trails in #30 (where would they go and who are they for)?

Discussion:

- Plan for future needs, that ground is extremely suitable for supporting more trails.
- A secondary access just north of the airport property would provide better connection from lower to upper trails and would alleviate concerns for emergency access.
- **Winner Creek Trails Feasibility Study** referenced as important document for group to review before deciding on where trails would go in area #30.
https://www.muni.org/Departments/hlb/HLBDocument/WinnerCrkTrlsFeasStudy_Part1.pdf

#23-Arlberg Trailhead-with restroom

HST

- There are currently 23 parking spaces/how much will this lot need to increase?
- Discuss idea that Winner Creek Trail needs to be connected to the Arlberg lot (not currently in project, but should be discussed).

Discussion:

- Determining size of Arlberg lot is outside of expertise of group and should be done by traffic engineer.
- Connection to Winner Creek should be included on the map.
- Yes on connection and yes lot needs to grow.

HST asks for clarification on this topic. Why hasn't connection to Winner Creek Trail advanced at all/why hasn't it come up in this process at all?

K. Kelley A: It hasn't been in a plan. It's been explored but hasn't been a priority. Parking lot is new within the last five years, so it is just now becoming a prominent issue.

HST agrees the size of lot is beyond scope of sub-committee, but she wanted to be sure there wasn't any strong opposition.

Discussion continued:

- Reference made to a parking study completed by **DOWL** for the **Alyeska Spa Expansion**. Could be useful in drafting narrative for this plan.
- Lot should be adequately sized for all potential user groups to this area.

Clarification: When talking about a connection to the Winner Creek Trail does HST mean connecting to the current lot or a future lot location?

HST A: Both, one does not prevent the other.

Discussion continued:

- Suggestion made for phased approach since current lot is not big enough for the current use.

Discussion on whether or not resort would object to a parking agreement for the use of resort parking lots for trail access. There is no objection currently, but this may not be the case in the future.

HST

- If there were to be a bridge across Winner Creek, how do people feel about adding capacity at the Hand Tram lot in order to relieve some parking pressure?

Discussion:

- (K. Kelley) Doable, would need to be coordinated (lease or easement) with the Forest Service.
- Preferable location for expansion since it's not surrounded by wetlands like the Arlberg lot.
- Good long-term solution.

Question asked if there are any plans to add spots at Moose Meadows parking area.

K. Kelley A: Yes, they are looking into it. It is a high priority.

HST states that project will show up on the list of projects in this plan.

Continued Map Discussions: Middle Valley

HST overviews Middle Valley discussion.

- #9-California Creek to Ragged Top
 - Class 2-hiking/Prohibited use dog sled, skijoring
 - Part of the circum valley loop
 - There is a historic route that used to exist in that area
- #20-Expansion or upgrade at Beaver Pond trailhead
 - Highly desirable for hiking and biking, biking not necessarily authorized
 - Need to rethink due to user conflicts
 - New trails could create a traffic pattern for bike traffic to alleviate user conflict
- #5-Trail for bike specific traffic
 - Use to separate hiking and bike traffic
- #34-Proposed Mountain Bike Area
 - Provide bike specific area to separate biking from hiking around Beaver Pond area

Discussion:

- #9-*The original trail location was discussed on the map*
- Cemetery is planning on putting a bridge over California Creek so that is something to consider

HST-Would it be better than to move trail to follow historic trails?

- Move the primitive trail to better separate the uses.
- Provide access other than Abe's trail for biking.
- Provide bike uptrail in #34 to separate bikes from Abe's Trail.

*S. Rowton references **Crow Creek Neighborhood Plan**, which outlines trails being discussed in this area. She screen shares the CC Plan. Discussion over what the map shows in reference to GT Plan.*

https://www.muni.org/Departments/hlb/Documents/CC_Land_Use_Plan_May_06_WEB.pdf

Discussion continued:

- Move the primitive trail to better separate the uses.
- Move #34 to the west of Abe's Trail.

HST-Where do they want #5 to start and stop?

Discussion:

- #34 is better slotted West of Abe's Trail.
- Suggested to move #20 east further into Town Square to create trailhead'

- Possibly connect #5 to the school and INHT (depends on feasibility of topography and land ownership).

HST asks what the reality is of having shared parking with the cemetery.

K. Kelley A: Depends on phasing and demands. Area being discussed would be part of Phase III (50 yr. projection) and a bridge would be expensive to build.

- Locate #20 where it best suits the Beaver Pond access in proximity to the other trails being discussed.
- The landowner at #20 is the State so expanding is feasible.
- #5 could be down/out route for bikes (do not promote as trailhead)
- Utilize existing ROW for #5
- Shift top of #5 towards the West, get rid of shared trail conflicts
- Tiny Creek access is a good spot to get to parking lot as well.
- Consider encouraging some trailheads without adjacent parking access.

C. Cope Hendrickson volunteers to review documentation from the Singletrack Advocates on similar user conflicts within the Anchorage Bowl and report back to group if there is any information that would be relevant to the GT Plan.

- #19 can also be utilized as support for parking needs.
- Where N. Georgelos drew new potential locations for #20 is an old gravel pit.

Public Comment

Written comment submitted 2/16/21 by Julie Raymond-Yakoubian.

“Waqaa, hello,

I am not able to attend the 2/16/21 GTP worksession so am submitting this comment in writing. Please forward this to the subcommittee. I hope it can be shared during the meeting along with any other public comments received.

Regarding **Trail #8** on the draft GTP map: I am a very frequent and long-time user of this trail and I would like for it to stay as-is, i.e. a ~Class 1 primitive trail. I do not think this trail should be upgraded, modified, or changed in any way. This is a wonderful trail that currently provides an unparalleled primitive trail experience.

Regarding **Natural Space #30** on the draft GTP map: I am also a frequent and long-time user of this natural space. I would like the boundary of this space expanded to the east, all the way over to the CAT track. I think this primitive natural space should stay as-is and no additional trails should be built in this area. In addition to primitive trail hiking experiences, this area is also currently a fantastic, magical and important space that is actively used for a multitude of other activities such as snowshoeing, skiing, meditation, foraging, wildlife observation, spiritual contemplation, and other activities.

Quyana for your consideration,
Julie Raymond-Yakoubian
Girdwood”

HST-Next meeting will be regular sub-committee meeting where they will regroup and discuss schedule moving forward.

Meeting adjourned 7:00pm