



Meeting Minutes DRAFT

Date: February 2, 2021—6:00 – 7:30pm

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, Brenden Raymond-Yakoubian, Paul Crews, Carolyn Brodin, Jonathon Lee, Eileen Halverson, Jessica Szlag, Christina Cope Hendrickson, Nick Georgelos, Amanda Sassi

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

Members of the Public: Kalie Harrison, Mike Edgington, Barbara Crews, Brianna Sullivan, Julie Raymond-Yakoubian, Shannon O'Brien, Brian Burnett, Ethan Tyler, Jeff Samuels, Debra Croghan, Jeff Stevenson

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 6:02pm.

R. Tenny asks for approval of the February 2 agenda and asks for comments.

C. Cope Hendrickson made motion to approve

J. Szlag seconded

No discussion, motion passes

R. Tenny asks for motion to approve the January 20 Special Meeting minutes and asks for comments.

Comments:

C. Cope Hendrickson did not feel the minutes included enough information and would like to ensure that the meeting minutes accurately record the level of detail discussed in the special meeting and any future meetings.

R. Tenny states that all meetings are recorded and available to the public. He suggests they add language to the minutes letting the public know they are recorded and available to listen to as part of the public record.

J. Lee clarifies he was not listed in the attendance, but that he was there, he just did not have the ability to unmute.

HST amended the minutes to include J. Lee's attendance as well as incorporating B. Raymond-Yakoubian's written amended changes to the minutes.

C. Cope Hendrickson made motion to table voting on the minutes pending any changes that needed to be made, including more detail and additional information.

HST and K. Kelley state that in a prior meeting it was recommended that HST provide less detail in the meeting minutes and that the notes be summarized for all meetings and work sessions.

J. Lee seconded

Yea: B. Raymond-Yakoubian, C. Hendrickson, E. Halverson, J. Lee

Nays: N. Geogelos, J. Szelag, A. Sassi, D. Essex, R. Tenny

Abstain: P. Crews, C. Brodin

Clarification: A. Sassi asks if recordings are going to be kept and made available in the future.

HST states they will be made available.

Motion to table fails.

N. Geogelos made motion to approve the January 20 Special Meeting minutes

P. Crews seconded

B. Raymond-Yakoubian moves to amend

Amendments include:

- Adding J. Lee to the attendance
- Adding Julie Raymond-Yakoubian, Becky Germain, Shannon O'Brien as attending members of the public
- Added the full text of the updated Vision Statement
- Added names to the public comments
- Added slight changes to language of S. O'Brien's comment and added "Refer to official letter submitted on February 1, 2021". *Statement language approved by S. O'Brien.*

P. Crews seconded amendment.

No comments, amendments approved.

Back to vote on original motion with approved amendments for January 20 Special Meeting minutes.

Nay: C. Cope Hendrickson, E. Halverson

Clarification: J. Lee-"Yes" is a vote to approve the amendments to the minutes?

HST-"Yes" is a vote to approve the minutes as amended.

No discussion, motion passes.

J. Szelag made motion to approve the January 5 minutes.

P. Crews seconded

B. Raymond-Yakoubian moves to amend

P. Crews seconded

Amendments include:

- Adding M. Edgington's name to the public comment
- Correct spelling of B. Burnett's name

Clarification: J. Lee-Is B. Burnett a committee member? He is listed as a member.

HST-He is not, she will revise.

Motion passes.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Goals

K. Kelley sets a 20 minute cap on discussion of goals.

HST turns discussion over to J. Szelag to discuss her process for the revised goals.

J. Szelag gives overview of the revised goals:

- Keep it simple while trying to encompass all the discussed points from prior meetings.
- Provide something for everyone.
- Explains the color-coded version of the goals category breakdown:
 - New goals (trails, natural spaces, stewardship, and process)
 - Old goals (from last meeting)
 - Themes from 12/2020 meeting
 - J. Szelag's words (sub-goals)

J. Szelag asks for discussion on the revised goals.

Comments:

C. Cope Hendrickson-Add world class "trail and natural spaces" to goal #1 in place of hiking, biking and nordic skiing. Strike the word "forested" in goal #2.

B. Raymond-Yakoubian moved to approve the old goals from the prior meeting with minor amendments to the language.

Amendments include:

- Goal 3: add "build trails and **establish natural spaces**
- Goal 4: strike "regularly maintained" and replace with are "**managed as needed**"

C. Cope Hendrickson seconded motion to amend.

Discussion follows on the two versions of the goals. Opinions are split for and against the revised goals.

Discussion is mainly split over whether or not Natural Spaces should be split out as its own goal or not.

B. Raymond-Yakoubian does not want natural spaces separated out and feels that the new goals are too far outside of the goals that the committee has worked on previously and which have already been presented to the public.

Leads to larger discussion of how the plan will assist user groups in getting projects approved.

K. Kelley reiterates:

- the crux of this plan is to develop a plan that allows for the planning director to have backing to approve trails projects so they don't have to go through the UDC process.
- This plan would help to establish projects.

Discussion returns to goals.

R. Tenny calls to move forward with the motion on the table to approve the previous version of the plan goals and if that does not pass the group will move toward refining the updated version.

HST clarifies that the motion is to approve the previous goals with the two minor adjustments.

Nays: J. Szelag, A. Sassi, D. Essex, R. Tenny

Motion passes.

New goals to be adopted into the draft plan read:

GOAL 1: PLAN Provide a balance and diversity of trail and natural area experiences that minimize user conflicts and are consistent with the Girdwood Area Plan and the Girdwood Valley Trail Management Plan.

GOAL 2: CONSERVE Identify, designate uses, and protect trails and natural spaces through proper processes.

GOAL 3: DEVELOP Build trails and establish natural spaces using sustainable design principles with a clear project approval process among landowners.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN Trails and natural spaces are managed as needed for safety, the desired user experience, and to conserve natural resources.

GOAL 5: SUSTAIN Provide adequate funding, planning, support, and stewardship for trails and natural spaces.

2. Continued Map Discussions: Upper Valley

- Proposed new trail #10 (Upper Valley Multi-Use Trail)
- #30 (Stumpy's Natural Area)
- #8 (Glacier Canyon Rim Trail)

HST reviews the intent of the discussion – to receive feedback on proposed project #10, #30, and #8. The discussion at the last worksession resulted in the idea that the Upper Valley Multi-Use Trail (#10) would shift to the east (more uplands). This shift would expand the boundary of Stumpy's natural area to include Secret Meadow (#30). Additionally, the Upper Valley Multi-Use Trail (#10) would be identified as a Class 4 trail, design parameter Skate Skiing.

HST opens these items up for discussion.

Comments:

- P. Crews-decide as a community if we want the Upper Valley Multi-Use Trail and then he will address which route he feels is best based on his extensive time in that area.
- C. Brodin-agrees she would like to decide if they want Upper Valley Multi-Use Trail.
- B. Raymond-Yakoubian would like to discuss #8 in conjunction with #10 and #30 since they are all related.

HST gives an overview of the area:

- There is a way to protect the natural spaces while providing a loop connection in that area.
- Closer to the creek would be a more primitive natural space with lower density trails and closer to the resort would allow for higher intensity recreation with a higher density of trails.

HST turns discussion over to D. Essex to explain the proposed Upper Valley Multi-Use Trail.

D. Essex (*feels a multi-use trail in this area would serve the community well*)

- Based on polling by the Nordic Ski Club and other organizations, the community is interested in another multi-use ski trail.
- The Upper Valley Multi-Use Trail would start from Arlberg parking lot and create a loop trail to the cat track and would come back to the parking lot.
- Would provide an area where people could engage in different multi-use activities.
- Currently, the land is zoned commercial recreation and is closest to the resort. For example, the area near Virgin Creek and Joe Danich is more primitive and should remain primitive.

- Clarifications: C. Brodin-Would a Class 4 trail be sufficient?

E. Halverson-Asks for further clarification on the size needed for skate skiing.

D. Essex-The Upper Valley Multi-Use Trail would be built half the size of the Nordic 5K Loop and would be built to Forest Service design parameters.

HST-The trail design parameters for Class 4 skate skiing are the following:

Design Groom Width: Single Lane: 8'-12' (or width of grooming equipment)
 Double Lane: 12'-16'
 Design Clearing: Height: 8'-10'
 Width: 8'-18'
 Shoulder Clearing: 0-2'

Committee will need to decide if it will be single or double direction.

J. Lee asks the people with the most experience in this area to speak their thoughts on a trail in this area (P. Crews and C. Brodin).

P. Crews

- Paul confirmed that there are limited trail options in this area and knows that there is currently a demand for more multi-use trails.
- After extensive multi-season time in this area, he thinks they should be able to put a trail in that area with minimal impact. *He drew his preferred route on the map (East of existing Secret Meadow).*
- Suggests that in the winter the cat road is the down route and for the summer route, build in conjunction with the bicycle alliance to provide up route. (utilize cat road as is, but provide trail tread for walking)

C. Brodin

- She is passionate about protecting and preserving Stumpy's natural area, but also sees that there is a community need for another multi-use trail in that area and if planned for and done carefully both can be achieved.

A. Sassi asks if they can move to approve the location of that trail.

K. Kelley states they at this time he is looking for input and not a motion. However, the committee can move if they so choose.

A. Sassi declines to make a formal motion.

C. Cope Hendrickson

- Group needs to consider that additional infrastructure (i.e. parking, wayfinding, etc.) will need to be provided for with the inclusion of a new multi-use trail.

B. Raymond-Yakoubian

- Is there any more discussion of the alternatives and will the facilitators be providing information in the narrative that provides more detail?

HST-Yes, they will have parameters for the trails to help the planning department make decisions. Their narrative for trails will include:

- Design intent for each trail or project
- Design parameters for each trail or project
- Will stay out of wetlands as much as possible
- Will maximize the space of the natural area (#30) as much as possible

HST states that the intent of #8 is to be inside Stumpy's natural area and it is intended to be a primitive trail (class 2 max).

HST calls for public comment public comment/questions.

Debra Croghan feels the meetings need to leave more time for public comment at the end. She also states that comments made tonight were, in her opinion, unfounded. She was offended and it made her uncomfortable. She believes Girdwood meetings should not be contentious. She also agrees with opinions regarding natural spaces. She also agrees to proceed with caution in regards the new proposed multi-use trail.

K. Kelley asks committee to be prepared for another work session.

C. Cope Hendrickson would like to see additional enforcement of how people address one another.

R. Tenny-noted

C. Cope Hendrickson makes motion to adjourn.

E. Halverson seconded.

R. Tenny calls for adjournment.

Meeting adjourned 7:32pm

DRAFT

TO: Girdwood Trails Committee (if appropriate)
FROM: Barbara Bowers – 432 Timberline Dr., Girdwood
DATE: 01/31/2021
RE: Joe Danish Trail – possible development: a.k.a. Taming the Wilderness

tylerms@
MUNI.ORG

I understand there is the possibility of changing/improving the Joe Danish Trail (currently a Class 1 or 2 trail) into a multi-use/bike trail with the start possibly down by the old gravel pit just south of Girdwood on the Seward Hwy. In my opinion this is a bad idea because of the following reasons:

1. With summer traffic increasing yearly, the users coming from Anchorage would have to cross over the north bound traffic to get to the proposed parking area. With the ever-increasing summer traffic this would cause a bottle-neck for the south-bound traffic and another traffic hazard most certainly resulting in more accidents. There is already discussion about how to get the south-bound traffic safely into Girdwood, this would just duplicate the present problem a half mile down the road.
2. I have never hiked the new trail between Old Girdwood and the Girdwood Park/Baseball Field. I understand this is available for bike use. Bikers could use this trail, on the opposite side of Glacier Creek from the Joe Danish Trail. Bikers already use the parking lot by the railroad station to access the Gird to Bird Trail, they would just go the opposite direction. This new trail connects all the way to the Girdwood Park/Ball Field and from there up the Bike Path, out to the 5K Nordic Trail/Summer Bike Path already in place. This also opens the possibility of connecting to future hiking/x-c ski trails up valley.
3. I am not sure when Joe Danish cleared his original hiking trail. The trail was already in use and the trees "notched" when I moved to Girdwood in 1974. It is a beautiful walk through the woods in summer, winter, spring & fall. I don't understand why it has to be changed when there is a good trail on the opposite of Glacier Creek already in and available for bike and hike traffic.
4. Do we really need MORE development and MORE reasons for recreational users to come to Girdwood? If we build it, they will come. And keep coming and coming.
 - a. With the improved Winner Creek Trail the quiet walk through the woods doesn't happen. (Yes, it WAS in very poor condition and did need improvement. The only reason it was enjoyable last summer is because the hand-tram was down.) Do we want to lose another quiet walking trail?
 - b. The parking lot at the start of the 5K NNT has been over-flowing EVERY WEEKEND with cars parked along the side of the road this winter and will most likely continue happening year-round. More developed trails, more users.
 - c. All meadows and wetlands are now being stomped down by hikers, bikers, and cross-country skiers (of which I am one). Especially true with our warmer winter weather resulting with rain probable any month of the year.
 - d. Let's stop and think this through – are we willing to give up our quiet life-style by developing trails up and down, back and forth throughout the Girdwood Valley?
(OVER)

Page 1

* See page 2 for short
SUMMARY.

Let's leave the Joe Danish Trail as he intended it: a quiet, year-round walk through the woods where nature can be enjoyed.

Thank you for listening to my thoughts.

* * *

IN SUMMARY: Proposed Joe Danish Trail Improvements not recommended because:

1. Proposed parking lot at old gravel pit south of Girdwood will result in same traffic congestion that now exists from south-bound left turn off New Seward Hwy. into Girdwood.
2. No need for Joe Danish Trail up-grade as present "new trail" on opposite side of Glacier Creek from Old Girdwood to Girdwood Ball Field/Park. What's the point of two trails ending up the same place?
3. Connecting present Bird/Gird Bike Trail to present "new trail" along Glacier Creek from Old Girdwood to Girdwood Park/Ball Field solves parking issues.
4. More development wanted?
 - a. Want to loose another quiet & peaceful walk-through-the-woods?
 - b. More trails, more traffic (auto/bike/foot).
 - c. Over-use of the fragile ground in Girdwood turns it into-mush (as we are experiencing now on ski/bike/hike trails).
 - d. Ready to give up present life-style by developing trails all throughout Girdwood? IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME!

From: [Zelma Denise Gallup](#)
To: [Carolyn Brodin](#)
Cc: [Holly Spoth-Torres](#); mike.edgington@gmail.com
Subject: Open Space
Date: Wednesday, January 27, 2021 2:39:37 PM

To
Carolyn Brodin
Chair, Girdwood Trails
carolyn_brodin@hotmail.com

25 January 2021

Hello Carolyn:

I am writing because I have had a few experiences with locals on various street corners just chatting that have brought a common concern to light. I am referring to the concept of Open Space.

This letter is in support of Open Space. Concerns voiced to me involve a couple of things:

- 1) Open Space first will shut down new trails and
- 2) Open Space first will shut down the local economy.

Open Space first will shut down new trails

It seems common sense to me that our trails need open space; that is why we live here and why people come here - to view the open space along the trails. They don't walk the trails in Anchorage as a first choice because the trails run next to busy neighborhoods and commerce spaces which are noisy and not near as beautiful as Girdwood.

Open Space first will shut down the local economy

The second point is just based in fear. Having Open Space will increase economic strength of our valley not squash it. People will come to a place and spend a lot of money there just to be in the protected Open Spaces - because of the protected Open Spaces. There are a lot of current day examples of success with this. A lot of them.

Sure, Open Space may require the local governing bodies to say no to some propositions but the value of something is not increased when we choose to let everyone have a piece of the pie. There are a lot of good ideas out there but a good idea does not mean that it is automatically given a Right to demean and devalue something that cannot be replaced.

One thing about Open Spaces; once gone they are gone for a lifetime (or more).

Thanks for listening Carolyn. I know that you will share this with whoever needs to hear it but hopefully with the Trails Master Plan committee and the Imagine Girdwood committee.

All the best and thanks So Much for all you do!
Zelma Denise Gallup
zelmadg@gmail.com

Cc: holly@huddleak.com, mike.edgington@gmail.com

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Zelma Denise Gallup
Artist and more

Paul Crews
Public comment to Trails Planning Sub Committee
2/1 /2021

As a committee, we have covered a lot of ground. Soon we will have the Goals and Objectives behind us, and we have met several times to go over the nitty-gritty of the map. We must not get bogged down discussing again conversations most of us had four years ago.

We have mutually decided that our plan should include “something for everyone”, but to agree to a plan will require everyone to compromise because it is impossible for everyone to have everything they want.

Our job is to plan for the future, 20 years and beyond. We are all reluctant to see our valley grow and for our favorite spots to become less private, yet the reality is that our population will continue to grow and the demand for more trails will parallel that trend.

Our job is to identify and prioritize what our future trail needs will be and to identify the trails we will need to build.

Preservation of the environment is important to all of us. Identified trails should be solidly built the first time. We must resist the tendency to disturb our forest growth in order to build a small trail only to dig things up again 10 years later (after vegetation has recovered) to make the trail larger.

We must be practical where we build trails. Can the trails we build fulfil the following principals?

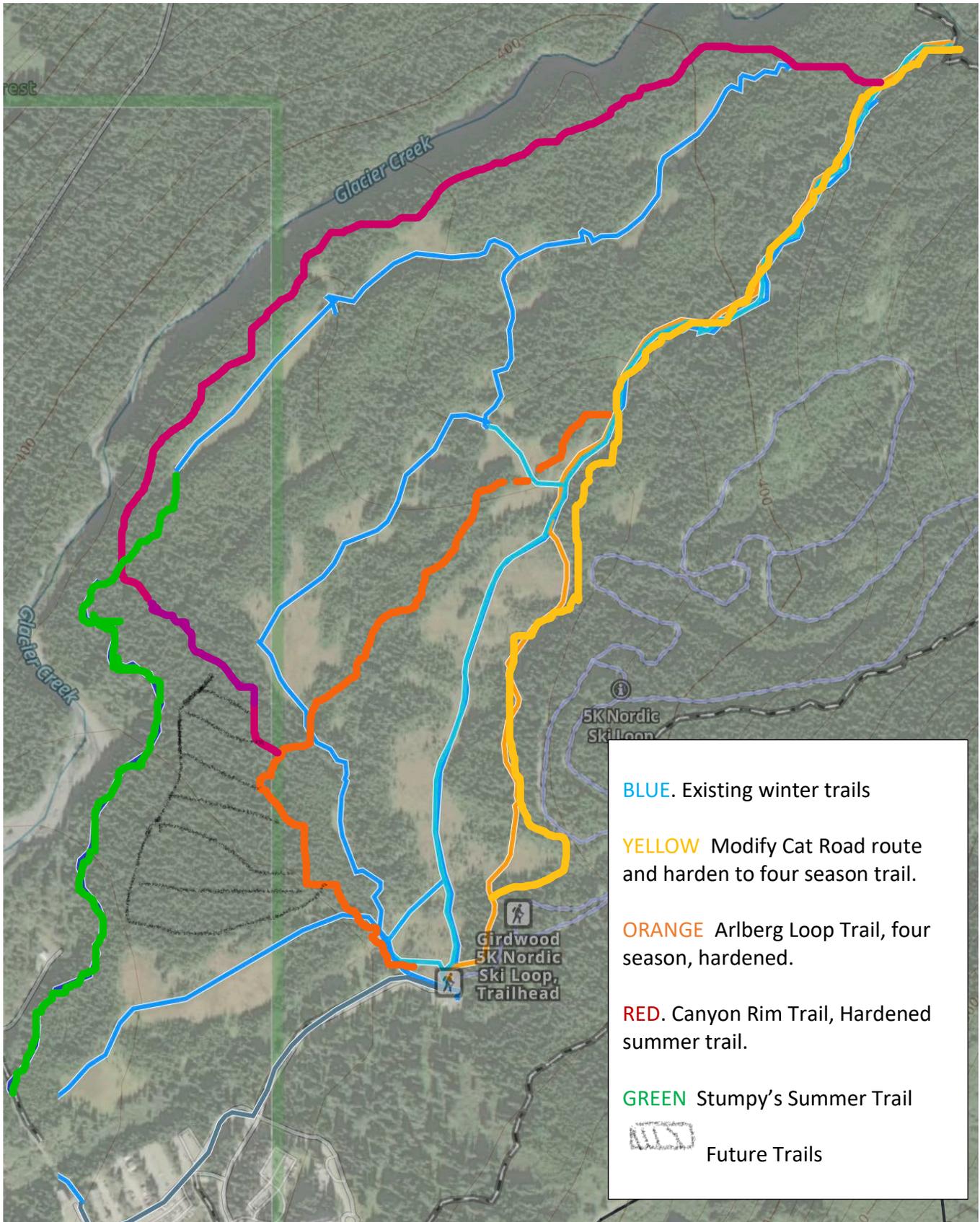
- 1 Build trails that are useful for multiple user groups.
- 2 Build trails on drained ground.
- 3 Avoid building trails that disrupt water flows through wet areas.
- 4 Avoid building trails in areas that will require constant maintenance.
- 5 Build solid trails during original construction. Do not dig up trails again 10 years later.
- 6 Do not build wide trails on steep side slopes.
- 7 Trails built to accommodate skiers must have gentle grades.

We all agree that Open Space is important in the context of our trail planning. We should remember, however, that relatively flat drained ground where it is practical, economical, and ecologically less destructive to build trails is limited within the areas we are studying.

Some of the area previously identified as the “forest loop” should be selected as an area for future trail development. It is relatively flat on drained gravel.

We should not ignore our agreement that our neighborhoods should be connected by trails. We should build a trail from Turin Drive to the Danish Trail to downtown. The area below Turin should eventually include any easy ski/bike/walking loop. We have agreed that we wish to have trails “out my back door”. Timberline neighborhood should not have to drive past the hotel for a quick afternoon walk, ride, or ski through the forest. We should consider that the area below Turin could eventually become a community park.

We should adjust the boundaries of Open Space to best serve the community.



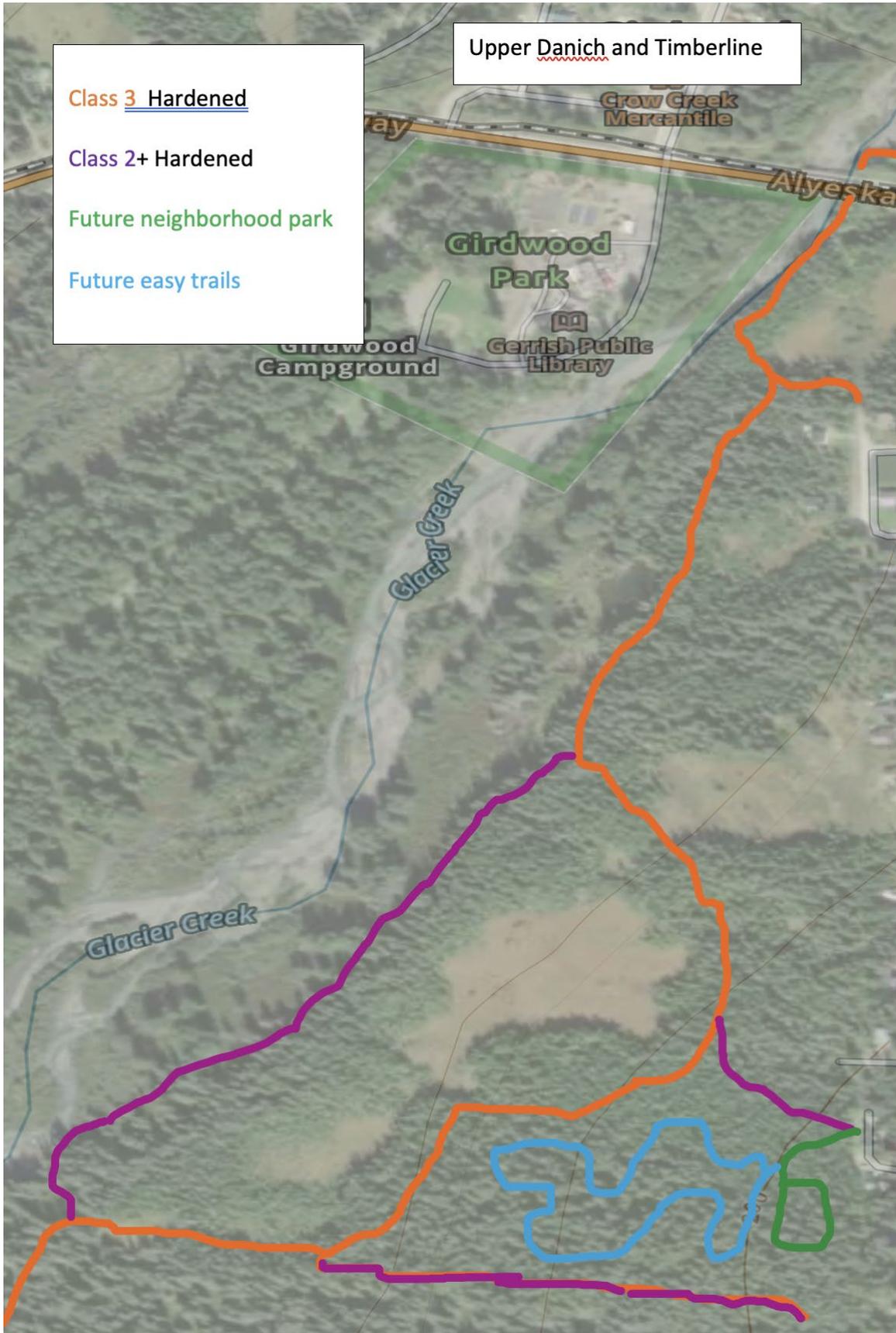
Upper Danich and Timberline

Class 3 Hardened

Class 2+ Hardened

Future neighborhood park

Future easy trails



From: [Deb at Girdwood Nordic Ski Club](#)
To: [Holly Spoth-Torres](#)
Subject: Here is a thought
Date: Monday, February 01, 2021 11:05:43 AM
Attachments: [PastedGraphic-1.tiff](#)

Hi there,

This is how I have always divided Girdwood Trail sections: divided by the constraints of the Alyeska Highway and bisecting Glacier Creek. It creates 4 quadrants, and residents living within each quadrant tend to use the trails in that quadrant more than others. To balance out the motorized/mechanical versus non-mechanized, we could:

Designate the NW and SE quadrants as non-motorized and a trail Class 3 or less. That leaves the NE and SW as motorized (allowing for grooming) and up to Class 5 (since it included the Alyeska Highway paved bike path), Alyeska Resort trails, and Nordic trails.

I realize there is DNR and DOT land in there, but for general overview, this works. Actually, this is how many trail users see the valley. Keeping these different classes (and therefore uses) separated by the highway and creek might alleviate some user conflict as well.

A possibility.

Thanks for all your work,

Deb

Deb Essex
Girdwood Nordic Ski Club
PO Box 337
Girdwood, AK 99587
deb@skigirdwood.org



From: [Shannon O'Brien](mailto:Shannon.O'Brien)
To: carolyn_brodin@hotmail.com
Cc: [Holly Spoth-Torres](#); [Mike Edgington \(GBOS\)](#); [Kyle T. Kelley](#)
Subject: Public Comment Joe Danish Trail
Date: Monday, February 01, 2021 3:54:37 PM

To: Carolyn Brodin Girdwood Trails Committee Chair Date: February 1, 2021

I am writing to formalize the public comment I made in the January Trails master Plan Meeting regarding the Joe Danish Trail.

The 2020 Girdwood Valley Trails Management Plan describes the Alyeska Basin Trails as "local trails- or back door is the trail head. The trails are routes that have evolved through use into class 1 and 2 trails. These are numerous social trails that are important community links"

It is important for the trail plan to take into consideration what use this trail already serves.

Historically the Joe Danish Trail has been a popular destination for residents who live in the neighboring streets of Alpina, Alta, and Timberline as well as roads that connect to those mentioned. It is an area that allows people who have chosen Girdwood as their home to go out on foot and recreate on a more primitive trail. The right out your door trail experience is why many of us moved here. As a frequent user there has been a steady increase in its use especially by local families with children. In the winter residents are skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, and fat biking (when the meadow is frozen) creating an already popular primitive trail experience in its current form, in the summer it is an established hiking corridor when the Class A wetland is more fragile.

Allowing the Danish Trail to stay in its current 1-2 trail status does not take away from the growth of trails. Instead, it allows for a different type of trail experience and serves the need to create a more balanced approach by keeping the summer experience as it is, a hiking only trail, which is currently lacking in the trail plan draft. Redesigning this trail for mountain biking designation is in actuality taking it away from its current user group.

At some point each user group, hikers, skiers, bikers, open space need to consider a more balanced approach developing understanding that multi use is not the best design for every trail. There is a deficit of hiking trails that prohibit other uses in the summer. As biking becomes more popular across the state so will our local biking trails. As stated in the past meeting creating a dense biking area will pull bikes to one area lightening the use on other trails. In theory this concept makes sense, however in reality a designated hiking only summer trail will solidify that hikers are recognized as a user group that should have a few single use trails as does the other user groups.

Allowing the Joe Danish trail to keep its current designation will enhance our trail system while

taking into consideration historical and current use of the Danish Trail. It will also show the residents that the trail committee understands that those of us who live here (some have been using that trail for 40 years) are just as important as the idea of helping local businesses thrive through the goal of economic growth.

**** Draft Goals met by keeping the Joe Danish Trail a primitive level 1-2 trail with summer hiking only****

Goal 1: Provide a balance and diversity of trails for all user types and at all difficulty levels

Minimize user conflicts and manage allowed uses on trails

Goal 2: Establish a process for determining and establishing natural spaces

Allow only minimal trail development to ensure user experiences are preserved

Monitor the environment health of the natural space ecosystem

Goal 3: Maintain trails and natural spaces to ensure safety user experiences to conserve natural

resources

Goal 4: Maintain consistency with Girdwood Area Plan and Trail Management Plan

Thank you for all you of your efforts in creating an improved trail experience for our community. Your volunteer efforts are appreciated.

Shannon O'Brien Girdwood Community Resident

Cc: Kyle Kelly, Holly Spoth-Torres, Mike Edginton