



DRAFT Meeting Minutes

May 11, 2021, 6:00 – 7:30 pm

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), Jessy Post (Huddle AK)

Committee Members: Ron Tenny, Deb Essex, Paul Crews, Carolyn Brodin, Jonathon Lee, Eileen Halverson, Jessica Szelag, Christina Cope Hendrickson, Amanda Sassi, Brenden Raymond-Yakoubian, Nick Georgelos

Municipal Staff Members: Kyle Kelley (MOA), Margaret Tyler (MOA), Shelly Rowton (MOA).

Members of the Public: Kalie Harrison, Mike Edgington, Barbara Crews, Brianna Sullivan, Shannon O'Brien, Julie Raymond-Yakoubian, Julie Jonas, Melissa Randich, Marc Esslinger, Sandberg, Zach, Alayna Dupont, Debra Croghan, Ryan Hutchins, Phil Zumstein, Ben Kohler.

HST asks for meeting to begin and starts recording.

R. Tenny opens meeting and asks for roll call.

Roll call given by HST.

Meeting begins 6:04pm.

R. Tenny asks for approval of the May 11 agenda and asks for comments.

C. Cope Hendrickson made motion to approve

E. Halverson seconded

No discussion, motion passes

R. Tenny asks for motion to approve April 6 meeting minutes.

C. Cope Hendrickson made motion to approve

D. Essex seconded

No discussion, motion passes

NEW BUSINESS

Draft Girdwood Trails Plan – Subcommittee Review Version – Comment Summary

HST discusses next steps.

The committee will have to decide how to move forward with significant comments focused on two topics. The comments received could result in significant change in the plan. Many of the new substantial comments include comments about natural spaces and class 3 & 4 trails.

HST asks K. Kelley for additional thoughts.

K. Kelley provides options for how the committee could proceed:

- They could document the new comments and then move the plan to the public as it is to see if comments are representative of others' views.
- They discuss and incorporate changes now. If changes are incorporated, additional funding would be needed to work them into the plan.

HST opens for discussion.

- C. Cope Hendrickson - Wants to know if a project delay would impact some of the projects?
- N. Georgelos - We've already lost out on a year of grant money. There's a lot of opportunity to fund projects in the plan right now. We need public comment and moving this forward would be in our best interest.
- C. Brodin - Liked the plan. There already is a lot of compromise and was surprised by comments about not enough level 3 and 4 class trails.
- C. Cope Hendrickson - Did not provide comments on the plan. Thought the plan was a good balance for the purpose of funding opportunities. The substantive comments that recently came in should be presented at the public forum.
- P. Crews - The whole discussion boils down to access. The map is not what he envisioned because it doesn't fulfill the plan values. In talking with the community, he's heard they want trails without obstacles. Class 2 trails are full of obstacles and are not inclusive. He strongly feels there's nothing wrong having class 3 or developed trails allowed in natural spaces.
- D. Essex – In previous plans, access was a bigger topic or left more possibility for it. A takeaway from the Trails Conference is that advocacy and support for trails are unprecedented right now. This provides an opportunity for collaboration with the plans for the Alaska Long Trail. We need congruent language with all the user groups of the state. She doesn't feel we are speaking for the community and agrees on the need to define natural areas to be consistent with other plans. It's possible we are focused too much on classes.
- E. Halverson - It was a bit of a shock to see comments that would eliminate natural spaces and wants to speak up for the natural spaces. The idea of natural areas is to protect primitive trails, access to them, and the experience they provide. She appreciates that Girdwood is mostly primitive. There's vagueness in the class classification, which is a problem. We need to better define what experiences can happen on different types of trails or areas. The best workshop was on our values – we need diverse trails.

- R. Tenny - We have trailhead access and infrastructure issues around parking. There are urban development issues with the plan. We need to get something out to the public as soon as possible.
- D. Essex - One of the reasons we suggested limiting the zone was for leeway to create a loop or another trail that provided a better place for a class 4 ski trail. I don't want to eliminate natural spaces, I want to define them so they are congruent around the state. This seems to be more of a land use issue.

Q: J. Szelag – How would we move forward on getting feedback from the public, even if we can't come to agreement on the plan today?

A: HST - We would put the plan out for public review. We can collect comments a couple ways:

- Hold a public meeting to present the plan, then the public could review the document for a public comment period.

Then HST and K. Kelley go through comments and come back to the committee with more recommendations.

K. Kelley - Would lean on planners on how to better respond to public comments, and then would present recommendations back to committee.

HST presented options:

- Make all the changes at this committee level before presenting it to the Trails Committee. If you think we should make changes now before presenting to the public, we need to discuss tonight.
- If you don't believe you have enough information to make suggested changes, her opinion is to take the work that's been done and get the public's comments with the plan as is.

C. Cope Hendrickson - One way we could approach sharing the plan to date, as well as the alternative ideas, is to have an in-person meeting. We need to have something in person for deeper engagement.

B. Raymond-Yakoubian - Is disappointed by many of the comments. The public has participated quite a bit and it's valid. He's leaning towards putting the plan out there for the public to comment. This plan has decades of future trail work with all of the added mountain bike and circumvalley trails. He is concerned about trails development going forward if we don't share this with the public soon.

J. Lee - We were tasked with finding consensus and he feels we are moving away from that. We should include all user groups. To get to consensus we need all these different types of trails and need to move forward by sharing with the public. Their job is to decide which areas should be for what type of trails and experiences.

A. Sassi - Trails can coexist. All the different designated areas do not need boundaries.

N. Georgelos – Made a motion: The subcommittee should move the current draft forward for public comment.

C. Cope Hendrickson seconded.

Discussion:

Q: E. Halverson - Do we have a final plan to look at?

A: HST: The plan will be based on the comment table sent out. Most updates will be minor and clerical edits not substantial edits.

P. Crews – The motion doesn't include alternatives. Those issues should be presented to the public so we can decide.

Q: C. Brodin - You would only make changes that were technical edits?

A: HST - There are areas where changes are just clerical or minor changes but not substantial.

Q: J. Lee – Can you clarify which document we would be sending to the public? Is it primarily the document we received by email yesterday with relatively minor changes?

A: HST: Yes, it's the document you received yesterday with only minor changes. The document would not include any changes with substantial suggestions that were marked as "need to be reviewed by the committee."

N. Georgelos – The motion to send the version of the document with minor edits, not substantial edits, is giving us a path to move forward. We should we send that version for the public to weigh in on.

R. Tenny – The Nordic ski group is a large user group. I'd like to know if there was something that we missed. He directed this question to D. Essex as representative as the Nordic ski community.

D. Essex – What's missing for her is the 3-4 class trails looping ski trails.

C. Brodin - Clarify there was never approval of the Rim Trail.

P. Crews - He would like to settle how move forward with the additional comments within the community.

C. Cope Hendrickson - Called for the discussion to end and moved for a vote.

C. Brodin seconded.

Vote on motion to move the current plan forward to the public.

**Nays: P. Crews
(Yea-10, Nays-1)**

No discussion, motion passes.

Next Steps

HST – She and K. Kelley will get things ready for the public to review.

OLD BUSINESS

Public Comment

HST invited the public to comment.

Q: S. O'Brien - When you put the plan out for public comment, is there a way to harness ideas without it getting chaotic? She referenced a former public meeting where comments and images were drawn on a map.

A: HST – Yes, this time the public will have something to respond to verse the open-ended gathering of comments.

R. Hutchins - The GTP should be consistent. It uses terms that are not consistent with other plans. There are Class 2-3 trails that can only be accessed by class 1 trails. Residents don't want just out and back trails. As a resident of Timberline Drive, he can attest that it is one the busiest area in Girdwood. It is not a safe corridor to travel by foot or bicycle. His family would like existing and new tails developed in this area.

B. Crews - Whatever we do, it needs to meet UDC requirements.

J. Raymond-Yakoubian - Would like to have more information about how public comment will be addressed, specifically she doesn't support a process where the majority of comments get what they want and if there are less comments about an issue those commenters don't get what they want.

A. Dupont – Apologized for not having been a part of the long process. She is a representative of Girdwood Bear Aware. There is space for more discussion on the definition of natural areas and what they mean – they are spaces that are “unpeopled.”

D. Croghan – Everyone should have the same knowledge about the definitions of terms, yet we have repeatedly heard what open and natural spaces mean. She is disappointed that we are still discussing these definitions. Grouping Forest Loop and Rim Trail together – she doesn't want to have to hop on a paved Class 4 trail to access a natural trail. It's busy, noisy, unsafe, and confusing when we have natural and developed trails intersect. It's important to protect the natural spaces and having trails developed around them is not protecting natural spaces.

P. Zumstein - The natural spaces of this valley are important. The T3-T5 connector on the map looks good, but if you see it on the ground, it's an area that has mass beaver influence. You'd have to adjust that trail all the time, etc. We need to identify areas that have other important qualities.

M. Edgington - The hope was the committee would come together with a unified vision that could be presented to the public. And it doesn't seem like it is able to do that. We are still at the point where we need to clarify terms. There are land-use issues around this, which will need to be discussed in a larger context.

B. Kohler - We need more public input with this process. He doesn't think the public's desires are being met through the survey.

K. Harrison - Wants to have more opportunity to comment. She is concerned if the committee cannot come to consensus.

Meeting Adjourns

R. Tenny calls for adjournment.

E. Halverson motion to adjourn

C. Cope Hendrickson seconded

Meeting adjourned 7:34 pm

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