



MEETING MINUTES
PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2020 – 5:30 PM
ZOOM WEBINAR

I. Call to Order at 5:31p.m. – C. Mertl, Chair

Present: Josh Anderson, Edric Carrillo, Ron Crenshaw, Kirk Duncan, Chris Mertl, Will Muldoon, Tom Rutecki

Absent: Alex Beebe-Giudice, Emily Palmer

Staff Present: George Schaaf, Director; Michele Elfers, Deputy Director; Lauren Verrelli, Staff Liaison

II. Agenda Changes – None

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes–

A. From July 7, 2020 – W. Muldoon moves to approve the minutes; no objection. *Minutes adopted.*

B. From August 4, 2020 – W. Muldoon moves to approve the minutes; no objection. *Minutes adopted.*

IV. Public Participation on Non-Agenda Items – None

V. New Business –

A. Dimond Park Field House

G. Schaaf: The Dimond Park Fieldhouse Incorporated has proposed to transfer ownership of the Diamond Park Fieldhouse to the Parks & Rec Department. Due to COVID-19, they are in a difficult financial position and have been closed since March. They are optimistic they will receive a grant from the CARES Act that will pay off the money they owe Eaglecrest which manages it. The Fieldhouse is a private building that was built on land leased from the city for \$1/year. Under the terms of the lease, if the nonprofit that owns the building ceases operations, the building will revert to CBJ. The Eaglecrest Board has voted and they agreed they are not interested in continuing management of the Fieldhouse. We tried to find entities and organizations that would be interested in managing it and no one is in the position to do so. The Fieldhouse does fit really well within the department. We can increase utilization; we plan to operate the facility fulltime, 12-14 hours a day year round. The department can also do a better of maintaining the structure within our facilities maintenance division, which can extend the life of the building. As it currently stands, some of the key user group's get priority of scheduling; we do not see that changing a lot but when the building is operated as a public facility, we will make sure that we are being equitable and there will be a scheduling policy. The building is in good shape but does have some immediate repairs such as the fire protection system, repairs to the field surface and HVC work. Overall going forward, we think the building will cost about \$170,000 to operate and that is after

revenue. The cost recovery we are expecting is more than our aquatics facilities generate and just under what Treadwell Arena does. We recommend that the city accept the Dimond Park Fieldhouse and have Parks & Rec operate it.

W. Bryson: My big fear is that budget will not be going up next year. We need to prepare for budget decrease.

C. Mertil: What is the timing of this? Can we wait to see if they get the CARES grant?

G. Schaaf: We should hear about the CARES grant soon and are optimistic they will get it.

Tracy Gilmour (River Court): The use of the fieldhouse is youth heavy; an additional revenue source would be opening it up for adult softball, the batting cages for example, would be used weekly.

G. Schaaf: There is a lot of opportunity to grow revenue within the schedule.

J. Anderson: I do share some concern about taking on more debt and responsibility but the fact to get a building like that for next to nothing is a lot cheaper than the city building it down the road. It is an amazing opportunity. I make a motion that the PRAC recommends that the Assembly accept the donation of the Dimond Park Fieldhouse to be managed by the Parks & Rec Department and appropriate additional fund necessary to support maintenance and operations for the remainder of FY21.

Motion passes unanimously.

VI. Unfinished Business –

A. Montana Creek Road Discussion

G. Schaaf: *The Director and Deputy Director, Michele Elfers, presented about Montana Creek Road in regards to the request from the JNSC, land ownership and management of the area, stakeholders and the options ahead. View the presentation [here](#).*

W. Muldoon: Do we know the number of members that crossover between ORV and Snowmobilers group? I am wondering how you arrived at the 20 day closure to them?

M. Elfers: We do not know details on the number of members. We talked with user groups on site and we threw out some scenarios to start a discussion. We discussed sharing the use based on number of days so they had separate days. We do not think there is a right number. It landed on 20 and 10, as we recognize that there are more skiers than motorized users than we have seen in the past. We also recognize that many ORVs thought they could not use it. The meat of our recommendation is shared use space based on days vs. dividing the road. We would like to use this winter to collect data.

E. Carrillo: I know we are trying to prevent any incident. Have there been a previous incident? Is there an existing good steward agreement for all user groups?

G. Schaaf: Interactions, like tearing up the tracks, does not happen very often but when it does, we hear about it.

M. Elfers: Building the relationship with the user groups and relaying the proper use to the community is important. One of the outcomes will be a management plan that includes resource protection and education.

C. Mertil: Have there been any coordination with DNR with what we do on the road?

M. Elfers: The agencies told us they would support what the City decided. They recognize that

the road that CBJ manages is a gateway to the land beyond.

T. Rutecki: In the comprehensive plan, chapter 8 focuses on maintaining non-motorized trails in the Montana Creek area and establishing motorized use trails in the Lemon Creek area.

M. Elfers: It is definitely in our mind and it goes into the long-term solution and management. It is very clear at this point with so much comment the department needs to put their resources into another location for motorized use. We have to remember, what we are discussing tonight is about managing a road and not a trail.

C. Merti: We will give the presidents of the three clubs 5 minutes to provide comment.

PUBLIC COMMENT FROM USER GROUP PRESIDENTS-

Juneau Nordic Ski Club (JNSC) President Frankie Pillifant: Personally feel I cannot answer for the Nordic ski club tonight because the JNSC will want to discuss PRAC's recommendation. JNSC board previously discussed the 25-5 idea, which mirrors PRAC's recommendation. The JNSC board agreed the 25-5 idea would be a difficult situation to deal with for the following reasons: 1. Damage to base of snow. 2. Cost of grooming where the tracks have stirred up dog poop, pine cones, rocks, twigs, is going to be a significant cost. JNSC previously asked who will help pay for grooming and was told that CBJ doesn't have any money to contribute to enforcement or grooming for Montana Creek Trail. Michele Elfers has been great to converse with to deal with the situation. I believe the JNSC is still interested in participating in a resolution but more interested in a management solution for winter 2020. JNSC is asking for CBJ to actively manage the Montana Creek trail for safety, until a long term plan is implemented.

Juneau Snowmobile Club President Corey Baxter: Montana Creek Trail is permitted as a road. Ordinances state that we can use it during the winter months with snow coverage. Another ordinance says the manager can close it. I think that ordinance wasn't intended to close it to one certain group. When the gate was installed, it pushed away snow machine riders because they thought it was closed. The 20/10 day split does not feel like equal amount of time for either group, so I do not agreed with it.

R. Crenshaw: How many members do you have?

Corey Baxter: We have over 400 members.

Juneau Off Road Association President Darrin: The section between the bridge and the trailhead is legally called the National Forest Development Road 8452. It is permitted as a road. The off road use has been artificially low for two reasons: People thought it was closed. Three years ago, I learned it was not closed and I started telling people it has not closed and called P&R to open it. Second reason is the hostility being received by the off road community has been severe. I personal have been verbally accosted and had ski poles tossed at me. People haven't felt safe. I tried to open a dialogue with the ski club to come up with a plan. During the discussion period I encouraged OR members to stay away for a bit. My attempts were unsuccessful but fortunately, we are talking about it here. Montana Creek is the best place for ATV's on wheels to operate. Users are aware of safety and operate slowly. They are using the road to access trails they've been working on past the road. They are not a lot of options for ATV's in Juneau. Can't access Echo when the road isn't plowed. That is why this is a big deal to us.

PUBLIC COMMENT-

Steve Morley (N. Douglas): Good snow coverage is because of JNSC grooming. PRAC's proposed

solution will destroy that work. ATV have a different agenda. Snow machine and skiers share the same goal. Seems like having access to the upper meadows could go along with Nordic skiers. Opening up Lemon Creek would be great.

Mike Heckers (3rd St.): JNSC board member. 99% of user days are non-motorized. We've counted 13,000 non-motorized user days vs. 10-20 motorized. We're asking for closure and share the road 6 months for non-motorized and 6 months for motorized. We don't have equipment to fix ruts.

J. Anderson: Would JNSC be in favor of widening the trail by 6 feet to allow a path for ATV and snow machines?

Mike Heckers: In theory that would be great, but unfortunately you have river on one side and mountain on the other so there's no space.

Andy Romanoff (Mountainside Dr.): Did analysis of all the public comments. 387 anti-closure comments submitted, just 13 mentioned using the trail, only 2 specifically mentioned winter use. 459 pro closure comments, over 400 mentioned skiing on the trail in the winter. Many more winter skiers and walkers compared to riders. I feel 6 month, 6 month split would be best.

C. Mertl: If the number of motorized users is so low and hypothetically your trails might be impacted 3-5 times a year. Could this be simplified by posting motorized speed limits? Can you work with occasional motorized use?

Andy Romanoff: There was no opposition in putting up the gate and no complaints for a long time. There was not an issue until this process started and created an issue. Now I suspect there will be a surge of riders going to Montana Creek to send the message that they want to be there too. There is no one around to enforce the 20/10 split. 6 month split is best.

E. Carrillo: What agreement or mechanism would make you feel better as a user to make sure folks are held accountable.

Andy Romanoff: We're all here trying to find solutions but not everyone is tuned in. Rules can be put in place but if people don't read the sign they can claim they didn't know. Honor system would be great if it worked.

Lacey Derr (Valley): We need to avoid division. Equitable use keeps being mentioned but it's not equitable. The City is trying to avoid costs but closing the gate creates costs. You are going to see increased use of the trail for safe outdoors activities during COVID. Lets look toward the future and continue conversation about use. Decision should not be made now. No one should be excluded. All groups should come together for an equitable solution.

C. Mertl: To be clear you are looking for motorized use?

Lacey Derr: Yes, I use it myself. I've been riding this trail my entire life. I thought it had been closed to motorize use. I'm grateful for the opportunity to go out and ride more.

Odin Brudie (6th St.): JNSC board member. Glad to hear that other agencies (DNR & USFS) will accept what CBJ decides. I worked on remedial improvements to the bridge to make it safer. DOT decommissioned the bridge 15 years ago to render it impassable to cars and vehicles with four wheel drive and reclassified it as a pedestrian bridge. The road ends and the trail begins at the old wooden bridge. I questions whether the bridge can tolerate constant motorized travel. I've been exploring on skis beyond the trail and I find it completely impassable making it hard to believe that is provides access to Spaulding in the winter.

W. Muldoon: Can you provide a brief background on working with DOT on the bridge repair.

Odin Brudie: In 2015, the JNSC consulted with DOT, F&G, CBJ, Trail Mix and engineering to see what it would take to make it safer for the grooming equipment and pedestrians. We discussed adding a bull rail, widening, supports, and replacing damaged planks. After about a year of planning it was added to Trail Mix agenda.

C. Mertil: Do you feel we can maintain the status quo and allow motorized use this winter?

Odin Brudie: No, the gate should be closed and CBJ can be called when it needs to be opened.

Erich Schaal (Hummingbird): 10/20 split is new to this meeting and I don't think that should happen this year. The gate has a camera and we should gather data and make the decision next year. I don't think it's wise to excluded users. Walkers and skiers have had interactions that aren't friendly. Spread word to user groups on how to be good neighbors.

W. Muldoon: Do you walk the trail pretty frequently in the winter?

Erich Schaal: I use occasionally. I have kids who need reminders to not walk on the tracks and they are sometimes met with hostile responses.

Tim Bloost: JNSC board member and volunteer coach for the youth team. Hoping to have 90 kids in their programs. Montana Creek is what keeps the program alive. Lots of money and volunteer time is put in. I ask the PRAC to request the City Manager's office to close the road to motorized use in the winter and open it for summer use.

Sam Sanbei (Tongass): ORV rider. Low numbers because too scared of verbal and physical assaults. We don't want to rip stuff up. We want to explore and share. I would volunteer my time to help groom. Using it for home schooling this winter. Save decision for next winter.

Jim Powell: I am a XC skier. Looking at the investment skiers have made in volunteer time, trail maintenance, coaching, organization and number of users. Creates a problem, not opportunities. I think we are going to have conflict. Hard to groom after days of motorized use. Taking away from a healthy activity during COVID. I don't go to Dan Moller trail anymore because you can't mix the two users here.

Robin Stratton: My family uses the trail for multi-use but have a teenage son in the JNSC program. Concerned about safety issue when you combine motorized use with skiing, snow shoeing, hiking, and dog walking.

Cody Wilkie (Valley Blvd.): ORV member, speaking on behalf of multiple members. A permit is in place to repair bridge. JNSC website asks walkers to use another trail. Supports Montana Creek access and doesn't see reason to change things.

W. Muldoon: Can you explain the bridge permitting and who you are working on it with?

Cody Wilkie: Juneau Off Road Association is getting a permit from DOT to work on bridge.

E. Carrillo: What speed limit proposals do you have?

Cody Wilkie: Suggested to install speed limit of 10-15mph. Skiers like to go fast too so a speed limit doesn't suit their needs. Until recently I thought the trail was closed.

Beth Kertula (Horizon Dr.): Member of JNSC, used to own a snow machine. Main use is non-motorized. Allow 6 month/6 month split this year, then work this out. I'm not sure mixed use will work on this tiny trail. Keep the trail Nordic this winter.

Jacob Miller (Sunset Blvd.): Ridiculous to exclude one user group. I've snow machined and four wheeled with skiers there and it can be done. Need to set rules and have access for everyone.

It's public land.

Roman Motyka (Dixon St.): JNSC member and groomer. Hazards of shared motorized and non-motorized traffic include narrow roads, cliff sides, many blind corners, policing issue of who will enforce a speed limit. So much work goes into groomed trails that have been overridden by all-terrain vehicles. Motorized and non-motorized are fundamentally incompatible.

Fred Hiltner (N. Douglas): JNSC board member. Safety must be the primary concern. The Montana Creek trail isn't wide enough for all use at the same time. It's narrow, blind corners, not enough room for ATV's to pass without ruining the groomed trail. 90 kids expected to join the Nordic ski team. Off road vehicles do not need access to Spaulding Meadows via Montana Creek, they can use Lake Creek. Please make the safest choice of skiers in the winter and off road vehicles in the summer.

John Thedinga (Wilma Ave.): Groomer for JNSC. I've seen the damage and it takes time to repair, sometimes multiple days. I don't think 20/10 split will work. After 10 days of motorized use it would be a nightmare to groom. In favor of trying a one year non-motorized test.

E. Carrillo: How often do you have to groom? Is it after each snowfall? How long does it take? I understand ATV's tend to be more intrusive on the track than snow mobiles. Is one the biggest issue, or is it all of them?

John Thedinga: We groom every day for at least two hours. Repairs were needed about half a dozen times last winter. ATV's are definitely much more damaging, partly because they don't have good traction.

Neil Slotnick (Evergreen Ave.): Montana Creek Trail is one of the greatest success stories here in Juneau. In the winter I use the trail 4 times a week and see happy walkers and skiers. It takes one ATV to destroy that by wrecking the trail. I urge you to protect the groomed trails and close it to motorized use in the winter.

Bart Watson (8th St.): JNSC board member, but have owned snow machines. I led the ski club several years back with a collaboration with the snowmobilers club to get better access to Spaulding Meadows. Collaboration is a desirable thing and attainable. I would like to suggest a possible solution. The trailhead at Herbert River to get up to Montana Creek would work really well for snow machines/ATVs and would be a good solution. I would like to keep Montana Creek road open to skiing only.

Nicole Ferrin (Montana Creek): Snowmobile Club member. The established use of this trail is motorized and shared access. It's not closed to motorized use. The skiers have a brand new trail across from Skater Cabin and the camp ground. Motorized use keeps getting closed. Zero places closed to skiers. Motorized users don't want to close Montana Creek to skiers. Any skiers that get into trouble rely on the snowmobile club for help.

Tristan Knutson-Lombardo (Harris St.): JNSC coach. Losing another option of a nicely groomed trail would be a bummer for our kids. Especially when weather conditions mean Montana Creek is the only place we can ski. 25/5 split would be a better compromise for this winter.

J. Anderson: Do you take the team up to Eaglecrest?

Tristan Knutson-Lombardo: We do take the kids up there. When Eaglecrest is closed, they do not groom. Mostly used on the weekend in the daylight.

PRAC DISCUSSION-

T. Rutecki: I have been a huge advocate for finding a place for motorized users. In this case, this is the wrong place and I do not think it would be safe. We need to work on a solution for getting a place in Lemon Creek and Blackerby for motorize folks.

J. Anderson: I want to focus on the facts, in this particular case; we are dealing with this being classified as a road. It would be nice to figure out a way to widen the road and allow everyone to use it. If we are going to close the trail to certain groups, you need to close it to everyone. One possible solution, is grooming more area at Eaglecrest. All user groups need more education. Motorized users need to understand the damage they are causing to XC skiers. At this point, I would leave it as is since we do not have any data. We need to give it a year to use the road as it is, collect the data and make a decision then.

W. Muldoon: I agree with Mr. Anderson. We need more time with this. I have concerns with the lack of data; we need to stay as we are and gather data from this coming winter.

E. Carrillo: I agree with both Josh and Will. We need more data; we should make a temporarily agreement for now and work on a long-term agreement with all the user groups going forward. There is a reoccurring need to find a location for ORVs to recreate.

C. Mertl: There is a historic use of motorized use on the roadway and I do not want to displace one user for another without the group being displaced getting an equal to or better experience elsewhere. We need to maintain the status quo. We have two user groups that are in opposition and we need to find a common ground. The groups need to support each other and work together.

R. Crenshaw: I am not willing to blow up the most incredible resources the JNSC has. *I move that the Montana Creek road be closed to motorized use between November 1, 2020 and May 1, 2021.* I want to speak on my motion. Staff and the committee have put together a committee to find a location to offer motorized recreation.

W. Muldoon: I object to this motion. We should not be excluding a user group. If we were to choose an exclusive use for one user group, the Nordic skiers have more options in town.

J. Anderson: I object to the motion.

E. Carrillo: I agree with will, this is a bit preliminary to make that motion.

Yea: R. Crenshaw, T. Rutecki

Nay: C. Mertl, J. Anderson, W. Muldoon, K. Duncan, E. Carrillo

Motion fails.

W. Muldoon: I move that we defer any management decisions for Montana Creek Road until we have usage data available and direct staff to come back to the PRAC with a proposal to get that information.

M. Elfers: Camera data can be reliable. Once the season ends, we will go through the data.

C. Mertl: The roadway is wide enough for both motorized use, both types of skiing and dog walking. We could flag, manage and maintain some sort of separation on the road but only to the bridge. Will the department be able to put some sort of management control to separate the users?

M. Elfers: We would be able to put up signage along the road but we would not be able to run a

fence through the middle to separate uses.

K. Duncan: I would like to get staff opinion on all of this.

G. Schaaf: By maintaining the status quo, we would have to work with the two user groups. Do the best we can to educate on trail etiquette in that area. I am hesitant that the data might not be as helpful as folks hope.

C. Mertl: I think there will be motorized use on the trail this year, since there was a misperception that they could not go there. I was hoping to have some sort of direction tonight; I do not think one user group gets exclusive rights to the area. We need to sit down and bring the parties together to make this work. I support Wills motion.

R. Crenshaw: I would like staff to tell me if Will's motion passes, how management will change from last winter.

M. Elfers: Under that motion, we would open the kissing gate as we did last year and maintain that kissing gate open throughout the winter. We would install a camera to collect data. With all the attention on the area, we will be out there more frequently in that area. The management of the gate would stay the same. Attention of the area would increase.

C. Mertl: Does the PRAC want to discuss the idea of a 20/10 split? My concern is the safety aspect with the existing management, as we will see an increase motorized use in the area.

R. Crenshaw: The casual skier or motorized user is not going to keep track of the split schedule. That would be too confusing.

M. Elfers: We do have a proposal from the JNSC to close Montana Creek Road during the winter months.

W. Muldoon: I withdraw my motion.

E. Carrillo: I recommend the PRAC allow the Department continue with their status quo management of Montana Creek area for the 2020-2021 winter season, address conflicts as they arise, and continue to work with the user groups for a long-term solution of the Montana Creek area. The Department will then come before the PRAC with a recommendation before the 2021-2022 winter season begins.

Yea: C. Mertl, J. Anderson, W. Muldoon, K. Duncan, E. Carrillo

Nay: T. Rutecki, R. Crenshaw

Motion passes.

VII. Information Items – None

VIII. Committee, Liaison, and Board Member Reports

A. Chair Report— None

B. Liaison to the Assembly Report— Good job tonight.

C. Liaison Reports— *Pushed to November meeting*

Other Member Business – None

Adjournment – 9:47 p.m. *Having no other business before the board.*

Respectfully submitted by Lauren Verrelli, Recreation & Public Services Manager, 1/29/2021