



PARKS COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

-Public Hearing-

Date and Time: 14 December 2011; 6:00 pm

Location: Redmond Public Works, Warehouse Training Room

Commission Members Present: Cyndie Bell; Andy Hoffman; Richard Lance; Gordon Wiseman; Shirlee Evans, Council Liaison

Public Works Staff Present: Chris Doty, Public Works Director; Curt Petersen, Parks Operations Supervisor; Susan Bailey, Administration

Media/Others Present: Mayor George Endicott; Councilor Ed Boero; Councilor Jay Patrick; Katie Hammer, Executive Director, RAPRD; Trish Pinkerton, Redmond Spokesman; Several members of the public

CALL TO ORDER Lance called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm. The Commissioners, Council liaison and staff provided brief introductions. Lance noted the public hearing format and asked that testimony be limited to no more than 5 minutes.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/UPDATES/PRESENTATIONS

Doty clarified that written testimony regarding horses in the Canyon would be accepted through December 28th, 2011. The Parks Commission will deliberate on January 17th, 2012 and provide a recommendation to Council.

Staff Report Regarding Equestrian Use in the Dry Canyon

Doty provided a summary of the events leading up to the public hearing regarding equestrian use in the Dry Canyon. He explained the decision points for determination and the process used for staff research and evaluation. Doty cited the 1984 Canyon Master Plan which was not opposed to equestrian use in the Canyon. Doty explained staff recommendations and other options such as a trial evaluation period, use by permit or exclusive use provisions.

There were no questions from the Commissioners before commencing with public testimony.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jo Trenhaile, an experienced horse rider, read a letter that she submitted to the Commission stating that horses and other trail users can safely share the Canyon trails. Lance asked about having separate trails for bikes and horses. Trenhaile responded that all users can safely share the trail.

Laura Chick testified that she would be willing to volunteer to help maintain the trails. She noted the importance of taking the appropriate animal on the trail and following proper etiquette. Evans asked if Chick was a resident of the City. Chick noted she is 2/10 of a mile outside the City boundary. Further discussion noted laws relating to riding horses on City and County streets.

Andrew Gunther, Canyon resident, noted that his main concern centers around safety as his son is on the cross-country team. He also noted concern for kids using the trail to walk to school and issues regarding horses carrying diseases. Gunther stated he would like to see a compromise and he knows of no horse-runner conflict.

Kelly Barnett, a Bend resident, clarified that equines are not carriers of salmonella and do not pose an E. coli risk. Evans asked Barnett about riding trails in Bend and noted that Bend Parks and Rec. does not allow horses. Barnett commented that on the Forest Service portion of the trails horses are allowed.

Sandra Mayeril commented that as a new rider she believes inexperienced riders and horses would not use the trail.

Oliver Gunther, a high-school cross-county team runner, stated that he has safety concerns and would like to see strict use of the trails and a definite separation of runners and horses.

Kris Rees, who has used the trail actively for the past 5 years, stated that she has encountered riders that are considerate and doesn't believe that there will be increased horse use. She would like to see moderate signage and rules posted. She supports multiple use of the trails and asked the Commission to look at the historical use of the Canyon. Rees does not see horse manure as an issue as there is a significant amount of deer droppings in the Canyon.

Linda Nolte commented that the Staff Report was very balanced and helpful in making a decision that is fair for all users. Nolte noted the importance of user etiquette, whether or not horses are allowed on the trails. Nolte believes that it shouldn't matter whether or not trail users live inside or outside the City limits and that the positive impacts should be addressed. She suggested that a permit to ride, with certain expectations, could control the volume of users.

Karl Johannsen, retired City fireman, stated that he has ridden in the Canyon for years and does not feel that safety is a concern. He would like to see etiquette signage. Johannsen noted a bad experience involving a bicycle while utilizing the paved trail as a pedestrian.

Bill Groesz, a trail runner and resident of The Greens, stated that he has had issues with dogs but never horses. He doesn't want to see anyone shut out or have Redmond lose its "Old West" appeal.

Ellen Salonics, used to live off of Antler Avenue, has been riding since 1983 and would like to see horses stay in the Canyon. She does not see any safety issues.

Kate Beardsley of Bend noted that the Canyon will not become a magnet destination for horses. She wants to see a healthy, undivided community. Beardsley testified that multiple use is appropriate. She referenced the Oregon Equestrian Trails mission and Backcountry Horseman of Oregon. Beardsley stated that weed spread is not a significant issue.

Nancy Cox, a Powell Butte resident and horse endurance rider, does not foresee weeds as a problem.

Johannsen asked if motorized vehicles could enter the Canyon during cleanup efforts. Doty explained that cleanup efforts should be coordinated with the City. Johannsen noted that the paved area near the Wastewater Treatment Plant trailhead would need some modification.

Barnett commented on difficulty finding an ordinance regarding equestrian use. Doty noted locations in the City Code.

The group discussed various aspects of trail etiquette before Lance closed the comment period.

DISCUSSION/DECISION ITEMS

Wiseman thanked the public for their testimony. Evans raised concerns regarding insurance and liability citing testimony from Andrew Gunther. Evans also expressed concerns regarding trail maintenance. Doty noted that he will review liability issues and that he is addressing trail maintenance. Evans suggested that she would like to see a trail professional evaluate the soft trails.

Hoffman noted no concerns and thanked the public for their support. Lance stated that it was good to hear testimony and learn about equestrian use, noting appreciation as historical use. He does have concerns regarding safety and commented that trail etiquette is overdue regardless of horse issues. Lance noted he is favorable to a trial use period to minimize safety issues between bikes and horses. Lance noted that he will be ready to make a decision at the next Commission meeting.

Bell cited that she is a proponent of horse use and appreciated the information. Lance reiterated that safety is the biggest concern.

Nolte commented that if the trail is unsafe for horses, it is unsafe for everyone and noted liability status at other parks. Doty stated that recreational immunity applies unless there is a known defect.

Lance noted the points made and closed the meeting.

ADJOURN

The next regular meeting will be 17 January 2012 at the Public Works facility at 243 E. Antler.

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned at 8:14 pm.

APPROVED by the Parks Commission and SIGNED by the Chairperson this 17TH day of

JANUARY, 2012.


Chairperson