

**Wilderness Park Strategic Planning
and Community Advisory Committee**
Trails and Facilities Subcommittee
Minutes

March 8, 2017, 3:00 – 5:00 pm
PPNC Conference Room

Present: Susan Deitchler, Matt Gersib, Chris Heinrich, Dan King, Tanya Lynch, Rosina Paolini, Dan Schlitt, Joeth Zucco

Parks and Rec. Staff: Jerry Shorney, Lynn Johnson, Sara Hartzell, Andrea Faas and Matt Mittelstadt

The meeting was called to order at 3:00.

Review of Trail Maps and Current Facilities

Sara Hartzell distributed a handout highlighting the results of the map exercise from the February 22nd meeting. At that meeting, members were asked to indicate which parts of Wilderness Park were their favorite, which areas had room for improvement or they had questions about, and areas of more immediate concern.

One of the red areas was an area of bad road runoff with oil and other pollution. Dan King indicated he called this runoff and pollution to Hazardous Waste. Another red area that sparked discussion was creating safe access from the Rock Island Trail to Jamaica Trail and into Wilderness Park. How would funding be obtained to build it? Cost estimates run from \$900,000 to \$1.2 million, which makes getting grants difficult. However, if the project is phased in over multiple years, grants or income has a better possibility of being sourced.

After reviewing the map activity, Lynn Johnson explained that Wilderness Park is still classified as a conservatory. However, that classifies the park as a lower-tiered goal (5) on a lower-tiered priority (2) than public safety, for example. \$35,000 has been allotted for the budget at Wilderness Park for staff and equipment. But the discussion from this committee will guide the Parks & Rec Advisory Board for the ten-year plan for parks and facilities.

Andrea Faas presented ideas for a new education building at Pioneers Park. The preschool has outgrown the building, and she has been looking for a site to the new building, possibly on the west end of Calvert, out of the flood plain. She would like indoor space for 80-100 with a storm shelter, kitchen, office and work stations, a picnic area, storage with lockers, moveable walls, fire alarms and sprinklers, access to the trail system, windows overlooking the prairie, and a parking lot to accommodate 50-60 cars. "Wish list" items include leaving a small carbon footprint with wind/solar/thermal power, an archery range, a garden area, an ability to only leave restrooms open while locking the rest of the building, and a cistern for rainwater collection.

Discussion of Current Trail Issues being experienced by LPR

- **Yankee Hill Horse Bridge**

An engineer from JEO inspects the bridges at Pioneers Park. He has visited four times since the 2015 flood, and he is concerned about the sides of this bridge and how it bounces. Last fall, a study was commissioned to come up with three alternatives on how to improve the bridge:

1. Tilt up the bridge, rebuild the abutments, and set it back down. This is the least expensive solution, and the permits would be easy to obtain due to this being a repair of an existing structure in the floodplain.
2. Create a low-water crossing under Highway 77 about 100 yards down. This solution costs 50% more due to the hydraulics involved. State right-of-way may not allow this to happen in any case.
3. Construct an entirely new bridge, which would cost four or five times as much as option #1.

Tanya Lynch raised the possibility of using “gang slats,” which are concrete slats put on a low-water crossing to provide a stable bed for crossing.. It could be used as a foundation for the crossing, even if there is flooding. At about \$70 a slat, it is an affordable option to consider. These can be purchased from Wahoo Concrete.

- **Rokeby Road Horse Bridge**

The cost to repair this bridge is approximately \$50,000. The engineer who was last out to inspect it said the abutments sounded hollow. This bridge is probably located about 1/3 on RR property, as is the trail leading up to it, and it gives access to a very small area of the park and could be considered for abandonment.

- **Hwy 77 and Rokeby reroute of Bike Trail**

Highway 77 is receiving federal funding to become a “freeway.” As part of the environmental review, a segment of trail that enters the ROW was identified and will have to be removed. This will result in a portion of the bike trail that will no longer be connected. Possible loops to maintain some trail in the area were discussed. It was suggested that this small loop may get more use than Parks realizes.

- **2017 RTP Application for Saltillo Bridge**

LPR will make application for this bridge in September. The County Board has agreed to act as applicant. Sara Hartzell reported that once an RTP application was put in, it would be wonderful for committee members could write letters of support. A small bridge or culvert could solve this problem in the future.

Parking Lots

It was suggested that LPR consider purchasing scavenger-proof trash cans to reduce litter scattered by animals such as raccoons. The suggestion was raised about adding recycling cans next to trash cans, thereby increasing environmental awareness. This could be a project to do with a partnering organization or other City departments.

The group was asked to provide input about the possibility of creating some “specialty” parking areas to attract certain users. For instance, a bike-friendly lot at 1st Street, and a horse friendly lot at 14th Street. Could add some things like mounting blocks for equestrians, and a bike station for cyclists. Both 14th Street and Old Cheney parking lot surfaces are in need of repair.

Signage

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the separated trails and the possibility of combining uses and creating single track bike routes. There were many different opinions on this idea with concerns for safety, speed of bikes, ability of bridges to handle all users, impacts to the trail surface and ecology, etc... Several shared their experience in other location with shared access trails and said they had not experienced many problems. There are several good examples of educational materials and signage that address the hierarchy of right-of-way. Wilderness does pose some challenge in the multiple points of entry into the park – which would make education by signage challenging. Rather than users crossing over to “forbidden” trails because of a lack of respect for rules, it was suggested that perhaps it is out of a desire to experience all areas of the park, not just the trail they are confined to. It was agreed that this should be part of a larger conversation involving more users and more discussion. There was discussion about signage on separated and combined trails, as well as trails with multiple points of entry. Points raised included:

- Trail users would self-police with better signs and common-sense rules.
- Riders, cyclists, and hikers want to experience all aspects of the park, which is why they go on all the trails. Designating trails would not necessarily eliminate usage problems.
- Groups such as the GPTN could help educate the public on trail etiquette usage.
- Kiosks at trailheads could provide route and etiquette information.

Several of the different representatives offered that their organizations have some capacity for fundraising and would be willing to discuss putting some money into signage and other improvements.

Bridges

The covered bridge in the Day Camp area is in good shape and is kept on a cycle for regular painting.

The bridge just north of the covered bridge appears to be in good condition, although recent wind blew some branches onto it and knocked the top rail off.

There are a couple small bridges on the Fitness Loop that could use some attention. This may be a good By Scout project.

The old red bridge crossing Salt Creek is gone and would cost about \$1 million to replace. In addition, the ACOE regulations for the levee have made construction of any new bridges in that stretch of Salt Creek highly unlikely. There are no plans to replace.

The Van Dorn Bridge has essentially assumed the function of getting people across Salt Creek on the north end of the park. This bridge is watched closely and is in the 10 Year Facility Master Plan as being likely to need replacement.

The Bridge in Epworth is also gone. There are no current plans to replace it, and alternative trail routes still give access to the area. The current trail that runs under the arch leads to nowhere. Creating a connecting loop would help integrate the historic arch into the user experience.

According to the engineer who last verified it (2016), suspension bridge at Old Cheney is solid.

The bridge south of the BNSF abandoned rail line is very narrow and inaccessible to any vehicles. This is one that is structurally sound but could use some improvement.

There was a discussion about low water crossings and how those might be improved within the regulations by which Parks must abide. Approaches to the crossings are the biggest issue. Solid creek beds at crossing is also very important. This would be a good use of the gang slats to provide solid footing for horses.

There was also discussion about low areas that do not dry out easily after rains. There are many of these areas in the park. In the past there have been some efforts to use ballast rock to provide a more solid base with drainage. Some of these efforts have been more successful than others, but removing some silt, using geotextile, and replacing with ballast rock is one method that has worked well. The worst of these areas is between Warlick and Rokeby and would be a high priority area for a project.

Top priority projects would likely be:

- Replace Wilderness South bridge
- Repair Yankee Hill bike and horse bridge
- Address wet area on bike trail near that bridge
- Improvements to low water crossing at Cardwell Branch creek
- Improvements to low water crossing near 14th Street parking lot
- Maintenance of small bridges in fitness loop area

Other important projects

- Community conversation about multi-use trails as opposed to user specific
- Comprehensive sign plan
- Feasibility study of new Day Camp building, possible design work
- Continued bridge inspections
- Discussion of the future of the Fitness Loop equipment
- Discussion of restroom facilities

The meeting adjourned at 5:05.

Next Meeting:

- Ecosystem – March 22, 3:00 p.m.
- Full Group Meeting – April 5, 3:00 pm