

**Flathead County Weed/Parks/Recreation**

**MINUTES**

**Board of Directors**

**Meeting Date: November 5, 2012**

**Members of the Board in attendance:**

Clyde Fisher, Elise Robocker, Ray Sanders, Pete Woll

**Members of the Board not in attendance:**

Jim Buechle

**Also in attendance:**

Jed Fisher, Superintendent; Gordon Jewett, Assistant Superintendent; and Michele Haarr, Clerk

**Others Present:**

Mark Campbell – Flathead County Fairgrounds  
BJ Grieve – Flathead County Planning & Zoning  
Alex Hogle – Flathead County Planning & Zoning  
Sharon Hopkins – Bigfork Advisory Committee  
Liz Mackman – Foys to Blacktail Trails  
Tom Murphy – Flathead Industries  
Mike Pence – Flathead County Administrator  
Steve Robinson – Flathead County Weed District  
Don Roe – Flathead County Weed District  
Mary Klein Ruby – Gateway 2 Glacier Trail  
Alan Ruby – Gateway 2 Glacier Trail  
Matt Springer – Flathead Valley Community College  
Tamara Tanberg – Lakeside Advisory Committee  
Bob Tuman – Flathead County Parks & Recreation

**Call to Order**

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors, Flathead County Weed, Parks & Recreation, was held in the conference room at 311 FFA Drive, Kalispell, Montana, on November 5, 2012. The meeting convened at 8:32AM, Chairman Sanders presiding.

**Approval of Minutes**

Minutes of the October 1, 2012 meeting of the Flathead County Weed, Parks & Recreation Board of Directors were distributed to the members of the Board.

**Elise Robocker made a motion to approve the October 1, 2012 minutes.**

**Pete Woll seconded the motion.**

**There being no discussion and all in favor ~ the motion was carried.**

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

Superintendent Jed Fisher introduced Tom Murphy of Flathead Industries who organized the clean-up effort at the Flathead County Animal Shelter and the 911 Center. The crew did an outstanding job at a reasonable price.

### **Applications for CTEP Project Proposal – Alex Hogle, Planning & Zoning**

Mr. Hogle reviewed the four CTEP project proposals received by the October 1<sup>st</sup> timeline. Consideration is given to location, function, connectivity to existing trails, new access enhancement & safety improvements. Recommendations from this board are requested within a one month turnaround, with a final decision from the Commission by the end of December. The projects are attached as **Exhibits A, A-1, A-2, A-3, A-4**.

Proposals were reviewed without priority to the order.

#### 1) The Sam Bibler Commemorative Trails Project — North Willow Glen Drive

- Pedestrian and bicycle facility consisting of approximately 1 mile of separated pathway proposed in two segments, or schedules, to be situated within the public access and utility easement of Willow Glen Drive between the existing northern terminus of the recently completed 'Sam Bibler Memorial Trail' and Conrad drive to the north.
- Requested allocation is \$827,600 which includes estimated cost for engineering design and construction for both segments. The 'local match' requirement (13.42%) is estimated to be approximately \$111,064, and the application indicates the matching fund requirements would be raised and met by the local sponsor group through conventional fund-raising activities in the same manner the group raised the matching funds for the recently completed Sam Bibler Memorial Trail.
- Schedule 1 is the southern-most segment which is proposed to connect directly to the north end of the Sam Bibler Memorial Trail. Encountered along the route of Schedule 1 is the Kalispell Montessori Elementary School, and the proposed project would provide safe access to the school from existing trails.

#### 2) Gateway To Glacier Trail

- Pedestrian and bicycle facility consisting of approximately 6.8 miles of separated pathway proposed in two segments to be situated within the Highway 2 right-of-way between Coram and West Glacier.
- Requested allocation is \$871,745 which includes estimated cost for engineering design and construction for both segments. The 'local match' requirement (13.42%) is estimated to be approximately \$116,988 and the application indicates half of the estimated matching fund requirements (\$58,450) have already been raised by the local sponsor group through active fundraising activities.
- A letter from Ed Toavs of MDT indicates "MDT has no issue with the concept of a proposed trail along this stretch of US 2."

#### 3) Stillwater River Trail at Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC)

- Pedestrian and bicycle facility described as the 'Reserve to Grandview Connector' which consists of approximately 2.1 miles of pathway to be situated on the FVCC campus.
- Requested allocation was initially \$363,559 and has been updated to \$490,700. The 'local match' requirement (13.42%) is estimated to be approximately \$65,852.
- The initial application indicated a proposal to use the value of volunteer labor (students and faculty of FVCC's heavy equipment operator's program) and in-kind services (use of FVCC's heavy equipment) to meet matching fund requirements which didn't fit the framework of the CTEP program. Dialogue with MDT CTEP indicated labor cannot be used as a match, 'Force Account' work cannot be done by a third

party, and if the project were to be built all with the FVCC resources a 'Public Interest Finding' would be needed. Based upon this information, the initial application and budget were adjusted.

#### 4) Flathead County Fairgrounds Exterior and Pedestrian Enhancement Plan

- Pedestrian pathway facility consisting of approximately 0.9 miles of pathway and landscaping improvements proposed to be situated upon the grounds of the Flathead County Fairgrounds. The proposed CTEP improvements are a portion of overall enhancements envisioned and planned for the Fairgrounds.
- Requested allocation is \$361,865 which includes estimated cost for engineering design and construction for both segments. The 'local match' requirement (13.42%) is estimated to be approximately \$48,563, and the application indicates the matching fund requirements would be met through the Fairgrounds portion of County CIP funds which were requested in the fiscal year 2013-2014 submittal by the Fairgrounds to the Flathead County Board of Commissioners.
- The FY 2013-2014 is pending approval upon completion and adoption of the Fairgrounds Master Plan.
- Upon a previous inquiry from this Department to MDT CTEP about the proposed pathway and landscaping improvements to be situated upon the property of the Fairgrounds, MDT CIEP responded the Fairgrounds property is acceptable in terms of public access and use and that the proposed landscaping improvements qualify as 'allowable' cost under the CIEP program.

Alan and Mary Ruby represented the Gateway to Glacier group and had the following input:

- In just 2 short years a diverse group of dedicated businesses and residents from 4 communities in the canyon, Hungry Horse, Martin City, Coram and West Glacier raised over \$58,000 in cash currently on deposit specifically and solely for this separated bicycle/pedestrian path.
- This project meets 2 of the 3 points in the Mission Statement, provided non-motorized access to parks and recreation activities with an emphasis on water access and a safe route to schools. The West Glacier elementary school would be a prime beneficiary of this project and the route connects an existing bicycle path from the South Fork of the Flathead River to the Middle Fork of the Flathead River and Glacier National Park.
- The canyon area is growing although you don't see it so easily driving through. There are many small subdivisions, gated communities and bed and breakfast businesses in addition to the private campgrounds and RV parks developing in the area. All of which would benefit by this project.
- Because of the load growth and the impending reconstruction of the Badrock Corridor and the replacement of the South Fork bridge, Flathead Electric Coop just finished relocating and enlarging the Badrock Substation to Hungry Horse.
- The Mt. DOT US 2 Badrock Canyon Corridor study specifies a separate bicycle path in the section from Hungry Horse to Columbia Heights. Replacing the bridge in 1 to 5 years (2013-2017) and the reconstruction including bicycle trail 6-10 years (2016-2022).
- National bicycle touring groups target the northern route across the US as a highly desirable choice but note the most dangerous segment from West Glacier to Columbia Falls due to the high volume of vehicle and truck traffic.
- Glacier National Park visitors exceed over 2 million per year and the West Glacier entry station receives over half of those entering the Park.
- Business owners and residents raised this \$58,000 in good faith knowing full well the deadline and requirements for a successful CTEP application.

Matt Springer spoke on behalf of the Stillwater River Trail at Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC). Mr. Springer indicated that due to the concern of using labor as a match, the project morphed a bit.

- FVCC originally brought a CTEP proposal to the parks board that included a training component that included using FVCC's heavy equipment operations program. That approach would have reduced the project cost by roughly \$200,000.
- In light of new information about how the state would categorize the college, essentially a type of public agency without the authority to assist in implementation of a CTEP project, the college has revised the amount of funds being requested by CTEP to reflect the different cost of implementation. Under this revised approach, if the County Parks Board and County Commission were to award the college CTEP funds, the college is committed to providing a full cash match.
- This project has been under discussion for at least the last eight years with significant public input and external participation.
- The major benefit of the college's proposal is connectivity. The project would be located in the midst of multiple high use areas, including Kidsports with 10,000 visitors/week in summer, Hutton Ranch Commercial Plaza, KRMC and the multiple long-term care facilities in the Buffalo Hills area, and the college itself, which sees about 2,600 visitors per day with staff and students.
- The project would also complement existing and planned trails. The project would build off of the City of Kalispell's planned trail which will parallel Highway 93, starting in downtown and finishing at the college and also the previously mentioned Kidsports/tunnel trail which currently stops in the middle of a field on FVCC's campus.
- The college has just completed a new set of tennis courts on the east side of our campus. That facility will eventually include a parking lot, with wheelchair access, that will provide an easily accessible trailhead for this project. School District 5 is also very supportive of this project with strong likelihood of hosting interscholastic state tournaments at that new tennis facility which will also promote trail-use.
- The project, once complete, would improve safe access to Glacier High School, FVCC and Edgerton, once the bridge across the Stillwater is completed in Phase III of the project.

Mark Campbell, Flathead County Fair Manager and Tom Murphy, Flathead Industries, spoke on behalf of the Flathead County Fairgrounds Exterior and Pedestrian Enhancement Plan. Mr. Campbell indicated that the 48K match can be budgeted in operational funds or derived from CIP funding. The overall exterior trail for the fairgrounds provides a tremendous benefit and adds an element of connectivity to Rails to Trails. The trail would be open to the public at no cost 51 weeks of the year and during fair week it would be available for the fair entrance fee. Tom Murphy indicated that Flathead Industries has taken a stakeholder position in the fairgrounds project and that it has high visibility and high return.

Alex Hogle summarized there are 2 current projects underway and the program has just under 550K with 307K as the estimated final allocation, bringing the total to approximately 850K. Recent marked changes to the CTEP Program and discussion with MDOT has indicated there will no longer be new money coming into this funding and this could very likely be the last of it.

BJ Grieve reviewed parameters stated in the Flathead County Trails Plan and expressed the importance of defensible paper trail. At this point in the process the Planning & Zoning Department steps back and the Flathead County Parks Board takes the lead, and then submits evaluations to the Commissioners.

### **Potential Surplus Properties**

Superintendent Jed Fisher reviewed a request from Quentin & LaDona Vitt of 260 Vitt Lane, Kalispell – **see Exhibit B**. The Vitts are interested in purchase of County property called Big Sky Park which borders their property and described as a little creek with a swampy bottom. Superintendent Fisher suggested that the Board

schedule a tour of this park and also review and tour other County parks that have limited development potential. Appraisals would be needed along with discussion regarding the potential sale of some of these properties.

Mr. Fisher further stated that the County has many beautiful properties, one in particular on Bitterroot Lake between Blue Grouse and Kelsey Cummings sites. It would be worth considering construction of a cabin type rental structure that could be reserved and enjoyed by the public with the added benefit of rental income.

### **Weed Enforcement Inspection Rates**

Superintendent Jed Fisher stated that 1.78 mills in taxes are directed toward the weed effort which equates to 150 – 160 K per year. Current weed enforcement procedure requires certified letters, phone calls, visits to sites, and administrative time. This could accumulate to 10 – 15 hours in many cases and has become quite costly. Discussion ensued regarding charging for time over and above getting the weeds treated – something along the line of an apathy and ignorance rate. The suggestion was made to establish a fee after one visit, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> action being assessed respectively higher fees.

### **Advisory Groups Membership Change**

Andy Young submitted a letter of resignation for the Herron/Foys Advisory Committee. Discussion ensued regarding 3-person groups as opposed to 5. Superintendent Jed Fisher was directed to make revisions to the By-Laws and submit them for consideration at the next regularly scheduled board meeting.

### **Bigfork Advisory Report**

Sharon Hopkins reported the two current goals of the group – to pursue the perimeter trail at Lake Hills Park and to meet with sports group representatives regarding park use.

December 4<sup>th</sup> is the date set to meet with adjacent landowners to discuss interest in construction of a gravel walking path around the perimeter of Lake Hills Park. In addition there will be door-to-door flyer handouts.

Contact with the representatives of the various sports user groups at Carlyle Johnson and Camelot Parks. The intent is to provide better communication and timely submission of all required documentation and fees.

Superintendent Jed Fisher reported that Paul Mutascio and friends have an interest in redoing the electrical at the Bigfork Dock; however, the project has been placed on temporary hold pending further discussion with the landowner of the neighboring property. Commissioner Holmquist has contacted the neighbor. A project to improve the landscaping in the area disturbed by water district renovations is also on hold. The County attorney will be contacted regarding this matter.

### **Foys/Herron Advisory Report**

Liz Mackman reported that the group has not met for a few months as things are going well. Kalispell Middle School has enjoyed Herron Park for several events. Ms. Mackman questioned progress on the plan to improve access at Foys Beach. Superintendent Jed Fisher indicated that this project is on hold pending the outcome of the lingering issues at Church Slough. Judge Kitty Curtis has yet to address takings and lake shore water protection concerns. Resolution of these matters will dictate how the access improvements are managed. It would be premature to spend 30 – 50K of taxpayer dollars if there are permit issues.

There is a concern regarding dead trees right by the boat ramp. These trees will be removed.

Assistant Superintendent Gordon Jewett reported that he performs periodic checks for dogs on leashes and this seems to keep pet owners in compliance.

### **Foys to Blacktail Trails**

Liz Mackman reported a pleasant day and turnout for the recent Herron Park tour with the commissioner candidates, Board Chair Ray Sanders, Superintendent Jed Fisher, and representatives of Foys to Blacktail Trails. There are plans to take Daily Interlake staff and the Parks Board members on similar tours. Ms. Mackman stated that over 40K has been raised in the past 2 months and an appraisal is in process for the recent Herron Park land acquisition. If FTBT is allowed to use the recent purchase as a comparable the matching funds grant requirement should be met

Administration of the Community Forest Grant was discussed and Board member Elise Robocker offered to become involved. Participation of VOAG, FVCC, and Advisory Committee members is anticipated. Rick Trembath is retired from the Forest Service and will be a good resource. Appointments will be made at the Board meeting on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. A meeting is scheduled with Margie Ewing, the Regional Urban & Community Forestry Program Manager of the USFS, on November 27<sup>th</sup> which will include review of the Forest Stewardship Plan.

### **Lakeside Advisory Report**

Ben Williams Park – Ms. Tanberg reported that further research was done to locate a more competitive price for playground equipment and was pleased to hear that the Kompan Blazer vendor would waive the \$800 freight charge if delivery could be combined with another customer delivery. This equipment will come from Pennsylvania and not Denmark.

Volunteer Park – Typically all power is off during the winter months except any power needed to keep doors locked. Assistant Superintendent Gordon Jewett will call park donor Bruce Ennis to discuss this.

Ms. Tanberg expressed her appreciation for the efforts of the West Glacier trail group that has already raised 58K.

### **Middle Forks Advisory Committee**

There was no one present from the Middle Forks Advisory Committee.

### **Other Business**

- Tansy Ragwort – Don Roe

Superintendent Jed Fisher reported that a recent meeting was arranged by Tris Hoffman of the Forest Service to discuss tansy ragwort control efforts. George Markin was in attendance and was highly critical of the County's control approach, which he felt did not consider bio-control. Weed crew staff were referred to a "nozzle heads" and Mr. Markin stated that the County's control efforts set bio-control back by 5 years. Superintendent Fisher indicated that he had responded to a subsequent email received from Mr. Markin. Fisher further indicated that the County's approach was endorsed by the Montana Noxious Weed Foundation and grant dollars were awarded on that basis. All tansy that is able to be reached by the right-of-way or by a 4k-wheeler is sprayed.

Weed staffer Don Roe reported that he has managed the tansy in the Pleasant Valley area for the past several years and has taken an aggressive approach to eradication of this noxious weed. He has tracked tansy since the Little Wolf fire in 1994. Three years ago he surveyed Tansy toward the fall and found it had gone ballistic. If

any bio-bugs were sprayed it was unintentional. Also, it is recognized that biological control will not eliminate weeds and do not aid in seed control.

Mr. Roe also commented that the County is part of the cooperative effort to control Tansy; however they are not mentioned in posted signing. The coop meets twice per year in the spring and the fall. Although Tris Hoffman set up the recent meeting she did not attend.

The Board applauded Mr. Roe's efforts and encouraged him to carry on with the current control efforts.

- Weed Compliance Report – Steve Robinson

Mr. Robinson reported that complaints are going down and there has been significant follow-up with 60-80 cases. We are working with BPA, FCD and private property landowners in weed management. The new enforcement process had tried our hands and is quite cumbersome. The County cannot enter a person's property to spray without a court order. There was discussion about writing off current balances when landowners have not responded to invoices for weed control measures.

- Recreation Report – Bob Tuman

Mr. Tuman reported that recreation programs have concluded with the exception of Flag Football, which is winding down. He is working with coaches and players to provide an easier transition into the Little Guy Football program.

Sale of signing at the Complex has been successful and Tuman is confident that double or triple the number of signs can be sold next year.

Tuman was invited to participate with the noon Rotary group which sponsors Rotary Basketball and gets 1<sup>st</sup> priority for use of the school gyms. This would be very beneficial to scheduling of County recreational programs.

The current lease with the Conrad Cemetery Board for the Conrad Complex expires in September of 2013 and it is time to begin negotiations. Strategies were discussed and fair and affordable numbers will be investigated with consideration given to what has been invested to date, including 38k for a new pump. It was agreed to arrange a meeting with the Cemetery Board and/or its representatives to discuss the matter. It was generally agreed that the recent lease renewal has worked with 15 k the first year and 2% per year thereafter. A letter will be drafted and a meeting will be arranged.

## **Adjourn**

**Jim Buechle made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:57AM.**

**Pete Woll seconded the motion.**

**There being no discussion and all in favor ~ the motion was carried.**

The time and place of the next regular meeting is Monday, December 3, 2012 at 8:30 AM in the conference room at 311 FFA Drive, Kalispell, Montana.