



**HELENA OPEN LANDS MANAGEMENT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SUMMARY
November 14, 2017**

City Members Representative

- Betsy Miller
- Karen Reese
- Eric Sivers
- Jeff Shirley
- Dan Wirak

City-County Parks Board Representative

- Dave Payne

Helena Citizens Council Representative

- Denise Roth Barber

City of Helena Staff Representatives

- Brad Langsather, Open Lands Manager
- Greta Dige, Code Enforcement

Helena Tourism Alliance Representative

- Jennifer Davis

LOCATION: City of Helena Parks and Recreation – Room 326

TIME: 5:30 Pm – 7:00 pm

Call to Order -

Welcome/Introductions/Visitors – Evan Kulsea - PPLT, Jim Brown, Betty Brown, Susan Leonard, Charles Nelson, Lynn Boone, Sarah Ells and Nick Sovner.

HOLMAC Action Items

Beattie Street Trailhead Parking Area Option II

- This is an informational agenda item for HOLMAC.
- Brad created a rough draft of Option II. When we did the exploration of the rock, we ended up with more solid bed rock at the end of South Beattie. We are now looking at a second option which would be to have the trailhead further to the South. This would be quite a bit smaller trailhead because the footprint of where we can have the trailhead isn't that large.
- This would entail extending a road which would be somewhat similar to MT Helena (this is a road that we are responsible for). There are three draws coming into the parking area. We don't have the preliminary design back from engineering yet. There are more advantages of going further in – the trailhead will be further away from homes, we can maintain natural vegetation which would screen the parking area and the boundary. This should help with some of the privacy concerns from residents. It will also be a "fill" project – meaning we will bring in fill so the rock will no longer be an issue. As we get the preliminary design from engineering, we can begin to look at costs and the economics of the project.
- When we looked at putting the parking area at the end of South Beattie, we realized that we had bed rock that was solid enough that cutting that and putting the parking area there has inherent risks financially that we are unable to cover. Brad anticipates the parking area will be significantly smaller than anticipated.
- At this point, we don't have a viable option to present to the neighborhood; however, this is something we will want to do. Dave then asked Brad when we would be ready to present the

project to the neighborhood. Brad said he will do so as soon as we get the design back from engineering – he is hoping around the first of the year. The project would hopefully begin in the spring/early summer.

- Brad suggested we wait on public comment until he can present the two options at the neighborhood meeting. We have been working on solutions for the South Beattie trail for many years. When the last lot on the west side of the street sells, we will be even more limited on parking. We have looked at other options for a long-term solution.
- Some of the Beattie neighborhood visitors expressed concerns:
 - One visitor stated she had never heard that the neighborhood was involved in the discussion of the expansion of a parking lot. We never had a decision. Brad stated that this item was on our 2017 work plan which was circulated publically with our normal yearly process. We do understand that the South Beattie neighborhood wants to be a part of this.
 - We have an existing trailhead parking area and at this point, we are talking about moving the parking lot further to the South. We are looking to accommodate parking as we knew our time in the streets was limited. A trailhead at the end of the street in 1980 was sufficient. It's not now. Brad added there are a lot of reasons for this project that go beyond parking. This project will accommodate all trailhead users as well as provide amenities that we currently can't have because we are in the street.
 - The neighborhood association is asking that they are engaged and included in any discussions regarding this area. Brad restated that the work plan was circulated publically with an invitation to attend an open house through the yearly process. If you have an interest in open space, we encourage you to look at the work plan and attend the open house to discuss concerns and ask questions. A visitor recommended that perhaps we put signage at the trailheads indicating potential changes and ways to become involved in the process. Another person stated placing a message at the trailhead stating work is being done would be helpful.
 - Brad reminded everyone that we haven't yet presented to the neighborhood association as we haven't had a concrete plan.
 - Brad stated the neighborhood is upset about a decision that hasn't been made yet.
 - Denise then asked if it would be helpful, even before an engineering report, to meet and discuss this project. Here is what we have to do; we don't have a choice because we are on a street and this parking lot cannot continue so we **have** to do something. The neighborhood should know about this and provide ideas as well, but something has to happen. It is not an option to keep this area as it is. Brad added that he still would like to have drawings to present showing different options. We are close to this point.
 - Brad was asked if part of the plan will include traffic calming (traffic calming is the installation of safety solutions such as radar speed signs or speed bumps to slow or reduce traffic in order to enhance safety). Currently there are no stop signs or traffic calming all the way down to Broadway. There are sight obstruction/safety issues in this area. Brad said there are two departments – the parks department which manages park land, and public works which manages the streets. The parks department has nothing to do with decisions regarding streets. Brad cannot comment on the street issues. Brad encouraged the neighborhood association to present concerns to public works. We have no jurisdiction over street issues.
 - Someone recommended "Chaucer" could be an option (instead of Blake). Someone else got a street closure so this is not an option. Brad stated we have looked at several other options; however, it has to be parks property for us to be able to do something on.

- Brad stated we are basing our decisions on our current use levels. South Beattie is our second most use trailhead within the city system. We don't have a count of those users that arrive by motor vehicle.
- This is the second study done at South Beattie. The first one was done in 1990. It showed Beattie as the second most used trail system at that time as well.
- Brad stated there is current capacity of 10 cars in that lot.
- We will also need ADA accessibility as well. We also want to put in a kiosk and restrooms. The parking spots will be closer to 20.
- If the school wants to do an event at South Beattie, we need to have ample space for the bus to turn around. Do we foresee the Downtown Helena shuttle using the Beattie parking lot? Jennifer Davis said she doesn't see that trail as a drop-off.
- Brad reiterated that he is willing to be available at a neighborhood meeting once we have a potential design in place. Let's wait until we have something to present to the people. There was concern of how the neighborhood will be contacted of said meeting. Brad state he will send a letter to those in close proximity to the trailhead and those who live on Beattie Street. Denise also encouraged the neighbors to go to our website for the most up to date information: <http://www.helenamt.gov/parks/open-lands-and-trails.html>. HOLMAC will make certain the information is out on the website. We will do everything we can to make the information publically available.
- One citizen requested that city employees remember to post meeting cancellations, etc. Greta reminded everyone to check Facebook as well for up-to-date information. You can view our Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/HelenaParksRecreation/>.
- A visitor asked Brad why the kiosk, restrooms and picnic table a part of this plan. Are the amenities necessary? Once we develop a trailhead, we are required by law to provide ADA accessible facilities. We will have to make all trailheads ADA compliant. The same will be true for Dump Gulch, etc.
- We need to protect the resources we are attempting to promote.
- **Timetable:** Brad is looking to have a potential design from engineering by January. He will get a letter sent to neighbors as soon as we have something to present. **Brad was asked to include someone from public works to attend the neighborhood meeting.**

Preliminary Trail User Counts

- Jennifer provided Brad some of the preliminary trail user counts. **This information is provided at the end of this summary.**
- Brad suggested everyone spend time to review this information in order to understand how busy our trails are. At the end of the day, we are driven by data.

Aftershock Bridge

- We are under construction on the Aftershock Bridge. On the south end, the City of Helena is working with a contractor to build a 40-foot long bridge over a gully. The work was proceeding quite well before the snow fall. Brad took a break to focus on burning. His preliminary plan is to go back to this project after Thanksgiving. We do have the excavator in the area. We were getting the treated lumber in there and we have started to build the abutment.

Active Living Trailhead Signs

- The trailhead signage is in except for South Beattie. We haven't put the signage in at the Donaldson Folf Course due to gas lines.
- Brad added that another goal with signage is to update our kiosks this year.

Davis Street Parking Area Expansion

- Brad stated that the Davis Street Parking Area Expansion was on the 2017 work plan. He gave the committee a brief report. This trailhead is getting a lot of use.

Limekiln Parking Area (Rocky Road Trail)

- Limekiln is one of our problem trailheads when it comes to parking. People are turning around in neighborhood driveways as they are unable to back out of the parking lot. Brad shared some ideas on how to rectify these parking concerns. The key issue for parking here is being able to get out safely. Brad will put this on the 2018 work plan. He will meet with public works to discuss other options.

Park City Trailhead Improvement Project

- Park City is a partnership between the city, the county, and the forest service. The county has been unable to do their part of the project as of yet. Our part is the purchase of the vault restroom which we will purchase. We will be unable to install the restroom until the county completes their part of the project.
- The forest service has reached out to the neighborhood. We are doing this project to meet basic necessity.

Parks and Recreation Report – Brad

Forestry Projects

- The McKelvey project is on hold because the excavator that is doing the work at McKelvey is tied up on the Aftershock Bridge. We are looking to start up again in March.
- We lost approximately 1,000 trees up on the top of MT Ascension during the first heavy snowfall – most were snap-off. If you leave damage like that, we can have issues with Douglas-fir Beetles. Brad said they did get the trees chipped up and had hoped to get it down to the Narrate Low Income Program, but we had additional snow storms. We are partially done with this project.

Open Lands Burning Program

- Brad is focusing on burning. With the snow on the ground, we have an opportunity before we enter the winter burning season.

Narrate Low Income Energy Program

- Narrate had their second low-income energy distribution on Saturday and they had great turnout. We had 70 cords and it all was almost all distributed. They don't have enough for a third distribution.

2018 Open Lands Work Plan

- With all the interest in the 2018 work plan, Brad has decided to get going on the work plan earlier than the April deadline this year. Within the next month, Brad will work with Evan on several items we have discussed. Brad will present this to HOLMAC at the December meeting. HOLMAC will be given a month to review the plan, make suggestions and comments (Greta will have the

information on the website), and then we will do our public announcements and have January as our open house. The public comment period will be from December to January. The open house will be at the City-County Building. One issue with doing this earlier in the season is we may have to amend it as we get through the year and will have to take it to commission again.

Reports from Subcommittees

Weeds – Greta

- Greta stated we were unable to do any fall spraying due to fire danger. We still have an active South Hills Weed Grant for those in the area of Lewis and Clark County and the South Hills Trail adjacent to the trail system where we do a 50/50 cost share. We still have plenty of money left from this grant and will send homeowners (anyone who lives adjacent to the South Hills) a letter letting them know that this funding is available.
- The cost share is for a variety of weeds. It is chemical restrictive (have to use chemicals specified in the grant).
- Greta will also post this information on our Facebook page.

Report from PPLT

- Evan stated he is working with Brad on figuring out PPLT's role in the 2018 work plan. He is looking forward to the partnership between PPLT, Open Lands, and the trails committee.
- Jennifer is hopeful that we will add additional counters next year.

Cultural Resources

Wildlife

Forestry

Public Comment

Next Meeting Date: December 12, 2017 at 5:30 in Room 326 in the City County Building

Future Agenda Items:

- Identification of topics for December meeting.

Adjournment: With no further business, the November 14th HOLMAC meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm.

ADA NOTICE

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Persons with disabilities requiring accommodations to participate in the City's meetings, services, programs, or activities should contact the City's ADA Coordinator, Elroy Golemon, as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to arrange for the requested accommodation, at any of the following:

(406) 447- 8490
TTY Relay Service or 711
citycommunitydevelopment@helenamt.gov
316 North Park, Avenue, Room 440, Helena, MT 59623

TRAILHEAD COUNTER INFORMATION:

Entry Point	Mountain Bike Entry	On Foot Entry	Total Users	Daily Mountain Bike (Days=153)	Daily On Foot Entry (Days=153)	Daily Users (Days=153)
Arrowroot Dr. trailhead	2,140	793	2,933	14.0	5.2	19.2
Beattie St. trailhead	1,014	7,570	8,584	6.6	49.5	56.1
DeFord trailhead	2,429	3,876	6,305	15.9	25.3	41.2
Dump Gulch trailhead	1,040	1,217	2,257	6.8	8.0	14.8
Mt. Helena Ridge trailhead	3,561	1,363	4,924	23.3	8.9	32.2
Mt. Helena trailhead	785	18,847	19,632	5.1	123.2	128.3
Old Shooting Range trailhead	1,748	3,089	4,836	11.4	20.2	31.6
Tubbs trailhead	897	4,635	5,532	5.9	30.3	36.2
Other Mt. Ascension trail	1,955	2,854	4,809	12.8	18.7	31.4
Other Mt. Helena access trails	495	683	1,178	3.2	4.5	7.7
Other Ridge access trails	1,375	674	2,049	9.0	4.4	13.4
Total May-September Entries	17,438	45,602	63,039	114.0	298.1	412.0

Assessment period covers May-September

Notes:	
Arrowroot Dr. trailhead	No usable trail counts. Use Trailforks check-ins for May-Sept 2017. Based on trails with counters and check-ins, assume checkins represent 5% of total use. Estimate Foot use based on ratio at Helena Ridge which also has shuttle drop offs.
Beattie St. trailhead	Beattie has both IR and MB counters. Assume that entry/exit is 50/50 Assumption based on reported entries and exits by survey respondents at beattie.
DeFord trailhead	Used combination of 2017 proportion counts at DeFord and the 2016 IR and MB counters on Eagle Scout. Assume that MB entry rate is 45%, and foot is 48%. Assumption based on reported entries and exits by survey respondents at DeFord.
Dump Gulch trailhead	Used combination of 2016 IR trail counter and Trailforks check-ins for May-Sept 2017. Based on trails with counters and checkins, assume check-ins represent 5% of total use. Estimate Foot use and entry/exit portions based on survey data collected.

TRAILHEAD COUNTER INFORMATION (notes continued):

Mt. Helena Ridge trailhead	Mt. Helena Ridge has both IR and MB counters. Assume that entry/exit is 50/50 for foot travel. MB entry portion is 67% based on survey responses.
Mt. Helena trailhead	Mt Helena has IR counter. Assume that entry portion is 41% for both foot and bike. Assumption based on reported entries and exits by survey respondents at Mt. Helena. Bikes represent 4% of count based on proportion counts
Old Shooting Range trailhead	Used combination of 2017 proportion counts at Shooting Range and the 2016 IR and MB counters on Shooting Range West. Assume that MB entry rate is 28%, and foot is 48%. Assumption based on reported entries and exits by survey respondents.
Tubbs	Used combination of 2017 proportion counts at Tubbs and the 2016 IR and MB counters on Tubbs. Assume that MB and foot entry rate is 50%. Assumption based on reported entries and exits by survey respondents.
Other Mt. Ascension trailheads	Trails included as potential entry points: Little Moab, Catch Up, and Prickly Pear. Use TrailForks to identify the number of check-ins in May-September 2017. Assume this is 5% of all Mountain Bike use (based on trails that have counters and strava data). Assume foot traffic is 1.46 times that of bikers
Other Mt. Helena access trails	No usable trail counters for other Mt. Helena access. Also limited confidence in Trailforks check-ins given limited MB use in area. As such, estimates based on survey respondents' reports of having entered from such sites. Assume similar time distribution as Mt. Helena TH. Value is 6% of main TH
Other Ridge access trails	Trails included as potential entry points: Mini Ridge Trail and Show Me the Horse. Show Me is primarily a down hill trail but with some up hill, thus entries are quite small. Mini-Ridge is expected to be balanced up and down. Emmett's trail is not included as it is primarily down hill. Use TrailForks to identify the number of check-ins in May-September 2017. Assume this is 5% of all Mountain Bike use (based on trails that have counters and TrailForks data). Assume foot traffic is .49 times that of bikers based on ratio of foot to bike at Mt. Helena Ridge who arrived at TH by foot or bike or personal vehicle. Removed those who arrived by shuttle for comparison.
5% TrailForks Assumption	Based on the trails with available MB counters and sufficient TrailForks use, we estimate that the direction specific check-ins represent approximately 5% of all use. For comparison, we estimate Beattie street to have had 1,014 MB user entries. If we use the alternate 5% Trailforks adjustment, the estimate would have been 1,100 user entries.