

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

AGENDA

October 19, 2016

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

- ADMIN-1 Advisory Board Member Introductions
ADMIN-2 Adoption of Minutes – September 21, 2016 Advisory Board Meeting

DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS

- D-1 Ragged Mountain Natural Area

CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

BOARD MATTERS

DIRECTOR'S MATTERS

ADJOURNMENT

City of Charlottesville
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board – Agenda Item
October 19, 2016

ADMINISTRATIVE – 1

Advisory Board Member Introductions

ADMINISTRATIVE – 2

Adoption of Minutes – September 21, 2016 Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meeting

ACTION REQUIRED:

Advisory Board adoption of the minutes of the September 21, 2016 meeting.

ENCLOSED DOCUMENTS:

Minutes of September 21, 2016 meeting.

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES

September 21, 2016

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board held a regular meeting on Wednesday, September 21, 2016 at 5:30 p.m. held @ Key Recreation Center. Members present were: Ruth Barnett, Llezelle Dugger, Anne Hemenway, David Hirschman, Jody Lahendro, Ned Michie, Jennifer Stack and Maurice Walker. Members absent: Elise Cruz
Staff: Brian Daly, Vic Garber, Doug Ehman, Chris Gensic

Adoption of Minutes – August 17, 2016

Motion:

- Llezelle Dugger made a motion to approve August 17, 2016 minutes, Ruth Barnett second, motion was unanimously approved

Advisory Board Introductions

- Advisory Board members introduced themselves
- David Hirschman, Chair, welcomed Jennifer Stack to the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board for her first meeting

Ragged Mountain Natural Area – Discussion

- David Hirschman, Chairman of Advisory Board, reported that board members have received lots of comments on Ragged Mountain, they have read them, and that a lot of information has come in, sometimes a little confusing. He stated that questions have been submitted by board members to staff, Albemarle County and City Council.
 - He also stated that members are diligent in reading materials and visiting the Ragged Mountain site. He felt that board members represent a cross section of the city and are appointed by City Council. He thanked board members for their time.
 - David Hirschman stated that there was a Day of Caring recently and that a group had removed invasive @ Ragged Mountain
 - He stated that the intentions for this meeting were not to come to final resolution tonight but to have a discussion on the Ragged Mountain use options topic.
 - One issue several board members had asked was for the directive from City Council.
 - City Council will be authorizing everything concerning user options @ Ragged Mountain
 - David Hirschman, Chairman, stated that he would like to go through the proposed uses @ Ragged Mountain and discuss each of the options with board members:
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- Existing use – Boating & Fishing allowed.
 - Asked if any members were not in line with continuing this use?
 - Ned Michie asked if they could leave boats @ site. Brian Daly replied that it has not been determined at this time, but that gasoline motors may not be used on water except for RWSA

- Ned Michie asked about a dock? Brian Daly replied no, that there was just a ramp there. He stated that he saw some comments from ADA about access
- Anne Hemenway stated that over this past weekend a lot of boaters feel there should be improvements to the boat access which is popular with boaters
- Ned Michie asked if there was a sense that boating has increased since the dam was put in, Chris Gensic replied I believe so, probably because it was more difficult in the past to get up the hill with boats
- Ned Michie stated that he was in favor of boating & fishing, but was surprised how well voices carried from boaters
- David Hirschman stated that he found it enjoyable there with a kayak
- David Hirschman asked board members if they were in concurrence with boating & fishing. Board members replied unanimously in favor

➤ **Dogs**

- Ned Michie stated that he was a dog owner, and likes to take his dog on hikes, okay with dogs there. But also stated that there is a disturbance factor with dogs, a lot of people are not comfortable with dogs, biggest problem is dog owners don't keep them on leash, I've done it, friendly dog, no problem with other dogs, dogs much happier off leash, just what dog owners do, some dogs will continue to be off leash. Stated that when he was in Ireland on a trip hiking, was interested to see some signs that they had there, one stated: "No Dogs allowed, Dogs Worried Sheep will be Shot"
- Jody Lahendro stated that he seconds what Ned Michie had said, except for a pen for dogs, not appropriate
- Ruth Barnett stated that she felt there was a problem with enforcement with dogs, but also agreed with Ned Michie
- Anne Hemenway stated that she has a dog, goes hiking lots because of dogs, not sure why they are not popular @ Ragged Mountain but based on comments read felt that they should not be allowed @ Ragged Mountain
- Maurice Walker stated that he pretty much agreed, have taken dogs to other areas and have encountered dogs getting startled, bicyclists, do feel that they would bring too much disturbance, worried about people abiding about rules
- Llezelle Dugger stated that it's not dogs but dog owners that are irresponsible, feel they should not be allowed, cannot police, takes only one that could bite a child
- Jennifer Slack stated that she would go with recommendation of others, does not own a dog, but has not encountered problems
- David Hirschman stated that the task with uses is to define the proper level of use for this property. Thinks it is significant about people that are afraid and stay away from areas, would rather spaces taken by fishermen than dog walkers.

- Stated that it seems that board members are unanimous to not allow dogs @ Ragged Mountain

➤ **Trail Running**

- David Hirschman asked if anyone was opposed to train running or fast walking @ Ragged Mountain. No board members voiced any opposition.

➤ **Mountain Bikes**

- Jennifer Slack stated that she felt the same as dogs, what is priority, keeping use @ a manageable level, should support the public to use areas that are sustainable
- Llezelle Dugger stated that it was a tough one, husband is a biker, if voting now would be against because of natural resources, there are other areas that they are allowed, have received a lot of information, this issue was more evenly divided
- Jennifer Slack asked what impact concerned about, Llezelle Dugger replied all of it, how is it going to affect if more bikers, ecology, would say no to bikers if voting today
- Maurice Walker stated that he goes back & forth at this point, biggest hang-up, making sure that area is maintained, have an area that is appropriate for bikers, with appropriate signage might be able to go for it, have had very good experiences when coming in contact with bikers, have been very nice & accommodating, because of positive experiences not sure
- Anne Hemenway stated that she was undecided, need to talk in context on trails only, not sure there is a final decision on that trail, if could have a bike trail that is reasonable & low impact, don't see a big problem, stated that hikers can be noisy and disturbing, too. Saw 20 boaters experiencing the area, who am I to say that bikers are not appropriate, huge area, maybe suggest a bike trail that is appropriate for that area, just like the boaters & hikers have
- Ruth Barnett stated that she was not against bikers, but there are other areas close by that could be appropriate, not in favor
- Jody Lahendro stated that he had given this a lot of thought, have watched videos on internet, influenced by the number of trails in the Charlottesville area that allow, and that there are only two natural areas in Charlottesville, feel should be a quiet place to make connections, does not agree.
- Ned Michie stated that he was undecided, goes back & forth, have seen comments on both sides, have been some comments on environment that don't think is true; use not clear cut in 1900's, most recent construction blasting, every kind of disturbance, yet bio diversity still there, thinks it would still be a natural area. Preddy Creek – bikers very friendly & considerate, woods still very nice. Was very different when a bike comes up on you, you do worry, it's different, felt for people that just want to hike, shared use, but it's okay not to have every use in every area. Yellowstone has

controversy concerning snow mobiles, does change experience for hikers, compelling history not to have bikers, should not be taken lightly, it is public land, hard to say my use is better than your use, will still be wooded area

- Ned Michie stated that bicyclists groups are good trail maintainers, serve on Rivanna Trails Board, bikers are a huge asset, bikes keep the trails open, less growth, open & visible, still back & forth, if shared use, should be split more than the current plan, too many shared trails going around the whole area, maybe alternating days would work, could have fewer trails, bikers wouldn't have to worry about on those days, worry about enforceability, could be self-enforcing, cellphones today could take pictures of abusers. Not sure what would push over edge one way or the other
- Ned Michie felt that there are parks coming on line in the next couple of years, ex. Biscuit Run, if these other big areas allowed bikers would not be in favor.
- David Hirschman stated that they have talked about the history, was on County staff and involved in trail mapping and has been involved over the years and in the establishment of Ragged Mountain as a natural area. There was an attitude generated, that other groups have plenty of what they want, this area has abundance of areas for trails, use designation is only one part of how these areas are used.
- David Hirschman stated that he went to Preddy Creek, walked & biked a few times, put bikers into two categories, families – very courteous, didn't affect experience, part in back, mountain bikers there for experience, sweat on brow, going pretty fast, even though sign said yield to hikers, could ruin experience, thinking about that. If biking was going to be an allowed use @ Ragged Mountain, came to some ideas:
 - A lot would be enjoyed by families
 - A lot of narrow spots, steep drop offs, dam to pontoon bridge – hikers only
 - Southwest area most sensitive – lower level of use
 - Biking – trail around the north side, bikers built trail, nicest trail in area
 - Almost makes use in half, some might look like a compromise, might be more sustainable.
 - Feel that people that bike or hike, Ragged is a special area, and primary function is outdoor experience.
 - David Hirschman stated that he agreed with Ned Michie, current system relies on volunteers
 - Jody Lahendro stated he was very impressed with trail improvements, but at best mitigate the damage but still happens
 - Albemarle County Natural Heritage – it's the overall use that impacts the most
 - Don't have any personal evidence that one over another
 - Llezelle Dugger right now hiking, paddle boarding, kayaking, adding bikers what would add to the use, double? quadruple? That's where the effects come in. What is the impact to the area if more users? Unknown currently.

- Jennifer Slack asked if anyone felt stronger than others. Jody Lahendro stated that he felt strongly against
- Jody Lahendro– quotes an 1837 at Harvard from Thoreau about nature
- David Hirschman stated that the Advisory Board will have to make a recommendation to City Council, as was done for McIntire Park, in which that report included different points of view. We may not have consensus.
- Ned Michie asked if the new trail areas, Hedgerow & Biscuit Run allowed multi-use would it change opinions for Ragged Mountain? If Hedgerow was just hiking would it be okay with bikers @ Ragged Mountain. Might merit revisiting usage when these other areas come in play. Anne Hemenway stated that this usage should be revisited anyway in 3-4 years to see how things area. David Hirschman felt that in reality it would be tough to change the usage.
- Jennifer Stack asked if anyone was strong on the other side. Seems lots are wavering.
- Ned Michie stated that he was more inclined with more access than David Hirschman; recommendation could be alternate days with more trails.
- Room for multiple trails, alternating days, if access, should be full access
- Southwest corner – DCR, sensitive ravine, key environmental interest, If we follow the recommended 250 meter buffer around sensitive plants, we could not have any circuit trail in that area.
- Cites four studies but none have to do with trails, dealt with fragmentation, invasive, animals – evidence, increased use might make a difference, birds fly away – with bikes, flora – footprint of trail – only damage, invasive – can be a problem, haven't seen more research, limited look on internet, more invasive on long trails, native plants don't tolerate, off trail goes back to square one. Studies do not support a 250 meter buffer, question mark for him. Would like to see more research, don't believe trails on ridges are not ruining environment. Invasive vs. trails, where are hotspots for invasive? Chris Gensic stated that he could make a map showing these areas.
- Jody Lahendro stated that he felt the Center for Urban Habitat could be trusted that these people know what they are talking about, seed bank, continue down above that sensitive area, washing those invasives downhill. Jody Lahendro stated that the upper road was most sensitive.
- David Hirschman stated that it was a complicated area which included service road, trails, etc. When kayaked saw disturbed edge along shore, which might make it a good location for trail. Do need a process on the bikers.
- David Hirschman asked did any comments sway you. Maurice Walker replied not now.

- Brian Daly stated that staff can take what was heard tonight, and bring to next meeting, nothing in process says that decision has to be made immediately. Will provide some additional information on invasive
- Jennifer Slack asked how different is the trails construction, if bikes are or are not allowed, how significant are trail changes that would need to be made. Brian Daly replied not that different.
- Chris Gensic stated that trails are built regardless of use, water is what you fight
- Trails can be sustainable, 8 ft. wide range to narrower. A lot of trails are wider than Rivanna @ Ragged Mountain. Maintenance the same.
- David Hirschman stated this has been a process where many people have weighed in, expectation is for an answer, but it's been 20 years for usage, only two cars were allowed @ a time, needed permits, don't want to drag out for sake of public, have between now & October to look into things,
- David Hirschman asked board members if they think they can vote by November, Ned Michie stated that he thought a vote should be in October, Llezelle – take next 30 days to think about
- Anne Hemenway asked to clarify what they were agreeing to: dogs off table, really talking about? Bikers – any? Only in this area? Vote in concept, staff interpret, or should come up with recommendation. States she was on trail last weekend couldn't imagine a bike on.
- Brian Daly stated that a couple of options had areas of shared use
- David Hirschman stated that did not think conceptual recommendation should be with all the information that has been provided
- Anne Hemenway asked about cars dropping boats off? Curious what plan is for kayaks, paddleboards, canoes? Brian Daly replied that have been talking internally about dock, no specific recommendations for boating at this time
- David Hirschman stated that design of access would determine level of use
- Jody Lahendro stated that there should be a firm recommendation to City Council, owe to people that have come to us, have a better reaction to respond to board, doesn't have to be unanimous. Stated that he serves on the Planning Commission so is used to be not agreed with
- Ned Michie asked about where the Planning Commission was in process? Brian Daly stated would go to the Planning Commission for comment.
- David Hirschman stated that @ the next meeting the board would take a vote, clear recommendation to City Council, does not have to be unanimous.
- David Hirschman reported that recently when paddling @ Ragged Mountain he saw smoke on the shoreline, paddled to cove, found extended family hiked with a gas grill, set up by the water, grilling, kids running around
- Ned Michie asked what was the original set up with the County, share cost of parking lot. Share some of operation costs? Brian Daly replied that he was not

aware of any County funding. Chris Gensic replied that the County gives advisory support, not aware of funding, did pay \$750,000 for land replacement due to dam flooding.

- David Hirschman thanked citizens for coming to the meeting

Board Matters

- Llezelle Dugger stated that her children were back swimming, complimented staff on closing & cleaning @ Smith, said kids like it.

Directors Matters

- Brian Daly welcomed Jennifer Stack as a new board member
- Annual Halloween event – Saturday, 10/29, 2-5 pm @ Downtown Mall by pavilion
- Flea Market this Saturday @ Carver Center
- One more week of Farmers Market on Wednesdays
- 2 for 1 access pass promotion @ Smith Aquatic Center
- Urban Forester – should have new staff person in place within next 30 days

Motion – Adjourn Meeting

- Llezelle Dugger made a motion to adjourn meeting, Maurice Walker second, motion was unanimously approved
- Jody Lahendro asked where next month's meeting would be held. Stated it was hard to hear @ the Key Center. Ned Michie stated that it was hard to have a conversation in a larger area. Brian Daly replied that they expected a larger crowd @ next meeting, could use Council Chambers.
- Meeting adjourned @ 7:10 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Daly
Secretary to the Advisory Board

City of Charlottesville
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board – Agenda Item
October 19, 2016

DISCUSSION/ACTION - 1

Ragged Mountain Natural Area

Advisory Board discussion and possible action on a recommendation to City Council of permitted uses at the Ragged Mountain Natural Area.