

FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH TRAILS ADVISORY COMMISSION

**MINUTES**  
**April 5, 2021**

A regular meeting of the Fairbanks North Star Borough Trails Advisory Commission was held via Zoom from the Mona Lisa Drexler Assembly Chambers, Juanita Helms Administration Center, 907 Terminal Street, Fairbanks, Alaska. The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Carol Kaynor, Chair.

**A. ROLL CALL**

MEMBERS PRESENT:            Brian Accola            Richard Shideler  
   Seth Adams            Maxwell Plichta  
   Helyn Lefgren        Mike Schmetzer  
   Geoff Orth            Leslie Kitchin  
   Carol Kaynor

MEMBERS ABSENT (note if excused): John Morack

OTHERS PRESENT: Bryant Wright, Trails Coordinator  
                                 Sharon Wittenkeller, Recording Clerk  
                                 Van Le, R & M Contractor  
                                 Taryn Oleson-Yelle, R & M Contractor

**B. MESSAGES**

1. Communications to the Trails Advisory Commission

Mr. Wright updated the Commission on the trails inventory for the Trail Plan; they have scheduled more trail visits and were able to get out to the Gilmore Trail area the week prior. The Trails Challenge is going on until April 30, 2021. If snowfall continues the Trails Challenge will be extended.

2. Citizen's Comments – limited to three (3) minutes – None.

3. Disclosure & Statement of Conflict of Interest

**Commissioner Orth** declared that he had a conflict of interest in regard to the letter of support in connection with the Bonanza Creek and Rosie Creek trail in the Tanana valley State Forest (New Business item 1); he is a member of Interior of Alaska Trails and Parks Foundation and the owner of Stray Dogs, LLC which is providing logistic and project management support to the trails project.

It was voted on by the Commission and determined that Commissioner Orth had conflict of interest with the letter of support and he was excused from voting on the letter of support.

**Commissioner Lefgren** declared that she is the President of the Interior of Alaska Trails and Parks Foundation. The Foundation is the applicant in the letter of support (New Business item 1).

It was voted on by the Commission and determined that Commissioner Lefgren did not have a conflict of interest with the letter of support.

**Commissioner Accola** also declared that he is a member of the Interior of Alaska Trails and Parks Foundation. The Foundation is the applicant in the letter of support (New Business item 1).

It was voted on by the Commission and determined that Commissioner Accola did not have a conflict of interest with the letter of support.

**C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA**

Motion to approve the agenda and consent agenda made by **Commissioner Shideler** and seconded by **Commissioner Orth**. Carried without objection or roll call vote.

**D. MINUTES**

Minutes from March 1, 2021 were approved.

**E. NEW BUSINESS**

1. Letter of support for 2021 Recreational Trails Program Round 2 grant project
  - a. Interior Alaska Trails and Parks Foundation's application for trail connections between forestry roads in the Tanana Valley State Forest—Geoff Orth

**Commissioner Orth** gave an overview of the request for the letter of support which is for a project in Bonaza Creek in the Tanana Valley State Forest, southwest of Fairbanks. The project will construct four new miles of sustainable trail connecting existing trails and timber roads in Rosie Creek and Bonanza Creek forests. It is a multi-use, all season trail network and connects approximately 50 miles of existing roads, serving a wide user base. The full project cost is approximately \$280,000 and it is to be funded by the second round of Recreational Trail Program (RTP) funds. The project work is expected to begin in early September 2021 and completed by the end of the fiscal year and combine it with an existing project that is expected to begin in early June 2021 which will regrade the existing Rosie Creek Trails.

Commissioners questioned and discussed the location of the four new miles of trail and the width of the multi-use trails.

**MOTION:** to approve the Letter of support for the 2021 Recreational Trails Program Round 2 grant project made by **Commissioner Shideler** and seconded by **Commissioner Accola**.

**Commissioner Adams** stated his support and excitement for the projects and noted that the trails in the Cripple Creek area have seen an increase in use and the project is an important addition.

**Chair Kaynor** will provide non-substantive copy edits to fix grammatical errors.

### **MOTION CARRIED WITHOUT OBJECTION OR ROLL CALL VOTE – LETTER APPROVED**

#### 2. Comprehensive Recreational Trail Plan Update—R&M Consultants

##### a. Review of progress to date

Taryn Oleson-Yelle with R & M Consultants gave an update of the work they have done up to date on the Recreational Trails Plan update:

- They launched an interactive comment map online.
- Since the map went live, they have received a lot of activity, especially in the Ester Dome area with a lot of trails added.
- The interactive map comments will be collected through mid-May or sooner depending on the data being received.
- They will be launching a community trail use survey online; in the survey they are inquiring on who is using the trails, why they are using the trails and how important the trails are to their quality of life.
- They will also be mailing out postcards to randomly selected residents throughout FNSB to take the survey.
- Responses for both the online survey and postcard survey will be tracked separately.
- They continue to work with Bryant Wright, FNSB Trails Coordinator and Jon Underwood with Happy Trails through the trail refinement and data collection process.
- They have had a lot of public engagement during the public work sessions and over 75 individual comments thru the project website, not including the interactive map comments.
- They will begin more interaction non-digital means of contact with the public.
- They will focus on using the data from the public work sessions by filtering it into the draft plan starting with step 2 of the process at tonight's meeting by

drafting the vision statement, reviewing issues and developing the goals.

b. Draft of vision statement

Van Le with R & M consultants guided the commission through a visioning exercise. Ms. Oleson-Yelle took notes in an interactive platform on a digital whiteboard as the discussion ensued. Commissioners focused the discussion around the two draft vision statements:

- Draft 1: The Fairbanks North Star Borough features a network of recreational trails for trail users of all ages, abilities, and activity types to enjoy year-round that are maintained and valued by the community.
- Draft 2: The Fairbanks North Star Borough is a recreation destination with an interconnected, well maintained, year-round system of public trails that feature unique experiences for all trail users, borough residents and visitors now and for generations to come.

The Commissioners focused their comments on the two draft vision statements on the following topics and ideas:

- Vision statement drafts are statements of fact but need to be aspirational.
- Add language to the effect of keeping what we have now and maintaining and improving that over the years.
- Preferences for short and succinct vision statements.
- A trail system that facilitates all user groups and is not strictly recreational. Trails are used for trapping and transportation and utilize old mining and forestry trails.
- Recreation “destination” statement of draft 2 may draw more interest to year-round recreational trails from tourists and residents. Trails can be an economic engine while also improving livability for residents.
- Include the word dynamic to describe the changing nature of trails, their uses, and local preferences.
- Omit “Borough residents and visitors” from draft 2;
  - Trails are for everyone and vision statement does not need to list or focus on individual groups,
  - “Borough residents” it is redundant because borough residents and visitors are or could be trail users.
  - It could be worked on as a goal.
  - Shorten it; could state “trails that feature unique experiences for all trail users--residents and visitors alike--now and for generations to come.”
  - Including “residents” or “visitors” is addressing the question “who is being served with the Trail Plan?”
- Liked the focus on “all ages, abilities, and activity types” in draft 1.
- Include words that can trigger recognition with the readers.
- Whether or not to include buzz words, such as “diverse” and “inclusivity” in

vision statement.

- Confusion between vision and mission statement or hybrid of the two.
- Include more aspirational language in draft 1.
- Keep “all ages, abilities, and activity types” in draft 1 vs. using a buzz word like “inclusive.”
- In “all ages, abilities, and activity types” in draft 1, change “activity types” to “activities” to simplify.
- Review the list of concepts and aspirations for the vision statement to determine which are most essential in defining the vision for trails.
- *Additional and more specific comments are included in the images from the presentation slides where notes were transcribed by the consultants in real time.*

c. Goals development & review exercise

The Commission discussed reviewing the original Trail Plan Goals (originally developed in 1985, and unchanged in the most recent 2006 update) in tandem with the current and primary goals to build the future goals of the updated Trails Plan.

The Commission took the concepts of the draft vision statements and brainstormed ideas and issues in order to create and refine updated goals for the Trails Plan. Topics and ideas discussed included:

- Maintenance:
  - FNSB legal authority for regulating offenses of the trails.
  - Physical and legal maintenance.
    - Rights-of-Way.
  - Advertise the trails to increase public involvement and use.
  - Trail etiquette and education to reduce conflicts.
  - Create the administrative methods beyond Title 17 to protect the trails
  - Creative designations that allow the best use of the trails seasonally rather than only designating motorized/non-motorized use.
  - Landowner liability is a goal in the current plan. Should it be?
  - Proper signage at trailheads and on trails:
    - Safety precautions.
  - Connectivity of trails.
  - Accessibility for users all of ages and abilities.
  - High and appropriate quality trails of all types and levels:
    - The quality depends on the use of the trail, the activity being sought after, and the season.
      - For example, a “high-quality” trail for many off-road motorized users may be a muddy or rough trail. This kind of trail is important to provide but is very different or opposite from a “high quality” hiking trail and so often gets left out.
    - Criteria for sustainable trail design – Venn diagram approach:
      - Satisfy the user’s expectations/demands
      - Minimize the maintenance requirements

- Minimize the impact to the environment
      - Quality of trailheads (signage, parking, access to public toilets)
  - Diverse user groups and ability levels:
    - Building and supporting a trail system geared toward motorized users that have a rough non-manicured terrain character to them for expert trail users.
    - Create advanced, challenging trails available for expert trail users and progressing trail users (for example, single track biking trails built for specific ability levels).
  - Guidance on alternative trails for trails users when trails are closed seasonally.
    - Alternatives help to address trail user conflicts.
  - Make trails that are fun.
  - Different trails for different abilities:
    - Different trails for different activities – variety in distance of trails.
    - Connectivity and inter-connectivity of trails.

*Additional and more specific comments are included in the images from the presentation slides where notes were transcribed by the consultants in real time.*

The Commission reviewed previous/current goal for Issue 1 Agency Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

*“Defines responsibilities of different departments of the FNSB and public agencies within the borough which are involved with establishing recreational trails for all trails within the borough which are included in the Trail Plan.”*

Discussion ensued and the Commission discussed the relativity of this goal to future goals. They also discussed the order that the current goals are listed in and whether this reflected their priority or importance. They also discussed the importance of the current goal(s) and their relativity to all current goals and issues including maintenance, and how to incorporate the current goal 1 with new future goals.

*Additional and more specific comments are included in the images from the presentation slides where notes were transcribed by the consultants in real time.*

Ms. Oleson-Yelle and Ms. Le will summarize the notes and discussion from this meeting and distribute to the TAC. Discussion of the remainder of the current goals and progress from the meeting will be continued at the April 14, 2021 meeting.

The next public involvement meeting will be May 4, 2021 @ 6:00 p.m. The next mission for Ms. Oleson-Yelle and Ms. Le will be to have a clean version of the vision, goals, and policies that TAC has decided on ready for review and comment by the public for the May meeting.

- d. Objectives development exercise – No Discussion. This item will be continued to the April 14, 2021 meeting.

- e. Action strategies brainstorming – No. Discussion. This item will be continued to the April 14, 2021 meeting.

**F. EXCUSE FUTURE ABSENCES**

The absence of Commissioner Kaynor for April 14, 2021 and Seth Adams for May 4, 2021 are excused.

**G. COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS**

**H. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:34 p.m.