

## Conservation Committee Minutes, July 1, 2014 Final

**Attendees:** Jim Daniel, Cherry Payne, John Parker, Mike O'Farrell, Mary Clark, Tom Brimacombe, John Cannella, Dag Ryen (for board liaison David Yard), and toward the end, David Yard.

**Guests:** Charles Smith, Joyce Hamner, Stuart Castle

June minutes were reviewed and approved. Motion made to accept and seconded, all voted aye.

Charles Smith noted minutes posted on the web are incorrect as the ones on the web are from May. The confusion and issue of a one-month lag time was explained. Mr. Smith also had questions about the agenda. In general, there seem to be some delays related to the web. Mr. Smith asked about the status of the pilot trail project. He disagrees that work should be done in the greenbelts and noted that the trails are random and not built. He maintains that when AMREP developed Eldorado, the greenbelts were to carry water. Therefore, he does not feel that work should be done in the greenbelts; he stated that there are ample bike trails and also the rail trail for community members to use. He said the term "pilot project" implies that more will be built, which he disagrees with. He also noted that due to the proximity to the rail trail, the new trail will invite non-Eldorado residents to enter the greenbelt, which is private property. He reiterated that the greenbelt should be off-limits to any kind of development be it by hand tools or machines. He says that because the involved area has been disrupted and when it rains, the trail area will turn into big eroded areas. He protests any further action there, pilot or not.

Mr. Stuart Castle brought up two issues: the current legal status of the preserve in terms of easements, liability or development beyond current levels. Do trails need to be posted in order to avoid incursions from adjacent property owners or liability if someone is injured, and has the committee had a legal review of the question? John noted that over a period of several years, if people use an area without enforcement, they may acquire legal access.

His other point was that if there was ever an opportunity to acquire more land in the preserve, and if that acquisition involved a special assessment of Eldorado residents, he would happily participate. Tom noted that the preserve is a conservation easement and as such, it is protected. If ECIA tried to develop it, it could be repossessed by the county.

Joyce Hamner stated she agrees with most of what Charles said. There are several miles of developed bike trails and sidewalks and she wonders why people insist on developing the rustic greenbelt. She also pointed out that by taking over those trails and opening them up, ECIA may be opening itself up to liability exposure. She asked about the meeting with the county.

Dag advised her that the ECIA did receive a stop work with mechanized equipment from the county, but that they have no problem with hand work; in order to resume the use of the Kubota, the ECIA would need to obtain a maintenance permit which has a 2-year life.

Joyce stated that the so-called "improvement" of the trail is not; the trails were meant to be what they are. She wondered why some people who spoke at the last Board meeting in favor of the new trail and who don't live adjacent to the new work would walk over to the pilot project trail when they have plenty of trails adjacent to their own homes.

Joyce also raised the issue of the time lag between meetings and when minutes are posted. She also noted that work in the preserve does not raise questions because those trails are not adjacent to people's homes.

Charles again raised the issue of communication lags and said it is a systemic problem and not just the Conservation Committee.

The three guests then departed.

**Greenbelt Map:** Tom has been working on a new preserve map and submitted a draft which was discussed. There was discussion about multi-modal users and who yields to whom. Regarding the bike trails along roads, the county wants them to be called multi-use trails. John Cannella suggested we use the county language regarding yielding hierarchies. Additional photos are needed and it was suggested that Jack Arnold might have some. Jim Daniel will contact him. John C. suggested we consider a contest to get content. The consensus was that we are out of time because we are out of maps and ECIA has to make photocopies when people ask for maps.

**New Trail Junction Map in Preserve:** we need to add a new map at the 1G intersection that shows Trail 105. Also, Jim noted that we need to install a map at 3F trail junction to give people information on which way to go. John C observed that we need to show the end of the Lamy overlook trail so people won't keep going down into the drainage and cross the railroad tracks. Dag suggested it say "Lamy Overlook."

**Trail Workdays:** there is an area on Trail 401 that needs chainsaw work to remove dead debris. It was suggested we wait until it is less hot and less dry. It was estimated it would take 2 hours plus 30 minutes travel time each way. A workday was tentatively scheduled for July 25 or 26 depending on schedules.

We need to decide when we will finish the Trail 201 rock work. We tentatively scheduled Sept 13 or 20; Cherry will follow up with Jan-Willem and then let Dag know the agreed-upon date. [Note: Sept. 20 was the date selected.]

**Pilot Trail Project:** Cherry gave an overview of the county's June 6<sup>th</sup> stop work order precluding the use of mechanized equipment until the ECIA gets a two-year maintenance permit and meets the requirements of the fire marshal. Members of the Conservation Committee and the ECIA Board met with the county land manager and the code enforcement manager on June 17, and the Fire Marshall on June 18. The latter requires markers at 1/10 mile intervals so that emergency responders will know where to respond to. Cherry introduced a draft planning document that was put together after these meetings. John then gave his rationale for entering into a formalized planning process. By developing conceptual alternatives, we might get an idea of what people would like for their community. There was concern that by entering into a planning process, it would slow the project down; however, the committee does want to continue doing handwork to mitigate raw edges of the new trail, insert water management structures, and to seed native grasses along the edges, with the goal of developing a finished trail tread of 48". Regardless of next steps, the committee does agree that the hand work needs to continue. Dag suggested that once a segment is completely finished (graded, seeded, etc.) the committee host a community walk on that section with a description of what the trail will be. At the conclusion, comment forms can be handed out to get input from community members at-large. Dag requested a copy of the document which gives background and options for him to use to brief the board.

**Education Day:** Dr. Mike O'Farrell will give a Bat Talk on July 31 at the Railroad Room from 7-9 pm. Jim brought up last fall's educational day with the Eldorado School; generally, the committee consensus is that was not a very successful effort. However, the committee would like to have a program for community members. William Newurth has been contacted, but we have not heard back from him. An alternative would be a walk led by Jan-Willem and Mike O'Farrell when the asters are in bloom.

**Board Liaison's Report:** ECIA has advertised for a general manager with applications accepted until July 23. There are 9 applicants so far, several of whom from out of state. It is hoped that 20 applications will be received. There is a review committee of 6 community members who will review and rank applicants, and then collectively select the top candidates.

The only other major project coming up is the reconstruction of the playground at Compadres Park that will start next month. The equipment will be delivered next week, wood chips are staged, but the contractor cannot start until Aug. 1

**Other Business:** David Yard has received some latillas that might be used for trail markers along the pilot project trail. They are weathered cedar, 6-7 years old, and would fit into the landscape well. If they were stolen or vandalized, they would be easy to replace. It would be nicer than using Carsonite. The price is right, David has a saw and can cut a supply of them. Numbers would need to be carved with a Dremel router.. Twenty three posts would be needed. David also noted that there are other old materials that will be disposed from the old playground that could be repurposed if we decided we needed exclusionary structures at the access points. However, Dag said that the contractor is getting the equipment as a part of his contract. Perhaps where the route joins the rail trail, we might think about some sort of exclusionary structure.

John Parker observed that he is getting chewed on by mosquitoes when he works outside. He guesses it is from ignored rain barrels where the screening has deteriorated. This might be a good item to note in the Vistas or Neighborhood Watch. Dag said if we have an article by next Friday it can go into the August Vistas. He asked John to put together some ideas on summer insects.

David Yard talked about the gentleman who talked about coyotes at the last Board of Directors meeting and the concerns about their domestication and habituation to humans. He wonders if there should be an assessment of local coyote populations, densities and behaviors. No decision was made on the question.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm.

The next committee meeting will be: August 5, 7:00 pm

Conservation Committee Minutes, June 3, 2014 FINAL

**Attendees:** Jim Daniel, Cherry Payne, Mark Young, Mary Clark, John Parker, Mike O'Farrell, Jerry Gulseth, Tom Bredenberg, Tom Brimacombe, David Yard (Board liaison), Dag Ryen (Board president and former liaison).

**Guests:** Steve Griego, John Segell, Kerri Segell, Carol Hawkins, David Johnson, Dick Huelster, Lyn deMartin, Joyce Hamner

May minutes were reviewed and approved.

**Update on pilot project:** Seven residents attended to discuss this work. John and Kerri Segell expressed their dismay about the greenbelt project directly adjacent to their lot. They feel like there was no discussion with them, but noted they received something on a Tuesday only to have the work commence the next day. Kerri noted that the path is much wider than 48". She expressed concern that the work was to accommodate one bicyclist. David measured the path and showed photos indicating that in places, the path is 5-7'.

Tom Brimacombe noted that the trail is a work in progress and that the work is being conducted by the committee members. Tom said that what people are seeing now is the preliminary work and it is not haphazard. There will be trail-edge mitigation. In order to grade and fill gullies, fill

dirt has to be brought in. The next phase will be hand grooming, some of which has been done on the north side of the arroyo. Tom indicated that the final area will most likely be about 3' wide, and that by the end of the monsoon season, the trail edges will be softened.

John Parker recapped the background that led the committee to initiate the pilot project. He also emphasized that it is a pilot project and that he also lives in the impacted area. He has observed that the existing trails are in poor shape.

Jim noted that the committee plans to do reseeding along the edges as well.

Carol Hawkins expressed her concerns. Did the committee do an EA or EIS? The wind will blow away any seed. Last year, Boy Scouts delivered a mound of rock that still sits there, so she is concerned about follow up. She said that some paths were created by her and neighbors to avoid mountain bikers. She asked if the committee would have done this in the Preserve? She feels the committee is trying to make the new trails look like those in the Galisteo Preserve. She asserts that there currently is little conflict and the paths do not need to be as wide as they are. She also asked why there was no advance notification.

David Johnson stated he often walks the greenbelt toward the rail trail. It is his opinion that, except in a few places, the trail is in reasonable shape, and suggests the committee only perform moderate maintenance. Again, he expressed his dismay about the scraped width, and that over 1 acre is impacted. He also expressed concerns about invasive plants taking root along the trail edges before the native seeds that will be sown can begin to germinate. He noted that there are lots of hike-bike trails in the community, and that there are areas with no hike bike trails (Azul) that might be considered for work. He urged that the pilot project be terminated and that spot maintenance take place.

Lyn deMartin stated that everyone is accommodated except those who want smaller trails. She wants to know where the permission and funding came from and why residents were not asked about the project? The cactus people should have been on site to rescue disturbed cactus. She expressed disappointment in the lack of communication and consultation.

Joyce Hamner attended last month and came back again, and stated she is appalled and shocked. She is especially concerned that there was little to no advance notice. She called the committee arrogant, and added that many folks are unhappy. Joyce noted that it is lovely to have little paths in the greenbelts.

Mark gave a recap of notification efforts. An article was placed on the web site and has been there since before the project started. As a result of last month's concerns, notices were placed in the trail work area and letters were delivered to the neighbors who live adjacent to the work area.

Dag concurred that we lacked in effective communications. There was an article in Vistas, but there is a 6 week lead time for that publication, so it is difficult to convey up-to-the-minute information.

Dag noted the paths along the roads are in the county right-of-way and they build and maintain them. They will not put a path.