

**MINUTES OF THE MILLCREEK CANYON COMMITTEE MEETING HELD MONDAY, JUNE 15, 2020, AT 3:00 P.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED ELECTRONICALLY WITHOUT A PHYSICAL LOCATION, AS AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNOR'S EXECUTIVE ORDER DATED MARCH 18, 2020.**

**Present:** Chair Ed Marshall, Tom Diegel, Paul Diegel, Del Draper, John Knoblock, Helen Peters, Lance Kovel, Hillary Jacobs, Zach Lund

**Staff:** CWC Deputy Director Blake Perez, Communications Director Lindsey Nielsen

Chair Ed Marshall called the meeting to order at approximately 3:00 p.m.

**1. Review and Approval of the Minutes from the May 18, 2020, Meeting.**

**MOTION:** Tom Diegel moved to approve the minutes of May 18, 2020, as amended. Paul Diegel seconded the motion.

The minutes were reviewed and corrected. John Knoblock asked that going forward action items be bolded with the name of the person for easier follow up.

The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

**2. Updates from Helen Peters Regarding the Status of the Federal Lands Access Program ("FLAP") Grant.**

Salt Lake County Transportation Program Manager, Helen Peters reported that the County Council accepted the FLAP grant at their last meeting. \$12 million was provided through the Federal Highway Administration ("FHWA") with the purpose being to improve access to federal lands. Salt Lake County, with key partners, will be required to provide a local match of 6.77% or \$812,000. They also committed to making restroom improvements that will require \$500,000 in additional funds. As part of the application, they recommended projects that should be considered. These included improving Millcreek Road from 3800 South to the Upper Big Water Trailhead, which is about 10 miles. They were also expected to widen the roadway to the extent possible and include a five-foot uphill bike lane in the lower canyon.

Ms. Peters reported that the Council approved signing a Memorandum of Understanding and a funds transfer of \$10,000 with \$6,500 coming from the Millcreek booth collections, \$2,000 from Millcreek City, and \$1,500 coming from Friends Interested in Dogs and Open Space ("FIDOS"). They will be looking at other funding sources for help with the match. The total obligation to be fundraised is \$1.2 million. They were in the planning phase of the grant and this summer they will hold a meeting with the FHWA who will refine the projects put forth in the application. The first available funding is the fall of 2024 at which time they will begin the design work and the National Environmental Protection Act ("NEPA") phase.

In response to a question raised by Chair Marshall about the Salt Lake County Bicycle Advisory Committee, Ms. Peters stated that the group is comprised of bicycle advocates throughout the valley.

Chair Marshall had recent conversations with representatives from the Metropolitan Service District (“MSD”) and the County and they are relying on FLAP grant funds for engineering work. In the meantime, repair and maintenance work will be needed. Since it will be four or five years before any roadwork is done, he asked if Ms. Peters’ office can provide support to ensure that the needed repair and maintenance work is accomplished.

Ms. Peters authorized use of the reference sheet. In response to a question raised, Lance Kovel from the U.S. Forest Service noted that Rattlesnake Trail went through the U.S Forest Service’s NEPA process that was implemented in conjunction with County assistance. The FHWA project is a separate issue and requires they submit to the FHWA schedule. It is routine to initiate a project and not see movement for years. He commented that one of the benefits of the FLAP grant is the involvement of the FHWA. Once they agree on a scope and it moves forward, they will have all of the resources of the FHWA who will perform the NEPA analysis and complete the design and implementation work.

### **3. Updates from Committee Members who have Worked on Issues.**

*John Knoblock* recalled the Rattlesnake Trail Project being discussed two years earlier in conjunction with the rerouting of the Rattlesnake Trail. The design was completed for a segregated use trail that is at a lower angle to separate hikers from mountain bikers. A grant was written for the Office of Outdoor Recreation and a \$40,000 matching grant was awarded; however, due to COVID-19, the County decided to pull the \$40,000 match. Trails Utah was currently seeking \$40,000. There was the potential to leave the current trail as is and construct the new trail as an alternative with restrictions.

Mr. Knoblock reported that the second trail project is the Upper Millcreek Trail. The funds have been released and a trail construction contractor was awarded the contract. Work was to begin by mid-July. The trail is just over three miles long and will go from Elbow Fork to the Big Water Trailhead. The alignment will be on the south side of the road between the road and the wilderness boundary. It was noted that the goal is to reduce on-street parking and convert it into formalized parking areas in the canyon. Mr. Knoblock commented that the road is owned by the County who will be responsible for signage. The 2003 Forest Plan did not include the addition of parking. Areas where there is perceived additional parking on the road will be balanced by no parking along the road adjacent to the trailhead. It was noted that the Environmental Impact Statement (“EIS”) has been released and addresses several parking options.

*Del Draper* had nothing to report.

*Chair Ed Marshall* reported that the General Plan was approved by the County Council the previous Tuesday. It focuses on protecting the environment and is balanced with recreational and economic uses. The next step will be to revisit the Foothills and Canyons Overlay Zone (“FCOZ”).

Chair Marshall checked the County's easement with the U.S. Forest Service and found that the easement is 33 feet on either side of the centerline with a width of 66 feet. With 11-foot lanes, there is sufficient room on each side to expand.

Chair Marshall reported that Bart Barker provided a summary of MBS and County expenses in Millcreek Canyon for the period of 2016 to 2018. A call took place with Mr. Barker and several others and it was made clear that the MSD is only responsible for engineering and public works issues. Any monthly variation would be for additional road repairs. He wanted to determine if they had a sense of how severely the MSD and Salt Lake County roads will be impacted. He emphasized that FLAP grant funds will not be available immediately so it will be necessary to maintain and repair Millcreek Road until then. He pointed out that it is deteriorated. He received a verbal commitment from Mr. Barker that they put forth their best effort to give the canyon roads a high enough priority to adequately repair and maintain them and not allow them to be easily subordinated to other budget demands. Chair Marshall pointed out that potholes are a major concern for motorists and cyclists.

The committee addressed pedestrian and bicycle safety in Millcreek Canyon. Chair Marshall specifically raised the issue of public safety at the AB curve and specifically cars crossing the lanes and pedestrians crossing too close to the uphill blind curve at Church Fork. Leon Barrett and Crystal Hubbard from Salt Lake County met with Chair Marshall and visited the AB curve, Church Fork, and Log Haven.

Chair Marshall described the issues associated with each as well as potential solutions. He explained that the problem with the AB curve is that vehicles commonly come 18 inches or more into the opposite lane. He considered it partly due to grading and partly an issue of seeming to be enough room on the left-hand side when traveling downhill. Chair Marshall was focused on paint on the road and signs but they were not supportive of that idea. Mr. Barrett and Ms. Hubbard were, however, in favor of moving the middle stripe to make the downhill lane wider and moving the uphill lane to the right.

At Church Fork, the problem was that some people are crossing too close to the uphill blind curve but are not low enough down the hill to see the uphill traffic coming. Chair Marshall asked for paint and signage, which was not well received by Mr. Barrett and Ms. Hubbard. They suggested that instead of controlling pedestrians they slow down the uphill traffic.

Chair Marshall addressed Log Haven and asked Mr. Barrett and Ms. Hubbard what they thought could be done to slow down the few bicycles that travel too fast around the curve. They were unsure but did not want to put more paint on the road. Another option identified was flashing yellow lights. The rationale behind not wanting more paint on the road at Log Haven was due to the road already being painted. Too much will reduce the paint that has been controlling the cars very effectively. The potential of a crosswalk was discussed.

*Paul Diegel* commented that one of the suggestions that came out of an experimental post made on Facebook to the mountain biking community was the possibility of installing a flashing yellow light at Log Haven and/or the Millcreek Inn. It was noted that UDOT made a similar proposal at Cardiff Fork in Big Cottonwood Canyon. The U.S. Forest Service has worked extensively over

the past year and decided on an overhead light system that would be activated by the user. In general, they are opposed to lights that are on or flashing all the time but would be open to discussing solutions involving a user-activated light. Chair Marshall suggested that any light at Log Haven be on a timer.

Chair Marshall reported that Log Haven is working with the Unified Police Department (“UPD”) to stop guests from parking beyond the white line. They have notified staff, posted signs, and authorized the UPD to ticket those in violation.

#### **4. Update from Lindsey Nielsen Regarding Chipper Days Project.**

Communications Director, Lindsey Nielsen reported that the Millcreek Chipper Days Project will be held in conjunction with Salt Lake County, the Division of Forestry Fire and State Lands, and the U.S. Forest Service. Chipping will be done along the road in Millcreek Canyon and other areas. Work was slated to be done July 13-16. Chipping will also take place along Millcreek Canyon Road. Currently, the areas to be chipped have not been solidified but they were looking at the area above the winter gate. Chipping will also be done near and around Log Haven. Although an agreement had not yet been finalized with the State Department of Forestry, it was in process.

Chair Marshall reported that Log Haven was closed for nearly two months and was not currently in a position to contribute to the project. Chair Marshall offered to personally contribute \$500 to the CWC and the Division of Natural Resources (“DNR”) for chipping at Log Haven. He was willing to contribute a match of up to an additional \$500 to help with the reduction of fuels in Millcreek Canyon. He asked that those who might be interested contact him within the next week.

John Knoblock stated that the week of July 6 the Mount Olympus Community Council will be doing Chipper Days for the roads and homes against the U.S. Forest Service boundary within Millcreek City limits. The hope was that over time the work will help reduce fuels. A fuel reduction program was also to be conducted in Lambs Canyon this summer and a more significant one in Millcreek next year.

#### **5. Decision on Whether to Comment on the U.S. Forest Service’s Projected Uses of Increased Toll Funds.**

Chair Marshall reported that John Knoblock was able to obtain a copy of the Communication Plan that the U.S. Forest Service prepared internally to discuss the use of the toll funds. In looking more closely at it, it was determined that Beckee Hotze’s priority was to increase enforcement and Interpretive Officers at a cost of \$140,000. With the toll booths being closed, it was assumed that the \$300,000 budgeted was likely to be \$200,000 or \$225,000. A wish list was published with the projected \$300,000 being insufficient to provide for everything listed. Some of the committee members were disappointed that other projects were not getting priority.

Lance Kovel commented that with the COVID-19 situation, nothing has been finalized in terms of funding. He pointed out, however, that visitation in the canyons has increased significantly. In terms of prioritization, his impression was that the FLAP project will address many of the safety

issues. One of the goals for the Forest Protection Officer and a Project Manager was to augment staff that the U.S. Forest Service has to dedicate to Millcreek. The considered the fee generation to be an opportunity to hire people who are paid out of that fund and dedicated to Millcreek Canyon.

Chair Marshall identified his priorities as signage and fuels reduction. Concerning the funding of fuel reduction, Mr. Kovel stated that the money generated from the toll booth needs to go back into Millcreek Canyon. He was not sure it could be spent on fuel reduction. Potential options were identified. A comment was made that Ranger Hotzee indicated previously that there was a separate funding source to provide for fuel reduction. Mr. Kovel stated that in general, funding for fuel treatments is easier to come by than project funding. There are opportunities to do Millcreek specific projects that involve fuel reduction or wildfire mitigation. They will need to balance out the funds to ensure that they are going to the best possible use.

## **6. Discussion of Biking and Safety Issues Based on Paul Diegel's June 1 Summary.**

Chair Marshall commented that pedestrians, bikers, and dog walkers all have to work together to stay safe. He referred to the summary and commented on the suggestion that pedestrians stay to the left and off of the road. He asked if it was acceptable for pedestrians to use the bike path that has been installed. Paul Diegel explained that the project began as a way to deal with bicycle speeds and issues near Log Haven. A separate issue exists above the gate primarily when it is closed, which presents the greatest danger to cyclists. Pedestrians tend to spread out and are not alert. It was noted that a sign would be helpful near the toll booth to direct users to stay on either side of the road. Users should be informed that rules still apply even if the gate is closed.

Because dogs are allowed to be off-leash, Chair Marshall thought it was appropriate for them to be allowed to be off-leash on odd days and on leash on even days. It was suggested that FIDOS be asked to help communicate the message. The law specifies that leashes can be a maximum of six feet in length. It was suggested that the committee develop a set of guidelines for Millcreek Canyon with signs posted at the bottom and top.

Paul Diegel considered establishing a set of behaviors to be the simplest and most effective first step. **It was suggested that Mr. Diegel, Hillary Jacobs, and Polly Hart draft a set of guidelines based on Mr. Diegel's suggestions that are similar to those posted at the entrance to City Creek Canyon.** The hope was to come up with a cooperative arrangement for all users with the consent of the County and the U.S. Forest Service.

It was recommended that vegetation be trimmed, especially above the winter gate to help with the visibility around the blind curves. Mr. Kovel stated that that would be part of the Chipper Days and one of the reasons they selected areas above the winter gate.

## **7. Other Business Relating Directly to Millcreek Canyon.**

It was suggested that a single-track trail be constructed from Big Water to Elbow Fork that will take a significant number of bikers off of the road. It would be a shared-use trail so education will be needed.

Del Draper recommended they get feedback from canyon residents. Zach Lund, President of the Porter Fork HOA, was present and reported that the primary issues involve dogs being off-leash and cyclists going fast around corners. Occasionally, campfires are started that are not contained in pits.

Concerning Rattlesnake Trail, it was reported that the U.S. Forest Service decision was signed in June of 2019.

**8. Adjournment.**

**MOTION:** Paul Diegel moved to adjourn. Tom Diegel seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

The Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting adjourned at approximately 5:00 p.m.

*I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate and complete record of the Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting held Monday, June 15, 2020.*

*Teri Forbes*

Teri Forbes  
T Forbes Group  
Minutes Secretary

Minutes Approved: \_\_\_\_\_