



Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District Joint Advisory Committees Meeting Minutes

Topic: Lowami Hart Woods Park Bond Trail Project
Date: April 11, 2011
Time: 6:30-8:45 PM
Location: Elsie Stuhr Center, Willow Room

In Attendance

Hal Bergsma – <i>THPRD</i>	Tom Hjort – <i>TAC</i>	Mitch Cruzan – <i>NRAC</i>
Steven Gulgren – <i>THPRD</i>	John Gruher – <i>TAC</i>	Cory Samia – <i>NRAC</i>
Matt Kilmartin – <i>THPRD</i>	Joe Barcott – <i>TAC</i>	Priscilla Christenon – <i>Friends of Beaverton's Johnson Creek</i>
Bob Wayt – <i>THPRD</i>	Mary O'Donnell – <i>TAC</i>	Mark Hereim – <i>Friends of Beaverton's Johnson Creek</i>
Kristin Atman – <i>THPRD</i>	Susan Hanson – <i>TAC</i>	Dave Brown – <i>Visitor</i>
Steve Regner – <i>THPRD</i>	Rod Coles – <i>NRAC Chair</i>	
Wendy Kroger – <i>TAC Chair</i>	Eric Lindstrom – <i>NRAC</i>	
Jim Parsons – <i>TAC</i>	Matthew Shepherd – <i>NRAC</i>	

- I. Call To Order
- II. Introduction of Attendees
- III. Allowance for Audience Participation

Rod Coles stated that due to time constraints and amount of information to be discussed tonight, the goal should be to stick to the agenda. Rod requested that comments and questions from the audience should be held until staff presentations have been completed. Wendy Kroger stated that public comments should be held to five minutes.

- IV. Guest Speakers: Project Introduction & Meeting Objectives

Hal Bergsma opened, stating that the goal of this meeting was to gain perspective provided by the Advisory Committees, and to encourage discussion and dialog between the two committees. Hal noted that Lowami Hart Woods has gone through a long planning process, and specific issues have been identified, which will be discussed tonight.

Matt Kilmartin gave an overview of the original Master Plan adopted in 2001, including the five master plan goals that staff has been using to guide the project: Protection and enhancement of natural vegetation, future connection to the South Johnson Creek Trail, safe and accessible passive recreational opportunities, environmental education opportunities, and an overall increase in awareness and appreciation of the surrounding natural resource. The project has an \$830,000 project budget. Current estimates show an approximate construction budget of \$430,000.

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Matt gave an overview of the two significant changes to the project since staff last presented this project to the Advisory Committees. First, based on CWS requirements, an Alternatives Analysis for the trail alignment has been conducted. Second, Friends of Beaverton's Johnson Creek (FBJC) representatives have raised issues with the 2001 Master Plan. Staff has worked with FBJC to create a list of key planning issues to be resolved.

Matt reviewed the new trail alignment being proposed. He noted that benefits of this proposed alternative alignment include reducing the number of creek crossings from three to two, significantly reducing the tree impacts along the main trail corridor, avoiding impacts to the wetlands on-site, and avoiding the inner 60% of the vegetated corridor buffer, which also helps for CWS permitting of the trail development. He also noted that the existing loop trail would likely remain a soft surface trail.

Matt reviewed the key planning issues that have been identified by FBJC:

- Site Programming – The 2001 Master Plan identified the goal for environmental education opportunities and the 2001 Board of Directors discussed the need to provide for these opportunities through development of the site amenities and implementation of educational programming, but the specifics as to the types and level of educational programming on-site were never established. Kristin Atman, Interpretive Programs Supervisor, explained that Cooper Mountain and the Tualatin Hills Nature Park are the only areas currently programmed for educational opportunities within the Park District. She explained that those sites are not accessible for all people, so the District looks to other locations for educational opportunities where possible, by using the Nature Mobile for example, and holding summer camps at other parks around the District. She explained that Lowami Hart Woods would provide another great site for education within the District. The District offers a variety of events for a variety of ages and group sizes, including Tyke Treks, day-off camps, and Naturalist guided tours. The District uses 15-passenger vans for these trips, so providing for van parking is important for site programming.
- On-site parking – The 2001 Master Plan included on-site parking, with the number of parking stalls ranging from 8 to 18, depending on need. While staff currently anticipates the need for 18 stalls and has worked with the design consultant to provide a preliminary parking design that accommodates this need, they have continued to focus on minimizing the footprint of the parking lot to avoid impacts to natural resources. As identified in the 2001 Master Plan, bus parking is currently provided for in the preliminary parking design.
- Parking paving – 2001 master plan calls for eco-pavers. Geotechnical Engineering studies will need to be conducted to determine if a permeable surface would perform with the current soil conditions.
- Main trail surface – Will the surface be asphalt, gravel, porous pavement? Hal Bergsma noted that the 2001 Board was very clear that the main trail should be ADA accessible, so that should be taken into account when recommending a trail surface.
- Main trail width – Currently categorized as a Community Trail, the proposed width is 8'-wide with 1' gravel shoulders on each side, for a total 10'-wide trail corridor. This is the narrowest width allowed for a community trail as identified in the District's Trails Plan.
- Vehicle Rating – What type of vehicle access (e.g. maintenance, security, etc) is needed and how far into the park interior should it be accommodated for?
- Use Limits – Currently a shared use trail (e.g. pedestrians, bicycles, wheelchairs, stroller, etc.), should any of these uses be limited on the trails within the park?
- Classification – FBJC representatives have suggested that the current "Community Trail" classification for the main trail leading through Lowami Hart Woods be reconsidered and that the trail classification should be downgraded, possibly to a "Neighborhood Trail".



- Loop trail – The 2001 Master Plan identifies the soft surface loop trail to be surfaced with wood chips. However, the District now uses gravel surfacing for soft surface trails to avoid long-term maintenance issues, particularly in cases where the trail is steeper than 5% grade and/or where wet soil conditions exist. Staff is recommending gravel for the soft surface trail where these conditions exist, but is requesting AC input.

Wendy suggested that, for sake of time, presentation of the remaining additional planning issues be forgone and possibly including in the discussion period to follow; Matt agreed.

Comments, Questions, Discussion

Wendy offered the suggestion that the representatives of FBJC provide comments first, and for time considerations, limit their comments to five minutes per person. Wendy also suggested that members of the AC's limit their comments to their respective Committee's scope of expertise.

Mark Hereim (FBJC) – Mark inquired why Lowami Hart Woods has been selected by THPRD to become a site for education, noting that several other parks in the area, like Hyland Forest Park, would be just as good for those events.

Kristin responded that access was important, and sites were chosen to introduce new natural resources to event attendees. Proximity to areas that would promote high attendance, such as nearby schools, also played a part. Finally, consideration is given to whether or not a site has the capacity to handle such events.

Mark noted Summercrest Park and the Powerline Trail were also reasonable alternatives. Mark felt this plan does not have any alternatives presented with it, such as trail width, paving surfaces, and parking lot size. He noted that these all have cost consequences that aren't shown with the new proposal. Mark stated that 10-years ago the West Beaverton NAC was in support of a low-cost, low-impact development, and still feel the same way; and, that the neighbors share that feeling. He stated that he felt that Lowami Hart Woods is a remarkable gem, and that special care should be taken with this park, and that THPRD is in the position to take the lead in this endeavor.

Priscilla Christenson (FBJC) – Priscilla stated that Lowami Hart Woods is a very unique natural area; a gem surrounded by development. She reiterated Mark's comments, stating that the FBJC has always been in favor of trail improvements, but that a 10'-wide corridor would be too impactful on the natural resource. She noted that there are other ADA trail surfaces besides asphalt that should be considered. She feels that the area does not fall within the THPRD Trails Master Plan definition of a Community Trail and that a Neighborhood Trail would be more appropriate. She was also concerned with programming, noting that the site is 1/10th the size of Cooper Mountain or the Nature Park, and to insert high impact programming would be inappropriate for the size of Lowami Hart Woods. She also stated that the 2001 Board did not approve 18 parking spaces, but that is how the District is choosing to interpret it. She concluded by providing a letter from Sue Price, the West Beaverton NAC Chair, stating that the NAC supports a lower impact trail improvement project. The letter, dated March 10, 2011, had been provided to the Board of Director's.

Tom Hjort (TAC) - Tom brought up the issue that this project would not only build one new trail, but close the existing illegal trails. He was in favor of closing these trails because mountain bikers are causing erosion throughout the park. Tom noted that Cooper Mountain has a really nice gravel trail, and the same could be done for the soft surface trail at Lowami Hart Woods. He was in favor of the trail



being vehicle-rated if it could be afforded, because it would mean park users would have a more durable and well-maintained trail.

Eric Lindstrom (NRAC) – Eric agreed that Lowami Hart Woods is unique in this area, and stated that the size, scale, and potential of the site should dictate the level of development within the park. He stated that he didn't think it was quite a gem because it is a rough piece of land, but that it could use some love. He did not think the site is appropriate for large scale development. He does not support large vehicle access, but bikes would be a good idea. He does not like hard surface trails, but likes the proposed alignment location. He felt that programming should be focused on research and restoration. He worried that if Lowami Hart Woods is opened up to a large level of programming, then the quality of the resources would be degraded.

Susan Hanson (TAC) – Susan stated she's concerned about programming, and that, based on her experience, one or two school classes brought to the site would be very overwhelming.

Kristin responded that school group sizes would typically be broken into groups of 8 or 10 at a time for a better educational experience and to limit impacts to the resource.

Matthew Shepard (NRAC) – Matthew stated his concern about trail classification and the number of people it would bring into the site. He agreed that other sites nearby could also offer programming, but Lowami Hart Woods is such a unique site that it would be a good candidate for educational activities. He noted that the Nature Park should not be the only site in the area to be used this way, and that Lowami Hart Woods should play a role in environmental education within the District. He does not see the benefit of being able to drive a pickup truck on the trails, and that ATV's could be used instead. He's in support of pervious surfaces where possible.

Joe Barcott (TAC) – John was generally in favor of a middle ground on most of the issues being discussed. Had a few questions: What is set in stone by the District for Lowami Hart Woods?

Hal responded that, with the expanded public process now underway, nothing was really set in stone. He noted that the current Board of Directors can reverse any decisions made by the 2001 Board. But he also noted that a lot of work and stakeholder participation had gone into the planning process to date, and that this prior work should be considered as we move forward.

John wondered how heavily the park is used? He stated that he'd recently visited the site and saw no other park users.

Matt responded that no trail user counts have been conducted for Lowami Hart Woods to date.

John asked what the access issue was for people who couldn't get to Cooper Mountain?

Kristin responded that there was poor public transportation to Cooper Mountain and also that it's not easily accessible by bike.

John stated that there should be bike access through Lowami Hart Woods, if only through the main trail.

Cory Samia (NRAC) – Cory noted that a major north-south trail alignment through the District is located just to the west at the powerline corridor (Westside Regional Trail). She does not see the sense in making another connecting trail through Lowami Hart Woods. She's not sure



paving the trails is going to prevent illegal trails being used on-site. She noted that there are no education boundaries north of Highway 26, and that there are other areas that are underserved in environmental education. She would like to see that educational programming at Lowami Hart Woods focus on High School level research and restoration activities.

Mary O'Donnell (TAC) – Mary noted that there are lots of people who would benefit from the hard surface trail, including those who have trouble walking or are in wheelchairs, and especially residents from the nearby retirement home.

Mitch Cruzan (NRAC) – Mitch supports the idea of using Lowami Hart Woods for educational opportunities. He noted that there are lots of features in the park that don't exist in other THPRD parks. He believes there needs to be adequate access for park users, and noted that if the parking is insufficient it will discourage schools from using the site. He thinks that providing room for bus loading/unloading but not parking would be sufficient. He believes that the value of urban parks like Lowami Hart Woods is in the experiences it provides for neighbors, and that improving neighborhood access would improve the value of the park. He agrees that the main trail should be a hard surface, noting that he has students in wheelchairs who would need the hard surface trail to access any of the site.

Jim Parsons (TAC) – Jim stated he's not sure if a 10' corridor is necessary to provide sufficient access, and that it could be narrower. He feels that the bus drop-off is a good compromise. He feels that safe bike parking should be included in the parking area. He agrees that the main trail should be a hard surface. He appreciates the current proposed trail alignment's benefits of avoiding wetland impacts and site erosion. He also thinks that the trail should be wide enough to allow for smaller electric vehicle access for security purposes.

John Gruher (TAC) – John recently visited the site and was surprised there was not more vandalism or litter on site. He'd visited the nearby Brookhaven trail and noted that it didn't seem to have a significant impact on the natural resource, and that he'd observed it was being enjoyed by the neighbors. He noted that other 8'-wide trails in the District don't seem to impact the natural resource.

Rod Coles (NRAC Chair) – Rod visited the site recently and did observe people using the site. He lives near the Nature Park and has seen it evolve and develop over the last 20-years. He noted that the Nature Park used to have the same issues that Lowami Hart Woods currently has (e.g. illegal trails, campfires, paintballing, etc). He believes that the development of the Nature Park has dramatically reduced the illegal activities there, and he believes that the educational component there also played a large part in creating a positive change in illegal use. He believes that by allowing children the opportunity to experience the natural environment helps to educate them about why social trails, littering, etc. are not good ways to treat the environment. He noted that he has great faith in THPRD staff to provide outstanding, responsible educational programs. He believes that a hard packed gravel surface is the best year round surface for trails, and is not sure that an asphalt trail is necessary in a park like Lowami Hart Woods.

Wendy Kroger (TAC Chair) – Wendy noted that it is important to look at the trail system district-wide. She explained that the TAC has focused on Regional Trails to be the main spines of the overall trail system, and noted that Regional Trails provide good conduits for moving people and allowing for off-street commuting. She noted that the Trails Master Plan plans for Community and Neighborhood Trails to branch out and provide a comprehensive system of access and connectivity throughout the greater communities and neighborhoods. She agrees



that Lowami Hart Woods is a beautiful park, and that it needs to be accessible through the greater trail system. She noted that, as future trail segments are completed, Lowami Hart Woods will play a vital role in the overall trail system. She noted that if the trail is narrowed to less than 8', then conflicts will arise between trail users. She feels that the Community Trail classification is appropriate for Lowami Hart Woods. She also noted that if multi-modal use via a hard surface trail is encouraged, the number of parking stalls on-site could likely be reduced. She noted that this park belongs to the public, and it should be accessible to everyone in the District. She feels that the more people who experience and appreciate the park, the better it will be taken care of.

Committees Motions/Comments of Record

Mark Hereim (FBJC) stated he appreciated that so many members of the AC's visited the site and understood its unique qualities. He echoed his earlier statement that he would like to see special attention paid to this site. He stated that although trail connectivity to the north and south of Lowami Hart Woods may be a good idea on paper, it would be very difficult to actually implement. He noted that to the north at Brookhaven Park the natural area narrows significantly, and it would be extremely difficult to develop a trail connection through that area without causing heavy impact to wetlands. He also noted that to the south a future trail connection beneath Hart Road would adversely impact South Johnson Creek due to the narrow underpass. Additionally, he noted that asphalt is not great for stream health. He stated that impervious surfaces such as asphalt cause spikes in stream levels during storm events, increasing the likelihood of erosion; and, that any chemicals or toxins that settle on the impervious path surface would be washed directly into the stream during a storm event. He is in favor of providing ADA access through Lowami Hart Woods, but doesn't think the entire site needs that level of access - there should be a balance. He noted that the Westside Regional Trail is just about one-quarter of a mile to the west, and that it should be the wide, people-moving trail in the area; the ancillary trails should be much narrower.

Priscilla Christenson (FBJC) stated that the local NAC has always been in favor of access and parking, but at a much smaller scale than proposed by the District. She noted that the Trails Master Plan and Bond Oversight Committee both direct that the District focus on completing trail connections, not creating isolated segments. She's concerned that while the trail segment through Lowami Hart Woods could be completed now, the future segments to the north and south will be very difficult to build and would likely not be completed for many years until a new bond measure is passed.

Dave Brown (Visitor) asked if the width of the trail segment through Brookhaven to the north is the same width as the proposed Lowami Hart Woods main trail? It was confirmed to be an 8'-wide trail with 1'-wide gravel shoulders, the same as proposed for Lowami Hart Woods.

The Advisory Committees split up to formulate their own Committee Motions. The committees rejoined after approximately 15 minutes of discussion.

NRAC Motion of Record – Approved by Consensus

- *“The Committee supports educational programming that enhances and sustains the environmental protection of the park.”*

TAC Motions of Record – Approved by Consensus

- *The TAC is in support of adopting staff's currently proposed alternative trail alignment.*



- *The TAC is in support of maintaining the main trail's classification of a Community Trail, as classified in the 1998 and 2006 Trails Master Plans.*
- *The TAC is in support of the loop trail remaining a soft surface trail, with surfacing material appropriate for it's use as determined by Staff.*
- *The TAC is in support of removing all informal trails in the park.*
- *The TAC is in support of allowing for buses to pull out of traffic alongside the park to discharge passengers, but not to provide bus parking on-site.*

Wrap-up / Next Steps

Rod asked if staff wants any more input from the AC's.

Hal responded that AC members are welcome to attend the upcoming neighborhood meeting on May 11th at the Seventh Day Adventist Church. The District will also expand the radius of the mailing notice to invite more neighbors. AC members are also encouraged to attend the June 6th Board meeting as well as a possible subsequent June 20th Board meeting, to provide their input to the Board of Directors. Following that, there will be a City of Beaverton Planning Commission Public Hearing during the City's land development review period, which will provide another opportunity for public input.

Wendy concluded that everyone agrees that Lowami Hart Woods is a gem, and everyone wants to make the park better. Wendy thanked everyone for attending, and Rod Coles stated that he would welcome the opportunity to walk the park with any AC or FBJC member for a more in-depth conversation about the park.

END OF NOTES