

San Miguel County Open Space Commission (OSC) Meeting Minutes FINAL

Date: Monday, September 26, 2022

Time: 4:00 PM MST (via Zoom)

Attendance:

OSC Members Present: Susie St. Onge, Sefra Maples, Roger Wickham, Angela Dye

OSC Members Absent: Laura Kudo, Yvette Henson, Jason Merritt

SMC Staff Present: Janet Kask, Deanna Drew

Guest: John Wontrobski, member, County Historical Commission

Call to Order: 4:00 p.m. by Chairperson St. Onge. A quorum was established.

Approval of 8/22/2022 OSC Meeting Minutes: Roger Wickham announced he is still reviewing the 8/22/22 minutes and will abstain from the vote. Therefore, due to lack of a quorum, the 8/22/22 meeting minutes will be approved at the next possible OSC meeting.

Agenda Items:

CDOT Chain-Up Locations: BOCC is working with CDOT, as they have money in their budget for lights to be installed at two chain-up stations on 145 southbound. The potential locations are Deep Creek, Lawson Hill and West Meadows across from the Ski Ranches entrance. OSC members are concerned about the impact of lights on the residents along with the impact on the San Juan Skyway Scenic Byway. Lighting will consist of four stanchions similar to the ones at Lizard Head Pass/Rico, and are controlled remotely when chain laws are in effect. This topic will be further discussed at the 10/12/22 BOCC work session at 9:30 a.m. OSC members discussed that the proposed Ski Ranches location is in the view shed of Sunshine, Mt. Wilson and Wilson Peak range and Wilson Mesa, and the Lawson Hill location may be more appropriate, because there is existing infrastructure, little ambient light, and maybe one chain-up station is enough. Other concerns were the County's Dark Sky Initiative and impact on nearby home owners. Lawson Hill may be a challenge with proposed development and the active RCT trail. **Chair believes a comment letter should be submitted by OSC noting concern with scenic corridors and dark skies, requesting a lower profile with the least lumens possible. Dye will draft/prepare a statement.**

UPDATE - BOCC 10/12/22 Work Session discussion with CDOT - According to CDOT, their lumens are Dark Sky compliant. CDOT researched motion-activated lighting options, but the technology doesn't exist. CDOT also checked switch options, but truckers need to see the lighted chain-up stations to know where to pull off. CDOT is aware of the SJSSB, but safety/emergency issues overrule. CDOT also said they have many chain-up locations along the SJSSB and their lights are on only during snow events and automatically come on at dusk. The BOCC will continue this discussion with CDOT at their Wed., 11/9, Work Session at 9:30 a.m. CDOT needs to make a decision by December.

San Juan Skyway Scenic Byway Committee: OSC and HC members took photos and notes of the poor conditions of interpretive panels along the SMC portion of Skyway, with a goal to earmark funds in next year's budget to replace damaged panels and/or install additional ones. Ophir, Lizard Head, and Keystone panels have been installed through various arrangements and partnerships between County, USFS, and CDOT. Kask contacted the USFS to inquire if they are addressing interpretive signs in 2023 (no update from them yet). Cost estimate per sf. for new interpretive panels is \$50-\$80/square foot, and OSC would like to replace/install 4-5 panels. OSC is proposing a \$5K-\$10K budget item for replacement and new interpretive signage. The San Juan Skyway Scenic Byway Committee is currently defunct, however Visit

Durango has submitted a grant to the Colorado Tourism Office for revamping the Committee and updating the SJS Corridor Management Plan. Six counties are involved in the SJSSBC. **Kask will revise the OSC's 2023 budget request to include funds for the interpretive sign project.**

E-Bikes - County Trails Consideration: In 2020, the OSC recommended, and the BOCC agreed, that 2 County trails be permitted for Class 1 (only) E-bikes for a pilot program: the Whiskey Charlie 62 and the M59 River Trail. E-bike use is rising in popularity, more incidents are occurring, and staff believe the issue of E-bikes on County trails should be revisited. Most conflicts are from aggressive riders vandalizing signage and upsetting hikers. Chair feels it's time to open more County trails to Class 1 E-bikes on a trial basis, and suggested Aldasoro, Penelope's, Remine Creek Trail (might have to consult with SMVC), Galloping Goose, and Idarado Trails be considered for E-bike use. Galloping Goose to M59 is good for commuters, but GG is partially USFS and E-bikes are currently not allowed on USFS trails except for the ski area. OSC wants to figure out how to make multi-use trails work for the community, including how to educate users and who yields to whom, but agrees it may be hard to take away E-bike use on trails after they are designated open to E-bikes, even as a pilot program. OSC feels Class 1, pedal-assist only is a good place to start, and the best trails for E-bike pilot projects are of minimal grade and wide enough to accommodate other users on the trail at the same time. Enforcement is an issue and challenge trying to differentiate between Class 1, 2 and 3 E-bikes. Class 2 and 3 typically have throttles and allow travel at higher speeds. Some teeth and energy should also be put into user education, noting why trails are, or aren't, recommended for E-bike use. E-bikes and where to rent them, etc. must also be considered when updating the regional trail map. One option is to consider a Class 1 E-bike the same as a regular mountain bike. It was suggested a meeting be scheduled to discuss this topic with all trail stakeholders. **Kask mentioned she requested Starr Jamison add this topic to the next meeting she schedules with the Regional Recreation Collaborative group, which consists of all pertinent local stakeholders. Staff will reach out to SMBA, TMC, USFS and see what E-bike conversations are happening on their end.**

Old Business/Other:

Down Valley Connector Trail Feasibility Study: The DVCT, a new 3 mile potential trail from the County's Down Valley Park to the M59 River Trail just beyond the Sawpit community, was divided into 5 segments with residents living within segments 1, 2 and 4. Kask and St. Onge hand-delivered 150 informational letters to homes in these areas on both sides of Highway 145. The detailed letters included a map and zoom link for public meetings on October 3, 4, and 5 based on each segment. Staff has set up a separate web page on the County website for project updates, comments and contact information. The DVCT Feasibility Study process is underway and a firm has been hired to handle public outreach, manage public input, listen to the community, vet ideas, make recommendations and mediate meetings. The Project Study Committee consists of CDOT, BLM, the Town of Sawpit, the OSC, SMART, the TMtC and SMBA and all are invited to attend the public meetings. The entire trail is proposed on the south side of Highway 145 utilizing CDOT ROW and publicly-owned land with BLM. **Staff will provide details of the public meetings to the OSC members (DONE).**

OA Greager Site Signage: OSC agreed it's a good idea to install signs indicating the OAG property boundaries and the County's existing no-firearm ordinance as per Resolution 1997-35. Signage should indicate the property was acquired for GuSG habitat protection and environmental education purposes.

Perimeter Trail Site Visit: A site walk of the proposed Perimeter Trail alignment took place on 9/13 with project partners. Idarado representative was present to express concerns about the trail's proximity to cliffs, liability, shortcuts, etc. Staff documented at least ten areas where avalanche chutes will cross the trail and present danger in winter. Foley is mostly finished with the trail survey. Approximately 200 feet of trail is on USFS land which triggers NEPA and strict trail design standards, so the group is considering options to avoid USFS property altogether. **Staff will keep everyone updated on this concept and the overall progression of the trail alignment.** It was asked why not connect the Idarado trail with the Bridal Veil Trail and what is the reasoning for this new trail? Been on community wish list for a long time, to emulate the Ouray, high-elevation Perimeter Trail around the box canyon. This would be a hiking trail versus the Idarado walking trail. Also a connector from TMV, to Boomerang Traverse, to Telluride Trail to Town Park, Bear Creek, and to BVT is being considered to broaden the hiking experience and disperse hikers. **Kask contacted Idarado for a status update. No word yet.**

TOT OSC Crossover Report: Some discussion about signage and trailhead on the east edge of Valley Floor, with a temporary bridge for use in summer and for cross-country skiing. Bear Creek preserve kiosk and signage is underway and most work has been done. USFS/EPA tailings removal is complete. During the EPA's work, a beaver pond was drained and a beaver dam(s) was removed. The Town of Telluride will follow-up with the EPA. The Cornet Creek trail has been closed due to a mudslide. Build-up of stagnant water along the west edge spur along VF is due to beaver activity, is not a health issue or impacting utilities, but the town is monitoring due to potential impacts to bike paths or public works.

Next meeting Monday, October 24, 2022 @ 4:00 pm: May invite Starr Jamison, Director of Natural Resources and Special Projects to present GuSG and oil & gas updates. POS staff was told to remove GuSG from the OSC's Work Plan. Staff will distribute the OSC's 2022 Work Plan for review, as the new 2023 Work Plan needs to be prepared.

Meeting adjourned @ 5:55 by Chairperson St. Onge