



# Oakland County Trails Advisory Council

Oakland County Parks and Recreation Administration Office  
2800 Watkins Lake Road, Waterford, Michigan 48328

## Minutes

January 27, 2010

The meeting was called to order by Kristen Myers, Chair, at 9:03 a.m. in the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission Room.

### **PRESENT:**

Kristen Bennett, MDNRE  
David Burley, West Bloomfield Trail  
Troy Farwell, Polly Ann Trail  
Jenny Frederick, Highland Township  
Jacy Garrison, O.C. Water Resources Commissioner's Office  
Lois Golden, Paint Creek Trail Commission Friend  
Derenda Howard, OCPRC  
Sue Julian, Headwaters Trails, Inc.  
Dot LaLone, Headwaters Trails, Inc.  
Stephanie Marchbanks, OCPRC  
Mindy Milos-Dale, Oakland Township  
Andrew Mutch, City of Novi  
Kristen Myers, Paint Creek Trail  
Jon Noyes, OCPRC  
Vince Ranger, MDOT  
Merle Richmond, Oakland Equestrian Conservancy  
Marc Spencer, City of Novi  
Laurie Stasiak, OCPRC  
Kristen Wiltfang, OC Planning and Ec. Dev. Services

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Approval of minutes from November 18, 2009 was moved by Dot LaLone and supported by Dave Burley. The motion passed on voice vote.

### **ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA**

No additions were added.

### **APPROVAL OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR POSITIONS**

The positions of Chair and Vice Chair were available for 2010 and offered to the table. It was a unanimous vote to renew the position of Chair to Kristen Myers and Vice Chair to Dot LaLone. Approval of the 2010 positions was moved by Dave Burley and supported by Kristen Bennett. The motion passed on voice vote.

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### **TRAIL NETWORK UPDATES**

#### **Paint Creek Trail**

Kristen Myers reported that they are in the process of finalizing their Commercial Use Policy. On National Trails Day (June 5<sup>th</sup>) the PCTC will be working with Six Rivers Regional Land Conservancy, as well as 2-4 communities along the trail, on an open garlic mustard pull for two hours. It will be held on the same day as the native plant sale for the Conservancy. The PCTC is also looking into targeting youth groups for help with such trail stewardship events.

#### **Polly Ann Trail**

Troy Farwell shared information about the work the Polly Ann Trail members have been involved with over the last year. Their group utilized the services of Oakland County Community Corrections Division's WWAM (Weekend and Weekday Alternative for Misdemeanants) crew, along with volunteer services, to trim brush, weeds, and other maintenance along the 15 miles of trail.

They also implemented an Adopt-A-Trail program, which currently covers about half of the trail. Local businesses and families get their own sign and post (worth \$35) for their one year commitment to maintain a section of trail (¼ to ½ mile). The groups often compete against each other for the best trail maintenance.

For National Trails Day in 2009, they set up cleanup sub-stations along trail sections of Oxford and Orion (problem areas). This year they want each community member to have a station.

The group joined the American Hiking Society.

They participated in the 2009 Earth Day 5K Expo in collaboration with the DDA and raised \$5,000. This year a 5K and 10K run is being planned, and they want only a few specific earth day vendors for the event, located close to the trail.

They are also working on a cost analysis report to determine the savings accrued on equipment and hours by relying on volunteer/WWAM groups.

#### **Clinton River Trail**

Kristen Wiltfang reported the CRT Friends group is still looking for the right consultant and funding for their "Look and Feel" project RFP. The focus for this project is to create designs and concepts for gateways, signage, benches, and other amenities along the trail that will help keep a similar look and feel throughout the five communities that the CRT passes through.

Construction on Phase II, the Downtown Pontiac Spur, is nearly complete. Construction will resume and finish in spring 2010.

Final design plans for Phase III, the Telegraph Road bridge, are being submitted to MDOT. Funds are anticipated to be distributed in March/April 2010. Utilities will need to be relocated. Construction is planned for summer 2010.

Phase IV (2+ miles connecting from Woodward Ave. to Opdyke Rd.) was walked last fall for the preliminary map (two miles) with Wade Trim and OC Water Resources Commission (WRC). Wade Trim has submitted cost estimates. Grants/funding sources need to be identified for construction. There are a number of safety issues along the proposed route, and much of the route crosses WRC property.

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### **West Bloomfield Trail**

Dave Burley reported on their MNRTF grant approval for acquisition of the Michigan Airline Railroad. They submitted two appraisals for the acquisition, and the DNRE has accepted one. The company Browner Turnout now owns the MART. Discussed connecting with W. Bloomfield at the 160 acre nature preserve. Now working with the firm Beckett & Raeder for development plans and have submitted an application to MNRTF for a development grant.

They will hold a walking event on the trail on National Trails Day in concert with "Walk Michigan". Also, in early September this year, they will hold their 5K/10K walk/run on the trail and in one of their parks. They moved this event to the fall to avoid competition with other races around National Trails Day.

### **Lakes Community Trail**

Stephanie Marchbanks reported to the group a concern from a resident of Wixom that was sent via e-mail to Dan Stencil from Deanna Magee (City of Wixom, Lakes Community Trail). The resident is a senior that travels along a portion of the Huron Valley Trail (along Pontiac Trail Road) to the Wixom Community Center. The issue is that the trail is not plowed of snow to allow him access. Any help from OTAC members is appreciated.

### **Huron Valley Trail**

No report at this time.

### **Headwaters Trail**

Sue Julian reported they are looking at available collaboration for improving the un-maintained portions of trail.

All their signs for their river trail along the Shiawassee are in.

They are considering a trail "placeholder" by putting woodchips down in the areas of proposed multi-purpose trails. This could be an incentive for their need of trails and financial support. They are a 501(c)3 entity.

They cannot be considered for Safe Routes to School funding, but will try anyway.

They are working with U of M-Flint Center for Applied Environmental Research (CAER). On Sunday, February 28 at 6:00 p.m., a free chili night out is planned for those in the community who want to participate. There will be chili provided then a walk on the proposed Water Road trail.

### **Woodward Corridor Trail**

There was an article in the Detroit Free Press concerning a possible trail next to the active railroad track in Royal Oak. There is discussion taking place with the city. If anyone receives an update, please share with OTAC.

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### **I-275 Pathway**

Vince Ranger shared the progress to date:

M-14 to Meadowbrook - Construction is proposed to start this spring (April/May). Proposed work is for pavement repairs, drainage improvements, and way-finding signs.

US-12 to Hines Dr. - This is a design/build project. Design is currently ongoing and construction is scheduled to start this spring. Proposed work is reconstruction of the trail.

Sibley to US-12 - The design of this project will be starting shortly and is proposed for a fall letting date. Construction will start either this fall or next spring depending on the DEQ permit. The proposed work is for reconstruction of the trail.

M-5 (Using CMAQ funds)

- M-5 from 13 to 14 Mile Road: construction work to start sometime in April 2010.

- M-5 from 14 to Maple Road: The RFP for consultants should be advertised by mid-February.

There is funding for the design and preliminary engineering phases. The construction phase to be requested at a later date since we don't know what CMAQ will fund after year 2011.

Also heard this morning that MDOT is proposing a gas tax increase – needed to provide necessary funding to MDOT in future.

### **Other Trail Information Updates:**

Mindy Milos-Dale, from Oakland Township, spoke about their Final Draft Parks, Recreation, Land Preservation, and Trails Master Plan, which is posted on their website. The plan will be used to apply for grants. Trails are the #1 thing that people are asking for, and they want the trails now. They have a vision of a 30 mile trail system and are using a 10 year millage to help achieve that vision. They also have volunteers. Mindy's job is split now—part with planning parks and recreation and part with trails. Mindy was asked to share an update on the Master Plan with OTAC in the future.

### **Presentation: Collaborating on Trail Events and Local Recreation Needs**

**Oakland County Parks and Recreation – Recreation Programs and Services Section**

**- Derenda Howard, Recreation Program Supervisor – Outdoor Recreation and Camps**

248-858-1486 [howardd@oakgov.com](mailto:howardd@oakgov.com)

**- Laurie Stasiak, Recreation Program Supervisor – Health/Wellness and Special Events/Golf**

248-858-4929 [stasiakl@oakgov.com](mailto:stasiakl@oakgov.com)

Derenda explained their department's involvement within Oakland County Parks & Recreation. She talked about the "GO Adventures!" programs, such as GO Fish! and GO Cache!, which are part of the mobile outreach programs available for the trail systems and others. OCPR can assist organizations with the approval process for setting up geocaching systems/programs (Michigan Geocaching Organization oversees). She talked about the "Cache and Trash" programs and how they can help the trails with organizing a clean-up event. OCPR can also offer assistance in trail events with their mobile rec. equipment, such as bikes and adaptive trail recreation equipment.

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All fees for mobile recreation are listed on the new website, [www.destinationoakland.com/recprograms](http://www.destinationoakland.com/recprograms). Non-profit groups receive a special rate, and soon there will be a recreation assistance program on the website for qualifying organizations.

Laurie Stasiak shared information about the health & fitness, dog & golf programs, and special events that are some of the core services within OCPR. OCPR wants to expand and introduce health and fitness initiatives on trails. For example, OCPR has "Walk in the Park" initiatives in our parks, which are supervised walks in conjunction with MRPA's "Walk Michigan!" program to promote the benefits of walking, nature and outdoor environment.

OCPR has organized a volunteer walking ambassador program; dog walking events that promote pet safety, supplies and equipment. OCPR also has many groups that use our park trails for organized run/walk events, like the annual Hidden Forest Run at Independence Oaks. OCPR staff was involved in the Brooksie Way Half Marathon and 5K Run and other events that promote health and fitness, like the Oakland County Health Expo.

Laurie acknowledged the OTAC members for their work with the OakRoutes maps, as they are a popular hand-out item at events.

Also available is OCPR's Adaptive Recreation program, sponsoring many events for people with disabilities. Any trail group may contact Sandy Dorey at Oakland County Parks and Recreation for information. These programs are also listed on the parks' website:

<http://www.destinationoakland.com/recprograms/adaptiverecreation>

### **Grant Implications of Trail Advocacy (Presentation)**

**Jon Noyes, Planning Supervisor, Oakland County Parks and Recreation**

Jon spoke about the issues that have occurred with advocacy efforts for trail access in the state and how they can impact the funding available for trails in Oakland County. He referenced the December 2009 Michigan Trust Fund meeting, and why they were not awarding some applications.

According to the Trust Fund board members, because of disagreements over trail access that resulted from management decisions made by the Natural Resource Commission (NRC) and staff of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, legislation has been introduced that, if passed, would create a means of superseding the decisions of the NRC. This legislation would have the effect of negating the role of the NRC and MDNR and their established process to solicit feedback from trail users and to make management decisions based on the sustainable use of public resources. The Trust Fund Board supports the current process and has expressed a concern that if the NRC is prevented from insuring appropriate use there would be resulting degradation of recreational resources. For this reason, the Trust Fund Board indicated that they could not support funding projects that could be negatively impacted in the future by this legislation.

Jon stressed that advocates can be a powerful force, with beneficial and non-beneficial outcomes. He stressed the value of communication and dialogue, and to be open to the process of submitting feedback to the NRC, and not force things through the legislative system. User groups should demonstrate good stewardship and sustainability of the trails they use.

Jon referenced the book Nudge, which explains that people will support and make decisions based on what is *easy to understand, convenient* and is *to their immediate personal benefit*. Ultimately it is in everyone's best interest to promote appropriate access to trail recreation opportunities, but we have to be willing to participate in dialog and work through the process necessary to develop broad support.

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Jon spoke about the 68 miles of trails within the park system and using the parks' Centralized Asset Management System (CAMS) work order system to ensure appropriate maintenance in the future. He suggested that perhaps such a system could potentially be used for managing the maintenance of the Oak Routes network as it grows. This would be helpful to secure project funding, as the quality of the trails would be seen as being safeguarded. Another idea was to develop a "Trail Corps", and have volunteers run a major program for maintaining the network or portions of it. Oakland County Parks and Recreation is currently testing a program to use Horticultural Volunteers to grow and maintain plants for the County Park System. This program could serve as a model for a Trail Corps that would first steward the 68 miles of trails in the County Parks and in the future could be expanded to maintain trails across the county.

Jon indicated that Oakland County Parks, along with PEDS, supports OTAC's efforts. Kudos to those involved in the preparation of the Oakland County Trails Master Plan. Jon asked OTAC members to be involved in the committees that would implement some of the goals of the plan. He also asked if members could prepare an Annual Report earlier in the year (by the end of September 2010), as this would serve as good timing for a report to the Parks' Commission at the end of the 2010 fiscal year. It could also be presented at the annual Trail Summit in a user-friendly way, and assists in the master planning process for the County Parks.

### **Approval of Revised Oakland County Trail Advisory Council Bylaws—Stephanie Marchbanks**

Stephanie passed out the most recent editorial changes to the OTAC Bylaws that were proposed in August, 2009. It was noted that some trail name changes were either made or need to be changed in Section 3. Discussion took place about whether or not to place the suggested Annual Report into the Bylaws. The suggested timing of the Annual Report in August/Sept. was discussed. It was noted that the county is on a fiscal calendar that begins on October 1st. Therefore, it was decided that the OTAC Annual Report, which could be completed after the Trail Summit, would be better suited for presentation in January. Kristen W. suggested that we discuss this further at another meeting. Dave Burley made the motion to accept the bylaws with existing changes and Dot LaLone supported it. The motion passed on voice vote.

### **Determination of Trails Master Plan Priorities for 2010—Stephanie Marchbanks**

Stephanie referenced last year's OTAC survey results, asking for input on priorities, making items a goal and forming subcommittees. She provided a suggested format for setting performance measures (you can also reference this format in the Master Plan, page 106). Stephanie demonstrated how to access the new [www.destinationoakland.com](http://www.destinationoakland.com) site, how to locate the Master Plan and other information. Stephanie would like to update the Trails Advisory Council webpage on DestinationOakland as it is outdated by a couple of years.

It was suggested that member's ideas for the upcoming Trails Summit be presented to the group in March meeting.

The Oakland County Parks and Recreation bus tour for our members will be held in May this year.

Merle Richmond inquired about the progress of the marketing committee? She stated that the video production goes hand in hand with the endowment. Which committees take precedence? The Gap Analysis portion of the Master Plan was discussed and it was suggested that we form a committee for collaborating between trails groups with community stakeholders to share knowledge of resources, processes, etc.

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Stephanie asked the members for a commitment from OTAC on what actual sub-committees will be formed and who will represent them. It was decided that:

- Creating of an Outreach/Marketing Committee is a priority.
  - This would include creation of a video to promote the trail network
  - A letter on OTAC letterhead should be sent out to various community stakeholders be sent out to explain what OTAC is, it's mission, it's members (Stephanie will create a list)
  - Kristen W. and Stephanie M. suggested any committee or trail group to contact them to share information on who to contact/target.
  - Members were asked to join the Outreach/Marketing Committee. The committee meetings will begin after each OTAC meeting.

### **Misc. Trail Information – Kristen Wiltfang**

- Met with equestrian groups—trying to gather current equestrian population data to update the trails map to provide current information on equestrian trails.
- The Road Commission for Oakland County met with people in Milford to resolve issues concerning the intersection where it meets with the trailhead.
- PEDS is working on a “Local Food Map”. Merle R. asked for a rough draft to be sent to add farmers markets and local food distributors onto the maps.
- Stephanie M. passed out a copy of the old vs. new OTAC letterhead for review.
- An updated member contact list will be sent out to members.
- The OakRoutes map will be updated and reprinted this Fall, hopefully in time for the Trail Summit.

### **Announcements/Public Comments**

- Andrew Mutch from the City of Novi announced that the former Walled Lake Casino site will become park property. There will be a “walkable” committee meeting regarding the interest of bike lanes with the road commission.
- Kristen W. updated the group on some involvement between Oakland County Planning and MDOT and the Road Commission for Oakland County, and suggested more local involvement.
- Sue J. announced a meeting to be held tonight about the Upper Bushman property acquisition to Independence Oaks.

**The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.**

### **NEXT MEETING**

The next OTAC meeting will be Wednesday, March 24, 2010 at 9:00 a.m. in the OCPR Commission Room.

Minutes taken by Sue Thibodeau-Administrative Services and Stephanie Marchbanks, Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission.