

Equestrian Trails & Facilities Referendum Committee

Appointed by the North Brevard Commission on Parks and Recreation (NBCPR)

Meeting of June 19, 2006, 7 p.m., at the Mims-Scottsmoor Library

Members Present

Donna McCone, Chairman

Susan Canada

Jennifer Hill

Sabrina Jeffers

Kay Miller

Carol Thompson

Winnie Woods

Members Absent

Connie Carswell

Mary Page, Vice Chair—Equestrian emergency

NBCPR Liaison

Gigi Henkel

County Staff Present

Terry A. Lane, North Area Parks Operations Manager

Judy Inman, Administrative Secretary

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman McCone called the meeting to order 7:02 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

As listed above.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the April 17, 2006, meeting were approved as presented at the meeting as draft 2, at the motion by Sabrina Jeffers, seconded by Kay Miller.

AYE: Canada, Hill, Jeffers, McCone, Miller, Woods

NAY: None **Carried 6-0**

Carol Thompson arrived at this point.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Conceptual Drawing—Terry Lane presented a conceptual drawing for a 5-acre site prepared by Terry Stoms, Parks Planner, which the committee requested at the last meeting. Also Town of Malabar Horse Park drawings were presented. Those sites are 2.97 and 1.72 acres. Gigi Henkel inquired the width of the parking spaces in the conceptual drawing. Terry Lane responded the drawing was done to code. The parking area wouldn't be paved because of unloading horses, and therefore won't be striped. Carol Thompson suggested defining the parking spaces with signs. Mr. Lane noted the plan has 28 parking spaces and 8 paddocks. Additional paddock and barn information was passed around. There is also space for a ½ acre fenced area.

Chairman McCone noted the Committee doesn't have to approve the plan as it is just information as requested. She noted that on the tour, the Committee saw places with different use. Some were day use and some had

overnight spaces. She noted overnight use wouldn't be available at certain places.

Chairman McCone related her recent experience at O'Neil Regional Park in California, on 7.5 acres, with individual sites with picnic tables, some with two or three together, and pipe corrals. This is a great concept for a lot of people using a trailhead on one day. It seems like a wilderness feel to the staging area could be entertained.

Carol Thompson noted Dupree in South Florida has barns scattered throughout the facility and it is park as you can. Withlacochee State Forest in Citrus County has pull through spaces and is wooded with room between campsites. Susan Canada stated she likes the idea of more privacy, and parking needs to be identified to avoid one trailer taking up two or three spaces. Kay Miller noted paddocks need to be closer to parking sites. Carol Thompson suggested Mr. Stoms drawing would be good along the Rails-to-Trails for day use, but parking should be delineated. She noted the width of the parking spaces is unknown.

Winnie Woods suggested it could be cut it in half and have day use and overnight use. Jennifer Hill noted most carry their own portable paddocks. A survey of those present revealed four do and three don't carry portable paddocks. It was agreed some paddocks would still be needed.

Gigi Henkel commented people are more apt to use the area if facilities are available. Carol Thompson suggested covered paddocks would be nice in the event of a storm. Chairman McCone would like to see

individual campsites as well, but would like it as rustic as possible. She will send the website for O'Neil.

Sabrina Jeffers brought up the idea of an arena on the ½ acre area that was well received.

The committee asked Mr. Lane to thank Terry Stoms for a conceptual drawing.

B. Salt Lake—David Turner, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission—Chairman McCone stated Salt Lake is user friendly and has been a great place to ride. David Turner reported it is a relatively new area. As to the owner of the property, it is co-owned by the Division of State Lands and St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD). Mr. Turner works for Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC) which has a lease with the two agencies. He had to write a conceptual management plan that was a three-year process. The 10-year plan was just approved. He wanted to get some user groups going so a trailhead was developed. A vaulted toilet was put in at a trailhead and an equipment area has been established. He just received an email from his recreation planning group in Tallahassee who wants to do the recreation plan in 2007. There are no marked trails, a multitude of fire breaks and a few named and numbered roads. In the absence of marked trails, equestrians can ride where they can. Once trails become established, riders will need to stay on the trails. If the recreation planning receives public input, the equestrians might want to attend the meetings. Mr. Turner reported he worked with Mr. Miller for a ride in the spring, and noted the users left the area very clean. A few years ago the FFWCC agency reorganized and is trying to break stereotypes of “hook and bullet,” hunting and fishing.

Chairman McCone noted Tosohatchee allows overnight camping. Mr. Turner reported it is currently prohibited at Salt Lake, but that will be up to the recreation folks, so that may change. Chairman McCone asked how to give public input. Mr. Turner will let them know of the equestrian interest.

Gigi Henkel inquired about working with County staff on an ongoing project. Mr. Turner stated they probably won't be looking at any more site development until near the end of 10-year plan. However, recreation may seek approval outside of the plan for additional amenities. He noted parking is under power lines, which he also noted is sometimes very wet. The equipment site

is where a rancher's home was located. There are limited disturbed areas. The wet nature of the site may be a concern. The eastern area has a scrub jay habitat. There are orange groves in the area that possibly could be acquired in the future. Susan Canada noted water at Salt Lake can be quite deep during rainy years. In response to an inquiry from Sabrina Jeffers as to size, Mr. Turner reported it is 8,000 acres, but FFWCC manages 5,000 acres. In response to an inquiry from Susan Canada, Mr. Turner reported hunting is allowed about 40 days a year, permits are required, and those periods are closed to horseback riding. Discussion ensued on hunting with dogs and dogs running wild in Buck Lake.

C. Buck Lake—Terry Lane reported Peter Henn emailed this morning that he had a personal issue and could not attend.

Public Comment—Rodney Hillsman, 2935 Kingfisher Way in Mims, Fawn Lake. Mr. Hillsman stated he has heard mostly rumors and asked where in Buck Lake the Committee is thinking of putting something. Chairman McCone responded that isn't known yet. Mr. Hillsman inquired if there would be events to which Chairman McCone, responded not necessarily. Carol Thompson noted there could be camping and trail rides.

Mr. Hillsman stated neighbors adjacent to Buck Lake would be concerned about the noise of radios, generators, etc. Mr. Hillsman inquired if camping would be overnight or for a week. Chairman McCone responded “yes.” Mr. Hillsman stated he thinks there would be a lot of opposition to that. Chairman McCone asked Mr. Hillsman to please speak for himself. Mr. Hillsman stated he doesn't like it and asked if his neighbors had been contacted by the Committee. Chairman McCone stated there has been no reason to. Susan Canada stated she would want to get away from homes and mentioned the far west entrance to Buck Lake.

Mr. Hillsman inquired if it would be open to the public. Chairman McCone responded the Committee has a public mandate to do an equestrian trailhead. There is no plan to disturb homeowners. Mr. Hillsman expressed concern anyone could come out to hang out. It was pointed out that can be done now. Mr. Hillsman is concerned about changing it from a trailhead to a park.

Jennifer Hill left the meeting at this time.

Mr. Hillsman stated people would hang out if there are facilities and noted there would be odor from the horses. Chairman McCone stated that has not been addressed as yet. It was noted the County would maintain the area.

Mr. Hillsman stated rules were mentioned and inquired who will enforce the rules. Chairman McCone stated the Committee is not invested with that much authority, but is just to decide possibilities for a trailhead. The County will enforce rules.

Mr. Hillsman inquired what events are planned there to which Chairman McCone responded that isn't known yet, but told Mr. Hillsman he is speaking at the right time about his concerns. Mr. Hillsman inquired why someone that is a neighbor would want this facility. Chairman McCone responded sales is not the Committee's job.

Chairman McCone assured Mr. Hillsman he didn't have to be concerned about people in his own backyard. There is an interior area that is partially developed. This Committee has a lot of information. Some of the Committee ride at Buck Lake regularly. Fawn Lake was meant to be an equestrian community when first developed. Chairman McCone told Mr. Hillsman that if he thinks that his way of life will be impeded by this Committee, he has every right to speak to the Committee and the Committee will listen.

Susan Canada suggested setting a distance limit from Fawn Lake. Chairman McCone stated she thinks that would be jumping the gun and would restrict staff and Committee isn't educated enough yet to do that. She doesn't want to set a precedent of making motions for or against ideas of each speaker.

Gigi Henkel told Mr. Hillsman his questions are valid and inquired if uses have bothered him so far. Mr. Hillsman responded hunters and buckshot have. Mrs. Henkel stated the equestrians just want a place to horseback ride and to camp under the trees. Mr. Hillsman responded he isn't so concerned about the horses, but is concerned the Committee is creating a facility that could be used by others. Mr. Hillsman also asked who he would call if there are problems. Gigi Henkel suggested the Sheriff's Office covers that area. Chairman McCone stated some in the community do want such a project. Some of the rumors of the scope of the project are what the Committee would like to have

had at Aurantia and I-95. Those things are not appropriate for the areas being looked at now. The Committee toured several equestrian sites and like the primitive trailheads the best. The Committee will take note of his concerns. The Committee doesn't want it in someone's backyard.

Kay Miller stated she has a self-contained trailer and cleans up after her horses, leaving the campsite as clean as it was found. She likes to ride horses in the coolness of the morning, nap in the afternoon, ride in the coolness of the afternoon/evening and go to bed early. There is no noise. She noted very few equestrians stay up after 10 p.m.

Gigi Henkel expressed to Mr. Hillsman that he has a vision of way more than the Committee does. By leaving this primitive, one won't see different user groups. Equestrians are self policing most of the time.

Chairman McCone noted \$230,000 won't go very far. Events will be things like a poker run, trail event. Riders may pass by the houses. Gigi Henkel noted there was already a poker run at Buck Lake. Mr. Hillsman stated he is concerned about other people coming in on weekends and using it as a park; that could be a problem.

Terry Lane stated that primitive camping managed by Brevard County Parks and Recreation Department would be by permit. The Department uses the Sheriff and police departments to enforce rules. Rules are established at parks. Caretakers assist in enforcing rules. The Department maintains facilities under its management, whether owned by the County or not.

Mr. Hillsman stated he wanted to get his concerns on the table and he will go to the website and call Mr. Lane if he still has questions.

D. Environmentally Endangered Lands (EELs) Update—Terry Lane reported Mike Knight could not attend. Mr. Knight emailed that his group is willing to consider a trailhead on property they are appraising in order to purchase to the north of Blounts Ridge. Mr. Lane reported he discussed up to 5 acres with Mr. Knight. If EELs does purchase the property, they then need a management plan which could take up to a year to develop. Usually they don't have a caretaker or trailhead unless the area is disturbed. They may do so at this location. Mr. Lane reported he and Mr. Knight drove the property which has disturbed areas. With

other property on the other side of I-95, the purchase totals 600 acres.

Carol Thompson expressed concern if a right of way to the trail from the trailhead would continue if surrounding area were developed.

Chairman McCone noted some have the Enchanted Forest and EELs question in mind again. She reported she rides that area now and then and asked if it is under EELS management, will equestrians have other areas to ride within the property. Mr. Lane stated he couldn't answer that question, but equestrians would have access to the Rails-to-Trails corridor. Chairman McCone stated that could be good if there is access to MPO funds. She asked staff to keep the Committee informed. Carol Thompson stated she is very happy EELs is keeping the Committee in the loop.

E. Rails-to-Trails Update—Barbara Meyer—Not present.

F. Committee Attendance—Chairman McCone stated she likes a relaxed policy which has allowed flexibility for equestrians that have extenuating circumstances. Susan Canada reported she is still rescuing animals from the 2004 hurricanes so her schedule is unpredictable. Chairman McCone inquired if there is a way around the regulation on absences. Mr. Lane stated the Board of County Commissioners has to establish policies and administrative orders to make it a successful venture. Connie Carswell signed for a certified letter about her lack of attendance. Chairman McCone requested tabling action on Connie Carswell one more time. Susan Canada is to provide staff with a telephone number for Connie Carswell. In response to an inquiry from Chairman McCone, Mr. Lane reported the NBCPR has a process for those interested in serving on a committee to submit an application and appear before the NBCPR to show their interest. The NBCPR then makes a selection. Gigi Henkel mentioned Committee members could attend the public meeting and give input.

V. NEW BUSINESS—None.

VI. PUBLIC INPUT

Chairman McCone welcomed the public present and gave them an opportunity to speak.

Ken Neuweiler is interested in Rails-to-Trails. Mr. Lane gave a brief overview of Rails-to-Trails in North Brevard that extends into Volusia and Seminole

Counties. Various Committee members added information.

John Pine noted the land at Bount's Ridge is some of the driest land in the area. He thinks Rodney Hillsman has concerns about ATVs and other things if there is a parking area. Mr. Pine also noted parking spaces need to be wide enough to accommodate large trailers.

VII. NEXT MEETING DATE

It was decided to meet on July 17, 2006, if at least one speaker is available, and if not, try for August 21.

VIII. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m. at the motion by Kay Miller, seconded by Winnie Woods and carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna McCone, Chairman

jbi