Brevard/Transylvania County
Ecusta Trail Advisory Board

Date: April 24, 2024 Location: City Hall Council Chambers

Members:

- Maureen Copelof, Mayor (absent)
- ✓ Aaron Baker, Council Member
- Larry Chapman, County Commissioner (absent)
- ✓ Addison Bradley, NC Cooperative Extension Dir (Zoom)
- ✓ Mark Tooley, Conserving Carolina
- ✓ John Ditillo, Friends of Ecusta Trail
- ✓ Wilson Hooper, City Manager, Ex Officio
- ✓ Paul Ray, Planning Director, Ex Officio
- ✓ Meredith Carli, At-Large Member (Zoom)
- ✓ Clark Lovelace, Tourism Development Authority (Zoom)
- ✓ Selena Einwechter, Vice Chair Henderson County Ecusta Trail Advisory Board Ex Officio
- ✓ Madeline Hanley, At-Large Member (Zoom)

Staff:

- ✓ Katherine Buzby, City Planner

Guests:

- ✓ Tad Fogel, Friends of Ecusta Trail (Zoom)
- ✓ Lonnie Watkins, Volkert Inc, NCDOT.
- ✓ Carol Clay, Heart of Brevard
- ✓ Steve Williams, NCDOT (Zoom)
- ✓ Luis Hemmer, NCDOT EIT (Zoom)
- ✓ Matt Revis, Ecusta Trail Talk Newsletter

A. Welcome & Call to Order

Committee member Aaron Baker welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:31 pm.

B. Certification of Quorum

Quorum was certified by clerk Katherine Buzby.

C. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Mr. Tooley, seconded by Mr. Lovelace to approve the agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

D. Approval of Minutes from March 27, 2024 Meeting

Motion by Mr. Tooley, seconded by Mr. Ditillo to approve the meeting minutes. The motion carried unanimously.

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E. Updates/Discussions

1. Conserving Carolina- Nothing new to report.
2. Planning Department- Getting ready to start the public engagement per NEPA guidelines sometime in July. It will be advertised in the quarterly newsletter in the June edition. The public engagement sessions start with the public officials then all the property owners along the trail will be invited to the meeting.
3. Transylvania County- N/A
4. Tourism Development Authority (TDA)- The TDA did approve a new 1-million-dollar funding grant related to design and development of the Ecusta Trail and connecting trails. The TDA has a contract for anytime they approve anything over $25,000, and at the next board meeting will present the contract for approval. After approval, it will need to go though the internal review process which should happen in the next month or so (including County Commissioner and Attorney review). They anticipate that the additional design costs be a combination of the TDA money ($250,000/year) and the pledged $750,000 from Friends of Ecusta Trail. If the design does not cost the entire 1 million, a refund can be made to the Friends group as TDA has pledged the entire $250,000 this fiscal year.
5. Henderson County- Construction phase I is underway (Hendo E) and goal to be open by December of this year. Hendersonville is creating a downtown path to connect to the Ecusta Trail trailhead.
6. NCDOT- Regarding the potential archeological site, they reached out to TP&D who has advised DOT that they will be doing a "shovel test" to assess the area but has kept the location and details confidential. They are not anticipating to find anything that will impact the project.
   For amenities, they can be in the DOT ROW where the trail crosses the road but must be approved and have an encroachment agreement with the district DOT office. DOT has noticed along the ROW that there are some illegal structures along the proposed trail. The City will formulate a plan to reach out to property owners.
7. City of Brevard- Looking at creating a joint meeting of the Parks & Trails Committee, the Ecusta Trail Advisory groups, Friends of Ecusta Trail, and other stakeholders. The meeting date to be determined, probably later in the summer. The agenda and goals of the meeting are under consideration, and the City Manager is reaching out to mentors for guidance through this process to make the meeting as productive as possible. One of the topics will be the fate of this Board, as it is supposed to expire at the conclusion of construction but decisions are still going to be made after construction completion. The future oversight or governing board for the Ecusta Trail needs discussed. Also, he is getting advice on how to integrate the trail better into the City's work (organization internally to institute goals of the Trail). Also to answer questions like where will the Ecusta Trail begin and end? Who makes these decisions? How will it connect to the City's trail systems? Many topics will need to be discussed in the upcoming joint meeting.
   This morning, the Parks & Trails Committee agreed with the TDA's Destination Infrastructure Committee to have City Staff move forward with the integration of NCDOT's R-5800 project on Asheville Hwy into the trail better. It was designed before the Ecusta Trail, so NCDOT is amendable to changing some plans but needs an official design review on how to do this. The City would hire TP&D, who is already designing the Ecusta Trail, to look at the R-5800 plans and identify improvements that could be made on their plans and negotiate with NCDOT.

8. Friends of Ecusta Trail- They have hired a company (Blue Ion) to redo their website and are still waiting on input about roles from the City.
9. Public or Citizen Input- Question on if the new Friends website (Ecusta Trail Maps) will be mobile friendly, which was answered yes.

H. Next Steps

The City Manager will get with Council about the future roles of Friends of Ecusta Trail and get that input back to Friends. He will also coordinate the joint meeting in the summer.

I. Set Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Brevard/Transylvania County Ecusta Trail Advisory Board is scheduled for May 29, 2024 at 3:30 pm. (last Wednesday of the month at 3:30 pm)

J. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:14 pm.

x Maureen Copelof

Maureen Copelof, Chair

Minutes Approved- 5/29/2024

x Katherine Buzby

Katherine Buzby, City Planner