Brevard/Transylvania County
Ecusta Trail Advisory Board

Date: May 29, 2024 Location: City Hall Council Chambers

Members:

- ✓ Maureen Copelof, Mayor
- ✓ Aaron Baker, Council Member
- ✓ Larry Chapman, County Commissioner
- ✓ 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
- ✓ Chris Burns, 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
- ✓ Kristen Cozza, Conserving Carolina
- ✓ Lonnie Watkins, Volkert Inc.
- ✓ Various citizens

A. Welcome & Call to Order

Committee Chair Maureen Copelof welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm.

B. Certification of Quorum

Quorum was certified by Chair Maureen Copelof.

C. Approval of Agenda

Chris Burns asked to modify the agenda to have Henderson County present first due to needing to leave early. Motion by Mr. Chapman, seconded by Mr. Baker to approve the modified agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

D. Approval of Minutes from April 24, 2024 Meeting

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

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E. Updates/Discussions

1. Henderson County- They met with the County Engineer today and have been notified that piles for all Henderson County bridges have been installed. 4 out of the 6 abutments for the bridges are installed. They are ahead of schedule for planned delivery of those bridges in August. They were notified that the federal funds can be used for some approved amenities, so design of the amenities is underway. Design and permitting is underway for the "west section", from Horseshoe to the County line. They have an upcoming meeting to discuss branding. The three municipalities are working together on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). They are still estimating to open the first 6 miles "east section" in December. There is a meeting next week with the planning dept. to work with adjacent property owners about businesses that now face the Trail.
2. NCDOT- They had a meeting with TP&D and the City concerning the bridges. There are a couple of bridges that the City is interested in rehabbing/salvaging and reusing. TP&D has provided the pros and cons of that option with the costs, which should be provided to the City sometime today. There is a total of seven bridges, 4 of them have to be totally replaced but 3 of them may be reused. The City will need to review and decide what to do with the remaining 3 bridges. TP&D is starting to do the preliminary design so they are looking at where amenities may go. They have a "short list" of amenities that they are pretty sure they know will be approved (bench, bike fixit station) and then they have other amenities that they are waiting on the City to decide on such as a bathroom (needs City decision on location) and Trailhead locations. A list of the amenities that will be included in the design will be sent to the City. A decision needs to be made regarding the western terminus, like if it will connect to the Estatoe Trail or tie into the Cherry Street connector. TP&D presented four different options for the terminus. The Mountain Industrial Street project currently being constructed has a small connection piece on the plans that was decided (by the board) to keep/allow NCDOT to construct until the City can make a decision on the terminus. They are on schedule with the 30% design and expect it to be completed at the end of June or sometime in July. After this is releases, the City will be holding public engagements in August.
3. Conserving Carolina- They are still researching the unowned section of land.
4. Planning Department- The Davidson River bridge is one that the City planned on saving and repurposing, but it does not look like this is possible due to clearance issues and raising the span. Replacing the other bridges instead of reusing old bridges can cost around $1 million dollars, and they have to be inspected every 2 years where the reused bridges is every four years.
5. Transylvania County- They received an inquiry on how adjacent landowners are to cross the trail with heavy equipment once the trail is built.
6. Tourism Development Authority (TDA)- The $250,000 grant has been received by the City.
7. City of Brevard- Staff met with an old mentor of Wilson's that has experience with transportation projects like the Trail, and mostly discussed governance of the trail and how we make decisions going forward. The joint meeting coming up will be a workshop to determine what committee or council will make decisions and Wilson will make an agenda about what the City recommends and meet with the chairs of both committees about what they recommend and discuss the options with Council at this joint meeting. Details of the meeting date, time, and location to come. Hopefully the 30% design will be completed and can be presented at the joint meeting.

Another discussion was what service level the City can provide or not provide, and the City will consult with Henderson County and come up with reasonable service levels that we can expect to afford. The economic development goal of the trail was discussed, and what steps the City needs to take to really leverage the presence of the trail to help impact development. Also, local governments should not have MOUs with private agencies, it should be contracts. Vice Chair Aaron Baker presented a draft resolution that recommends that the "official" end of the Ecusta Trail would be at the City's Depot so the Estatoe and Ecusta Trail merge; this document will be presented at the joint meeting coming up. TP&D is investigating the pedestrian crossing at R-5800 to see how to safely cross Asheville Hwy.

8. Friends of Ecusta Trail- Working on website redesign for the trail. Once that is complete, they hope to schedule a public event to announce the new site, along with branding and merchandise. They are still creating a job description for a trail manager, but needs input from the City to know what Friends will be responsible for in order to create the position. This too will be discussed at the joint meeting.
9. Public or Citizen Input- N/A

H. Next Steps

Many decisions are needed to be made by the City, such as trailheads, amenity lists, bridges, etc. The City will hold a joint meeting that will include City Council, Parks & Trails Committee, and the Ecusta Trail Advisory Board to discuss how these decisions will be made and by whom. It will also discuss the roles of the three going forward regarding the Ecusta Trail. The meeting is scheduled for June 26th at 1:30pm.

I. Set Date for Next Meeting

The June 26th meeting is cancelled and a specially called joint meeting will take place on June 26th at 1:30pm to include City Council and the Parks & Trails Committee. The next regular meeting of the Brevard/Transylvania County Ecusta Trail Advisory Board is scheduled for July 31, 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 4:50 pm.

x _____
Aaron Baker, Chair

Minutes Approved- 8/22/24

x _____
Katherine Buzby, City Planner