

OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
ABBREVIATED MINUTES  
November 10, 2011  
4:00 – 5:30 pm

<b>Present:</b>	Mary Manning	Ethel MacDonald	<b>Absent:</b>
	Tim Aldrich	Maureen Bookwalter	Bob Clark
	Bert Lindler	Gary Knudsen	Adam Liljeblad
	Jeff Stevens	Beth Hann, Park Brd Rep	
	Jed Little	Jenny Tollefson	

Also Present: Jackie Corday, Open Space Program Mgr, Pelah Hoyt (FVLT), Jim Brown (Five Valleys Audubon), Jim Hepburn & Katlin Chisum (UofM students), Sally Peterson & Jim Habeck

**Public Comment Re University Golf Course**

Sally Peterson presented information on why she believes it is important for the University Golf Course and track area to remain as open space for recreation. She belongs to the Committee to Save the University Golf Course whose members are opposed to the area being built-out with campus buildings. They believe the former plans to build the COT at University owned lands at out Fort Missoula should be chosen instead. Sally presented a couple of handouts, one of which listed the many benefits of keeping the land open for multi-use sports.

**December Meeting Location**

Tim offered to host the December meeting at his house instead of our usual December meeting place of either the Iron Horse or McKenzie River. Everyone agreed that would be a nice change.

**Lemm Property in the Grass Valley Area – Further Discussion**

Pelah Hoyt from Five Valleys Land Trust informed us that she has spoken to a realtor on the FVLT board about the probable value of the 155 acre Lemm property off Deschamps Road just north of the Mastel farm. The value is way less than 1/2 of the \$2,000,000 listed price. FVLT has been interested in seeing this parcel preserved for several years now due to its direct ecological connection to the various habitat types on the adjacent Mastel Farm, which itself has been the subject of many years of work to preserve through conservation easement (not achieved yet). Pelah plans to present this project to the FVLT board for approval of making an offer.

Bert asked if an appraisal has been prepared or will be? Pelah said the offer can be contingent upon an appraisal, but there is no need to get one before making an offer. Jeff asked who are the potential funding partners? Pelah listed FVLT, Audubon, Owl Institute, maybe the University, and a couple of grants she's looking into. Jim Brown said that the Five Valleys Chapter of the MT Audubon has been fundraising to protect Important Bird Area properties, this one in particular. They have raised \$3,000 thus far. Mary suggested working with Kate Davis, Raptors of the Rockies, to help with finding funds.

Bert said a focused funding campaign for this parcel could be very helpful – he believes ~\$100-150,000 is needed from partners to make this project more likely to happen. Mo asked how neighboring property owners feel about the property becoming public. Jackie said it's too early in the process to obtain that info yet – we need to first know if the owner is willing to sell it for far less than the listed price.

Bert said that Ken Dial, an ornithology professor at U of M should be contacted to help with funding ideas. Mary also suggested that the Native Plant Society might be willing to let us use their member list for a funding appeal since native grassland is getting rarer every year.

Pelah asked members if they felt about a \$300k open space bond contribution with about \$100k in partner funds being raised was reasonable. Gary said that he thinks this property is so important that, yes, he felt it was reasonable, and he

looks forward to us working out the price, funding and use issues. Other members chimed in that it seemed reasonable since the City would be owning the land (as opposed to contributing to a conservation easement).

### **Open Space Updates**

Jackie updated members on several potential projects:

- 1) **Fred Stout Property** – Fred owns over 90 acres located adjacent to Council Grove State Park off Mullan Road in the Grass Valley Cornerstone. She explained this is one of only 6 potential parcels west of Reserve Street that Pelah and Jackie identified are large enough and have significant enough conservation values to pursue for preservation. His property consists of beautifully managed farmland that forms the entrance to the park and the eastern and northern boundaries. Jackie sent a letter to Fred in 2009 asking if he would be interested in talking to her about preservation options. He did talk with her but decided the timing wasn't right. In September 2011, Fred contacted Jackie to ask if the City was still interested in his property. They got together to discuss several possible options, but the one that rose to the top was selling most of his acreage to the City to then be transferred to FWP to become part of the state Park. Fred asked Jackie to inquire of FWP's interest in this idea. He has made no commitment, but wants to know if it's a viable option. Jackie has set up a early December fieldtrip with FWP staff to discuss the possibility.
  
- 2) **Former Stone Container Pulp Mill Property** - Tom Platt with Hybrid Energy Group requested a meeting with Jackie, Pat O'Herron, and Nancy Heil in order to pitch an idea for preserving ~500+ acres out of the ~3,200 acres formerly owned by Stone Container. He wanted to know if City and County Open Space Bonds could be used to pay back the potential buyer (who Tom is working with) who is in the position to purchase it in the near future if he knows there are funding sources that can be lined up to pay him back (ideally, he would like to come out whole even if it takes a few years). Tom informed us that the current owner, Green Investments, is willing to consider selling the floodplain acreage to Tom's client for open space purposes. The price being discussed is about \$2,000 to 2,500/acre, which equates to over \$1 million. Tom's client wants to see the property preserved for its wildlife values and recreation access and is especially interested in the land being transferred to a public land agency. The property is almost 99% in the Frenchtown Planning Region, but Section 25 is within the City's Open Space Plan boundaries. About 200 acres proposed to be preserved is in Section 25, thus it is possible to contribute City O.S. Bond funds to that portion.

Pat and Jackie informed him the City and County would not be interested in owning the property – County is not taking on any parklands and this is way too far out for City Parks Dept to take care of. Thus, the most probable owners are either the USFS (they own land adjacent and to the west) or FWP (slim chance however since they are trying to keep new acquisitions to a minimum and they already own Council Grove State Park just 1.5 miles SE). Pat informed Tom that the Commissioners are very interested in seeing the high conservation values lands preserved and I indicated the same from the City's perspective. However, we both cautioned him that the \$1,000,000+ price tag would be an obstacle – he will need other major funding partners beside the County and City O.S. bonds. He has already spoken to FVLT, but not USFS and FWP, so we suggested that he talk with them next and let us know how that went.

- 3) **Dave Edgell Property off Deer Creek Road** – Dave owns the 66 acre parcel across the street from the Clark Fork Terrace property. It is a triangle shape sandwiched between the railroad to the south, I-90 to the north, and Deer Creek Road to the east. It was proposed to be subdivided in approximately 2007, but nothing is happening now due to the economy. Dave contacted the Mayor to inquire about the City's interest in purchasing the property as it is a key piece to completing the Kim Williams extension (about 3/4 mile piece between the current eastern terminus of the trail to Deer Creek Road. Unfortunately, Dave purchased the property at the very apex of the market and now it is likely not worth even 1/2 of what he paid (over \$1,000,000). Because his asking price of \$750,000 is likely way over the current fair market value, Jackie suggested to Dave obtaining an appraisal, which the City could share 1/2 the cost. Dave said he would think about it and get back to her.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm with the next meeting date scheduled for 4:00–5:30pm on January 12<sup>th</sup> at Currents.