

TRAIL: Council will support opening new EA process

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District Ranger Kristie Miller concluded that no workable compromise could be reached between the opposing camps. Therefore, the draft decision for the trail was withdrawn.

Miller stated, "The contention surrounding the proposed trail was breaking communities apart rather than bringing them together; therefore, I pulled it." She cited the lack of a compromise and many dissenters but noted, "There is also clearly a strong amount of community support for a paved trail connecting communities," leaving the door open for the possible submission of another proposal.

As such a proposal peeks over the horizon, little of the heat has dissipated since the withdrawal of the first draft decision.

Last spring the Oregon Solutions (OS) Network was unable to bring the key parties to the table to begin discussions. OS determined that the trail situation "is not currently ripe for a collaborative discussion and/or negotiation," and stepped away. There wasn't even any

agreement as to what participants in the process were supposed to be discussing. There was also rancor about the fact that opponents of the project met in a separate group after complaints that no trail opponents were named to the original committee.

Because no mutual understanding by opposing parties about their concerns and interests could be reached, Deschutes County Commissioner Alan Unger determined that the trail project needed to have a champion. In June of this year he sent out a letter to constituents indicating that he had received numerous emails and calls and had spoken with many people who support the paved trail concept.

"I believe that I should act on their request for trail reintroduction," he said. He recognizes that the proposed paved path is controversial and acknowledges the concerns raised by opponents to the proposal, but would like to have people look at the project in a broader context. He sees the trail as part of a larger system, possibly going all the way to the Camp Sherman turnoff on Highway 20.

By the end of August, Unger hopes to provide the Sisters Ranger District with a report on the community

outreach efforts and will possibly submit a new proposal requesting that the Black Butte paved trail be considered, or at the very least, a letter of interest supporting an Environmental Assessment (EA), that would probably examine alternative trails as well.

Chuck Humphreys, president of the Sisters Trails Alliance and ardent supporter of the paved trail, requested at their August 6 workshop that the Sisters City Council send a letter of support for the paved trail between Sisters and BBR to Unger.

At the August 13 City Council workshop, councilors engaged in a free-flowing discussion with Ranger Miller regarding the past proposal for the trail and an outline of the entire decision process if a new trail proposal is submitted to the Forest Service. (See related article, page 22.)

Councilor David Asson would like to see the Forest Service come up with the best trail possible. He would like to see the language of any letter sent by the Council regarding the trail expanded to "allow for the possibility of a trail," not specifically the one identified in the first proposal.

If the Council letter is in support of a specific trail with a start/finish at BBR,

Mayor Chris Frye indicated he would abstain from voting on approving the letter due to the fact that he owns a store at the Ranch and could be seen as having an economic interest in the building of the trail. He does not see a conflict if the letter is simply in support of opening an EA.

Councilor Amy Bergstahler believes that the possibility of a trail between Sisters and BBR fits within the parameters of the Sisters vision statement, which talks about being a bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly village. She would like to see "robust public involvement" in the entire process surrounding the possibility of the trail. In her mind, project and process

are both important when undertaking a study and any resultant endeavor, but thinks the importance of the process needs to be elevated.

Nancy Connolly supports the Forest Service conducting an EA on a new proposal for a trail and would strongly encourage more in-depth community involvement.

A letter will be drafted in support of the Forest Service conducting a new EA on whatever proposal they may receive regarding a trail between Sisters and BBR. The draft will be reviewed at the next Council workshop on August 20 at 8 a.m. at City Hall. If approved, the letter will be sent to Commissioner Unger.

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Dr. Dana Bailey from Broken Top Veterinary Clinic
Sana Hayes from BrightSide Animal Shelter

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Best Look Alike - Glenda Smith & Bailey
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