

Parks board appoints new members

By Sue Stafford
Correspondent

Gregg Johnson and Barbara “Robin” Holm were selected by City Council from a pool of four well-qualified applicants to take seats on the City’s Parks Advisory Board.

Johnson, who is currently serving as an interim appointee on the board, will be an in-city representative. He brings years of professional experience to his position. He holds both an MA and an ABD in parks and recreation, with an emphasis on planning for parks and open spaces. Johnson worked for over 30 years in park development, maintenance, and construction management.

He says that he has a love for recreation and leisure activities.

Barbara Holm, who goes by Robin, enjoys serving on volunteer advisory boards, especially those dealing with parks and trails. While living in Arkansas she served on a state parks advisory board for about eight years.

Holm, a retired medical technologist, says being retired provides her with the time to devote to the board position as an out-of-city representative. Prior to 2008 she spent almost 30 years living in Anchorage, Alaska. She enjoys horseback riding, hiking and biking.

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South Locust Street, with a width of 36 feet and a speed limit of 20 mph should remain the designated entrance/exit. He predicted “stacking problems” on Highway 20 with campers waiting to turn onto Buckaroo Trail. He also predicted problems with traffic coming from the east on Highway 126 that will have to make the left-hand turns across the point of land that divides Highways 126 and 20 with probable stacking issues there as well.

Storton reminded the board that, besides the 24 new homes to be constructed, there is also the probability of more commercial development in FivePine creating more traffic. He sees the entrance/exit on Locust as only affecting a few families.

The neighbors of Creekside Park have made their concerns known in considerable public testimony over the past year and presented a petition to the City containing 104 signatures.

“Let each area have their problems and deal with it,” Storton said in conclusion.

FivePine developer Bill Willitts presented each PAB member with letters and photographs of the areas in question to support his contention that the approved changes should not be made, although he assured the board he “will personally support whatever the Parks Advisory Board comes up with.”

Willitts shared with the PAB that in a letter he sent to Community Development

Director Patrick Davenport, dated April 5, 2015, he made the following request:

“Prior to approval of any traffic changes we request written confirmation from ODOT and the City of Sisters confirming that the FivePine approved Master Plan will not be negatively impacted, and if it is, the City of Sisters will accept full responsibility for all associated costs.”

He also indicated that the traffic study done by FivePine prior to development, and approved by ODOT, demonstrated there were intersection limitations that with any traffic changes could require turn-lane and intersection improvements. FivePine property owners paid for the intersection, including widening of Highway 20, as well as adding deceleration and acceleration lanes.

“We believe the wrong answer is to shift campers driving through a family residential neighborhood and across a pedestrian trail. The change would create a significantly more hazardous access.” Willitts concluded, “I think we have a perfect balance right now.”

There is general consensus among all involved that the ultimate best solution would be to have a dedicated park access and exit road directly off Highway 20, thereby eliminating traffic impact on any neighborhoods. There is

talk of the current truck scales being moved and making that the access to the park.

However, because of the complexity of that entire area, with the merging of Highways 20 and 126, any such changes are years away.

As an interim solution to the problems noted by residents of Buck Run and Coyote Springs, the PAB recommended to the Council that neighborhoods on either end of the campground share the burden of the impact of entrance and exit traffic created by the campground.

Buck Run resident Janet Baker, who lives directly across Locust Street from the current entrance/exit, reminded the PAB that when they originally purchased their home 12 years ago, the campground was a quiet, small facility until 2010 when it “blew up into an RV park.” She said that everyone in the surrounding neighborhoods has been affected, not just a few homes across from the park. Many residents contended earlier that the changes in 2010 all occurred with no input from the neighbors.


Baker stated that she and her husband had taken their truck and trailer, probably 50 feet in length, and tested the access off Highway 20 onto the 24-foot-wide Buckaroo Trail and then making the turn onto Desperado, experiencing no difficulty in making the

turns. Baker closed with, “We would appreciate due consideration. We need help. What do we do?”

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— Bill Willitts

At their October 7 meeting, at 4 p.m. at City Hall, the PAB will take another look at the entire issue and either uphold their original recommendation to Council or craft a new one. The decision of what to do ultimately rests with Sisters City Council, as the PAB serves solely in an advisory capacity. Even if the PAB recommends something new, the Council can choose to stick with their original decision.

“I have a simple philosophy. Fill what’s empty; empty what’s full. And scratch where it itches.”
— Alice Roosevelt Longworth



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