

**Minutes of January 28, 2014 Meeting  
Nichols Basin West Edge Trail Planning  
Marina Center Commission Room  
5:30 p.m.**

**Present:** Project Advisory Committee (PAC) Members: Todd Anderson, Arthur Babitz, Larry Brown, Steve Gates, Pepi Gerald, Jaime Mack, Bob Naito, Heather Staten, Greg Stiegel, Lori Stirn, Hoby Streich (Commissioner), Cindy Thieman, Brett VandenHeuvel, Cindy Walbridge

Walker|Macy Consultants: Mike Zilis, Christopher Miller

Port Staff: Michael McElwee, Laurie Borton

Commissioners in the audience: Jon Davies, Fred Duckwall, Brian Shortt

**Absent:** PAC Member Jeff Pickhardt

**Public:** Sign-in Sheet Attached

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At 5:30 p.m. Port of Hood River Executive Director welcomed PAC and audience members to the first of four public meetings regarding the bike/pedestrian path project. One intent of the meeting was characterized as grounding so that PAC members, staff, and consultants had the same starting point as they work through the next three meetings that will result in staff making a final recommendation to the Port Commission on the design approach that will be developed further into construction documents. McElwee noted that public comment would be welcomed but reserved for the last 30 minutes of the meeting. He also noted that documents are available to the public on the Port's website (<http://portofhoodriver.com/NBP.php>) and that reference materials will continually evolve as the process proceeds.

Following self-introductions McElwee summarized the project's goal, approach, project area, and budget; then reviewed prior planning work that had been prepared over the past 12-18 months by Group Mackenzie.

Mike Zilis and Christopher Miller, Port consultants with Walker|Macy, introduced themselves and provided information on similar projects they have been involved with. They used board illustrations and a PowerPoint presentation for this initial meeting. Their scope for work on this bike/pedestrian trail will be from top of bank to water's edge, stating the section of trail will need to fit funding but also be a starting point for the "next lifetime of success." Zilis requested that PAC members assist them in understanding how the Nichols Basin is used so that conceptual plans are reflective of their background information, types of activities, and scale.

*The following represents comments and/or questions from various PAC members (and may not represent a consensus opinion):*

- **Types of use:** An increase of multiple activities at the Basin has intensified. The use is starting earlier and going later into the season. The area is often packed out and not just on weekends in July/August. Winter uses should be considered; and there is use by business area employees on lunch breaks.
- **Vehicle access to the water:** You can now drive close to the water's edge and if this accommodation cannot continue, it is a worry. On-site gear storage could be a way of solving the problem. The north end is wind-affected for SUPs and kayaks so a vehicle turnaround at the north end for equipment drop-off may not be feasible.
- **Wider park:** This needs to be part of the conversation to accommodate multiple uses and to be seen as a gateway to downtown. The area is now dominated by buildings and parking. A more comprehensive approach needs to be done rather than looking at it piecemeal.

- **Habitat:** Water species habitat needs to be considered. Shallow water will benefit juvenile fall Chinook and lamprey. Fertilized lawns could create water quality issues with potential runoff. Consider large vegetation plantings as a way to reduce geese habitat. Also consider something that honors the area's historical past.
- **On-site Storage:** There is demand but how economically viable is an unknown. Existing space is limited and finite. Storage height also needs to be a consideration for kayaks and boards.
- **Concession Space:** Space needs to be reserved for concessionaires to provide service and assistance to people. Current concessionaires at the Event Site feel they could use 3 to 4 times the space that they now have.
- **Parking:** Required parking will be an issue. This needs to be worked out first before going further into a plan for a bike/ped trail.  
McElwee commented that providing parking for everyone is an urban challenge and that creative solutions will be needed; e.g. transit, shared parking. There are also spin-off questions that will need to be considered; restrooms, permit implications, for example.
- **Design:** In the long-term, trail connectivity is a huge benefit. You also need to be mindful of operating maintenance costs and sustainable design will be a critical need. The Port might also consider future grants from SCORP, which is another Oregon Parks & Rec connection.

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- **Is North 1<sup>st</sup> Street shifted?** --Yes
  - **What are the boundaries?** --East edge of N. 1<sup>st</sup> to the water. North 1<sup>st</sup> becomes a hard surface esplanade.
  - **What is the funding timeline?** --The Port has received a grant award of \$122,000 from Oregon Parks & Recreation with a percentage match from the Port. A contractor will need to be identified by the end of 2014 in order to meet grant covenants that state the project shall be completed by December 31, 2015. A grant application has been submitted for *ConnectOregon V* funding and an application will be submitted in March for LPPG funding. The outcome of both applications should be known by late summer.
  - **If the seawall is found to be not sound will a lot of work be required to make it viable?**  
--The seawall structure will be studied. Rebuilding would be a significant cost.
  - **Are there depths for the Nichols Basin?** --A partial bathometric survey will be done.
  - **Can fill be used to create a lake?** --No, there is natural flowage into the Basin from the Hood River.
  - **What is the Basin north-to-south distance?**

At 7:07 p.m. McElwee opened the meeting to public comment, first calling on those who had signed up to speak. The time limit was 2 minutes per person, 30 minutes maximum. Zilis requested that if an opinion had already been presented, the speaker should yield to the next person. The comments are summarized as follows:

Mark Zanmiller – This project will create a pedestrian magnet from downtown but suggests wordage of “esplanade” or “inner harbor” rather than trail. Try to avoid more vehicles. Try to get people as close as possible to the water.

Jacque Brown-Barone – Take advantage of elevations for storage; consider riparian sections with nature interactions; vehicle access to the water, and storage, is important; does not want part-time building occupancy; walking will be encouraged as a result of the project; and developers should be responsible for public parking. Also inquired whether maintenance would be the Port's responsibility or fall on someone else.

John Wood – This project needs to be worth it to draw people to the area. A larger park would draw more than just being a front door to businesses. If bigger, then it's a destination and not just seasonal.

Susan Froehlich – People come here to be active. Keep the connection to water rather than buildings, and keep green space so it's visually more appealing. She inquired if the upper space elevations could accommodate storage underneath, and if there was some type of "equipment mover." She does not want to see buildings in Zone B and said "less is more."

Chris Gann – She asked the committee to consider the success of the Hood River Waterfront Park. A maximum amount of open space/vista as possible should be used for this area as it will add value to the community.

Adam Smith – Priorities should be recreation, relaxation, and education. There should be easy water access and encouraged use for the Hook and Spit.

Lorri Epstein – Look at the bigger perspective and not just a narrow strip. Basically 81% now is pavement and buildings. The green space needs to be expanded into Zone B.

Eileen Garvin – Maximize the space as people want to be on or near the water. Buildings will block vistas. Maintain simple, natural qualities. Would like to see seasonal uses that go away in the winter.

Susan Crowley – Views an expansion of a park into Zone B as an economic benefit. Buildings on current concept plans create wind tunnels, so consider reconfiguration of buildings to the west of Zone B that would act as a wind break.

Polly Wood – Supports a larger park. If it's not made large enough you can't get it back. Make it the 'front porch' for generations.

Emily Long – Why not use sources of monies other than grants-Port funds for example? (McElwee responded that grants do require matching funds from the Port, and that the Port's expenditures to maintain current open space is a large budget item.)

Linda Maddox – What's lacking is looking over the entire space. There needs to be a consideration for where else vehicle access can be accommodated. Regarding the issue of width, the Group Mackenzie plan did not have a lot of public input. She urged Walker|Macy to start over and move the whole park to the west. The waterfront has been a boon to the economy so imagine what this space will do. The Columbia Riverkeeper plan is a marvelous plan that widens the strip and Event Site.

Brian Shortt – Commissioner Shortt mentioned a Waterfront Site Assessment narrative that was approved in December. (This document will be provided to the PAC and added to the reference bibliography.) He also suggested that the PAC focus first on people who live here and commented that the Port needed to start with something so this is not a done deal.

Sarah Fox – Inquired if there were any projections on the number of users in the next 5 to 10 plus years? Also asked about the feasibility of underground parking, or parking under buildings—was it cost prohibitive or not allowed by code? (McElwee responded number projections were not known other than a perception it will grow.)

Julie Wilcox – Asked that a broader connection be considered and consider a tie-in to the pedestrian bridge and other looping connectivity's. An esplanade would tend to bring people down by foot vs. cars.

Jon Davies – Stated it would be a benefit to him, as a Commissioner, that the PAC looks at scaling practicality. He doesn't want to lose funding if the project gets too big, so phasing should be kept in mind and what is important and how those phases will tie together.

Public comment was closed at approximately 7:45 p.m., with the following final PAC comments:

- Vehicle access to the water could be anywhere, not just at the north end. A school program for SUP would be a good idea.
- Are grant funds available for floating projects?
- Even if time and funding is limited, there needs to be a vision. If we grab at money now, will that limit our future? (McElwee responded that is a fundamental question, and a result could be the Port backs away from the project.)

McElwee wrapped up the meeting stating the PAC would meet again on Thursday, February 13 at 5:30 p.m. in the Commission Boardroom. Walker|Macy will bring back a couple sketches for design discussion. The committee members were thanked for their time commitment and the Commissioners were also acknowledged for their attendance at this first meeting. Public comment on the Nichols Basin West Edge Trail can be provided by email to [porthr@gorge.net](mailto:porthr@gorge.net); by letter; and through the Port's website contact link to the Port.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

*Prepared by Laurie Borton*