



County of Los Alamos

Council Meeting Staff Report

August 10, 2017

Agenda No.: C.
Indexes (Council Goals):
Presenters: Stephanie Nakhleh
Legislative File: 9759-17

Title

Open Space Advisory Subcommittee Report

Body

Open Space Minutes: July 11, 2017

In attendance: Eric Peterson, Liz Aicher, Kevin Holsapple, Stephanie Nakhleh

1. Eric updated the group on the Ancestral Pueblo project, which is complete. They used a mixture with a native recipe for chinking. They used edging, crusher fines, and sloping so it drains. Once every two weeks they'll patrol it to make sure the weeds aren't creeping up.
2. Flow trail is out for RFP. The bid is for a design with *possibility* for construction. The County needs to know how much it's going to cost to determine feasibility. After that information is gathered, it will be up to Council to give the green light or no; obviously public comment will factor in heavily. The County sent it out to 15 professional companies, from Arkansas to local. There will be a mandatory site visit for anyone bidding.
3. Camp May improvements are underway. A drainage problem was fixed; also they replaced old picnic tables with new ones. Kevin asked whether there was a way to estimate utilization of that area; answer is there's no direct way at the moment. Camp May, it was noted, is zoned PL (public land), not open space.
4. Open Space shortages: Eric said the Open Space program has gotten amazing things done with one part-time employee but one can only imagine what might be accomplished with 2 FTEs. Kevin said the County is facing pressure to keep its FTEs down, as perception is FTEs have mushroomed. I noted that FTEs might be mushrooming in some departments, but not (in my understanding) in Parks & Rec, and not in Open Space in particular: this would be useful data to examine. With the Comp Plan being so open-space heavy, and the Open Space Management Plan's to-do list being so far behind, more budget support is needed for Council's stated priorities to be met. Kevin noted that special funding could be allocated for the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps on some jobs. "We'd show how much work can get done, and we'd also train future employees. And RMYC is not expensive." Liz commented that it would be useful to see a list of open-space priorities with a timeline and checklist to see what can and cannot be accomplished under current conditions. Eric said he has been unable to do any trail maintenance this year. "With no YCC here this year especially, we're not doing: drain drips, edging, erosion control, rock work, reroutes of steep sections to make trails more sustainable, flagging future projects, updating management plans, signage plans

(100 signs need to be put into ground, haven't even got them made yet), restoration work, inventory of trees and weeds. There is currently not enough staff/time to get any of these priorities accomplished," he said.

5. Update on IMBA: Eric is about halfway through processing IMBA. "Our trails aren't really built for

mountain biking so there's only a few trails that meet needs. I don't know if we're even close to meeting IMBA," he said. The County has prioritized attaining IMBA medal status, which might prove challenging, costly, and resource-heavy: All members agreed that a project like this is, while perhaps worthy, a drain on resources and Eric doesn't have sufficient staff. Kevin noted that if the County is interested in grants, those can be tapped into for pennies on the dollar via RMYC, and those resources could be used for canyon restoration, etc. RMYC crews have a professional crew leader and they're pretty autonomous, he said. Eric said he's been holding off on volunteer projects because the work put into getting everyone trained and deployed is overwhelming. Liz: "This is why we need a volunteer volunteer-coordinator."

6. Canyon restoration: Regarding Graduation Canyon, there are many options to look at. Liz asked if any volunteers might be able to create a restoration plan pro bono-someone with real experience. Kevin said it would be great to find a doctoral student who needs a project. I noted that because the Comp Plan actually matters to Council, they hopefully would fund this kind of project for multiple years, because it will take multiple years to do it correctly. Liz mentioned that stream restoration-which is a good chunk of what's needed in Graduation Canyon-is very expensive, and it would be tempting to break the project up into tiny affordable chunks every year, but you can't make any progress if you do that. Eric: An initial step would be to work with the fire department to at least get rid of invasives as fire mitigation. (All members agreed.) Liz: Can we get a proposal to see what LA County can do on its own, and what would need to be hired out? Eric: We could collaborate with the Lab. Susan Lime through LANL was hired to do the area by Dot Grant and the cemetery. That went through LANL because it's a legacy site.