

TO: Parks and Recreation Board

FROM: Equine and Livestock Working Group

RE: August 6, 2025 Meeting report

1: Recruitment of new members.

Recruiting efforts continue but have had limited success. Two reasons mentioned were a feeling that the work of this working group does not seem to have an effect, and the timing of meetings is not convenient. ELWG is exploring other meeting time options.

2: Review of CSD Projects and Programs

ELWG members have reviewed proposals for ***the North Mesa Master Plan, the North Mesa Turf Field Realignment and Framework Plan, the North Mesa Picnic area Plan, the Open Space and Trails Master Plan, and the proposed changes to Policy 1735. We are awaiting more detailed information on the Brewer Arena upgrades.*** ELWG has also reviewed the information on the upcoming Los Alamos County Horse Show, and Gymkahanas, and observed the Los Alamos County Rodeo.

General Comment on the CSD North Mesa Projects:

There seems to be a lack of coordinated information and planning between all of the above CSD North Mesa projects. All are interconnected in many ways, yet each individual plan has not been coordinated with the others.

Examples:

One of the options presented for the Turf Field realignments shows significant changes to the soccer field area included in the North Mesa Recreation Area, yet this option is never mentioned or shown in the North Mesa Recreation Plan options presented at public meetings or on line.

The Brewer Arena upgrades also include access and parking within the North Mesa Recreation Area, yet this is not well presented or documented in either of the proposed options.

The North Mesa Picnic Area master Plan has not included any equestrian Trail Access. The Equestrian community and ELWG was unaware of any plans to update this area, and therefore is late to the game in providing any input. Equestrian trail access has been lost here over the years, and trail riders have no way to access the roundabout area (when the north side trails are too icy or muddy for winter and spring). This has been

brought up before, but this group of stakeholders was not informed about planning and updates to the area.

All of these plans being considered on North Mesa are intertwined, and should be considered as a whole.

#### **NORTH MESA MASTER PLAN:**

In general , ELWG members prefer option B with the following suggestions:

Relocate the Volleyball courts to the area by the tennis courts to allow a larger bike area on the west side of the park.

Move the “accessible path” that is currently proposed around the bike park area to the natural, open space area on the east side of the park to reduce bike/pedestrian conflict and promote the natural area for walking.

ELWG supports the location of the park maintenance area in the location of the current garden plots with the following caveats –

Maintenance area should be accessed from the NM Park and not the stable area.

Garden plots should be relocated and expanded

ELWG supports the large natural open area on the west side.

Trail access to Kwage Mesa from NM Park – with the increase in bike activities, there will be an increase in bikers accessing Kwage Mesa. The current trail pops out by the restrooms right in front of the indoor arena. ELWG suggests that the trail access be relocated further east so as to reduce possible conflicts with equines. Trimming vegetation at the access points will also increase visibility for hikers, bikers and horses.

A good natural screen between the park and the stables should be a priority and should include a maintenance plan. The previous plantings were neglected and have not survived.

Coordinate with the Brewer Arena plan – parking and access

Coordinate with the Turf Plan

Coordinate with the Open Space and Trails Master Plan

## **TURF FIELD REALIGNMENT AND FRAMEWORK PLAN**

Two 11 x 14 drawings were available at one of the North Mesa Master Plan public meetings. Again, there is no coordination in planning with the North Mesa Master Plan. Other than that issue, ELWG 's major concern is that neither of these plans include any safe, equestrian friendly option for access from stables to the roundabout area. As these areas become more heavily used, the trail riders will be squeezed more and more to using the road.

## **NORTH MESA PICNIC AREA PLAN**

Again, same issue. There is no safe, equestrian friendly option for accessing the roundabout area from the stables. Historically, before Hawks Landing and the MidSchool XC track, there were safe options. Current options are for horses to use the paved trail (with the no horses signs), use the school land and try to avoid the xc track (but we have been requested to NOT use school land), use the old trail behind the picnic area (but this has been redeveloped into the disc golf course), or ride on the road. ELWG would like to see a safe path for horses to use to get to the roundabout.

## **BREWER ARENA UDATES**

ELWG and the equestrian community as a whole attended the public information meeting and gave input. A non-detailed site plan has since been provided, but there is not enough information given to allow for additional comment. The main concerns raised:

Concrete walkway across dirt road from proposed accessible parking on the North Mesa Park. Equestrians who access the indoor arena DAILY are concerned about the safety of a concrete path. A concrete path would have to be repaired often. It will be driven over often, and any snowplow activity will also cause frequent damage, For the one weekend a year (Rodeo), it would be more fiscally responsible for the county to purchase a set of portable sidewalk/ramps. This could be used at other county locations and events as well.

Restrooms – ELWG is still opposed to upgrading the current flushing toilet restrooms. It would be far less expensive and less ongoing maintenance to replace them with vault toilets like all the other parks. The rational of having to have running water for food trucks (again one weekend a year) makes little fiscal sense. Bring in portable sinks with the portapotties for rodeo or any other activity with food trucks present. As it is, the current plumbed restrooms are closed from October to April.

Size of grandstand – the proposed size of 700 seats is too large for the area and the activities. Plan for a smaller one, and if needed , bring back the portables for additional seating. Perhaps LAC should purchase a set of portables that could be used for other county events as well.

## **OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

### General comments:

The page numbers are difficult to follow. Pages 1-60 are intro and background, and starts up again at page 46 (there is already a 46) for reference material. The table of contents is also confusing with page numbering. This made it difficult to make comment on specific pages.

In several portions, there is specific mention of the Open Space Working Group. There is no mention of any other working groups (Equine and Livestock, or Bike Working Groups). There should be NO MENTION of specific Working Groups at all. Unlike Boards and Commissions, Working groups are not permanent, and should not be specifically mentioned in a master plan. The wording should be something like ***The Parks and Recreation Board and any appropriate Subcommittee, Working Group or Task Force.....***

In general, the zoning terminology should be changed – NONE of this is wilderness.

### Specific comments:

Pg 25 Equestrian Facilities -poor description – “Los Alamos County is unique in that it manages equestrian facilities that are holdovers for the Atomic Commission era. Facilities include stables, a large, indoor arena, an outdoor dressage arena, round pens, and a small, covered arena.” ***We actually have an outdoor dressage and jump arena, an outdoor trail arena, a large outdoor rodeo arena and three round pens. The privately owned stable infrastructure, while on county land, are licensed to private individuals.***

Pg 25 – also states that “Kwage Mesa includes horse trailer parking, but trailers are allowed at all trailheads” – ***This is not accurate – certain trails horse are excluded, and while parking of trailers may be allowed, it is not possible as there is not sufficient space.***

Pg 30 – Piedra Loop to Sherwood is listed as in LA (Los Alamos) – it is in fact in WR (WhiteRock)

Pg 32 (the first one) Groups represented – ***Please add the Los Alamos Stable Owners Association and the Equine and Livestock Working Group.***

Pg 46 (the first one)- Mentions a steep portion at the end of the mesa – there is no steep portion at the end of the mesa. Kwage is very flat on all three trails on the mesa.

Pg 43 (the second one) proposes a language change from ***“The Parks Division, with advice from the Parks and Recreation Board and its subcommittees.....”*** to ***“The Parks and Open Space Division, with advice from the community.....”***. This gives the appearance of being able to cut the Parks and Recreation Board out of the process. Suggested wording might be ***“The Parks and Open Space Division with advice from the Parks and Recreation Board, any applicable subcommittee, task force or working group, and the general public.....”***

Pg 44 (the second one) - Updating codes and ordinances. ***This states that “While engaging citizens, the Parks and Open Space Division will update the county development code and develop necessary county laws and zoning regulations that support and protect trails, trail access, and natural and cultural resources within trail corridors.”*** This is a bit unclear on process. Codes and ordinances are the purview of County Council, and any changes to codes or ordinances must be approved by Council, and therefore reviewed and approved by the appropriate Board or Commission. The “While engaging citizens...” should be further clarified to include ***the Parks and Recreation Board and any appropriate subcommittee, working group or task force.***

Pg 46 (the second one) Wildfire Mitigation :

Canyons Management Unit: Manage all forest stands for improved forest health and to protect adjacent housing areas ***and parks*** from wildfire with a .....”. Canyon management is important for the protection of the Stables and the arenas as well as areas like the Pine St and Orange Street playlots.

Management plan: that “combines mechanical and hand thinning, piling and burning, and broadcast burning” - suggest that the wording be ***“management plan that could combine a variety of strategies including mechanical and hand thinning, piling and burning, broadcast burning and other management options as appropriate”*** There are forest management options such as lop and scatter that have not been mentioned and others being developed that could be useful. This statement on management strategies should be included as an overall statement for each of the units mentioned.

Western Perimeter Management unit – define “historic stem densities”. This could be interpreted many different ways – pre-Cerro Grande (way too dense, but historic), pre Manhattan project? Should be worded ***healthy stem densities.***

Pg 48(the second one)

Guiding Principles:

**“Creation/modification of the existing trails to provide for skills progression and a wider spectrum of abilities.”** Does this refer only to bikes? What about hikers and equestrians?

**“PRB will foster the concept of non-motorized transportation as an alternative to automobile use”** – This should also include the Transportation Board. There is a distinction between transportation use and recreation use.

Strategies:

Trail system administration:

“The Parks and Open Space Division, with input from the community, will coordinate, design , and implement trail projects on an ongoing basis.”

And “The Parks and Recreation Board will seek the advice of Open Space Working Group....”

Any mention of a specific working group should be removed. Perhaps a better choice of wording for this would be to combine these two bullets into one. **“The Parks and Open Space Division, in collaboration with the Parks and Recreation Board and any appropriate Subcommittee, Working Group or Task Force, will coordinate, design and implement.....”**

Pg 50(the second one) Suggesting new developments include trails parks green space....as a point of history, in the late 90’s-early 2000’s, this WAS a requirement of new developments. It is unclear when this provision disappeared, but approval of a new development also went through the Parks and Recreation Board. Developments had to have a park, or a “payment in lieu of”, and the approval of PRB.

Pg 50(the second one) – Improve equestrian trail opportunities around **KWAGE** Mesa (misspelling) and Bayo Canyon – any other spots proposed? Trailer parking at other trail heads? Coordination with other park plans (NM Picnic, Ball Fields, NM Recreation area)with

Pg 51 (the second one) – “ With the advice of the Parks and Recreation Board and its subcommittees.....” Should read **“with the advice of the Parks and Recreation Board and any appropriate subcommittee, working group or task force....”**

Pg 58 (second one) – under STRATEGIES – The Parks and Open Space Division with advice from the community..... should also include ***with advice from all appropriate Boards, commissions, and their working groups, subcommittees and task force***.....not just “advice from the community. Consultation with the citizens, especially through the appropriate board should be a priority.

#### REFERENCE MATERIALS:

General comment: The maps, when printed out, are too small to really see any detail, therefore it was difficult to make comment on specific maps or plans.

Pg 46: TRAIL INDEX - there is NO MENTION of equestrian – there is bike and hike, but no equine.

#### APPENDIX A

General comment: The maps, when printed out, are too small to really see any detail, therefore it was difficult to make comment on specific maps or plans.

Pg 46: TRAIL INDEX - there is NO MENTION of equestrian – there is bike and hike, but no equine.

Pg 52 Remove mention of OSWG and add ***“any appropriate subcommittee, working group or task force.”***

Pg 53 - should read ***“With assistance from the Parks and Recreation Board and any appropriate subcommittee, working group or task force..... the Parks and Recreation Board may request that an appropriate subcommittee, working group or task force modify....”*** Any mention of a specific working group should not be included.

Our original input still stands. As ELWG desired to have our report finished in time for inclusion in the agenda packet, we were unable to see the updated draft and make any comment on the draft. We will review as soon as the new draft is available.

#### TRAILHEAD ASSESMENT

Goes from page 1 to page 3 (no pg 2).

Pg 3 table of contents has item 22 as Name (no trail name- listed as pg 49 which is actually Bayo Canyon (also pg 49)

Pg 5 – Key Terminology- need to add trailer parking

In general, all of the assessments make limited or no mention about trailer parking and equine suitability. Also trailhead signs should make note of restrictions (some ban horses)

Pg 61 – states that Kwage Mesa has no restrooms – it does have restrooms by the arena

Pg 111 notes a small trail access point with signage, pet waste and improved trail start. Should probably read ***pet waste station***

NOTE: Review of all of these plans was a heavy lift, and undoubtedly some things have been missed, but it is a good start.