

Brevard/Transylvania County
Ecusta Trail Advisory Board

Date: February 22, 2023

Location: City Hall Council Chambers

Members:

- ✓ Maureen Copelof, Mayor
- ✓ Mac Morrow, Council Member
- ✓ Larry Chapman, County Commissioner
- ✓ Addison Bradley, NC Cooperative Extension Dir (via Zoom)
- ✓ Mark Tooley, Conserving Carolina
- ✓ John Ditillo, Friends of Ecusta Trail
- ✓ Billy Parrish, Blue Zones Project (absent)
- ✓ Lauren Wise, At-Large Member (via Zoom)
- ✓ Chuck McGrady, Henderson County Advisory Board Chair, Ex Officio (arrived at 3:36pm)
- ✓ Wilson Cooper, City Manager, Ex Officio
- ✓ Paul Ray, Planning Director, Ex Officio
- ✓ Meredith Carli, At-Large Member (absent)
- ✓ Clark Lovelace, Tourism Development Authority

Staff:

- ✓ Katherine Buzby, City Planner

Guests:

- ✓ Steve Williams, NCDOT (via Zoom)
- ✓ Jonathan Rich, Transylvania Times
- ✓ Matt Revis, Ecusta Trail Talk Newsletter
- ✓ Tad Fogel, Friends of Ecusta Trail
- ✓ Kristen Cozza, Conserving Carolina (via Zoom)
- ✓ Rebekah Robinson, Conserving Carolina (via Zoom)

A. Welcome & Call to Order

Committee Co-Chair Mack Morrow welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:31 pm.

B. Certification of Quorum

Quorum was certified by Committee Chair Maureen Copelof.

C. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Mr. Tooley, seconded by Mr. Lovelace to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

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D. Approval of Minutes from January 25, 2023 Meeting

Motion by Mr. Tooley, seconded by Mr. Chapman to approve the meeting minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

E. Updates

1. **Conserving Carolina-** The old railroad bridges have been removed from the river and the road (Davidson River) and the road is now open. The old river bridge (trestle) has been saved and is sitting on the side of the road; hopefully it can be reused in the future. If it is to be reused it will need to be tested for lead paint. The entire project came right under budget. The Cradle of Forestry is interested in using some of the leftover ties to redo their train display.
2. **Planning Department-**Went out with TPD (engineers) and Conserving Carolina to walk the trail/bridges to evaluate the condition of the existing bridges. TPD needs to do a more thorough evaluation but is impressed with the condition they were in; most of them can be saved and refurbished instead of replaced. Saving the bridges will be cost-saving to the project. TPD will also help with public engagement (with FLAP money) and will work with the City's Communication Coordination (Rebecca McCann) to achieve this and eventually make a "Story Map" of the history of the project for public viewing. They want to have more of the design completed before the next public engagement session. The RAISE grant application is being reviewed and will be submitted next Monday (February 27). It will then be a public document and uploaded to our website by Rebecca in an easier format than last time. The application came in under \$25 million which is a big deal as if it is under, there is \$1.5 billion available to be rewarded but if it is over \$25 million, there is only \$800,000 available to be rewarded.
3. **Transylvania County-** The Mayor came before the Commissioners last Monday and presented a possible Resolution for support of the Ecusta Trail. The Chairman did not see any chance of the Resolution passing so the decision was made to not vote on it so it will not be on the Agenda Monday night. There is still much concern over who will police the Trail and maintain it plus the number of tourists it will bring to the Trail.
4. **Tourism Development Authority-** TDA Board continues to support the Trail and has made the pledge in local funding (\$1 million). The TDA board is open to smaller requests that are for shovel-ready type of work that may need to occur to get to the ultimate development of the Trail. If anyone knows of or has these types of projects have them contact the TDA.
5. **Henderson County-** The Advisory Committee recommended going to the Commission with 90% plans. Expectation is once the permitting piece is done first (60-day period of time), the County will put the work out for bids. The plan is to start building in July and be completed by Christmas (6-mile section from Hendersonville to Horseshoe). The Advisory Committee wants representation of the Brevard/Transylvania Advisory Board for continuity issues and will copy the Mayor on decisions. The Advisory Committee is trying to put money together past the 6-mile piece by looking at grants (MPO) that are not being used by other counties and maybe swapping with them as underutilized grant funding can be reallocated by the

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General Assembly. They will still provide the required match that is already committed to Transylvania County for the grants already applied for. They have the Story Boards available to give people a visual idea of what the Trail will look like. There is a new Senator (Corbin) and House Member (Clampitt) representing Transylvania County and Brevard that are not familiar with the Ecusta Trail project so should be extended an invitation to some of the upcoming events like the AOTC.

6. NCDOT- They have received an email from FHWA that they have requested the full FY2023 FLAP funding allocation from headquarters about a week ago and was routed to the appropriate person. It should be reviewed and processed in the "coming days". They have requested a timeline as the trail corridor needs to be surveyed and the easiest way to do this is by LIDAR but needs to be done by the middle of March before the trees cap out. They usually request these flights a year in advance but have reached out to their Location and Survey Dept. and asked them what they can do to help. They think they can combine this flight with another project already scheduled (which is a big project as they have to do ground panels that require equipment to be set up on the ground). If they get the FLAP funding within the next week, the money for the LIDAR survey will not be an issue at all.
7. City of Brevard- Paul is the official contact for the Ecusta Trail complaints/questions. The City is trying to work one-on-one with people who have adjoining properties. We have over 20 Letters of Support for the RAISE grant (including NCDOT) and we have a strong collaborative support for the grant funding. The Mayor and Planning Dept will attend the Henderson County Advisory Meetings. Wilson and Paul met with the staff in Henderson County to discuss the project and how to interact to support one another and the advisory boards.
8. Friends of Ecusta Trail- Events Committee is very busy and have many events coming up- Asheville Marathon, Assault on the Carolinas (AOTC), West Carolina Flyer, White Squirrel Rhythm & Blues, and Trail Clean Ups. They received an EBike from Sycamore Cycles which will be raffled off this year. They are thinking about doing something for Rails to Trails Conservancy Celebrates Trail Days April 22nd. They may have people here in town have their supporters with their Ecusta Trail Shirts walk around and maybe a Rally that day. They are working on presentations of amenities (taken on other trails) to present to advisory boards to get them thinking about how they want the trail to look. They are working on recommendations for trail rules based on rules on other trails. Concerns over parking has come up on the Henderson County, as the push is to develop the trail so the trailheads have been delayed. They are working on an outline (from the Swamp Rabbit Trail) called "Trail Partners" where local businesses may allow parking/bathrooms at their establishments and are mentioned on the maps.
9. Blue Zones Project- N/A
10. Public or Citizen Input- People are happy with the hard work the board is doing and is very excited to see the Trail happen.

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F. Next Steps

Continue working on ongoing progress as discussed.

G. Set Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Brevard/Transylvania County Ecusta Trail Advisory Board is scheduled for March 29, 2023 at 3:30 pm. (last Wednesday of the month at 3:30 pm)

H. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:18 pm.

Minutes Approved- 3/29/23

x Maureen Copelof

Maureen Copelof, Chair, Mayor

x Katherine Buzby

Katherine Buzby, City Planner