

Brevard/Transylvania County
Ecusta Trail Advisory Board

Date: March 30, 2022

Location: City Hall Council Chambers

Members:

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

Staff:

- ✓ Katherine Buzby, City Planner
- ✓ Aaron Bland, Assistant Planning Director (via Zoom)

Guests:

- ✓ Kieran Roe, Conserving Carolina (via Zoom)
- ✓ Michael Dexter-Smith, Brevard Rotary
- ✓ Steve Williams, NCDOT
- ✓ Vicki Eastland, Land of Sky
- ✓ Rick Emaus, Rotary Club of Pisgah Forest
- ✓ Sarah Hankey, Blue Zones Project & Rotary
- ✓ Dee Dee Perkins, Local Business Owner
- ✓ Ralph Miller, Rotary Club of Brevard
- ✓ Rebekah Robinson, Conserving Carolina (via Zoom)

A. Welcome & Call to Order

Committee Co-Chair Maureen Copelof welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 2:04pm.

B. Certification of Quorum

Quorum was certified by Committee Co-Chair Maureen Copelof.

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C. Approval of Agenda

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

D. Approval of Minutes from March 2, 2022 Meeting

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

E. Updates

Conserving Carolina: Letter of Support approved by Transylvania County Commissioner meeting on March 14th, 2022. Working on RAISE grant application due April 14th and working on a grant from Emergency Management Commission (EMC) that has \$15 million available and will be used for taking down trestles over Davidson River & Davidson River Rd. The EMC deadline for submission is tomorrow. A committee has been made from Friends of Ecusta Trail and Conserving Carolina and are meeting Monday to talk about expenditure for funds raised from Capital Campaign and funds raised from legislative appropriations. The rail corridor & its current state needs to be addressed; Henderson County has decided to open theirs up and clean it up. The current cost estimate is 20 million dollars for Transylvania County section and includes the 30% contingency which is a very conservative estimate; with the RAISE you are obligated to build what you propose no matter the cost. Overhead is built into that estimate for contract administration, construction management, and testing. We have been advised to utilize NCDOT. Even though it costs money to use them for the application, it is federal money that flows through NCDOT and it's easier to let them deal with the Federal Highway Administration. Once we receive the grant, the entire project has to be completed in 9 years.

Planning Dept: Working with Alta and partners to build our RAISE application and to get Letters of Support. Julie Metz has created template to try to get more letters of support. We are asking Oscar Blues to do a Mobility Hub, which will help make our application more of a transportation project, making it like a park & ride; people can park at Oscar Blues and ride their bike to work. We are sending photos/graphics for the application; will have draft next week of application.

Transylvania Co: Requests that we keep the board involved & up to date. The County is getting a lot of comments/questions and they should be routed to Conserving Carolina or Friends of the Ecusta Trail. If anything needs to come to the county board, let them know and they will get it on the commissioner agenda.

Tourism Development Authority: TDA board pledged 1 million dollars if RAISE comes through and will work closely with the county; voiced continued support for trail. This is the largest pledge ever in the history of the TDA. Money is collected from the tourists and is supporting the project.

Henderson Co: City of Hendersonville manager is not going forward with the RAISE grant this year and will reapply next year. They are looking to connect the Ecusta Trail to the Oklawaha Trail and are working hard to raise money and get grants.

NCDOT: Needs the template for the Letter of Support from DOT immediately since it has to go through the Raleigh office. For the Davidson River Rd bridge, there is ongoing discussions about wanting to

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remove the bridge over the road and over the river under one contract. Conserving Carolina will be helping with this under the application for the EMC grant being submitted tomorrow.

City: A meeting is being held tomorrow to discuss the administrative costs built into the application estimate. The cost estimate includes a 5% escalation cost per year and includes that all existing bridges will have to be replaced. The cost estimate, once completed, will be sent out to the board members. Discussions on maintenance of the trail and the ongoing safety issues are being looked at. The MOUs need to be addressed after the RAISE grant is approved (between Ecusta Rails to Trails LLC and the City of Brevard) regarding ownership.

Friends of Ecusta Trail: Focus is on fundraising; 7.5 million dollars is available from the state but there was an issue with the language in the scope of work and being corrected when they are back in session. Another \$600,000 came in from the state and people are working on the specifics on how it can be spent and reporting requirements. A local fundraiser at Ecusta Brewing was supported a week or so ago and is keeping the buzz going about the trail. There is also a call for volunteers April 23rd for cleanup in Henderson County. A presentation was given at Brevard College in an Environmental Science class about Sustainability and the trail was used as a project for the class. We may be able to use some of the language in our grant applications that come out of this project. They have been putting comments out about Madison Cawthorn's latest statement about the Ecusta Trail being "super communist".

Blue Zones Project: Working on Letters of Support and fundraising.

Citizens/Public: Appreciative of county commissioners support of the Ecusta Trail. Rotary Club of Brevard and Pisgah Forest are present and happy of the progress and supportive of the project. Both Rotary Clubs plus the Cedar Mtn. chapter have come together as the "Rotary Clubs of Transylvania County" and are working with Blue Zone Project. The goal is to add value to this project. Rotary Club's vision is wealth, wisdom, and work and wants to find opportunities to add these values to the project. They are consulting with the Rotary Clubs of Henderson County and will be helping out any way they can.

G. Next Steps

City-

- We need to get the RAISE grant application in on time.
- The agricultural community and land owners along the trail want to know the regulations. There needs to be communication with landowners along the trail about policy for the trail.
- To address comments by Madison Cawthorn, the City managers are to talk to the other counties/cities and decide on what to say if anything.
- We need to continue to raise more money.
- Once the RAISE application is completed it will be sent to everyone on the board.
- Steve Harrell will work with all the managers on policy and work on no trespassing posting.

Conserving Carolina-

- Policy needs to be established and some safety issues with current conditions (trestles) need to be addressed.
- Posted "No Trespassing" needed on trestles ASAP.

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- Will work on notifications about trail not being open to the public yet. (Press Release and FB/News/Radio).

Henderson Co:

- Transylvania Co and Hendersonville need to be on the same page, by small task force set up by Steve Harrell.

H. Set Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Brevard/Transylvania County Ecusta Trail Advisory Board is scheduled for Wednesday, April 27, 2022 at 3:30pm. (4th Wednesday of the month at 3:30pm)

I. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:13pm.

x Maureen Copelof
Maureen Copelof, Chair, Council Member

Minutes Approved- 4/27/22

x Katherine Buzby
Katherine Buzby, City Planner