

Brevard/Transylvania County  
Ecusta Trail Advisory Board

Date: April 27, 2022

Location: City Hall Council Chambers

**Members:**

- ✓ Maureen Copelof, Mayor
- ✓ Mac Morrow, Council Member
- ✓ Larry Chapman, County Commissioner
- Addison Bradley, NC Cooperative Extension Dir (absent)
- ✓ Clark Lovelace, Tourism Development Authority
- ✓ Mark Tooley, Conserving Carolina
- John Ditillo, Friends of Ecusta Trail (absent)
- ✓ Mark Burrows, Blue Zones Project
- Lauren Wise, At-Large Member (absent)
- ✓ Chuck McGrady, Henderson County Advisory Board Chair, Ex Officio (arrived at 3:50pm)
- ✓ Steve Harrell, City Manager, Ex Officio
- Paul Ray, Planning Director, Ex Officio (absent)
- ✓ Meredith Carli, At-Large Member

**Staff:**

- ✓ Katherine Buzby, City Planner
- ✓ Aaron Bland, Assistant Planning Director

**Guests:**

- ✓ Kieran Roe, Conserving Carolina
- ✓ Vicki Eastland, Land of Sky (via Zoom)
- ✓ John Wayne Hardison, Bartlett Tree Experts
- ✓ Lorraine Nash, Trail Talk Newsletter
- ✓ Rebekah Robinson, Conserving Carolina (via Zoom)
- ✓ Ralph Miller, Rotary Club of Brevard
- ✓ Tad Fogel, Friends of Ecusta Trail

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**A. Welcome & Call to Order**

Committee Co-Chair Maureen Copelof welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:30pm.

**B. Certification of Quorum**

Quorum was certified by Committee Co-Chair Maureen Copelof.

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**C. Approval of Agenda**

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

**D. Approval of Minutes from March 30, 2022 Meeting**

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

**E. Updates**

**Conserving Carolina:** A grant was submitted to the State Emergency Management to remove the trestles over Davidson River and Davidson River Rd for \$125,000 and they should hear a decision sometime in May. A press release was in the paper about the closure of the rail line in Transylvania County and are working on signage to keep people off the rail line. Signs will be posted at the trestles and potential entry areas. The big news is the RAISE grant application was submitted for \$15 Million and we will hear sometime in August. They are working with government consultants to make sure the elected officials and folks at every level are aware of this project and understand why they should be supporting it. The City will go to Washington DC in August and Conserving Carolina will be there in May to prediscuss the application and make them aware of the project. They have met with the City Attorney Mac McKeller about finalizing the lease language between Ecusta Rails to Trails LLC and the City which will hopefully be done in the summer prior to the Washington DC trip. Letters are going out to landowners on the trail about access and where to go for information and about trail closure.

**Planning Dept:** The final draft of the pedestrian/bike plan has been completed by Alta and will go to the steering committee for the Parks, Trails, & Recreation Committee in May. Then it is reviewed by NCDOT since it is funded by a NCDOT grant and needs to comply with their best practices and templates for these types of plans. This review usually takes a month or two. Then the plan will go to the Planning Board and ultimately City Council. The plan is several months out from adoption but is in the homestretch now. The Ecusta Trail is one of the action items identified in that plan. For the RAISE grant, the entire application and all the documents can now be found on our website, [cityofbrevard.com/RAISE](http://cityofbrevard.com/RAISE).

**Transylvania Co:** The Commissioners did approve the letter of support and they agree with the decision of Conserving Carolina to close the trail for now because of all the complaints they have been receiving.

**Tourism Development Authority:** TDA pledged 1 million dollars and 1/3rd of the money will be going to the infrastructure. The dollars are from the Fund balance and will need to be spread out over a couple of years. A Strategic Action Plan is in the works (w/Conserving Carolina) for the French Broad River and the 2 projects overlap and will work together.

**Henderson Co:** The advisory board met last month with their engineers to give options on building various parts of the trail, like how to improve the trestle sections or how wide the trail needs to be. Fundraising is still ongoing with Conserving Carolina and Friends of Ecusta Trail and by mid-summer they will have a naming ceremony to recognize all the corporations and individuals that have been involved. The board is pulling together numbers on how much has been raised altogether and the costs incurred so far and should be complete by summer.

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NCDOT: (Per Land of Sky) NCDOT rolled out the new draft State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) plan yesterday and Transylvania County and Brevard fared very well. Right-of-way acquisitions for the new roundabouts is in the process for the Pisgah Forest Entrance and Wilson Rd. Construction is slated to start in 2024. R5800 project has been pushed back at this time until after the other 2 are completed. Later this year, the crane will be erecting the Davidson River Bridge at the entrance of the Pisgah Forest and it will eventually connect Estatoe Trail back to the Ecusta Trail. Land of Sky has responded to 4 questions about the Federal Lands Access Program that was applied for back in January; this grant is for 1 million dollars towards the engineering design if awarded. The decision on this grant should be made within the next couple of months. RFQs for engineering should follow federal procurement guidelines.

City: The City is partnering with NCDOT who will be the administrator of the funds and construction as part of the RAISE grant application agreement. The City needs to work with both counties to have continuity for the trail. A project ordinance for Estatoe Trail is being heard Monday May 2<sup>nd</sup> at City Council which will allow council to manage the project for many years without having to go back and redo the budget. The Estatoe Trail will be eventually be connected to the Ecusta Trail when construction is completed. The City should hold a town hall meeting for homeowners along the trail to answer questions and concerns. The City wants to listen to the issues, be able to tell people what we are doing about the issues, and have people feel like they can come to us with their questions and they will get an answer. Things are changing constantly and the meeting should be held sometime this summer.

Friends of Ecusta Trail: They are continuing to host volunteer cleanups in Henderson County from town up to Horseshoe and are allowing people to use the rail line. The monthly newsletter is coming out May 1<sup>st</sup>. Fundraising is continuing with Conserving Carolina and is right about the 5-million-dollar mark of the 6.5-million-dollar goal. The Friends will have a booth at the White Squirrel Weekend this year. They have gotten two appropriations from the legislative last year; one for \$100,000 and one for \$500,000. These funds will be steered towards the construction of the piece of the rail that wasn't in the original purchase of the rail line on Main Street in Hendersonville.

Blue Zones Project: They have met with the Friends of Ecusta Trail to talk about how Blue Zones Project can facilitate additional fundraising thru letter writing and reaching out to different people.

Citizens/Public: The federal lawsuit, *Austin v United States*, is in its 9<sup>th</sup> month and it usually takes 2 years for these types of lawsuits to be completed. John Wayne: Bartlett Tree Experts (in cooperation with Chis Faulkner and Wheelhouse) wants to build a rest area with a small covered structure and water station at their facility on Old Hendersonville Hwy along the Ecusta Trail. As a certified arborist, they have the capacity to come look at trees as needed along the Ecusta Trail during construction to consult on tree conditions. They are currently on retainer for the Swamp Rabbit Trail in SC and the board may want to think about that option as well. Tad Fogel: He toured the Silver Comet Trail in Georgia and took pictures of the signs along the trail for examples of the types of signs for governance ideas. He will share the photos with the board.

### G. Next Steps

Waiting to hear on all the grants applied for and continuing to look for new grant opportunities. Also, to continue to work on the lease agreement for the trail and to look at the maintenance costs for the trail.

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**H. Set Date for Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Brevard/Transylvania County Ecusta Trail Advisory Board is scheduled for Wednesday, May 25 2022 at 3:30pm. (4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month at 3:30pm)

**I. Adjourn**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:33pm.

x Maureen Copelof  
Maureen Copelof, Chair, Mayor

Minutes Approved- 5/25/2022

x Katherine Buzby  
Katherine Buzby, City Planner