

Brevard/Transylvania County  
Ecusta Trail Advisory Board

Date: June 28, 2023

Location: City Hall Council Chambers

**Members:**

- ✓ Maureen Copelof, Mayor
- ✓ Mac Morrow, Council Member
- ✓ Larry Chapman, County Commissioner
- Addison Bradley, NC Cooperative Extension Dir (absent)
- ✓ Mark Tooley, Conserving Carolina
- ✓ John Ditillo, Friends of Ecusta Trail (via Zoom)
- ✓ Lauren Wise, At-Large Member
- ✓ Chuck McGrady, Henderson County Advisory Board Chair, Ex Officio
- ✓ Wilson Cooper, City Manager, Ex Officio
- ✓ Paul Ray, Planning Director, Ex Officio
- Meredith Carli, At-Large Member (absent)
- ✓ Clark Lovelace, Tourism Development Authority (arrived at 3:32pm)

**Staff:**

- ✓ Katherine Buzby, City Planner

**Guests:**

- ✓ Jonathan Rich, Transylvania Times
- ✓ Tad Fogel, Friends of Ecusta Trail
- ✓ Kristen Cozza, Conserving Carolina (via Zoom)
- ✓ Rebekah Robinson, Conserving Carolina (via Zoom)
- ✓ Lonnie Watkins, Volkert Inc.
- ✓ Vicki Eastland (via Zoom)
- ✓ Craig Wilson, Citizen
- ✓ John Lanier, Friends of Ecusta Trail Newsletter

**A. Welcome & Call to Order**

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

**B. Certification of Quorum**

Quorum was certified by Committee Chair Maureen Copelof.

**C. Approval of Agenda**

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

**D. Approval of Minutes from May 31, 2023 Meeting**

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

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**E. Updates**

1. City of Brevard- The City has been formally notified of the award of the RAISE grant by Senator Tillis for \$24.59 Million and DOT. The NSFLTP grant has never been officially announced but unofficially the City got this grant too as an oversight by DOT. The City needs to look at the RAISE grant, including the details, requirements, and timing of the grant and figure out how to tie this grant into the engineering being conducted under the FLAP grant in Transylvania County. Henderson County will look into how this money will help them seamlessly continue their construction for their side of the grant. The City will need to put in for the TDA grant that was pledged. Also, the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the County for security, police, maintenance. The City will look at Henderson County for guidance to help move the project along. The strong collaborative partnerships in the application are believed to be why the City got the RAISE grant. The City needs to find out when we actually get the money; the goal is to start construction once the engineering is completed. If the City hears anything officially about NSFLTP, an update will be provided. Congressman Edwards went way above the norm fighting for the City and the Ecusta Trail and we all owe him gratitude. Also the City Manager wants to do a presentation on the grant to City Council and the Transylvania Board of Commissioners, maybe in a joint meeting, with the appropriate players to explain how it all fits together.
2. Henderson County- NCDOT was equally surprised that the City was awarded both grants. They did not get guidance from the federal DOT, so since Senator Tillis made the announcement, they are going with what is publicly out there. The department made a pitch for some additive funds from the other grant to cover overages due to inflation and rising prices on materials. The fear is once the funds are allocated, there will not be enough to cover the entire project as requested. Transylvania County will need to go through the same process as Henderson County: Get engineering done- preliminary plans approved, move to roughly 80% plans, then the permitting process to get to 100%. The construction then has to go out to bid and the prices are not known until the bids come back. The Ecusta Trail has been moving up on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) due to the level of cooperation on the local level to move the project forward and has been noticed by Raleigh. The funding does not cover the trail amenities, things like bathrooms, trailheads, and parking. A MOU has been drafted by the County and it has been circulated to Hendersonville and Laurel Park. It deals with things like leaves, public safety, policing, litter, etc. and will be the subject of the next meeting in 2 weeks. They anticipate by the end of August that they will put the 6 miles (Hendersonville to Horse Shoe) out to bid.
3. NCDOT- (via Lonnie) The RAISE grant letter states that all RAISE grant money must be obligated by September 30, 2027 and expended by September 30, 2032. TP&D's scope has been approved and are working on their fee which will be given to Lonnie on Friday. He will submit it for review (division level approval) and send it to the City (Paul) to review as well. The process will take about 2 weeks on their end (mid-July) they can issue a Notice to Proceed and then TP&D can start work. They must submit a schedule right away to NCDOT to show when they will meet tasks (Task 1- 30% design). Some reviews will need to be done

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at the federal DOT but he will keep a schedule for when the reviews are expected back. The Henderson County letting process is scheduled for August 7<sup>th</sup>. The Transylvania letting will be done by NCDOT, not the municipality.

4. Conserving Carolina- Fundraising continues as they have matching funds and they will know more once they get construction numbers. As for Saluda Grade Trail, the corridor alternative analysis study kick-off was last week and hoping to have the economic impact study done by Clemson back by later this summer. TP&D is the group conducting the corridor alternative analysis study and are looking at ways to connect with the Ecusta Trail but estimates came back too high so they are exploring other options for the connection. They hope to wrap up the study by this time next year or sooner. The SC legislature appropriated 10 million dollars to acquisitions for the Saluda Grade Trail. The trail is estimated at 31 miles, including 4 counties and multiple cities.
5. Planning Department- Is looking at Trailhead options and will discuss with the City Manager. The options, once decided, will come to this board and ultimately City Council.
6. Transylvania County- Requests the City communicate with the County manager for moving forward, from permits to floodplain, etc.
7. Tourism Development Authority- The TDA board has pledged \$1 million dollars total towards the Ecusta Trail. The fiscal year 23-24 budget pledged \$250,000 with the hopes that one of the grants would come in. They are expecting the City to alert them by making a request for the funds once the grant comes in so they can bring to their board and the Board of Commissioners (as anything over \$50,000 must be approved by them to make sure State, County, and Legal requirements are met). If additional funds are left over from their budget, the City can put in an additional request for the funds to go to the Ecusta Trail. The timeline for the money from them is estimated at about 4 years, or less. TDA is based on tourism but also tends to benefit the community as well.
8. Friends of Ecusta Trail- The Tour de Transylvania starts the first stage on Saturday, then at the Depot on Sunday, and on Monday there is a big fundraiser at Oskar Blues and they have pledged 10% of profits to the Ecusta Trail. Friends will have a booth at the fundraiser. On July 14<sup>th</sup>, Cedar Mountain Outpost will have a fundraiser with a bike raffle, music, special beers, etc. The finale is back at Oskar Blues on July 23<sup>rd</sup> to wrap up the tour and recognize people who put it together. They are working with Aaron Baker to try to get Monster Energy to donate to the trail by helping him with a pitch.
9. Public or Citizen Input- Craig Wilson has sent an email to the Mayor offering his services (as an engineer reviewer). The Mayor has sent the email to the City Manager.

**F. Next Steps**

Continue working on ongoing progress as discussed.

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**G. Set Date for Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Brevard/Transylvania County Ecusta Trail Advisory Board is scheduled for July 26, 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 4:26 pm.

x Maureen Copelof

Maureen Copelof, Chair, Mayor

x Katherine Buzby

Katherine Buzby, City Planner

Minutes Approved- 8/30/23