

## **FAIRFIELD PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD**

### **MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 2014**

The monthly meeting of the Fairfield Parks and Recreation Board was conducted on Tuesday, June 17, 2014 at the Fairfield Community Arts Center. Vice-Chair Bob Myron called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Board Members in attendance were: Bob Breen, Bob Myron, Debbie Pennington, Billy Smith and Rodney Spencer. Board Members Craig Keller and Doug Meece were excused from the meeting. Staff member in attendance was James Bell, Parks and Recreation Director; Robert Schappacher, Facilities/Operations Manager; Heidi Schiller, Arts/Programs Manager, and Cyndi Kreke, Secretary.

Also in attendance were Terry Klei, Cincinnati Off-Road Alliance; Alex Mayer, Cincinnati Off-Road Alliance; Guy Stone, Cincinnati Off-Road Alliance; and Austin Hochstetler, Indiana University/Eppley Institute.

**COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE:** None

#### **MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING:**

The May 2014 meeting minutes were approved as written.

#### **REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR:**

**CORA/Harbin Park Mountain Bike Trails Request:** Pursuant to the Board's directive at the May meeting, representatives of the Parks Department, Public Works Department, CORA and a Board representative met at Harbin Park on May 28, 2014, to investigate erosion issues related to the mountain bike trails. It is staff's recommendation that CORA's request to relocate a portion of the trail to alleviate the erosion issue. The Board concurred. The Board also discussed the proposal of posting trail closure signage when weather and/or trail conditions prohibit the usage of the trails. It was discussed that the signage would be informational only and not enforceable. Staff and CORA would continue to investigate criteria for trail closure. Mr. Alex Mayer presented a report from the Hoosier Mountain Bike Association on the Alum Creek Park trail closing criteria (attached).

**CAPRA Update:** Jim Bell reported that the Department's preliminary self-assessment for national accreditation had been approved by the National Recreation and Parks Association/Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) and that an accreditation visit had been scheduled for July 21-25, 2014. The 3 person visiting team would consist of Parks and Recreation professionals from California, Missouri, and North Carolina. As details are finalized, further information will be forwarded to the Board.

**Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update:** Jim Bell introduced Mr. Austin Hochstetler, Project Manager for the Indiana University/Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands. Mr. Hochstetler proceeded to update the Board on the master plan process to date (report attached). Mr. Bell

and Mr. Hochstetler reminded the Board of the stakeholder interviews and the community input meetings that were scheduled for June 24 and 25, 2014, at the Community Arts Center.

**REPORTS OF AD HOC COMMITTEES:**

**City Council Update:** Debbie Pennington reported that at the last City Council meeting, the Mayor recognized the efforts of the Fairfield Post Office beautification committee and presented Keys to the City to the members. Mrs. Pennington was a recipient of a Key to the City. Mrs. Pennington also reported that the City Council had first reading on the entry feature at the Community Arts Center.

**Planning Commission Update:** Bob Myron reported that the Planning Commission had approved the Neyer Development Company's request to raze the Patterson Boulevard shopping center (all buildings other than Planet Fitness); with the condition that the property be securely fenced to avoid dumping on site.

**Environmental Commission Update:** Rodney Spencer reported that the Environmental Commission had scheduled an urban forestry presentation from Wendi Van Buren, ODNR/Urban Forester, at a future EC meeting.

**Cultural Arts Advisory Commission Update:** Bob Breen reported that the Cultural Arts Advisory Commission had review the upcoming 2014 summer events schedule at Village Green Park.

**OLD BUSINESS:** None

**NEW BUSINESS:** None

**COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE:** None

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:** None

The Board and staff presented Vice-Chair Bob Myron with a birthday cake and wished him a happy birthday.

The Board adjourned the meeting at 7:00 PM. The next regular meeting of the Board is scheduled to be held on Tuesday, July 14, 2014, at 6:00 PM, at the Fairfield Greens/South Trace Golf Course.

Cyndi A. Kreke,  
Secretary

We know it is a long read but once you've read through the whole thing, most every question you were thinking of asking is answered.

A great post from Paul Arlinghaus at HMBA (*Hoosier Mountain Bike Association*).

### **Are Alum Creek Trails Closed Due to Wet Riding?**

1) This subject is fraught with peril because it is not cut and dry as to when a trail should or shouldn't be ridden. A muddy trail doesn't just magically dry.

It transitions: very muddy → less muddy → kind of muddy, → Not too muddy → tacky perfection → dry → really dry → dry and dusty

When a trail should or shouldn't be ridden depends on a lot of variables. The trail design, the soil type, the maintenance level of the trail, and the number of riders the trail gets are all factors into the decision. Add to this that even among seasoned trail builders, there is going to be some amount of debate on when a trail is too muddy versus not too muddy. So how is the inexperienced trail user supposed to know when the trail is too muddy?

### **Alum Creek should not be ridden if your tire is leaving a mark, it's that simple.**

2) Riding muddy trails does cause long term damage. The short term impact of the rut is very visible, but the real damage is harder to see. The long term damage is caused by displacement of dirt. When the trail's tread is pushed down while the dirt is soft, the dirt is forced out to the edges of the trail. This causes the trail to sink down and the edge of the trail to rise up. This can cause water to stay on the trail and water is the enemy. While many will argue that riding through a little mud is part of mountain biking, the reality is that most trail riders will ride around the mud to avoid it. This makes the trail wider. Eventually, the result will be a 10 foot wide mud hole that stays wet for many weeks after the last rain. On trails that have fall line sections, the tracks will create channels for water to run down the trail and quickly erode away the trail surface.

**This is classic Alum Creek Phase 1 issue and affects sections of Phase 2. Riders widen the trail to get away from the mud; which then stays wet for weeks rather than days. It slowly widens the trails until the muddy areas can reach hub deep.**

3) Trail design and construction plays a part. On a well designed and built trail in a good location (bench cut trail with grade reversals built on hill sides with good soil) the impact is less than poorly designed trails or trails built in less than ideal locations. The more effort put into bringing a trail up to IMBA standards, the less impact riders will have on the trail (Yes, an IMBA standard trail can be fun and challenging, but that is a different subject). Some trails are on land that makes this hard, but when presented with flat land, armoring and wooden features do provide an option for toughening up the trails. Keep in mind that it is hard to build a really tough trail. Technically you could build a very durable trail anywhere. Enough rock and wood work will build a bomb proof trail. But this requires hard work and money. We could build a full bench cut trail and then armor the tread with crushed gravel. The result would be an all-weather single-track trail. A gravel trail may be less desirable than single track, but it would provide more rideable days.

**Anyone can see the great labor that COMBO (*Central Ohio Mountain Biking Organization*) has expended in trying to toughen Alum Creek trails. In practical terms, we can never really toughen it enough to make it all weather proof, so we rely on riders to use good judgment. Sometimes that means turning around and driving back home without riding.**

4) Perception is important to the cause. I toured Brown County State Park with a park manager from another Park System this past week. I was afraid that we would find some ugly ruts on the trails due to the current trail conditions. We were happy to find the trails in good shape. But as an advocate, I am always afraid someone influential will see our trails at their worst due to a few inconsiderate riders.

**COMBO is constantly concerned that our advocacy efforts to expand trails in Central Ohio are hurt by how badly rutted Alum Creek trails can get during the spring. Land managers from Metro, City, and State control our trail building opportunities, it's up to the whole rider community to keep the trails in good condition. Ask yourself, If Alum Creek is in bad shape, why would a land manager agree to give us more land to develop?**

5) Volunteers are a resource just like trails. We need to protect our volunteers just like the trails we ride. If I ask volunteers to come out and fix mud holes and then do nothing to discourage riders from tearing up their work, it will discourage them from volunteering in the future. Please help your volunteers by respecting their requests with respect to trail usage. No one is a mountain bike advocate because we like telling people not to ride. It sucks and is painful, but we have to protect our trails and our volunteers' efforts.

**So well put, please consider not riding as actually helping and tell your friends not to ride when it is wet.**

6) There are thousands of new riders every year, and we need to welcome and educate them. They are future members and volunteers if we play our cards right, or future thorns in our side if we drive them away. It is hard when you come across a rider covered in mud on your trail. I try to remain calm and first ask them if they have ridden here before. It gives me a chance to understand where they are coming from. The vast majority are new riders. They don't know riding in the mud is damaging, they don't know volunteers build the trails, and most don't have the outdoor experience to know when the trails are going to be muddy. When you talk to them in calm and assertive way, helping them understand the ins and outs of mountain biking and how to learn more, you stand a good chance of winning them over.

7) It will never end. We will have more new riders every year, so don't think this is a short term issue. We will be dealing with this forever. Too many groups and park managers take the easy way out. It doesn't help us that most parks wave people on to their trails when it is muddy. They are taking the easy way out. The reality is that most of our park systems are filled with poorly built and thrashed trails. We are trying to do something better than what other user groups are willing to settle for.

**Just because Alum Creek State Park does not close the trail, does not mean the trails should be ridden. The Park simply doesn't want anyone complaining to them. Of course, back when Alum was a complete mud hole, the Park was ready to close the whole system due to too much damage.**

**COMBO convinced the Park that we could rehabilitate Alum Creek, now we just need help protecting it.**

8) There are a minority of jerks who don't want to help or respect our trails. They typically don't want to admit that they are jerks so they rationalize that riding muddy trails doesn't cause damage, that advocates are Trail Nazis, that they know better than the trail builders, etc.... I am not concerned with winning them over. I just want to get to new riders before they do. That is why it is important that we greet new riders (even if covered in mud) in a positive way. The Jerks will eventually go away when they realize they aren't going to win. And, do not engage these people in name calling contests. They do not want a calm factual based discussion. If you know who they are, talk to their friends, bike teams, bike shop, etc. Quietly, behind the scenes, instead of engaging them on forums. Use peer pressure to your advantage.

9) Trails need positive role models on bad days. I try to swing by my local park on days when I know it should not be ridden. Especially those tempting days, when it is warm and sunny but muddy. I want to be the person the new riders meet when they pull in, rather than those experienced riders who would set a bad example.

10) Build a variety of trails. It is tempting for experience riders to only build intermediate level and above dirt single track. Think about adding a tamer but hardened-surface beginner trail. If riders come to the park and have an option other than the muddy dirt trail, they are more likely to stay off the soft trail. Sell these as kids' trails and build educational features off the side to add fun options. We haven't done this in Indiana yet, but something that I am thinking about after listening to Woody Keene's talk at the HMBA annual meeting.

**COMBO is greatly expanding the beginner trail just for this reason.**

11) Pick your battles. If you make a big deal about someone riding on a marginal day, then you will likely waste a lot of time arguing the thin line between too wet and not quite too wet. There are days I would pass on riding but wouldn't say anything to those riding. Pick battles that are very easy to win.

12) Even with trail closures and requests to avoid muddy trails, riders today have many more rideable days than we had 5 or 10 years ago. The increased trail access, improved trail design, and constant maintenance we do make the trails dry faster.

**Phase 1 is getting better but needs time to dry and Phase 2 does dry faster, that won't be true if it becomes damaged.**

13) Trails need tires and are resilient. Part of what makes a trail a trail is the compaction that comes from foot, tire, or hoof traffic. Accept that your trails will see some traffic when they

shouldn't, that they will survive with some TLC, and that the whole point is to get people out in the woods riding their bikes. Challenge yourselves to learn new trail building techniques to make your trails tougher.

14) Signs. If anyone figures out a sign that solves all these issues, let me know. You need to put up signs so that when you talk to someone about the issue, the signs back you up, but don't count on them to solve the problem.

15) Races: Races have a lot of positives and some negatives. Hopefully the trail builders are part of the decision to have a race and what would cause the race to be canceled. I know that many of my volunteers want a race on their local trail (home course advantage) and that I want riders from around the region to have a reason to see the great trail we have built. We know that there is a risk mother nature will not play nice. I try very hard to make sure the race goes one as planned. The past two years this has meant I was at Town Run at 7:00AM inspecting the trail. I know the trail better than most and understand the impact that holding the race will have on my volunteers. Yes, a race in less than ideal situations can create repair work, but I feel my volunteers understand the positives impact of the race and will be happy to repair some level of damage. At the end of the day, the promoter needs to ensure the local trail workers are part of the process. Just because a race was held in less than ideal conditions, does not justify riding trails regardless of trail conditions. Also, each trail system will have its own threshold for holding a race or canceling.

You are likely tired of reading and I am tired of typing, so I will wrap up. Protecting our natural resources is very important to the mountain bikers as a user group in our nation's parks. Mountain bikers are leaders in trail building skills, and volunteer support among our park's users groups. Even if at times your local trail stewards seem over protective, please respect their requests and take some time to pitch in and help them.

Thanks for writing this Paul.

Thank you,

COMBO Leadership

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Julie Good  
COMBO President

# Fairfield Parks and Recreation Master Plan

## Park Board Meeting

June 17, 2014

- Introductions
  - Austin Hochstetler, CPRP
    - Project Manager
    - Community-focused with a parks and recreation background
  - Fairfield Park Board
    - Who are you?!
- Goals and Objectives of Project
- Create a Comprehensive Park and Recreation Master Plan that will guide the Parks and Recreation Department for the next 10 years.
- Position the Parks and Recreation Department's goals within the context of City of Fairfield's 20 Year Comprehensive Plan (2009).
- Goals and Objectives of Project
- Engage city residents and stakeholders through interviews, survey, and public meetings to register their input for the plan.
- Complete a needs assessment that ensures the City of Fairfield is providing an appropriate level of service for its facilities to its residents.
- Fulfill a requirement for the Commission for Accreditation for Park and Recreation Agencies accreditation process.
  - Project Plan: Schedule
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Conducted by Hochstetler and Hackerd
- 30 minutes each
- Purpose
  - Assisted public engagement question development
  - Helped us understand what the city/department wants/needs
  - Provided necessary contextual background information that will inform Eppley research
- Survey
- Quantitative community assessment
- Ongoing
- Preliminary findings suggest:
  - High interest in special events such as concerts and Farmer's Market
  - High desire for evening programming (5:00pm or later)
  - Email, website, and social media
  - High interest in maintaining what you have
  - Connectivity
  - Master Plan Emerging Themes
- 1. Community Relationships
- 2. Recreation Programming
- 3. Organizational Readiness
- 4. Community Building
- 5. Asset Management
- 6. Financial Sustainability

Public Input Sessions:

June 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>

## Community Arts Center

### Interviews:

As scheduled

- Next Steps
- Benchmarking
- Process of identifying similar cities with parks departments comparable to Fairfield
- Comparing the same set of features within these categories:
  - Demographics and Geography
  - Facilities and Operations
  - Staffing Levels
  - Finance, Budget, and Revenue
  - Other Agency Support
  - Programs
  - Specialized Facilities
  - Benchmarking
  - Fairfield Parks and Recreation
  - Bloomington Parks and Recreation
  - Blue Ash Parks and Recreation
  - Dublin Parks and Recreation
  - Kettering Parks and Recreation
  - Miamisburg Parks and Recreation
  - Springdale Parks and Recreation
  - Mason Parks and Recreation
  - Montgomery Parks and Recreation
  - West Chester Parks and Recreation
  - Westerville Parks and Recreation
- Needs Assessment
  - Benchmarking
  - Survey Results
  - Interviews
  - Level of Service (LOS) Analysis
- Contact Information

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