

THE FERRY COUNTY RAIL TRAIL PARTNERS
SECOND ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

March 29, 2009

The Second Annual Meeting of THE FERRY COUNTY RAIL TRAIL PARTNERS ["FCRTP"], was called to order at 2:45 pm, March 29, 2009, at The Old Fire Hall, 29 N. Clark Ave., Republic, WA, the place designated for such meeting. The meeting was called upon with sufficient notice of the date, time, and place of the meeting. The following Directors were present: Bob Whittaker, Melissa Rose, Sarah Spark, DiAnne Hewitt, and Judie Cribby. The following additional individuals signed in: John Eikelman, David Taylor, Roberta Weller, Barton Wert, Kisa, Brenda Starkey, Dick Slagle, Dave Miller, Linell Harvey, Karen Anderson, Blanche Montbroussous, Janet Bosley, Dave Robinson, Sage McKee, Molly Detweiler, Michael Petty, Dan Donley, Paul Cribby, Michael Sternberg, Jane Faller, James Tucson, Randy Sage, Suzie Sage, Rick Lybarger, Ellen Picken, and Steve Anthes, for a total of 26 sign-ins. There were an additional 5 people who did not sign in. A copy of the Sign In sheet is attached. Together with the 5 Directors, a total of 36 were in attendance.

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, AND CHANGES TO AGENDA: President Bob Whittaker welcomed everyone, the Directors were presented, introductions were made and refreshments offered. An Agenda was circulated for additions.

SECRETARY'S REPORT: Spark gave a brief update of our corporate filings to date, including our accepted application for federal non-profit status under 501©(3). She announced that not only was the Corporate Record Book available during meetings for perusal, but that, as of January 2009, all Minutes would be posted on our website.

Spark then read the Minutes of the Last Annual Meeting. Motion was made by Steve A. to accept the Minutes as presented; seconded by Blanche; motion unanimously carried by those who had been in attendance at that meeting.

TREASURER'S REPORT: DiAnne presented a FCRTP Monthly Treas

Repost [sic] for March, 2009, indicating a current bank balance of \$2,390.87, a copy of which is attached.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH: Judie, our newest Director and Community Outreach Coordinator, informed the group that she had joined this organization as an adjacent landowner and believes that non-motorized trail is the best for the community.

Judie reported that FC RTP will be a presence at various events, including the Conservation Fair, Barrel Derby Days, Prospectors' Days, Ferry County Fair, and the Mountain Bike Festival. There was lively discussion regarding the parades, and Blanch agreed to help organize participants. Judie indicated that she is always open to suggestions and ideas on how to best promote our organization.

Bob reiterated his desire to have as much communication with as many groups as possible, such as his recent visit with the Back Country Horsemen last week. He expressed our willingness to go wherever we are invited to speak, or to hear others' opinions, ideas, concerns, suggestions, etc.

Bob announced that there was a potential fund raiser being planned, with guest lecturer Jim Whittaker, the first American to climb Everest. It is hoped that this event will be as early as April, details to be announced.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? Melissa spoke about the progress of the last year, how the rails and ties have been removed. The adjacent landowners have supported rail banking and non-motorized in great numbers, according to petitions and comments entered into public record. Many emails and letters were received by the Commissioners, as well as our Directors. At last count of public comment, only 5 Ferry County residents were on record for wanting a motorized rail trail; 188 residents wanted non-motorized. Now there are new numbers, with more than 700 verifiable signatures, with at least 650 of those Ferry County residents, wanting a non-motorized rail trail. That is almost 10% of the County who has cared enough to have their voices heard, a strong percentage by standard survey formulas.

The rail banking occurred in mid December, 2008, and Melissa reported as follows:

FCRTP had hoped to support the County in going after planning grants and funding in general immediately after the railbanking went through.

Funding is a methodical yet straight forward process and much discussion was held regarding the disappointment of not being “shovel-ready” or even having a trail use designation by this time. Beyond the funds available to rail trails in Washington State there are hundreds of thousands of dollars available through the Stimulus Package funds in the form of Transportation Enhancements: money allocated for infrastructure projects such as ours but that are time sensitive - projects must be readied, funds applied for and spent in a timely manner. However our rail trail project is unable to proceed even to the early stages of funding protocol as there is still no trail designation.

Instead, in December, before the term of new Commissioner Bob Heath – on record for being in favor of non-motorized but willing to hear all sides -- began, the then sitting Commissioners, Blankenship, Bond and Miller, opted for forming a Ferry County Trail Advisory Committee to advise the commissioners as to the best use of the rail corridor and County trails beyond that. We had hoped that they would take advantage of our experience and expertise of public comment recorded over the last 3 years, and act on the directive from the community at large recommendations before them, preferable with the will of the majority in mind.

In a regularly scheduled Commissioners’ meeting in January, we delivered a letter, in tandem to two Updates to adjacent landowners via email and regular mail, which requested that no advisory committee be formed and, instead, a decision by the Commissioners be made. Further, if no decision was forthcoming, we requested a committee comprised of a group of advocates for a non-motorized trail. Lastly, if that was denied, that our organization be accorded at least one specific seat on the 9-person committee.

It was several weeks later when the notice appeared in the “Job Opportunity” section of the newspapers, notable not in the “Legal Notices” section. Further, it was advertised in Omak and Colville. Commissioners’ Clerk Debbie Bechtol was asked to write Bylaws for the committee. Much discussion ensued as to how this committee was being treated differently from others, such as the KRAB. This new committee will hold 9 seats, with none designated for FCRTP.

Bob expressed our frustration at this lack of designated FCRTTP seat. He queried that if the folks sitting on the committee don't have expertise with funding, rights-of-way issues, and/or rail corridor, how can they be expected to offer viable and informed recommendations. We have put in many hours over 3 years, visiting and riding/walking other trails, meeting with trail bosses/managers and funders of rail trails. We have knowledge specific to rail trails.

Q: Will this advisory board make decisions for all of us?

A: No, it will recommend to the Commissioners and they will make decisions. Bob said that there is very real concern that the public input is being set aside, and queried DiAnne as to the City of Republic's ORV committee. DiAnne indicated that her experience did not go well; that there was no facilitator; and it was a complete waste of everyone's time, with the City deciding as it wanted.

One meeting attendee discussed his horse riding experience with other multi-use trails as not being too bad, in that most motorized folks pull over and turn their motors off. But there are many who don't, and they ruin the experience for everyone else.

We were asked if we have an adjacent landowners list and whether they all live on the land (the landowner had not been receiving the mailings but did not live on the land), to which we responded that yes, a list has been created, though we know it has flaws. There were 8 adjacent landowners present, and everyone was requested to contact us with the names and addresses of anyone they knew who had not been receiving our mailings.

Bob reiterated that the most important task for the advisory committee will be funding, and went into a thorough discussion as to funding sources, explaining that dovetailing between the two main rail trail funders in Washington: WSDOT Transportation Enhancement (TE) and the Recreation Conservation Office, Washington Wildlife Recreation Program (RCO/WWRP), is the key to securing grant monies for rail trails of this size.

Q: Will they still fund if the trail's all broken up?

A: Each project earns points with at a board meeting of the allocators. As

soon as they see something such as a non-motorized bicycle/pedestrian trail broken into 4 segments, intermingled with motorized users, as suggested by the Commissioners, fewer points will be awarded, if any at all. Specifically, the Commissioners' suggested action runs the risk that funds will be greatly reduced or, more likely, not awarded at all; the project could then be passed over and funds granted to other non-motorized specific projects meeting the desire of committee and legal requirements of the funding sources.

Bob explained that there is a tried and true formula for securing funds for connecting communities with non-motorized options. There is no reason to "reinvent the wheel". Many attending the meeting expressed that the Commissioners should use the models available to them, and not waste more time.

Bob introduced the Idaho Panhandle system of multi-use trails as an example, whose director recently advised Bob to "not let your trail go motorized". The areas where motors are allowed have seen a marked increase in thefts, signs stolen or destroyed, increased law enforcement required. Those areas of non-motorized have been enjoyed significantly fewer problems. When asked about the source of their funding, Bob indicated it was a collaborative effort between their Tribe, the County, and Super Fund monies.

One person voiced his opinions that we are fighting 2 Commissioners who are in favor of motorized and who will set up an advisory committee to say anything. He strongly believes that we need to have an election, which will cost \$6,000, and to which he pledged \$500.00.

That same individual also said FC RTP needs to be a strong presence and loud voice in the community, convincing the people. He pledged another \$500.00 for balloons touting a non-motorized trail to fill the main street during the Barrel Derby Days and Prospectors' Day parades. Much discussion ensued.

Another opined that Blankenship is running the whole show, and that they want an easily controlled group. The Commissioners know it's a time-delaying and stalling tactic, and we should be contacting our legislators in Olympia for help. Most people expressed dismay at what they expect to be a secret committee. Brenda Starkey informed the group that, since it was appointed by a public entity, it would be a public meeting. Anyone will be able to attend, though

not everyone's input might get into record.

A comment was made that the Commissioners are not interested in funds for this County. This person had 30 jobs to hire in Census and was told by the Commissioners that it was not County business.

Melissa requested more letters to the editors, public comment, and help with research projects FCRTTP has undertaken.

Another said that the adjacent landowners are the most effective group, and suggested having a meeting with them; saying that "the rest of this is about someone else using the land for their own purposes." Plans were made regarding meeting with the landowners. It was suggested having projected actions at the adjacent landowners meeting.

WHERE ARE WE GOING? Much of Bob's intended discussion was already covered, and he reiterated our frustration that this rail trail is not on any funding list, "wish list", or on "any funder's radar". Our group must continue to go forward with educating the community as to existing models, funding complexities, raising funds and gathering/submitting public comments from our community at large and adjacent landowners.

Bob introduced FCRTTP's newly formed "Surface Advisory Committee", with Keith Wakefield and Nils Larsen at its helm. FCRTTP is interested in having a few more on this board, preferably with interests in jogging and horse riding.

Bob discussed the "**Safe Routes to School (SR2S)**" program (a WSDOT TE fund that requires a school element and no matching funds), and how it could apply to this rail corridor. For example there was \$11 million available in Washington state under this project in 2007, which can be used for sidewalks, paving and signage within a two mile radius of a school – again, the rail corridor being a natural feature for inclusion in a plan since it is adjacent to Curlew School property and connects the School to the town of Curlew. Bob detailed that the Curlew School Board had voted to pass on a suggested SR2S grant application that the County proposed, that would have spent SR2S funds on an existing Bike/Pedestrian path that in part parallels the Bolder Pass hwy/county road and road into town. In passing on this less than optimum safe route option it is believed the school hope to collect more

info related to the two mile radius and come up with a more comprehensive plan and apply next SR2S funding cycle. **NOTE:** if money from the TE fund for the old bike/pedestrian route on the hwy was granted it would likely preclude TE funds from being spent on the rail corridor. New information was presented that the County has now applied for TE funds to fix the old safe route under the “TE Bicycle Pedestrian Safety” grant – a grant that does NOT require a school element but is still part of the TE fund and if granted will make getting TE funding for the rail corridor more unlikely.

It was commented that there is little-to-no local snowmobile abuse in Danville because they now know everyone will be going across the trail & thus realize they too should behave.

A Back Country Horsemen said that in Curlew, where the trail crosses the highway, it appears that someone has been scooping grave our of rail bed ballast; we made note of it.

Q: What did the Commissioners say about the extent of power to be given to the advisory board?

A: It is not clear how much power will be given to this board & from where that power originates. Brenda Starkey might know more on this.

Bob reiterated that this is the real concern regarding the advisory board. Will they have any qualifications to try & offer sensible recommendations, or not? Will the motorized side, which so far has made no public presentation of any plan to fund & develop the rail corridor their way, be able to present something behind the more closed doors of this board, rather than in a more open public setting? Will there be one presentation or nine—one of each persons vision of the trail or?

Q: Could we post links to funding information on our site?

A: we have several posted but will keep updating them.

Brenda Starkey said that the key to this advisory committee is to get who you trust to apply for it.

It was suggested that we need to recapture the same feeling we had

when this whole thing originated, the energized feeling of a community working together to build a great rail trail—need to reenergize!

Another suggestion was that we consider a mail-out survey that FC RTP does without County support. Get an independent agency to receive & tabulate it—formulate it with a printing protocol that cannot be unfairly duplicated. Digital Documents might be able to print items with individual, unique & sequential numbers, or something along this line to allow it to be fair.

This was followed by some discussion as to why a county-wide vote might not be the answer as that also was suggested. The FC RTP holding an adjoining landowner (ALO) meeting as soon as possible to inform the ALOs about the BOCC's Advisory Committee plans was also discussed. A facilitator was suggested to ensure unbiased comment from all. Someone reminded the group that the title still has not been recorded.

Bob briefly discussed the potential that the other side of the ROW, from Laurier to Kettle Falls is now slated for abandonment & implications of this.

Bob read the Jim Schumacher/Ken Barker/TCMRA letter to our group. It appeared to many that we are still forced to fight against the Golden Tiger Pathway idea that the BOCC says is an example of a Ferry County Rail Trail, while the BOCC ignores frequent user /ALO conflict on that path and that it is an incorrect use of funding sources (motorize and non).

The suggestion was made that Hwy. 21 might provide an alternative parallel motorized access pathway to Curlew when it is redone this summer.

One participant wanted to ensure that any survey we might do on our own would include those who do not live here but own land adjacent to the ROW. She also said she really wants to see an ALO meeting & see it soon, a statement the other adjoining landowners in the room echoed.

Theories of why the BOCC are letting the clock run on making Advisory Committee appointments were discussed. It was also mentioned that Commissioner Miller does not want to take any money for any initial signage, etc. that would tie the County to any particular designation. ALOs asked how

are they supposed to deal with initial signage & blockages & other things desperately needed to keep trespassers off for now & to try & control the corridor?

The idea of an ALO meeting as soon as possible was left on the table with the Board agreeing to discuss this possibility as soon as possible.

NEXT ANNUAL MEETING will be in March, 2010.

NEXT DIRECTORS' MEETING will be Thursday, April 16, at 6:00 pm, at The Old Fire Hall. All were reminded that everyone is welcome to attend the Board meetings, which are scheduled for the 3rd Thursday of each month.

There being no further business to come, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah K.W. Spark, Secretary