

TRAILS COMMITTEE REPORT – Parks and Commons – February 2, 2021

Work sessions – After consultation with PCC Chair, Dawn, we will resume Trails and YIPS! work sessions

Signage project – The four signs should be arriving by the middle of February. We are working with Yachats Public Works Department to get their assistance in installing them.

Trail maps – Joanne, with the assistance of Mark Shepherd, installed 6 plastic boxes on trail posts in town and filled them with folding trails maps; less than two weeks later, two were already empty. The boxes were purchased with funds from a VtF grant.

Boardwalk Project – The Yachats Trails Committee recommends that the City renew its efforts to undertake design and construction of the proposed Boardwalk, located along the south edge of Ocean View Drive between Beach Street and Highway 101 (See accompanying documents). For simplicity, this improvement has been referred to as “the Boardwalk”, but it may be constructed of materials other than those which are commonly associated with a boardwalk structure. Among the many reasons we believe this project to be beneficial for the community:

1) Safety for pedestrians and hikers: Currently there is no shoulder along the road for pedestrians, and nearly every person walks within the street. This includes the elderly, people with strollers, children, and those using wheelchairs. This is clearly a major safety issue. The existing approximately 18 inch wide gravel road edge, which drops off steeply toward the river, does not provide a safe place to walk. The safety issue is further aggravated when delivery trucks occupy one of the lanes to service nearby restaurants. Due to the steepness of the drop-off towards the river, there have been several instances with minor injuries where pedestrians have fallen into the blackberry, but lucky to have done so to keep them from falling down the bluff to the river many feet below.

2) Pacific Coast Trail: The state has mandated the completion of the Pacific Coast Trail. This section is a part of that trail, and is the only portion of the trail within Yachats where there is no actual dedicated pedestrian walking surface.

3) Erosion: Currently the south side of Ocean View Drive where the Boardwalk would be constructed has experienced significant erosion of the roadside gravel edging, and the City would benefit from a more permanent surface.

4) Esthetics: The City would benefit from the installation of this proposed Boardwalk for all of the above reasons and more. If designed properly, it could be a “feature” for the City.

The Yachats Trails Committee has prepared a narrative of recommendations concerning design of the Boardwalk; “Boardwalk – Recommendations by the Yachats Trails Committee” dated January 26, 2021. This project would be a major project for the City, which should remain the contracting entity for design, construction and administration. In addition to the aforementioned document, the Trails Committee should be consulted, especially during the design phases, as upon the Boardwalk’s completion the Committee will be tasked with its maintenance. Required archaeological investigations have been completed, and the project is ready for design phases.

A note from the leaders of the Yachats Trails Committee

In view of the significant changes that have occurred, and are likely to occur, in the make-up of the City Council, the Parks and Commons Commission and the City Administration, the Trails Committee feels that a short statement of our structure, activities and preferred mode of operation should be useful.

For several years, since the departure of Lauralee Svendsgaard, the Trails Committee has been run by a group of five, without a Chair. The five leaders are Joanne Kittel, Loren Dickinson, Jan Brown, Bob Langley and Wally Orchard. We all bring different skills to the table and, while we do not always agree with one another, we feel that we work well together and that Yachats Trails is a well-run organization. We neither want to nor see the need to have a single leader. The Trails Committee is responsible for maintaining and improving trails throughout Yachats and, through YIPS! (the Yachats Invasive Plants Subcommittee), we also remove invasive weeds on city property. We have our own website (www.yachatstrails.org) and also feature on the city's website. Our regular work sessions are held on the first and third Saturdays of every month.

We report to the Parks and Commons Commission, and one or two of us are usually present at meetings of the Commission. We are provided with an operating budget that has always proved adequate. At first we were given a free hand with respect to expenditure against our budget. We submitted claims for reimbursement of our expenses directly to the City Office. We kept careful records of our expenditure and always stayed well within budget. This simple system seemed to work well for all concerned. More recently we were required to route all reimbursement claims through the Chair of Parks and Commons. Also, since the Covid-19 pandemic arrived, we have had to get pre-approval from City Hall for any significant expenditures.

The Trails leaders firmly believe that these new requirements are no longer necessary and that we are very well prepared to spend our budgeted funds wisely.

We are planning to resume our regular work parties, beginning on February 6th. Late last year we were instructed by the Chair of Parks and Commons to cancel a planned work party on account of the Covid-19 situation. We would prefer to be able to make such calls ourselves, subject to respecting all governmental guidelines and requirements. We have many important activities that can be done by widely-dispersed individuals. We practice social distancing, wear masks, ask participants to bring their own tools, and do not socialize. Also, we stress to our members that they have no obligation to attend and should only attend if they are completely comfortable with our self-imposed regulations.

WE five leaders have considerable expertise in various aspects of trail design and construction. When the City contemplates any work affecting trails, we should be asked for input. We would much rather get involved in the planning stage than be expected to maintain a poorly-designed trail after it is built. A case in point is the northernmost access from Aqua Vista to the ocean, where some escallonia has been removed and fencing is to be installed. What sort of trail surface is planned where the escallonia has been removed? We are concerned that it may become a muddy path like the southern access trail.

We would also like to be heard before plans for the configuration of Ocean View Drive between the Yachats State Park and 7th Street are finalized. We have given a lot of thought as to how best to accommodate

pedestrians on this section of the 804 Trail and should be able to make valuable contributions to the conversation regarding this development.

It has now been some time since the Trails Committee alerted the City to the urgent need for a pedestrian walkway along Ocean View Drive between Highway 101 and (approximately) Beach Street. "The Boardwalk" is the subject of a separate representation we are making to the Parks and Commons Commission.

In summary, the main points again:

- The five trails leaders would like to remain as five equal participants. Anyone wanting to deal with the Trails Committee can simply get in touch with one of us.
- We want to our annual budget to constitute an approval to spend those funds without having to get further approval for individual purchases.
- We want to be able to make our own decisions about holding or not holding work sessions.
- We would like to be consulted before the City undertakes any projects that may impact the Trails Committee.
- We would like to see the Boardwalk project come to fruition without further delay.

Joanne Kittel, Loren Dickinson, Jan Brown, Bob Langley, Wally Orchard