

CITY OF UKIAH
PATHS, OPEN SPACE, AND CREEKS COMMISSION MINUTES
Regular Meeting Held via Teleconference
July 2, 2020
3:00 p.m.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Ginevra Chandler
Megan Parker Prout
Diane Knox
Jeanne Wetzel Chinn
Susan Knopf

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

STAFF PRESENT

Sage Sangiacomo, City Manager
Craig Schlatter, Community Development Director
Mireya G. Turner, Planning Manager

OTHERS PRESENT

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order virtually at or about 3:00 p.m. via the City's GoTo Meeting platform.

Chair Chandler presiding

2. ROLL CALL

Roll call was called.

3. CORRESPONDENCE

None

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the March 5, 2020 meeting.

Motion/Second Parker Prout/Knox to approve the minutes of the March 5, 2020 meeting.

5. COMMENTS FROM AUDIENCE ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None

6. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Discussion with City Staff on Orr Street Bridge update.

Presenter: City Manager Sage Sangiacomo

No action was taken on this item, as the Commission had general discussion with Staff.

- b. Discussion and possible action on Letter from Commissioner Parker Prout

Presenter: Commissioner Parker Prout

Commission discussed the proposed letter and made some revisions to the letter.

Motion/Second Knopf/Knox to approve the revised letter entitled The Proposed Orr Creek Greenway Project. Commission voted unanimously to have the Chair sign the letter and send to the Community Development Director for a future City Council meeting as correspondence received.

- c. Discussion and possible action related to three reports from Commissioner Wetzel Chinn.

Presenter: Commissioner Whetzel Chinn

Commission discussed the report and three proposed letters. Revisions were made to the letters. The revised letters are included as **Attachment 1**.

Letter #1- Protection of Waterways and Riparian Corridors: **Motion/Second Knopf/Parker Prout** to approve the revised letter. Commission voted unanimously to have the Chair sign the letter and send to the Community Development Director to present at a future City Council meeting as correspondence received.

Letter #2- Orr Creek Pathway: **Motion/Second Knopf/Parker Prout** to approve the revised letter. Commission voted unanimously to have the Chair sign the letter and send to the Community Development Director for a future City Council meeting as correspondence received.

Letter #3 – Support for Foot Bridge Path and Open Space for the Wagenseller Neighborhood: **Motion/Second Knopf/Parker Prout** to approve the revised letter. Commission voted unanimously to have the Chair sign the letter and send to the Community Development Director for a future City Council meeting as correspondence received.

7. **MATTERS FROM THE COMMISSION**

Commissioner Knopf requested Staff agendaize an item at the next Commission meeting to provide a report on the Creek Setback Ordinance.

General discussion and a request for City Manager Sage Sangiacomo to provide an update on the open space project in the Western Hills.

8. **MATTERS FROM STAFF**

None

9. **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:21 p.m.

**CITY OF UKIAH
PATHS, OPEN SPACE, AND CREEKS COMMISSION**

Ginevra Chandler, Chair

Dianne Knox, Commissioner

Susan Knopf, Vice Chair

Megan Parker Prout, Commissioner

Jeanne Wetzel Chinn, Commissioner

March 5, 2020

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
City of Ukiah
300 Seminary Avenue
Ukiah, CA 95482

Re: The Proposed Orr Creek Greenway Project

Dear Mayor and City Council Members:

As members of the City of Ukiah's Paths, Open Space, and Creeks Commission (POSCC), we are tasked with recommending and advising with regard to the implementation of the following measures of the Ukiah General Plan:

- A. Efficient implementation of the Open Space and Conservation Element of the Ukiah General Plan
- B. Efficient implementation of the pathway sections of the Transportation Element of the Ukiah General Plan
- C. Procedure and funding mechanisms for acquisition, preservation, and effective stewardship of City paths, open space, and creeks.

The ordinance that created the POSCC decreed that this advisory body shall report to the City Council.

We, the POSCC commissioners, do hereby recommend via this report to the City Council that the proposed Orr Creek Greenway project be implemented. We understand that this project will require coordination and cooperation amongst various entities and will likely take many years to complete; we therefore advise that the City Council decree that implementation procedures begin as soon as possible.

Creating the Orr Creek Greenway will meet all three of the Ukiah General Plan implementation measures that the POSCC is tasked with addressing. The greenway will conserve precious

sections of open space. The greenway will create a class 1 multi-use path for recreation and transportation. The greenway will allow for the preservation and enhancement of Orr Creek and its surrounding riparian area.

The Orr Creek Greenway will connect with the Ukiah section of the Great Redwood Trail. These two pathways will, in conjunction, offer safe and easy transportation for commuters and exercisers alike.

The Orr Creek Greenway is supported by the following organizations: the Ukiah Valley Trail Group, the Sanhedrin Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, the Rural Communities Housing Development Corporation, and Walk Bike Mendocino.

Please consider acting on this vital opportunity to protect and enhance the paths, open space, and creeks of our beautiful City of Ukiah.

Respectfully,

Ausan Knopf, Vice Chair 11/19/20

~~Ginevra Chandler, Chair~~

Paths, Open Space, and Creeks Commission

copies hand delivered to addressees - AKnopf

Date: July 2, 2020

To: Ukiah City Council Members
Craig Schlatter, Community Development Director; Sage Sangiacomo, City Manager

From: Paths, Open Space, and Creeks Commission

Re: Protection of Waterways and Riparian Corridors

The Paths, Open Space and Creeks Commission (POSCC) is charged with making recommendations on procedures for effective stewardship of our paths, open spaces and creeks. It is in the spirit of advancing effective stewardship that we respectfully offer the following comments.

We strongly recommend that you provide direction to staff to enforce the prohibition of camping in floodways or any area within 50-feet of the top of the bank of any creek, stream, or river as provided for in the camping ordinance you adopted on August 7, 2019.

Our hearts go out to our community members who are without adequate shelter; however, that is not a reason to turn a blind eye to damages that commonly occur when anyone, homeless or not, is allowed to camp in the most sensitive areas of our environment.

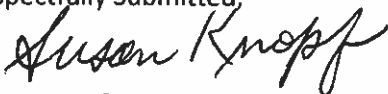
Everyone lacking shelter will find someplace to sleep, whether it's in a park, a doorway or under a bridge. This is especially true in riparian corridors, thus adding to the already stressed conditions of our wildlife species from habitat fragmentation and climate change. These impacts include bed and bank disturbance, turbidity in the waterways, trash, needles, human waste, and a likelihood of starting a fire to name only a few. In preparation for last year's creeks cleanup, the Russian River Watershed Association, of which Ukiah is a member, sent out a flyer with guidance on how to collect hypodermic needles. Ukiah students from local schools participate in these cleanups. Our children should not be exposed to needles and human waste when they are volunteering to remove trash and litter from our creeks.

We fully support providing housing and services to all those in need, although we acknowledge that homelessness is likely to be an ongoing issue into the foreseeable future. For this reason we cannot afford to allow the continued use of our creeks and riparian zones for environmentally damaging activity, no matter who is committing it.

We are also concerned that allowing camping in the relative seclusion of our creeks will encourage harmful activity, including drug use, sexual assault and other violence. We are all aware of the opioid crisis responsible for overdose deaths in our own community. Thanks to the availability of Narcan, lives are being saved, but only if someone is in distress can be seen. The odds of life-saving help being available are increased if people are in visible locations and not hidden away in our creek beds.

For the above reasons and to promote effective stewardship, we recommend that direction be given to staff to make keeping our open spaces and creeks free of homeless encampments a high priority and standing order. Thank you for your careful consideration of this request.

Respectfully Submitted,



Susan Knopf, POSCC Commissioner Vice-Chair

hard copies hand delivered to all addressees
SK

Date: July 2, 2020

To: Ukiah City Council Members
Craig Schlatter, Community Development Director; Sage Sangiacomo-City Manager

From: Paths, Open Space, and Creeks Commission

Re: Orr Creek Pathway

The Paths, Open Space and Creeks Commission (POSCC) is writing to express our support for the Orr Creek Greenway from Low Gap Park to the Russian River.

The mission of POSCC is to provide recommendations and advice regarding implementation of the open space and conservation element of the Ukiah General Plan, implementation of the pathway sections of the transportation element of the Ukiah General Plan, and procedure and funding mechanisms for acquisition, preservation, and effective stewardship of city paths, open space, and creeks.

This Project aligns with POSCC goals by providing open space and a pathway that is a safe place for all ages to recreate by walking, running, biking, and enjoying nature. In addition, this Project will enhance and protect open space by conservation of this valuable riparian corridor, promote the health of Orr Creek, and provide a corridor for the protection of wildlife resources.

Orr Creek reaches almost across the Ukiah Valley floor from east to west and is virtually flat, providing an opportunity to create a pathway that people of all ages and abilities can use. Due to its topography and easy access, the trail will be easy to build and maintain. Much of the corridor is already on public land (City of Ukiah, County, or Ukiah Unified School District.). And, space exists next to Orr Creeks' banks for a pathway within or next to the riparian corridor.

The creek is lined by large trees and the corridor is close to downtown, thus providing shade for non-motorized commuting during the warmer months. Development of the Orr Creek Greenway will connect residential areas to commercial and recreational areas, schools and county offices. Equally important, conservation of the Orr Creek riparian corridor/Greenway Trail will protect its watershed for listed steelhead trout, as well as other native fish, invertebrates, amphibians, mammals, and birds.

The Ukiah Valley Trail Group (UVTG) and Walk and Bike Mendocino (WBM) are two groups involved in gathering funding for plans and acquiring lands for the Orr Creek Greenway for open space, paths, and pocket parks. The Orr Creek Greenway will be developed one portion at a time.

Plans for this Project are being spearheaded by Neil Davis, Director of UVTG and WBM. Plans for the Orr Creek Greenway go from Low Gap Park to the Russian River and will be developed one section at a time, eventually connecting with the Great Redwood Trail. Ultimately, plans are for the trail to go through city and county lands around the entire valley.

This project will enable the City of Ukiah to achieve an open space connectivity corridor pathway and result in a great benefit for all city and surrounding county residents, as well as preservation for wildlife species and habitat. This project is expected to be highly competitive in state funding sources.

POSC strongly recommends the City Council support funding for purchase of open space parcels for connectivity and for restoration of the Orr Creek corridor from Low Gap Park to the Russian River with necessary improvements to bring it as close as possible to its natural state.

Respectfully Submitted,



Susan Knopf, POSC Commissioner Vice-Chair

Date: July 2, 2020

To: Ukiah City Council Members
Craig Schlatter, Community Development Director; Sage Sangiacomo, City Manager

From: Paths, Open Space, and Creeks Commission

Re: Support for Foot Bridge Path and Open Space for the Wagenseller Neighborhood

The Paths, Open Space and Creeks Commission (POSCC) is writing to express our strong support for a safe bridge and open space area for the Wagenseller neighborhood.

The mission of POSCC is to provide recommendations and advice regarding implementation of the open space and conservation element of the Ukiah General Plan, implementation of the pathway sections of the transportation element of the Ukiah General Plan, and procedure and funding mechanisms for acquisition, preservation, and effective stewardship of city paths, open space, and creeks.

This Project aligns with POSCC goals by supporting effective stewardship of a safe foot bridge path and open space area for children and adults of the Wagenseller neighborhood. Funding was provided for this project in 2010, and POSCC recommends the engineering report be completed as it is a necessary prerequisite for implementation of the project.

The current blighted state of the bridge discourages pedestrian use and bicycling. Studies have shown that homeless encampments and drug dealing are more likely to occur in isolated areas where the general populace does not wish to congregate. A refurbished Orr Street Bridge would attract more foot traffic and keep homeless encampments outside of the riparian corridor. Hopefully, with one less opportunity to camp in and around a creek, more homeless people would seek shelter and services in less harmful and more visible environments.

We are aware that the Wagenseller neighborhood has long been an underserved area regarding open space and outdoor recreational opportunities, particularly for children. In 2009 Director Erickson assured the Wagenseller Neighborhood Association that the City would maintain the bridge so it is structurally sound and funds were placed in the budget for that purpose. The Orr Street (foot) Bridge needs to remain closed to vehicle traffic for the benefit and health of the Wagenseller neighborhood. Since 2009, numerous emails have been exchanged and meetings taken place. Complaints have been sent to City Council members regarding this "most neglected neighborhood in the City." The area where the Orr Street Bridge is located remains a blighted neighborhood and residents have serious safety concerns. Ten years after initial funds were allocated for refurbishment, the bridge remains dangerous to walk across and the area is a magnet for drug activity, homeless encampments and trash dumping.

This neighborhood is lacking a safe open space area for children to play and benefit from healthy outdoor activities, and for adults and older citizens to enjoy walking around. The neighborhood needs open space and attractive outdoor recreational activities.

The remedy is to have the Orr Street Bridge refurbished and provide the neighborhood with some open space for their kids to play safely, off the streets. This does not require further funding, rather it simply requires engineering plans to be submitted to the City Council, and the plans accepted for project

This project will enable the City of Ukiah to support the Wagenseller neighborhood to enjoy a higher degree of quality of life by having a currently hazardous bridge repaired or replaced, and an open space area to enjoy natural resources as well as a place for children to safely play outside and off the streets. The inordinate delay in getting this straightforward project completed is simply inexplicable.

We strongly recommend the City Council use established funding to repair the hazardous bridge and secure the 100-foot buffer along Orr Creek from homeless encroachment from top of bank on Orr Creek to the RCHDC mixed use housing. This will create a safe place for children to play in a natural area, and for all neighborhood residents to enjoy natural resources. We further recommend the City Council work with the Rural Communities Housing Development Corporation (RCHDC) to retain the 2.5 open space acres next to the 80-unit mixed housing development to remain as open green space for the benefit and enjoyment of the neighborhood.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Knopf". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan Knopf, POSCC Commissioner Vice-Chair