



Paths, Open Space, and Creeks Commission

Regular Meeting **AGENDA**

This meeting will be held remotely, at the link below:

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/926910061>

*You can also dial in using your phone.
United States: [+1 \(224\) 501-3412](tel:+12245013412)*

Access Code: 926-910-061

June 3, 2021 - 3:00 PM

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

2. **ROLL CALL**

3. **CORRESPONDENCE**

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

4.a. Approve May 13, 2021 Special Meeting Minutes

Recommended Action: Approve the May 13, 2021 Special Meeting Minutes.

Attachments:

1. POSCCM_20210513_DRAFT

5. **COMMENTS FROM AUDIENCE ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

The City of Ukiah Paths, Open Space, and Creeks Commission welcomes input from the audience. In order for everyone to be heard, please limit your comments to three (3) minutes per person and not more than ten (10) minutes per subject. The Brown Act regulations do not allow action to be taken on audience comments related to non-agenda items.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

6.a. Discussion of General Plan Research Report - Update: Commissioner Jeanne Wetzel Chinn

Recommended Action:

Attachments:

1. JWC Research Report-GP OSC Element for POSC

7. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

8. MATTERS FROM THE COMMISSION

9. MATTERS FROM STAFF

10. ADJOURNMENT

Please be advised that the City needs to be notified 72 hours in advance of a meeting if any specific accommodations or interpreter services are needed in order for you to attend. The City complies with ADA requirements and will attempt to reasonably accommodate individuals with disabilities upon request. Materials related to an item on this Agenda submitted to the City Council after distribution of the agenda packet are available for public inspection at the City of Ukiah, located at 300 Seminary Avenue, Ukiah, CA 95482, not less than 72 hours prior to the meeting set forth on this agenda.

**CITY OF UKIAH
PATHS, OPEN SPACE, AND CREEKS COMMISSION MINUTES
Special Meeting
Held via Teleconference
May 13, 2021
3:00 p.m.**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Megan Parker Prout
Diane Knox
Jeanne Wetzel Chinn
Susan Knopf

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

N/A

STAFF PRESENT

Neil Davis
Craig Schlatter
Mireya Turner
Jesse Davis
Maya Simerson

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PRESENT: John Buchannan; Brian Griffen; Lawrence Mitchell;
Pinky Kushner; Dennis Crean;

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order virtually at approximately 3:23 p.m. via the City's GoTo Meeting platform.

Chair Presiding

2. ROLL CALL

Roll call was called. All members were present.

3. CORRESPONDENCE

None

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Approve the March 4, 2021 Meeting Minutes.

Motion/Second Prout/Knox to approve the Minutes of the March 4, 2021 meeting minutes, with the addition of the approved letter (Item 6a) attached.

5. COMMENTS FROM AUDIENCE ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None, but one member of the public indicated that they would speak with regard to an agenda item.

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

7. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Discussion of POSCC Response for Ukiah Western Hills Open Land Acquisition and Limited Development Agreement.

Maya Simerson, Jesse Davis and Craig Schlatter addressed questions presented by the Commission, as well as the General Public regarding the existing land use designations and project related questions.

Commissioner Prout departed by pre-arrangement; a quorum was maintained.

No action was taken on this item, but Commissioners were informed that they would be able to provide response as individuals utilizing their title as POSC Commissioners. Comments should be made by May 20th, but may also be provided prior to and at the scheduled Hearing of the Planning Commission.

- b. The POSC elected to continue the discussion of the prepared general plan research report to a subsequent meeting for review and discussion.

c. **MATTERS FROM THE COMMISSION**

- a. As requested, Staff provided an update regarding safety considerations at Low Gap Park, and confirmed that the location of recent fires was within the jurisdiction of the City of Ukiah. Staff indicated that they would follow-up with Ukiah Police Department, and the Ukiah Valley Fire Authority for additional details.
- b. The Chair clarified the ability of POSC to facilitate meetings without the need for staff presence. Mr. Schlatter iterated that this was correct, but that Brown Act compliance was still required.

8. **MATTERS FROM STAFF**

None

9. **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 4:45 p.m.

POSCC Report on Research for General Plan, revised 1-2020, OC-2.1(a)

Jeanne Wetzel Chinn, March 5, 2020

At the January 9, 2020, POSCC meeting I agreed to take on the task of research related to Ukiah's General Plan Open Space and Conservation Element revised in January 2020, OC-2.1(a): "During the short-term planning period, the City shall facilitate acquisition of open space by the Land Conservation Trust."

Another Commissioner agreed to gather an inventory of existing natural resources (DOC-OC-5.1(b) and (c)). In addition, another Commissioner agreed to research (OC-9.1(a)), talking with groups related to establishing a citizen's task force.

I provided the results of my research at the February 6, 2020, POSCC meeting. I was asked to provide a Report of my research at the March 3, 2020 POSCC meeting. and have since had further conversations that are included herein. Following is my report.

The Inland Mendocino County Land Trust website has a contact representative, Darcy Vaughn. I called Darcy and we arranged a tele-conference with Alan Nicholson, President of the Inland Mendocino County Land Trust (IMCLT) on January 17, 2020. I also spoke with Alan on January 22, and on March 2. Alan informed me that Ukiah's General Plan Space and Conservation Element (OC-2.1(a)) is a generic term, there's no one group in particular expected to work with the City to facilitate acquisition of open space. Note, the General Plan specifically names, "Land Conservation Trust."

Alan stated the IMCLT has long had their eye on riparian corridors to have them conserved but there is no money available at this time. Typically, current state funding is more available for open space and agricultural lands to be preserved that are at risk for conversion of development. There is a rationale for providing a Conservation Easement (CE) along a riparian area for "views," and another category of CE's are for agricultural land preservation. Crucial habitat that is threatened with conversion or has listed species may be a rationale for CEs. The only grants available now are at the state level from the USDA for carbon sequestration. These grants are available to pursue; however, there is no staff power available. Preserving Open Space is time consuming to get money for conservation and the IMCLT usually relies on donations from landholders as opposed to state funding. The biggest funding in Sacramento is to preserve agriculture and forest lands. It's political, the City and County need affordable housing for all income levels, while the General Plan emphasizes agriculture and open space conservation. The Sustainable Ag Lands Committee funded by the County Resource Conservation District office (RCD) recently received a grant from the State Department of Conservation for \$208,000 for education and outreach of conservation for ag and open space lands. Through these educational efforts, cash donations will be more readily available, which may result in acquisition of open space and other at-risk lands.

Regarding Ukiah's General Plan, the Space and Conservation Element (OC-5.1(c)) states, "The City shall strive to start an inventory of at least one resource identified on its list or in its

program every two fiscal years.” Alan suggested I ask Michelle if that is happening. Michelle did not respond to my inquiry, and in late February, Craig Slater contacted me to inform me that Michelle is out on maternity leave and he will attend the March POSCC meeting. Hopefully, this question can be answered at the upcoming meeting.

Alan had suggested POSCC contact Craig Slater, Planning Director and Community Development Director for a list of undeveloped and underutilized lands. He has a good handle on this list. Pocket parks within the City of Ukiah are all listed under the Ukiah Parks & Recreation Department website. They are handled within the domain of City Parks, Recreation and the Gulf Commission rather than POSCC, whose jurisdiction lies within providing protection for paths, open space, and creeks.

I asked Alan about any undeveloped City lands that may be available currently for protection as open space, paths, and/or creeks/riparian areas. Alan mentioned the Wagenseller Neighborhood Association, which has long been an underserved area and the members have long complained of no place for kids to play (between Perkins & Brush/State & Orchard). Alan provided me with the name of Ann Kelly, a community advocate who lives in the Wagenseller area and is invested in having open space for families. He also mentioned Susan Sher. Susan and Ann Kelly are the primary community advocates for the Wagenseller neighborhood.

Alan said that if a landowner wants to donate land and there is extreme conservation value, perhaps they can get funding for the land trust, otherwise only land threatened by development has monies available. Land with a CE on it remains with the landowner and they maintain and manage the land. There are three land trusts in the area, Mendocino Land Trust, which is primarily coastal but also has inland CEs; Anderson Valley Land Trust is focused there; and, IMCLT. Land Trusts make sure the land is conserved in perpetuity. I inquired if CEs in Mendocino County are visible on the front page of Grant Deeds as keeping them visible makes them less likely to be unintentionally developed. Alan is working with the local county assessor’s office to make CEs visible on the Grant Deed and/or in a separate designated area in their database.

Alan mentioned there is land along Orr Creek where The Rural Communities Housing Development Corporation (RCHDC) will build 80 units and there is a 100-foot buffer to the creek that could be an open space area. Adjacent to the RCHDC land with the 80 units, is a 1,000-foot buffer that is 100-feet wide along Brush Street on the north side of Orr Creek from Low Gap Park to the Russian River; it is approximately 1-mile long. RCHDC owns that land also but can’t use it due to the set-back so they are donating it to the City. Andrea Davis, a community activist, has done a fantastic study for a path that will be called the Orr Creek Greenway from Low Gap Park to the Russian River. It has been put on the books as an objective for the City to acquire as a deeded gift.

Alan stated that Orr Creek landowners along the creek do not want people along the creek for liability issues, and it is currently used extensively by homeless people. I also spoke with

Supervisor John McCowan about homeless issues in the creeks and riparian corridors, which he agreed is a serious issue and threat to city and county residents, the environment, and wildlife.

There is land in the western hills portion of the City near Gibson Creek where a donation of land into a CE near the fish hatchery may occur. Alan suggested I talk with Tami or Sage about this property.

Alan said IMCLT has explored areas along the Russian River, including Riverside Park at the end of Gobbi Street. The idea is to keep the land in current condition or restore the conservation value. It's basically a park at this time, not open space. He suggested I talk with Tami Bartolomei, Ukiah's Community Services Director and Director of Parks & Rec, about her experiences with underutilized lands and pocket parks, and for further information.

I spoke with Tami Bartolomei on January 24, and again on March 3, 2020. She has tried several times to acquire land for parks, the latest being along the rail trail, which has been renamed the Great Redwood Trail (GRT); however, she has yet to find funding. Senator McGuire and Assembly Member James Woods both want to turn railroad tracks no longer in use into useable trails. The RCHDC is seeking a way to have a pathway and riparian setback connecting Orr Creek Greenway to the GRT. Also on the GRT, from Clara to Brush streets, the Ukiah Valley Trail Group (UVTG) is putting in 2 pocket parks with benches and a garden; there won't be play equipment as it takes more acreage per state standards.

Regarding Wagenseller, the City is working on a Brush Street annexation and are looking at various places to put a pocket park but have not found available acreage to put one in, and there isn't money to purchase the land. Awhile ago, the Planning Department did a Wagenseller assessment to find options of where to put a park. One possible location is on the GRT, another is on Brush Street, and yet another on Orchard Street. Funding options have not occurred, and staff is also looking for other locations.

The RCHDC owns land on Brush Street along the North side of Orr Creek where 80 mixed-housing units will be built with a 100-foot buffer to Orr Creek that will remain an open space pathway. The City is acquiring it as well as an adjoining 1,000 feet from Orr Street to Orchard Street with the 100-foot buffer to Orr Creek as a deeded parcel from the RCHDC. This land along Orr Creek known as the Orr Creek Greenway, extends from Low Gap Park to the Russian River, for approximately one mile.

This RCHDC property with 80 units includes two apartment buildings with a 25-acre open space parcel on the east side of the buildings and RCHDC has no immediate plans for development of this parcel. RCHDC could leave this 2.5-acre parcel as an open green space for kids with access from the Wagenseller neighborhood and the Orr Creek Greenway path to the GRT. Another possibility is that the RCHDC could donate or sell the parcel to the City so it remains an open space or make it into a pocket park with play equipment.

Neal Davis is the director of both the UVTG and Walk and Bike Mendocino. Neal is very involved in funding for plans and acquiring lands for the Orr Creek Greenway for open space, paths, and possibly a pocket park. He has plans for the Orr Creek Greenway to go through city and county lands around the entire valley. The Orr Creek Greenway will be developed one portion at a time.

A potential portion of the Orr Creek Greenway is along purple pipes extending from between Low Gap Park and Orr Creek to the Russian River where the UVTG has a vision for a trail; however, there are jurisdictional issues as it goes behind the sheriff's office, the jail, and along the golf course, and has ADA accessibility issues. Alan Nicholson suggested these issues can be resolved through dedicated financial solutions.

These purple pipes will carry recycled water from the Water Treatment Plant near Brush Street, running alongside Orr Creek to Low Gap Park from East to West. This recycled water will be used to water Todd Grove Park, the Golf Course, Anton Stadium, Giorno Park, Vine Park, the cemetery, and the high school. Orr Creek comes out on the north end next to the Water Treatment Plant and wells where the Ukiah Sports Complex (ball fields) exist. Neal is spearheading this path as a portion of what will be the the Orr Creek Greenway.

Tami mentioned the Russian River area from Talmage to Perkins, where Riverside Park is the central core access to the river. The ultimate goal is to have Riverside Park be native habitat open space with fish restoration sites.

Tami and I also briefly discussed the homeless issue, which is not unique to Ukiah. It is best not to put fencing in to protect riparian corridors as the homeless go under them and it may give them more privacy, which would also prevent them from being noticed if they need outside medical attention. Fencing would also be a hinderance for wildlife seeking protection and sustenance. We discussed the possibility of acquiring land along the highway for a homeless encampment where they could have porta-potties, water, be attended by social workers, be visible and live outside of the riparian waterways. However, land along the highway has high commercial value and there is no funding available. North Coast Opportunities, Redwood Children Services or another agency, or several agencies, would be best suited to work with the City and County to find land option solutions for homeless people.

On March 2, 2020, I spoke with Susan Sher, a representative of the Wagenseller Neighborhood Association. She and Ann Kelly have been working diligently since 2009 to have the Orr Street (foot) Bridge made safe for passage. The bridge, in hazardous and blighted condition, is located at Orr Street on the southside leading across Orr Creek. The bridge ends on the north side of the creek at the Brush Street Triangle where the RCHCD is about to break ground on the 80-unit mixed housing development with the 100-foot Orr Creek buffer. Some discussion has taken place regarding RCHDC deeding a portion of that parcel for a long-desired open space or park in the neighborhood. The City of Ukiah initially allocated funding in the amount of \$125,000 in 2010 for the bridge refurbishment and required engineering plans, and in 2015, additional funding was allocated for a total of \$254,438 to make the bridge safe for passage. The

engineering plans have yet to be provided to the City Council. In the meantime, residential neighbors on Orr Street fear for their safety due to illicit activities, homeless encampments, and trash dumping attracted by the current blighted condition of the bridge. These activities also endanger the riparian corridor adjacent to the bridge.

On March 3, 2020, I spoke with Maya Simerson regarding Gibson Creek in the western hills. Gibson Creek has a small chunk of land at the fish hatchery that's not open to the public. An approximately 40-acre parcel will be left as open space about 200 yards up the Gibson Creek Watershed from Standley Street. There is an island in the middle of this parcel that is privately owned. City staff members or designees have provided docent tours, but no pathway is open to the public because of the private property and road. Neal Davis looked at putting in a possible trail but it's very steep and not conducive to walking trails. There is no CE designation for the 40-acre parcel; however, by resolution the City Council designated the land as open space not to be developed. The City has been pursuing grant funding to preserve open space in other areas of the western hills. In the last grant application for open space funding, the City did include funding for CEs to be established, and they will be included in any further acquisitions, pending funding, that the City will make in the western hills.

On March 4, 2020, I spoke with Neal Davis. Regarding the Orr Creek Greenway, the Ford Street Project owns one property in between the 80-unit RCHDC property and the City operated railroad corridor. At this time the railroad corridor is a City park from the north to south end of town. It is a significant open space and corridor and Neal would like to see major portions of the corridor restored to natural states. The Ukiah Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan identifies five primary projects, and the Orr Creek Greenway is one of those projects.