



Paths, Open Space, and Creeks Commission

Regular Meeting **AGENDA**

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July 2, 2020 - 3:00 PM

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

2. **ROLL CALL**

3. **CORRESPONDENCE**

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

4.a. Approve Draft Minutes of March 5, 2020 Regular Meeting

Recommended Action:

Attachments:

1. POSCCM_03052020 - 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 with City Staff on Orr Street Bridge update

Recommended Action:

Attachments: None

- 6.b. Discussion and possible action on Letter from Commissioner Parker Prout
Recommended Action: Staff recommends POSCC discuss the letter and possible take action on next steps.

Attachments:

1. Attachment 1- Orr Creek Greenway Recommendation Letter

- 6.c. Discussion and possible action related to three reports from Commissioner Wetzel Chin
Recommended Action: Staff recommends POSCC discuss the letters and report and possibly take action on next steps.

Attachments:

1. Attachment 1- Report and Letters.Wagenseller

7. MATTERS FROM THE COMMISSION

8. MATTERS FROM STAFF

9. 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.

I hereby certify under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing agenda was posted on the bulletin board at the main entrance of the City of Ukiah, located at 300 Seminary Ave., Ukiah, CA, not less than 72 hours prior to the meeting set forth on this agenda.

Mireya G. Turner, Associate Planner
June 25, 2020

**CITY OF UKIAH
PATHS, OPEN SPACE, AND CREEKS COMMISSION MINUTES
Civic Center Annex Conference Room #5
411 W. Clay Street
Ukiah, CA 95482
March 5, 2020
3:00 p.m.**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Ginevra Chandler
Megan Parker Prout
Diane Knox
Jeanne Wetzal Chinn

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Susan Knopf

STAFF PRESENT

Sage Sangiacomo, City Manager
Craig Schlatter, Community Development Director
Tami Bartolomei, Community Services Administrator

OTHERS PRESENT

Neil Davis, Ukiah Valley Trail Group

Meeting was called to order at 3:02 p.m. in Conference Room #5, Ukiah Civic Center, 411 W. Clay Street, Ukiah, California.

Chair Chandler presiding

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL

Roll call included the introduction of other staff and members of the public present.

3. CORRESPONDENCE

None

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the February 6, 2020 meeting.

Motion/Second Parker Prout/Wetzal Chinn to approve the minutes of the February 6, 2020 meeting with one correction.

5. COMMENTS FROM AUDIENCE ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None

6. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Continued discussion of 1995 General Plan Implementation Measures

Presenters: Community Development Director Craig Schlatter,
City Manager Sage Sangiacomo

No action was taken on this item, as the Commission had general discussion with staff and agreed by consensus to continue primary discussion under Matters from the Commission.

7. MATTERS FROM THE COMMISSION

General discussion on future New Business items between POSCC Commissioners and City Staff. Commission approved the following:

Motion/Second Wetzel Chinn/Parker Prout to submit letter to City Council to include action items in budget objectives for Community Services Department.

Agendize in next meeting the following: 1) update on Orr Street Bridge; 2) letter from Commissioner Parker Prout; and 3) reports from Commissioner Wetzel Chinn.

Public Comment: Neil Davis, Tami Bartolomei

8. MATTERS FROM STAFF

None

9. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:32 p.m.



AGENDA ITEM NO. 6A
Department of Community Development
Planning Services Division
300 Seminary Ave.
Ukiah, CA 95482
planning@cityofukiah.com

STAFF REPORT

TO: Paths, Open Space, and Creeks Commission (POSCC)
DATE: June 23, 2020
FROM: Craig Schlatter, Director of Community Development
SUBJECT: Orr Creek Bridge Project Update

Background

At the March 5, 2020 meeting, under Matters from the Commission, POSCC requested an agenda item at its next meeting to get a detailed update from City Staff on the Orr Creek Bridge Project.

Discussion

Staff has invited City Manager Sage Sangiacomo and/or other City Staff to participate in providing this update. Additionally, the City Manager's Office can provide additional contextual information regarding City Council and the City's Strategic Plan Goals and how they relate to this project.



STAFF REPORT

TO: Paths, Open Space, and Creeks Commission (POSCC)
DATE: June 23, 2020
FROM: Craig Schlatter, Director of Community Development
SUBJECT: Orr Creek Greenway Recommendation

Background

At the March 5, 2020 meeting, under Matters from the Commission, POSCC requested an agenda item at its next meeting to take action on a letter proposed by Commissioner Parker Prout for a recommendation on the Orr Creek Greenway.

Discussion

The letter from Commissioner Parker Prout is attached as Attachment 1. Staff recommends POSCC discuss the letter and possibly take action on next steps.

Item 6B - Attachment 1

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,

Ginevra Chandler, Chair
Paths, Open Space, and Creeks Commission



STAFF REPORT

TO: Paths, Open Space, and Creeks Commission (POSCC)
DATE: June 23, 2020
FROM: Craig Schlatter, Director of Community Development
SUBJECT: Letters and Report related to Wagenseller Neighborhood Open Spaces

Background

At the March 5, 2020 meeting, under Matters from the Commission, POSCC requested an agenda item at its next meeting to take action on a report and three letters submitted by Commissioner Wetzel Chinn for the POSCC's possible submittal to City Council.

Discussion

The three letters and report are attached as Attachment 1. Staff recommends POSCC discuss the letters and report and possibly take action on next steps.

Item 6C - Attachment 1

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.

Date: March 5, 2019

To: Ukiah City Council Members: Douglas Crane, Joan Orozco, Steve Scalmanini,
Jim Brown, Maureen Mulheren, and Allen Carter

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. And, as more people experience homelessness, their negative impacts to our natural resources also increases. 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,

POSCC Commissioners

Date: March 5, 2019

To: Ukiah City Council Members: Douglas Crane, Joan Orozco, Steve Scalmanini,
Jim Brown, Maureen Mulheren, and Allen Carter

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,

POSC Commissioners

Date: March 5, 2019

To: Ukiah City Council Members: Douglas Crane, Joan Orozco, Steve Scalmanini,
Jim Brown, Maureen Mulheren, and Allen Carter

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.

While infill is often a preferred remedy for housing shortages, this neighborhood is a victim of too much infill, having been maximally developed with hundreds of low- and very low-income subsidized apartments. 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 more attractive outdoor recreational activities to remedy and prevent further blight.

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 implementation. The beauty of the bridge is that it would adjoin the Orr Creek Greenway and the possible 100-ft buffer between Orr Creek and the RCHDC building 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,

POSCC Commissioners