

Upper Rattlesnake Neighborhood Council
General Meeting March 1, 2020
Messiah Lutheran Church
(~100 people in attendance)

Bill Ruediger, President of the Leadership Team, introduced other members: Doug Grimm, Bev Young, Andrea Stierle, Kathy Gaskill and Teri Roach. Bill facilitated the meeting

1. Rattlesnake Transportation update – Dan Doyle

Volunteer Subcommittee of Upper and Lower Rattlesnake. Broad transportation issues are addressed: bikes, walking, cars. Working on updating the Rattlesnake Valley Summit Study of 2011. Created a questionnaire that garnered many hundred responses; committee is currently working way through these comments. Other comments accepted at rattlesnaketransportation@missoula-neighborhoods.org. Next meeting is Tuesday March 10, 5:30pm, Hal Fraser Conference room, 140 W Pine St. At City website, there is a tab “How Do I?” click on that and you can comment on hazards (e.g. potholes, hazard trees, etc.) Also you can call Streets Division 552-6360; Development Services 552-6630.

2. Status of trail in borrow pit: Bill Ruediger & Morgan Valiant

(Morgan is not the city contact for this issue but shared his knowledge). The borrow pit is the ditch on the north and west side of Rattlesnake Drive after the intersection with Creek Crossing/Lincoln Rd. A feasibility report to develop a trail was prepared by Territorial Landworks in 2011 and Jane Kelly has a copy of it. Concerns about hazards for those walking & biking along road, especially in winter. Morgan spoke about how Grant Creek mobilized to get their 2 mile trail. They created the Grant Creek Trails Association (charitable non-profit). **Rattlesnake borrow pit trail is within street right of way**, thus the public has access. Work with City Streets Department. The ditch serves as a storm water absorption area, so drainage is a component. It is used for snow storage in winter. Snow plowing of street might have to be adapted if a hard surface trail went in. It could cost high hundreds of thousands or even a million dollars for hard surface trail. Guardrails might have to be installed to separate pedestrians and auto traffic. A narrower trail with gravel might just be tens of thousands of dollars. Mary Louise Zapp-Knapp offered records from 2011 feasibility study since she was involved. Recommendation to get to know neighbors whose property would be affected and work with them. Donna Gaukler, Director of Parks and Rec, was involved in 2011. At that time Parks & Rec was willing to maintain the trail, if developed. There would be no County involvement, just City and Forest Service on west side of road. Tom Javins and John Haber volunteered to work with Bill Ruediger on the trail possibility. Impact fees from Cornerstone subdivision are available. Mark Reinsel spoke about MTB Missoula, where he’s active on the trail committee, and promoted a gravel trail. Bryan von Lossberg will be the point of contact with City on this issue.

3. Fire Preparedness in the Rattlesnake—Max Rebholtz, Wildfire Preparedness Coordinator, Missoula County of Office of Emergency Management.

Max spoke about wildfire protection plan; maps of wildfire risk; patterns of home destruction & misleading perceptions; cannot just treat the fuels; we need to prepare homes because embers can travel up to a mile. Home ignition zones; 3 zones: 0-5 feet from house; 5-30 feet out, 30-100 feet out. Free wildfire risk assessments by Missoula Rural Fire Dept. or Missoula Fire Dept.

Attendees were asked to sign up on circulated form or go online to DNRC online form. Also sign up for emergency alerts at Smart 911; evacuation warning, evacuation alert. There are crews that will work with landowners for mitigation. Larger properties can get assistance with a forest management plan. Burn Season is open now until around 4th of July but need burn permit. A concern was raised about whether the Rattlesnake would ever be evacuated and, if not, where people could safely remain. Recommendation to establish a community safety zone, such as the elementary school, or safer homes. Smaller neighborhoods might want to establish safer homes to shelter in place. Do not wait for an evacuation call to come through. There is a team in the Lincoln Hills area focused on making the area fire wise. Eric Mendelson is contact.

4. **Removal of Rattlesnake Creek Dam**—Morgan Valiant, Conservation Lands Manager, Missoula Parks & Recreation

Trout Unlimited (TU) is one of the most active and most financially endowed in the nation. TU Rob Roberts and Morgan are working together on this. City acquired dam and reservoir when they bought Mountain Water. Work to remove buildings and dam will start in April/May. Creek will be reconnected for first time in over 100 years, by October 2020. Project is now fully funded, with 90% coming from grants and donations. All material needed for fill is onsite. There is a public access component and details can be found in the [Rattlesnake Reservoir Recreation Management Plan](#). There will be a 1 mile packed gravel universal trail around the substation. *Need volunteers to help plant tens of thousands of native plants in August and September.*

5. **Urban Deer Study Update**—Bryan von Lossberg and Bill Ruediger

Bryan has heard that what worked 5-10 years ago to deter deer doesn't work now due to population changes and behavior. Bryan has visited with UM wildlife professors about getting help from students in updating deer population estimates. Libby Metcalf at UM may get involved with a social science survey about tolerance for deer. Bryan mentioned a special public safety and health meeting at UM about deer populations and he'll let Jane Kelly know about the date/time for this meeting.

6. **Leadership Team elections** – Jane Kelly, Neighborhood Coordinator

Three current members are up for re-election for 2 year term: Bill Ruediger, Doug Grimm and Bev Young. Andrea Stierle moved and Terri Roach seconded to reelect these 3. All approved. Jane also asked for another volunteer to serve as an alternate on the leadership team while a determination is made if Karen Renne still has an interest in serving. Chris Schnodel volunteered.

7. **Q&A with City Council: Heidi West and Bryan von Lossberg**

- Question about a 2nd evacuation route from Rattlesnake. Possibilities might be Creek Crossing where City owns east side of creek or Mountain View where there is a footbridge. Use the City Councilors to get the idea before administration & local emergency planning group.
- Suggestion about putting up a warning sign on Rattlesnake Drive where Powerline trail crosses Rattlesnake near Tamarack Street. Traffic study group could look at details & make decision. Or even better, go to Meg Wissher at Parks & Rec since the Zootown Derailleurs biking program for small kids uses that road crossing.
- Will the 2 roundabouts impede traffic flow during a fire season? Bryan thinks no. Local emergency planning group, which includes railroad personnel, are tied into emergencies and can pause trains to allow for evacuation from Duncan/Greenough exit.

Useful Contact Information:

Jane Kelly, Neighborhood Coordinator jkelly@ci.missoula.mt.us 552-6081

Morgan Valliant, Missoula Parks & Rec mvalliant@ci.missoula.mt.us 552-6263

Bryan von Lossberg, Ward 1 Council Member bvonlossberg@ci.missoula.mt.us 258-1857

Heidi West, Ward 1 Council Member hwest@ci.missoula.mt.us 747-9158

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Notes taken by Bev Young, Secretary, URNC Leadership Team