

Turtleback Trails Network

Steering Committee Meeting “Group Memory”

June 23, 2021

Participants: Merry Jo Fahl, Attila Bality, Linda DeMarino, John Masterson, Deb Stubblefield, OJ Hechler, Ryan , Amanda Forrister, Kim Skinner, Sandy Whitehead. (Guests: Amy Bell, Ericka Pilcher, Marcy DeMillion, Maria Trevino, Eric Aune

Agenda Topics

1. Rotary Park Design Workshop
2. Working Group Reports
3. City Manager Mtg follow-up
4. Collaboration with River Walk project contractor
5. Review Plan Outline and assign tasks
6. NMSU Agriculture Marketing Group involvement
7. Next Meeting

ACTION ITEMS

What	Who	When
Recruit Project ambassadors for community event tabling	Merry Jo, John,	All the Time!
Review new publication text	Steering Committee	June 25
Identify ownership of A005	Amanda Forrister	July 9
Re-create Wetlands concept map as rough schematic	Not assigned	
Develop Word Cloud for project vision, provide chalkboard comments and other group notes to GWS	Groundwork Studio, Attila, Merry Jo	July 9
ID Key Workshop Participants	Merry Jo, Linda, Attila	July 9
Develop Workshop Announcement materials and distribution plan	Merry Jo, John, Kim, Linda, OJ in coordination with Amy	July 16
Schedule conversation with Mr. Brown	John, Attila	By July 16
Provide Village of Williamsburg tribal contact list	Attila, Mayor Stubblefield	July 16
Reach out to NMSU	Merry Jo	July 16

Rotary Park Design Workshop

Background:

The Healing Waters Trails & Cultural Landscape Plan completed conceptual illustrations of a restored wetlands at Rotary Park. The Concept Plan included enhanced visitor experiences like boardwalks and interpretive panels, accessible fishing piers and a terraced riverbank. The City of TorC has not implemented any of the recommended improvements.

The previous effort did not really address “people flow” through Rotary Park. Since the completion of the Wetlands Concept Plan, there has been increased usage of the park. It’s become a popular staging area for a tubing concessionaire, and the dirt dam is serving as a de facto river crossing to access paths and trails across the river.

With the continued interest in restoring the wetlands and having Rotary Park potentially serve as a “gateway” to the Rio Grande Trail and public lands access across the river, the NPS is suggesting the TTN Steering Committee, NPS and the City of TorC host a design workshop to revisit the Wetlands Concept Plan and to address “people movement” throughout the site.

Discussion:

It would be good to know the community goals for Rotary Park wetlands. Are these design ideas still appropriate?

- The existing map shouldn’t be shared with community since they will think it’s a “Done Design.” *The group was reminded this concept was developed with a lot of community engagement including a “breakfast with the birds” workshop at Rotary Park.*
- It’s suggested we let the community re-think Rotary Park and then compare the new workshop findings with the previous work.
- **It’s suggested we should recreate the Healing Waters Concept plan as a rough schematic which doesn’t show as much detail.**

Utilizing the Collector App ([ArcGIS Collector | Capture Field Data - Data Collection App \(esri.com\)](#)) could be a good way to engage local residents: Find the place with the best view; What’s the best fishing spot; Where is the best bird watching; etc.

- TorC isn’t technology saavy! We would need paper maps as well. The Collector App should be deployed before the workshop

Groundwork could compile our notes, draft vision, chalkboard comments and develop a Word Cloud to illustrate key issues and opportunities

Suggested workshop format:

Morning on-site visit, expert presentations and discussion

Afternoon map activity at convenient location (TorC Brewery suggested)

Evening map refinement with project team

Next Morning presentation of findings to public audience

The City has noticed Rotary Park is getting really busy. Their desired outcomes from the workshop include addressing: river access and safety, flow of traffic, signage, restrooms, parking, gateway to trails, capitalize on wetlands, and keeping the park character.

Advance work team to ID key participants include Attila, Merry Jo, Linda. Important to note all residents will be invited to participate.

Other points-

- Make sure the community understands any design/build restrictions related to Bureau of Reclamation, Army Corps of Engineers, Sierra County Flood Control, etc.
- Involve local resources “honor local expertise” in workshop design

Working Group Updates

Communications

- Communications group is working on a new project information publication. The idea is to share information with local residents about the Turtleback Trails Network. The publication would likely have a map with “bubbles” highlighting proposed improvements and new amenities.
- Kim Skinner has many ideas for social media postings
- The Farmers Market allows informational tables without a rental/reservation fee. For the remaining Farmers Markets , **volunteers need to be recruited to be project ambassadors.**
- The Williamsburg Post Office is another great location for information sharing. Mail is delivered around 10am. Since there isn’t mail delivery in Williamsburg, all residents make the pilgrimage to the post office!.
- **Draft text has been shared with the steering committee. Comments and edits requested by June 25.**

Trails & Footbridges

- Our vision is for the installation of up to four footbridges. Locations include near the Fish Hatchery, extending the Rio Grande Trail beyond Elephant Butte Lake State Park, Ralph Edwards Park, Rotary Park, and Williamsburg. Specific locations have not been determined. The highest priority river crossings are likely going to be at Rotary Park and in Williamsburg.
- We envision an accessible pathway connecting Rotary Park to Ralph Edwards Park on the other side of the Rio Grande if easements and partnerships with the land developer can be established.
- We envision a natural surface trail connecting Rotary Park to Williamsburg using the existing dirt road or, perhaps a new trail on the lower river bench.
- We envision the Rotary Park river crossing providing access to the public land trails

NPS recommends collecting more information on the BLM routes including are the routes single track, doubletrack, stable or eroding, steepness. This assessment would help BLM with eventual trail designations.

NPS recommends involving SC or others in evaluating trail alternatives downriver of the Forstner property (following the road on the higher bluff, or constructing new trail along the lower river bench.)

Confusion over ownership of A005 still exists. Amanda agreed to investigate.

Conservation & Education

- This working group is drafting part of their report to explain why the river corridor is managed the way it is. It will address previous salt cedar eradication efforts and difficulties in restoration efforts due to local conditions.
- We're still working to understand wildlife habitat and wildlife values along the river corridor and we anticipate convening a wildlife focus group to help us understand habitat and potential impacts from increased recreational usage, and how we might mitigate those impacts.
- The Education committee is exploring interpretive themes applicable to the Rio Grande corridor between TorC and Williamsburg.

River Access

- River access group has identified "improvements" at the existing launches. Generally, improvements call for either steps or stabilized ramp to river edge; limited time loading and unloading zones, parking and informational, regulatory, and directional signage at the launch sites and getting to them.
- Two other potential launch sites emerged during discussions. One along Hwy 51 right of way directly across from Mescal Canyon and at Ralph Edwards Park. The Mescal Canyon launch could eliminate congestion at the Hwy 51 bridge launch; the Ralph Edwards launch could be a convenient option for a short tube run to Rotary Park. If trail access emerges across the river, tubers could hike back up to Ralph Edwards Park and float again.
- The working group's next steps will be a discussion on visitor experience and residential "patience." If the floating opportunities continue to get popular, what strategies (policies, programs, promotions) can local government, livery operators, local businesses implement to address concerns like crowding at launches, too much noise from Bluetooth speakers or yelling, etc.

City Manager Meeting Follow-up

We presented four requests to Mr. Swingle to support this project:

- ☑ Help coordinate discussions for conservation/recreation easement with Rio Vista Land Holdings.
Mr. Brown welcomes further conversations with the project team. (John & Attila)
- ☑ Include recreation and conservation focused questions on Wilson & Co Riverwalk community survey.
Wilson & Co doesn't think our questions are relevant to economic feasibility survey. City agreed with Wilson & Co. We don't have a strategy for community survey.
- ☑ Cost Share request for Rotary Park Design Workshop
Accepted and in-progress
- ☑ Tribal Engagement
City has many higher priority projects and could not engage with affiliated tribes and pueblo's until the fall. Village of Williamsburg agreed to take lead in reaching out to affiliated tribes and pueblos. Attila to provide Mayor Stubblefield with affiliated tribes/pueblo's list

Wilson & Co Collaboration

Collaboration efforts unclear. Many Turtle Mountain Trails Network steering committee members also participate on the Riverwalk steering committee. Everyone was surprised to learn Wilson & Co. scheduled a public meeting on June 24 without any communication with team members. We feel there is value in both efforts, but the community is totally confused.

NMSU Agriculture Marketing

NMSU graduate students may be available to help us with branding, messaging and developing our interpretive themes.

*Steering Committee supports further discussions with NMSU and potential student projects.
Merry Jo tasked with coordination.*

Plan Outline and Workplan Discussion tabled

Next Meeting; July 26 @10am Williamsburg