Multnomah County

Rithy KHUT <rithy.khut@multco.us>

Fwd: Testimony regarding Metro's North Tualatin Taskforce and Access to Nature

Rich FAITH <rich.faith@multco.us> Tue, Aug 16, 2016 at 1:34 PM
To: Rithy Khut <rithy.khut@multco.us>

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: **Jim Thayer** <jim@thayers.org>
Date: Mon, Aug 15, 2016 at 5:58 PM
Subject: Testimony regarding Metro's North Tualatin Taskforce and Access to Nature
To: mult.chair@multco.us, district1@multco.us, district2@multco.us, district3@multco.us, district4@multco.us

Dear County Commissioners:

As a member of the North Tualatin Taskforce convened by Metro to design the best usage for the Multnomah County land, north of Forest Park, I was both pleased by some aspects of the process and results, and also dismayed by Metro's inequitable access policies. In short this was my experience:

1. **Metro's policy of excluding all pets from all their park properties is inequitable**. The trails north of Newberry Rd have historically been used by residents to walk their dogs. Prior to the Metro acquisition, Hampton Hardwoods, the private owner, had expressly granted permission going back as far as the late eighties. To have a public entity use public funds to acquire land and then exclude all pet owners from trails historically accessible for dog owners was not just grossly unfair, but it was also an inequitable use of public funds. Dogs should be leashed and should be excluded from sensitive habitat, but they shouldn't be banned outright in all Metro Parks.
2. The planning process was marred by **Metro's refusal to collect data that didn't serve their desired outcome**. On two separate occasions I requested that baseline data be collected, but both times Metro refused to collect this important data. First, I asked that historical dog-walking activities in the area be assessed, and secondly I asked that the communities' desire for future dog walking in the area be measured. Both of these sets of data are essential for establishing an accurate baseline. In both cases, Robert Spurlock, the project manager at the time assured me that this information would be collected from the local residents that attended the outreach events. In both cases he was overruled by senior Metro staff so that neither question was asked. Even the possibility of adding comments was omitted so that the impression was created that no such user demand existed, or had ever existed. This was a clear distortion of the information gathering process.
3. At least one of the task force members dropped out of the process once they learned of these fact-finding distortions. News of this fact-finding bias, led other residents to distrust the taskforce and its recommendations.
4. The North Tualatin master plan did increase access to nature for about half of Multnomah County residents. Those that owned pets and wished to be accompanied by their pets were excluded. This exclusion, which was never adequately justified, reduced utilization significantly since pet owners are justifiably reluctant to "go for a walk" and leave Fido at home. In addition, this prohibition strikes hardest at our most vulnerable citizens, the aged who rely on a canine companion to induce them to engage in healthy exercise. The cardio-vascular benefits of walking are undisputed, especially for seniors, but this segment of the population was explicitly excluded. Lone walkers and other vulnerable individuals were also discouraged because they could not bring their canine companions for protection and/or assistance.

5. On a more positive note, the **task force did show significant flexibility in meeting the residents concerns about wildlife**, **and cycling.**
6. **Metro has also agreed to review Title 10 that deals with access issues**. I am hopeful that they will conduct this review in 2017 in a fair and inclusive manner.
7. I agree that the **Multnomah Comp Plan should not prevent a good project from occurring**, especially if it is conducted in a fair manner and supports reasonable access for all County residents .
8. The Multnomah County Comp plan should support recreational uses, especially as the density of our city increases, and an increasing number of residents take to the hills to improve their health.

Finally, Multnomah County should be aware that **Weyerhaeuser has already established what amounts to a private park (2729 acres) in the region between NW Logie Trail and NW Rocky Point Road.** Access can be purchased via a permit system that costs $75 for each hiker per year and is only obtainable on-line on May 18th. This permit system is being applied across Multnomah, Columbia, Clatsop and Washington Counties and is completely out of sync with both Metro and county plans. This private park system puts more than 170,000 acres of previously accessible timberlands out of reach for Portland's residents - unless they're willing to pay $75-$250/year for the privilege . In effect, Portland's western forests have been put off bounds putting more pressure on our existing parks and recreational assets. For more see: *www.wyrecreationnw.com/Permits/PropertyPage_Common.aspx?PropId=11*

Jim Thayer
Vice Chair, Oregon Recreational Trail Advisory Committee (ORTAC)
Member, Metro North Tualatin Taskforce
Secretary, Columbia Land Trust Board
Founding member, Friends of Forest Park
Author, Portland's Forest Hikes, Timber Press, 2007
Author, Hiking from Portland to the Coast, Oregon State University Press, 2016

Begin forwarded message:

From: Dan Moeller <Dan.Moeller@oregonmetro.gov>

Date: August 11, 2016 at 11:25:13 AM PDT
To: Dan Moeller <Dan.Moeller@oregonmetro.gov>

1.) Metro is an important park and natural area provider and manager for Multnomah County.
2.) Metro's North Tualatin Mountains access planning process was thoughtful, fair and inclusive.
3.) The North Tualatin Mountains access master plan protects and enhances natural resources and creates meaningful access to nature for kids, families and all Multnomah County residents.
4.) The North Tualatin Mountains access master plan was responsive to and respectful of the needs and concerns of the local community.
5.) The Multnomah County Comp Plan should not prevent a good project that benefits County residents, like the North Tualatin Mountains access plan, from occurring.
6.) Metro is asking for the fair and balanced treatment of recreational uses in the Comp Plan. Current language in the plan makes it more difficult to create meaningful access to nature than to develop other uses in the County.

Subject: Multnomah County Comprehensive Plan Update and Metro's Access to Nature Plans