

Board of Commissioners Meeting  
December 8, 2010

Present: Commissioner Mark D. Davidson  
Commissioner Steve McClure  
Commissioner R. Nellie Hibbert

Call to Order

Chairman Davidson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. with all three Commissioners present.

Review of Draft MERA Master Plan

Hanley Jenkins, II, Planning Director, explained that the advisory committees have prepared a master plan for the Commissioners consideration. Commissioner Hibbert made a recommendation of a change to the plan at the last public hearing. That change was made and an updated document has been presented.

The hearing was opened for public testimony.

Lance Colburn, 57881 Godley Rd. Union, thanked the Commissioners for letting him be a part of the process of putting the master plan together. It was a good way to have all the user groups and the public involved that would be meaningful and carry forward into the future. One thing that became apparent early on in the process was that this would be a dynamic document. There are provisions for checks and balances, monitoring and assessing the plan. He hopes to see that continue on the ground. If it works that is good but if it doesn't work then find out why and fix it. The committee members are anxious to pick up again and move ahead with the plan. Looking back through the plan he thinks there is always a case when a plan is written that there is a lot of history and assumptions that are made that other people may not pick up on when they read it. There are a few rocky areas in the non-motorized committee. He thinks those rocky areas were alluded to but not everything was carried over to the plan. He went back and refreshed his memory with the meeting notes. In particular the meeting notes from May 4<sup>th</sup> where the public meeting of April 19<sup>th</sup> was discussed. There were some changes that were made regarding trail usage. It was alluded to in the Master Plan but not spelled out. The other rocky area was with the Bowman and the Archery range. He went back and looked at the meeting notes of March 31<sup>st</sup> when the adoption was made to make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Davidson thanked Lance and told him that he appreciates his hard work on the Committees.

Gene Erwin, La Grande, stated that overall he thinks it is a wonderful plan and he is glad that he was part of it. In going through the Master Plan he sees a few things that might need to be clarified. For instance, on 1.1 it needs to have

another bullet that would state, "to Enhance and preserve wildlife habitat and opportunities". On 3.1 the Grande Ronde Bowman Advisor and the Committeeman at-large were left off. On 4.2 there should be a statement there concerning the fact that grazing would not be allowed in the 100 acre archery area. In the uses in 5.2 there is no mention of archery being in the system at all. 5.3 talks about special use permits and he recalls the conversations from the meeting as much as the archers were a use organization rather than a special use organization. They were told that all they needed to do was submit the dates of their activities.

Commissioner Davidson explained that the discussion he recalls having was that the special use permits were needed for the record keeping so their large events could be coordinated since they will be taking up overflow in other parking areas so it can be coordinated and not have conflicts with other events that would need that area. It is not meant to be restrictive but more for communication purposes.

Gene asked if there is anything in the plan that says the Bowman are responsible for building a fence around the archery area and providing two gates for the public access areas. The gates would only be closed on the dates of those special activities.

Hanley stated that the advisory committee adopted the Grande Ronde Bowman Archery Range Proposal. Commissioner Hibbert stated that it is explained in the first paragraph of 5.3.2.

Gene stated that when they originally proposed that the Bowman should become a part of MERA they submitted a financial impact statement. They would like to have a statement in the plan under 6.4 that reads: The Grande Ronde Bowman could have a substantial financial impact upon the area at times when they hold the tournaments. The larger the tournament the larger the financial impact would be.

Hanley asked if he meant under section 6.5 which gives the financial impacts. Gene stated that is the place it would fit.

Bart Barlow, 64302 Mt. Glen Rd. La Grande, thanked the Commissioners for letting this process happen and stated it has been a good process. The plan as it is drafted is a fairly general document. It is a dynamic process and document. Things are going to change and new things will be learned along the way. Things that don't work need to change and things that work need to stay. The Committee hasn't dug into the back country ski, snowmobile Mt. Emily Road use at all. He would like to see a commitment to be tackled as a special item. He is afraid that people have parked at the end of Mt. Emily Road where the snow plow turns around for years but it has gotten more popular and depending on snow conditions are like elsewhere it will continue to get popular and crowded.

He would like that to be addressed as an advisory committee item to see how skier use will be managed on Mt. Emily Road. Bart explained that Hanley thought the trail head could be moved up the road in a big flat area which would be a good idea. It would be the most cost effective approach. Trail construction and maintenance standards have not been addressed much in the Plan. It was put off to be an appendix in the Plan but he wants everyone to understand that how the trail is built and maintained is as important to him as an advisory committee member as anything that has been done on MERA. There are three trails in the area that he explained will have no access to because they are part of the Grande Ronde Bowman expansion and as an advisory committee member he was given the assurance that the Bowman will make their expansion, put up their fencing and make a few trails that are acceptable before that happens. Bart explained that Cody Vavra stated that the County would build the trails so the clubs did not have to pay for the new trails. He is not sure there was ever a good discussion about who would pay for the trails and he doesn't care who builds the trails but he is concerned that the people that built the existing trails wouldn't have to pay for it. The trails need to be built so they are sustainable and usable for the users that are there today so they have to be a trail that is built according to some standards and the majority of people can ride a bicycle up, jog up, walk up, or ride a horse up. Bart stated that he is looking forward to getting the committees back together again and continuing to work on MERA.

Lance Colburn responded to the snow park area that Bart had discussed. He explained that he was talking to Kurt Weidenmann, Forest Service, the other day and he is interested in pursuing a comprehensive Winter recreation plan for the whole Mt. Emily area; Forest Service and MERA combined. He thinks it is a great idea to be able to accommodate all of the different user groups and the wildlife.

Commissioner McClure appreciates the effort that was put forward. There were a lot of hours spent and a lot of effort by a lot of good people. They stuck with it and it was a longer process than was anticipated but he does think that there is a good basis for a starting process. Peoples concerns were listened to and it has to be a living document and adjustments need to be made when necessary. There are a lot of pieces that need to be written. It was done with a lot of passion. It was a bigger issue than he thought it was going to be when it was started. He does want to compliment everyone that was in attendance at the public hearing and everyone else that participated in the process. He thinks it shows that when you make a commitment you would be surprised what will turn out. The advisory committees need to get back to work in January and start identifying the things that need to get done and there needs to be a replacement for Cody so the process can continue.

Commissioner Hibbert stated that it was beneficial to go to Morrow County to take a look at how they operated a successful park. Visiting with the Manager of that park gave her an insight that this could be a successful venture. As a result

of laying the ground work with what their hard work has been it has moved forward from there. She is proud of what has happened on MERA and as it moves forward with baby steps and big steps it is a good process. It is something that is going to be even more valuable than it is now for the public in Union County as well as those who visit the area.

Commissioner McClure stated that there might have been some people with the State Parks who were skeptical that it could be done and he thinks it was proven that it can be done. He thanked everyone again for their efforts.

Commissioner Davidson stated that it is a real asset and the process that everyone has been committed to should be admired and they deserve to be congratulated. It has been a lot of hard work.

Gene stated that as a committee member he felt they had the Commissioners behind them helping them do what they were supposed to do. He was encouraged by that.

There was no other public comment received.

The public hearing was closed.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley Wilhelm  
Department Specialist