

Brevard/Transylvania County  
Ecusta Trail Advisory Board

Date: May 25, 2022

Location: City Hall Council Chambers

**Members:**

- ✓ Maureen Copelof, Mayor
- ✓ Mac Morrow, Council Member
- ✓ Larry Chapman, County Commissioner
- Addison Bradley, NC Cooperative Extension Dir (absent)
- ✓ Clark Lovelace, Tourism Development Authority
- ✓ Mark Tooley, Conserving Carolina
- ✓ John Ditillo, Friends of Ecusta Trail
- ✓ Sarah Hankey, Blue Zones Project
- ✓ Lauren Wise, At-Large Member (Via Zoom)
- ✓ Chuck McGrady, Henderson County Advisory Board Chair, Ex Officio
- ✓ Steve Harrell, City Manager, Ex Officio
- ✓ Paul Ray, Planning Director, Ex Officio
- Meredith Carli, At-Large Member (absent)

**Staff:**

- ✓ Katherine Buzby, City Planner

**Guests:**

- ✓ Kieran Roe, Conserving Carolina
- ✓ Vicki Eastland, Land of Sky
- ✓ Lorraine Nash, Trail Talk Newsletter
- ✓ Rebekah Robinson, Conserving Carolina (via Zoom)
- ✓ Michael Dexter-Smith, Rotary Club of Brevard
- ✓ Tad Fogel, Friends of Ecusta Trail
- ✓ Jonathan Rich, Transylvania Times
- ✓ Ryan Brumfield, NCDOT

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**A. Welcome & Call to Order**

Committee Co-Chair Maureen Copelof welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:30pm.

**B. Certification of Quorum**

Quorum was certified by Committee Co-Chair Maureen Copelof.

**C. Approval of Agenda**

Motion by Mr. Tooley, seconded by Mr. Morrow to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

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**D. Approval of Minutes from March 30, 2022 Meeting**

Motion by Mr. Harrell, seconded by Mr. Tooley to approve the meeting minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

**E. Updates**

Conserving Carolina: Still working on fundraising; the rail & tie removals are underway and is scheduled to be done by May. They have not heard back yet on the \$125K State Emergency Management Grant but the proposals for the grant stated that awards should have started last week. The signage to keep people off the Transylvania side of the trail is still underway. They will get the rails removed on the spur going from the Pisgah Forest to the Ecusta Site as it is part of the acquisition. This location may be a good spot for the rail cart they are planning on putting along the trail. Kieran has recently been to DC to do some advance work for the Ecusta Trail and the City which includes making new connections and allies. Alta is going to reach out to see how the FLAP award can help promote the RAISE grant application and legitimacy of the project.

Planning Dept: FLAP grant awarded and NCDOT has offered to be the administer for the grant; the agreement is underway. Construction drawings should be completed within a year. Engineering plans will include possible locations for bathrooms and trailheads. NCDOT will select the engineering firm, and they already have a list of contractors that they use so no RFP's are needed which helps speed up the process. Decisions about the funds will still run through the City. The list does include the firm that Henderson County is using currently and the goal is to have continuity between the 2 counties.

Transylvania Co: Confirmation that the letters to the adjoining neighbors of the Ecusta Trail have gone out; this is helpful in answering questions they are receiving.

Tourism Development Authority: It is important that this board is the most informed on the areas we represent and any additional information is appreciated (like the letters to neighbors of the Ecusta Trail).

Henderson Co: Construction drawings are expected to be completed by August for 30% of the trail from Hendersonville to Horseshoe. Hopefully it will set a precedence for issues like trail width and construction that can be applied to Transylvania County. Unfortunately, politics is playing a part in decisions that may cause issues for the RAISE grant. We need to navigate carefully with the parties and establish relationships to help promote the Ecusta Trail. The advisory board is having a public safety meeting to discuss possible safety issues like vehicles allowed along the trail and public safety. The board will also be making a series of recommendations about things like the width of the trail, which will vary based on topography and usage. They are receiving questions about promotion of the Ecusta Trail and are advising people that the TDA will be promoting the trail in both counties. They are hoping to start construction in the late Spring of next year. Original request for funding through the NPO was larger than what was received. They have a request out for the next piece of the Ecusta Trail but the vote has not occurred yet. They have an appropriation from the state for 7.5 million but there is a problem with the purpose of the money; it got misdirected. They are working on getting that part straightened out but the money is to Friends of Ecusta Trail and applied to both counties. They are discussing agreements and will be working on MOUs between the County and Hendersonville and the County and Laurel Park which will address a lot of issues they are incurring. They would like to have a

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copy of the lease agreement from Conserving Carolina and the City to review once the document has become public to make sure the correct organizations are listed and the roles they will play.

NCDOT: Railroad bridge that goes over Davidson River Rd is now under Conserving Carolina's contract and DOT is now out of the picture on that. The plans for the pedestrian bridge over the Davidson River is almost complete and now the Forest Service must obtain all the required easements from utilities, adjacent landowners, and the City. The scheduled date for construction is 2024.

City: Lobbying strategy is underway to go to DC to promote the City and make people aware of the RAISE grant application. The end of the trail, on the Estatoe side, the City is developing an agreement with NCDOT who is putting in new sidewalk and resurfacing the road. The sidewalk will be 10' wide and will connect to the Estatoe Trail and a section will be owned by the City that will connect Brevard High School to Gallimore Rd and tie into the trail over there. This section should be completed in the next 3-4 months. The lease agreement between the City and Conserving Carolina is still in process and the City attorney has been meeting with them and are aiming to have it complete by the June 6<sup>th</sup> agenda for City Council.

Friends of Ecusta Trail: Continue to focus on fundraising and they have a booth at the White Squirrel Weekend. Also, organizing volunteers for trash cleanups along the trail.

Blue Zones Project: Sarah Hankey will be taking over for Mark Burrows on the board. They are continuing to support fundraising efforts with the other organizations and the City and maybe supporting a new trailhead in Brevard.

Citizens/Public: Rotary Club of Brevard is working on funding for a possible trailhead and will be organizing trash pickup when needed. Momentum is building for the Ecusta Trail and people are excited to see the progress that is being made. Lorraine Nash would like to be kept up to date for her Trail Talk Newsletter.

#### G. Next Steps

Continue working on ongoing progress as discussed.

#### H. Set Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Brevard/Transylvania County Ecusta Trail Advisory Board is scheduled for Wednesday, June 29, 2022 at 3:30 pm. (last Wednesday of the month at 3:30 pm)

#### I. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:20 pm.

x Maureen Copelof

Maureen Copelof, Chair, Mayor

x Katherine Buzby

Katherine Buzby, City Planner

Minutes Approved- 6/29/2022