**Park Board Trail Subcommittee**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Friday, September 17, 2021, 8:00 a.m.**

**Held via Zoom, Virtual format**

**111 S. Geyer Road**

**Kirkwood, MO 63122**

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Alan Hopefl (Chair), Matt Cook, Alvin Reid, Matt Helbig and Parks and Recreation Director Kyle Henke.

1. **CITIZEN COMMENTS**
   1. John McKinley, 433 Van Buren, volunteered information on how mountain bike trails would be constructed in the West Valley of Kirkwood Park.
2. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**
   1. Proposal for Beginner Mountain Bike Trails in Kirkwood Park.

Hopefl gave a brief overview of the proposal to construct mountain bike trails in the West Valley portion of Kirkwood Park. Several concerns were raised. One is that the Kirkwood Master Plan (Appendix B) denotes the land use of this area as PASSIVE/NATURAL. A natural area is defined as a low or no maintenance area with minimal man-made elements containing trails of low intensity, wet lands, conservation, or environmentally sensitive areas.

The Master Plan also suggests that the West Valley be returned to more passive use (p. 4-6). Passive use is often defined as relaxational activities that places minimal stress on a site’s resources, compatible with natural resource protection. (examples: birding, hiking, photography, wildlife viewing). Active use involves greater energy expenditures often requiring special facilities or equipment.

Another concern was the projection of more crowds coming to Kirkwood Park for this activity, drawn from all over. The Master Plan points out that “Kirkwood Park is the most heavily used park” and that “it is used to death”. Today the Park is probably more used than it was 15 years ago. Is there space for all these additional people?

Another concern is the size of trails in relation to the size of Kirkwood Park and the area under consideration. Mountain Bike trails are available in some County and State parks (Castlewood 1818 acres, Greensfelder 1734 acres, Babler 2325 acres). The trails there range in length from 0.8 to 8.0 miles in length. Kirkwood park has an area of 92 acres and the West Valley area is probably 5 acres in size and can support minimal trail length.

A final concern is the environmental effects of new trail construction in this natural area. A 2011 plant inventory found 160 unique native plant species in the West Valley area and recommended that “the forest be restored and protected for future generations.” Building new trails will likely destroy local habitat.

Discussion:

Reid: had concerns with other activities in this area besides walkers. The area is small and could create situations between bikes and people. The area would not be environmentally protected from bikes. People walking do not hurt nature.

Cook: had concerns with the erosion in the area.

Helbig: sees this proposal as a positive, the trails would be dirt, there would be erosion repair and GORC has funding to pay for this. He noted that interests change from the time the Master Plan was developed. He said GORC will do what the Parks wants done and we should give them a chance to show what they want to do here. This would be more of a local trail. We need to see what specific plans they have for this area.

Reid: Asks if the proposers can show us what the project would look like. We need a plan from them showing exactly what they want to do. We should be prepared for more people to use this than for smaller numbers. The proposal is contrary to the Master Plan. Would like to know what the trails would look like and what treatments would be done for erosion control.

Cook: agrees with Reid and would like more details on the proposal, remembering that we can still say NO to the proposal. Also he would like to know if the trails would be multi-use or single use.

Helbig: Most trails are multi-use. He will get together with GORC to look at other designs. GORC has been around for 20 years and has some funding and they do much volunteer work on trails.

The suggestion was made that a site visit might be in order with committee and the proposers

Henke: noted there are mountain bike sites at Eureka, Castlewood and Greensfelder.

* 1. Trail Connection Between Greentree Park and Emmenegger Nature Park

Hopefl: Went through the history of this issue. The Kirkwood Master Plan notes a trail along the west side of Emmenegger along the river. This was picked up by Great Rivers Greenway as one of their proposed future trails. It has since been removed from the GRG maps.

Problems with the west side of Emmy are: erosion and flooding. This area from the creek emptying into the Meramec north to the end of park property has suffered considerable erosion over the years and the collection of large amounts of debris. The erosion here is probably not as great as that seen south of the creek at the Emmy staging area. Putting in a trail here is likely to result in continual maintenance and replacement due to periodic floods. The other problem here is that between the north border of Emmy and the old Kirkwood water treatment plant lie three private properties with river frontage, all which are against any trails across their properties. Other local property owners are also concerned about trespassers onto their property from Emmenegger park.

Eastside park connection along Cragwold Road. Beginning at the park service road, there is approximately 3 to 4 feet of space between the west side of the road and a cliff face of 30 feet or more up to the north entrance to the park. It would be difficult to construct any path here. There are occasional rock falls in this area, one just this year. The north entrance to the park is approximately 20 feet wide. Immediately north of the entrance there is a steep drop off of 30 or more feet into a valley protected by barriers along the road for about a quarter of a mile. Beyond that there is another small cliff face for about 100 yards followed by private properties up to Cragknob road.

The east side of Cragwold has about 4 feet of space between the road and a chain link fence from the I-270 overpass to the end of Cragwold. This area is MoDOT right-of-way. Beyond that is more MoDOT right-of-way up to Marshall Road. There are also more private properties with entrances off of Marshall road. Access through these properties is unlikely. It appears that MoDOT has right-of-way on both sides of Cragwold that go into Emmenegger property. It is unlikely that MoDOT would allow bike/pedestrian paths along its right-of-way, based on past experience with them.

Construction of the new bike/pedestrian bridge over the Meramec river (completion in late 2022) creates a new potential for connecting to the Meramec Greenway trail. The bridge should be connecting to a trail or road in Unger County park. The trail in Unger does dead-end after following the curve in the Meramec river. This leaves potential for another bridge from Unger Park into Greentree Park and the Meramec Greenway trail. The big impediment here would be funding (Municipal Parks Grant, County Parks funds?). This idea might be investigated several years in the future.

Short discussion followed.

1. **NEW BUSINESS**
   1. None
2. **ADJOURNMENT** – The committee adjourned the meeting at 8:49 a.m.