

Summer Update on Current Open Space Projects

Open Space Advisory Committee – September 10, 2020

1.) Dean Stone Corridor Project

The Dean Stone Corridor project is proceeding as envisioned at the onset of the public process. Trail construction on the Corridor property is nearing completion, and Five Valleys Land Trust is currently working with City personnel to ensure the trail meets City specs. The Conservation Lands Advisory Committee (CLAC) has been on site and has begun discussing management plan implications and will further discuss the project at its September meeting.

The acquisition component of the project is now ready for City Council review. The Council review process is slated to begin in mid-September, and if the acquisition is approved, an adopted Council resolution/approval is expected in mid to late October. City staff is currently working with Five Valleys to complete a thorough due diligence and legal review of the subject property. The objective is to complete the transfer of the property from Five Valleys to the City by the end of the calendar year. The Corridor will likely be open to public access beginning spring of 2021.

2.) Knife River Ponds Property Transfer

This project dates back to the early 2000's when JTL Group (the predecessor to Knife River), as a component of a 2002 contract with the City that also included work related to Fort Missoula Regional Park, agreed that it would transfer its "ponds" property to the City for use as parkland upon reclamation of its gravel mining footprint. The reclamation requirements were met and approved by DEQ in 2016.

The City has recently been working with Knife River to complete the transfer of the property. Due diligence tasks have been completed by City staff. The primary challenge to City ownership at this time is a lack of public access to the property. The City is not comfortable taking ownership of the property (and, thus, incurring management related expenses) without reasonable assurances that public access to the property will be secured in the near future. City staff has had successful on-going discussions with University of Montana (UM) staff who feel confident that UM can provide public access to the ponds property across its adjacent land holdings. Once the City receives confirmation that access across UM property is likely, we will proceed with the transfer, which will require City Council approval. The City is hopeful that the transfer will occur by the end of the calendar year.