

Missoula City Council
435 Ryman Street
Missoula, MT 59802

The Open Space Advisory Committee recommends the City Council approve requested expenditures of \$462,500 of 2018 Open Space Bond proceeds and \$462,500 of the anonymous open space estate gift funds, a total of \$925,000, for the Mount Dean Stone Corridor acquisition project to provide a new publicly accessible recreational trail and protect scenic open space and wildlife habitat and pay transaction and project-related costs associated with the acquisition.

Whereas, in November 2018, 63% of Missoula County voters approved the Open Space Bond measure, which authorizes the Missoula County Commissioners to use the bond proceeds for the purposes of conserving, enjoying, and enhancing open-space land, to include providing public access to water and land; conserving agricultural lands, fish and wildlife habitat, and rivers, lakes, and streams; paying costs of purchasing land, easements, or other interests in land from willing landowners and of improvements and costs related to or serving lands acquired or designated as open space; and protecting scenic views, with \$7,500,000 of the \$15,000,000 total bond being allocated to the City of Missoula within the Missoula Planning Region;

Whereas, Article II, Section 2.1 of the May 20, 2020 *Interlocal Agreement between the City of Missoula and the County of Missoula Related to Use of 2018 Open Space Bond Proceeds* (Interlocal Agreement) establishes the general purposes of the open space bond;

Whereas, this project will carry out the purposes of the 2018 Open Space Bond by providing public access to over 350 acres of open space, including almost five new miles of recreational trail; conserving open space land and wildlife habitat; protecting scenic views; and paying non-personnel related transaction costs and other project related costs;

Whereas, in June of 2019, the City of Missoula received an estate gift from an anonymous donor “to be used specifically for acquisition, management, maintenance and improvement of trails traversing the wild open space in and around the City of Missoula.”

Whereas, the letter accompanying the anonymous open space estate gift stated that “a portion of these funds might be used to acquire open space land in the South Hills and on Mount Dean stone and for associated trail and trailhead development on that land”;

Whereas, the City of Missoula adopted the *2019 Missoula Urban Area Open Space Plan* (“*Open Space Plan*”), which updated the *2006 Open Space Plan Update* and provides a vision for continuing to expand upon community open space and trail systems throughout the greater Missoula area;

Whereas, the *Open Space Plan* describes the upper portion of Missoula’s South Hills that the subject property is located within as a “cornerstone,” which is defined as a priority area that encompasses high open space value, of the open space system, and encourages the preservation of scenic open space, wildlife habitat, rare and unique plant communities, and protection of lands for recreation, public access, and trails;

Whereas, the Dean Stone Corridor project provides significant recreational and scenic values and builds on decades of open space and conservation work in the South Hills and Pattee Canyon area, including a connection to the adjacent and recently acquired City-owned South Hills Spur recreation area;

Whereas, Mount Dean Stone is a prominent feature of the southern scenic backdrop to the Missoula Valley and visually connects residents to the Pattee Creek and Miller Creek areas and the Bitterroot Valley beyond;

Whereas, the 2018 Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails (PROST) survey indicated that 84% of Missoula County residents want more or better dirt trails for hiking, biking and running and 85% want more or better natural areas and wildlife habitat;

Whereas, public open spaces and trails are community assets that promote social equality and are available to all citizens regardless of race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, creed, sex, age, marital or familial status, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression;

Whereas, quality trails and trailheads provide education, stewardship, and protection of important resources while also providing significant benefits of health and welfare, reduction of congestion, and access for all;

Whereas, conservation lands are generally managed as natural areas, including riparian corridors along creeks and rivers, wetlands, grasslands, open or wooded hillsides, but both large- and small-scale conservation lands provide for relief from the urban environment, nature connectedness, active outdoor recreation, as well as opportunity for contemplation;

Whereas, on March 12, 2020, the City's Open Space Advisory Committee unanimously voted to recommend the City Council authorize the expenditure of up to \$462,500 of 2018 Open Space Bond proceeds and \$462,500 of anonymous open space estate gift funds, a total of \$925,000, for the Mount Dean Stone Corridor acquisition project to provide a new publicly accessible recreational trail and protect scenic open space and wildlife habitat, and pay transaction and project-related costs associated with the acquisition;

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED this 19th day of October 2020.



Rob Erickson, Chair
Open Space Advisory Committee