

Minutes of the August 3, 2022 Ice Park Advisory Team Meeting

The regular Ice Park Advisory Team summer meeting was held in the Citizens State Bank building from 5:30 - 8:30 pm on Wednesday, August 3. Attending were Tres Barbatelli, Katie Beringer, Kitty Calhoun, Silas Clarke, Pete Davis, Ryan Dingwall, Dawn Glanc, Tamara Gulde, Angela Hawse, John Hulburd, Mark Iuppenlatz (via Zoom – get well soon), Bill Leo, Peter O’Neil (via Zoom), Jacob Raab (via Zoom from Peru), Frank Robertson, and Logan Tyler. Lively multilogue ensued.

Agenda:

- Staff Updates and Plans	Peter, Pete
- Interim Guide Training Policy	Frank
- Allocation Update	Frank
- Proposed Fee Increase	Peter
Discussion throughout	All

Peter opened with an update on the capital campaign for “Our Water, Our Future;” over \$600K has been raised and another \$200K is pending environmental review. This success in closing on our \$1.1M objective should help us convince foundations and individual donors to carry the effort through to fruition. Our vertical turbine pump has been delivered, pipe is on order, and excavation of the wet well should proceed this fall after Army Corps of Engineers / Dept. of Fish and Wildlife approvals come through, as will burying the main water line from the outtake to the distribution vault.

Power installation may be problematic, since the timeline for the required transformer is tight (as is San Miguel Power Association’s queue). Suggestion of alternative power source will be evaluated (Angela: solar would be very desirable; we still have to get it hooked up to the grid to draw at night when we farm). We are driving hard to have the new water source on line for the coming season.

Pete gave us a report on Park infrastructure progress and plans.

Very cool floating steps have been installed in the south Schoolroom walk-down, and via ferrata-style cable set up to protect the access. The connector bridge to bring north Schoolroom access back on line after the trestle was rebuilt should be completed by Hydrowest before the season starts.

The dilapidated fence above the north end will be removed by the city to eliminate that hazard and enable clean access to expanded terrain at the Gazebo and Shithouse walls. In addition to opening up the dry-tooling area bolted by Logan, more ice routes are being plumbed up there in anticipation of new water supply (also at Two-eyed Dog, and maybe even in the Grad School). We will build a catwalk like in Schoolroom to access top anchors for some of the new routes at 2ED, though the right end will remain lead only. Dead trees are being removed and steel tripods will be placed to provide anchors instead where needed.

Pete is working with Chief Wood to address parking issues, traffic flow, and careless drivers with further signage improvements and monitoring to make roadways around the Park safer for pedestrians. We will also be working with the Ouray Trail Group to build a set of stairs on the walk-down to the comp reviewing stand. Improved bathroom facilities are in the works as well, to be coordinated with the Ouray Via Ferrata initiative at New Funtier.

Love Your Gorge will return September 17. Pete is working with Tanya Ishikawa of the Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership to plan another great volunteer Park clean-up day, and reviewing the 2019 stewardship report for other opportunities. We continue to make lots of improvements to other walkways and stairways addressing erosion problems.

NB: the extensive improvements to the Park over the last 2-3 years respond directly to encouragement from the City to enhance appearance and user experience; they require Pete to now work full time in the “off” season and cost a lot of money. OIPI is very pleased to continue funding them, as well as working to pay our employees enough to live in Ouray and providing a world-class venue for guides to make their living here.

Silas reminded everyone that the 50% of fees OIPI forwards to the City each year is reserved for application in the Park. For example, it was put to very good use this year in securing the City’s water right supplementing the one assigned by Ouray Silver Mines, Inc. to solve the Park’s water supply challenge. He also announced that work on the new water treatment facility above the Kids Wall will not begin until next spring. Several folks pointed up the importance of getting the word out on how much benefit will come of that project so as to address any concerns on its impact.

Frank presented an update to the interim policy on CGO guide training, for which feedback from the community was requested.

Comments during the meeting mainly revolved round the process, but one having to do with the content questioned the use of words describing approaches to our fixed anchors. The hazards mentioned are actually involved in climbing and being down in the gorge rather than getting belays set up top, and are included in the second table, but please see new language addressing the concerns in the attached revision.

Angela and Tamara clarified the invitation of recognized subject matter experts to the working group and the value of their contributions, and Frank made it very clear that neither of them advocates for any vested interest. OIPI thanks them, as should the community, along with the rest of the working group for helping us advance this work in progress.

On the substance of the document: is there anything missing and can any requirement, competency, or guidance statements be improved?

Frank rolled out the broad-strokes allocation plan for the coming season. Individual allocation letters will be sent to CGOs by the end of September.

Peter advised the group that with costs rising significantly since the fee action three years (during which commercial allocation rose by almost 70%), in order to balance the budget, the OIPI Board has approved an increase in Use Fees. City Council will consider the matter on August 15.

Members of the guiding community pointed out that they may have difficulty passing the increased cost along, and that they also need to pay people but make a profit, and questioned why they are always the ones hit by such action. Mark correctly pointed out that Frank’s statement that the guides are the only ones making money on the Park was inaccurate; Frank apologized for misspeaking and amended to say they are the only ones directly making money in the Park. Peter let everyone know that we are increasing fees for IGEs, not just CGOs, as well as sponsorship and local business partner asks, and we will redouble our efforts to beef up membership revenue and donations.

The fee increase is a very small part of what we raise to provide guides an incredible place to ply their trade, at a cost more in line with accessing unimproved sites than for the privilege of using one costing hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to build.

And to Mark's point, yes, lots of other folks in town are making lots of money as an indirect benefit from the Park. Professor Shawn Rahlin of Kent State University has delivered an economic impact study, the amazingly discounted cost for which was shared by the City and OIPI. He will present it at City Council on August 15.

The subject of charging recreational climbers to use the Park was again raised, as it was at the last Board meeting.

It is the policy of OIPI not to do so.

Logan provided heartfelt perspective on why that is so, and what it would mean to do otherwise – you had to be there...

It was pointed out that from a liability perspective it would be possible to charge recreational climbers; Silas agreed that the City does charge for the pool and the hot springs... and pays for insurance accordingly.

Angela suggested we consider a members-only soft open period, which would not only provide incentive to join up but also help alleviate overcrowding as capacity is ramping up in the early season.

Kitty volunteered to participate in a working group to put more stoke into membership and donation recruitment. We will get that going.

It was suggested to place infographics around the Park and on our web site to raise awareness of the costs of the Park and install donation boxes.

Question for OVF folks: do your donation boxes bring in appreciable amounts?

Pete volunteered to help out with any CGO pre-season walk-throughs.

Katie reminded us that the guides are always down to shovel snow after storms, and we are looking forward to seeing you all out there (thanks, Micah, for all the times you have showed up).

Dawn responded to the original minutes; her follow-up comments replace my summary in these amended minutes.

"I did not express preferences for meeting venues. The OIPI Board held a public meeting. The meeting was held at a private residence, yet the meeting was open to the public. My comment was that a public meeting has to be held in a public space. Not everyone feels comfortable meeting in a private home. A public space is a neutral place for all. Private OIPI Board meetings can be held wherever they would like.

This is not an attack on anyone or a demand by me. I am using the guide lines we used when I was on city council. This way the public would be meeting in a neutral space."