SCCC 4.16.24

Board members: Ned Andrews, David Chase, Molly Child, Johno McBride, Judy Lovins, Judy Frey, Chris Collins, Jill Sabella

Attending via zoom: Pete McBride

Guests: Jeffrey Woodruff, Gayle Means, Steve Child, Neil Riley, and Aaron Oakley, Helene Slansky, and Chelsea Congdon on zoom

CONSENT AGENDA

David moved to approve the Minutes of February 20, 2024 and the Treasurer’s Report ending March 29, 2024. Molly seconded and all approved. The Treasurer’s Report shows $34,034.90 in the Unrestricted Funds and $8,381.70 in the Water Studies Fund, with a $150 donation for Dark Skies for a total of $42,566.60. Expenses were $425 to Devon Child for web management, $56.66 to Martha Ferguson for Dark Skies handouts and $250 to Gina Olson for Dark Skies web work, for a total of $731.55. The balance minus expenses as of 3.29.24 is a total of $41,985.05.

DARK SKY UPDATE

David commented that Martha has been great at making presentations and fundraising. Information is getting out through the radio and articles in three local papers

On May 16 Dr. Jeffrey Hall, astrophysicist , director of the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, AZ will speak on “Stars and Stripes: Preserving the Dark of Night” at TACAW. This is a free event, sponsored by our Caucus and Wildsky Old Snowmass.

UPDATING SCCC WEBSITE

Dark Skies has been added to the Caucus website with a link to Wildsky Old Snowmass.

The new Master Plan is posted on the site now as well as updated bios of Board members.

Molly set Saturday, May 4th for the annual road clean-up, meeting at 9am at the Conoco for vests and trash bags. Steve Child has already picked up trash on both sides of the road from the Child ranch up Capitol down to the “T”, and Beth Meager has already picked up the trash on both sides of Sopris Creek Road in our caucus area.

PROPOSED RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT THE MAINTENANCE OF MONASTERY LANDS AS OPEN SPACE

David commented that a local group, Friends of the Monastery, had previously put together a conservation solution to the monastery lands, given that the lands and buildings will be sold. This group includes the McBride family, Tim McFlynn, Chelsea Congdon, Peter Van Domelen, Laurel Cato, John Bennett, Richard Shaw and Cindy Houben.

David met with Abbot Vincent of St. Joseph’s Abbey in Spencer, MA and was informed that the monastery is now listed with Ken Mirr of the Mirr Ranch Group in Denver. St. Joseph’s Abbey oversees St. Benedict’s. The land is approx 3,800 acres with three main structures - the main house at 19,000 sf, the retreat center with 2,288 sf total, and the ranch house with 880 sf, plus additional cabins and ranch buildings.

David said in Section XVI of the new Master Plan is the Environmental Stewardship statement. David has added a Resolution concerning the monastery land sale and proposed that the Caucus adopt this as our position on the monastery to the public and anyone looking at that property, and that it be used as a reference to the Caucus’ position, possibly posted on our website and given to the County and P&Z. David felt our concern ought to be elevated to a more public spot.

Chris’ concern was that if you put caveats on restrictions you don’t get top dollar and that Mirr’s specialty is finding conservation buyers looking at county open space. It will be listed for $150,000,000 and could be parceled off. Chris said he feels this statement is a red flag to potential buyers. Another restriction is our 5,750 caucus building limit.

Johno said it’s good for potential buyers to be acquainted with the values within the caucus area, and David added a buyer should be aware of such a “values statement”. Pete commented that our best intentions may not be what buyers want.

Jeffrey said establishing values publicly - having a public conversation -is good and that if he were a buyer he’d want to know where the county stands.

There was discussion about that land having special use permitting when the retreat center was planned and given permission by the county. But that one piece of property in the valley shouldn’t have special rights over other properties.

Molly said some adjacent neighbors might be interested in buying adjacent parcels.

David moved that the Board adopt this Resolution in order to elevate these values to be more visible and not advise what to do with the land. Johno seconded the motion. The Board voted 8-1 to adopt the Resolution.

David said the Trappist Order has a Committee of Closure in such matters, and that a portion of the sale money goes to care for the monks, a portion goes to St. Joseph’s Abbey in Spencer and their additional houses, and a portion goes to Rome.

Jeffrey, being on the P&Z, will read the approved Resolution at the P&Z meeting on April 23 thereby passing along to commissioners and staff the overwhelming caucus board support for conservation, planning, simplicity and land stewardship.

*\*The Resolution is attached at the end of these Minutes*

PROTECTION OF INSTREAM FLOWS ON CAPITOL AND LOWER SNOWMASS CREEKS; WATER RIGHTS FOR LANDSCAPE PONDS AND MORE

Two Creeks LLC claimed water storage rights in 2022 from Boram White ditch, as junior to state instream water rights. However, with our gauge now installed on Capitol Creek on Judy Frey’s property, we have the right to challenge the decision made by Pitkin County and the CWCB to withdraw their objections to the application which would allow them water for three proposed ponds, claimed as a “storage right”. The bottom line question is if there’s enough water in the summer in Capitol Creek to fill three storage ponds with Boram White ditch water. They do not have a water right to legally use water from Little Elk Creek to fill the ponds. Ned thinks the water levels in the ponds will likely fall throughout the summer irrigation season due to evaporation. This water is not primarily for irrigation, but simply storage.

Steve questioned if the Caucus and Boram White ditch managers should legally challenge the County’s decision to allow these 3 ponds. Previously the Caucus agreed to one pond, but Two Creeks challenged that. Legal action was discussed by the Board.

Chris moved to not approve the Two Creeks agenda and David seconded. Board approved the motion. Ned will send a reply to Paul Noto, the applicant’s lawyer, acknowledging this could escalate into a conflict. Johno expressed that it would be money well spent on a lawyer to bring our objection known to the County and the Water Court.

OTHER COMMENTS

On the airport layout plan issue, Steve said on May 1 there will be a second reading with public comment. The first vote was 5-0 by the BOCC.

Steve also mentioned that he is working to have the Board on Geographic Names correct the name Nickelson Creek to Nicholson Creek. The Nicholson family homesteaded their land up Capitol in 1927 and Hod Nicholson, Jr still resides in the state.

Meeting was adjourned.

