



Meals Hill Master Plan – Public Meeting #1

MEETING QUESTION AND ANSWER

Monday, November 16, 2020

6:00 – 7:30 PM

Virtual via Zoom Webinar Platform (a video of the presentation is provided on the project website <https://mealshillmasterplan.com/>)

Project Team Attendees & Webinar Panelists

City of Valdez

- Nicholas Farline, Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Department Director

Consultant Team

- Huddle AK - Holly Spoth-Torres and Bri Keifer
- Parks & People – Dr. Hunter Holland & Dr. Kathleen Holland
- Interior Trails – Christine Byl and Gabe Travis
- ECI – Brian Meissner

Additional Panelists

- Great Land Trust - Amanda Hults

Questions and Answers

Q: Where can we see full survey results?

A: All the survey results will be provided on the website, www.mealshillmasterplan.com. There will be other reports available as well on the website as they are ready.

Q: This is probably jumping ahead a few steps, but I'm most interested in connecting the Meals Hill trails to the Mineral Creek trails. Has this been discussed?

A: It has been discussed. There are a lot of incredible trail options, but the design should reflect what the community wants designed and we were waiting for the survey results. The message about connectivity has been heard!

Q: Would the city encourage/be interested in a mountain bike specific trail building volunteer group in the future?

A: Absolutely! Partnerships are welcome to get the community engaged and the groups create a sense of ownership. We encourage those conversations and it will be brought up again the process. Mountain bike trails can be a bit more maintenance intensive, so knowing there's a group interested makes that more feasible.

Q: Were there any questions in the survey about the current ski grooming of the trails because this seems quite popular for improving access?

A: We can see that there is interest in cross-country skiing based on previous usage. Survey respondents did not specifically mention ski grooming, but we have talked with the Parks and Recreation Department about current practices.

Q: You mentioned a road was built in the Meals Hill area years ago. Why did it fail and what are we doing differently so that history doesn't repeat itself?

A: The original intention couldn't be fully realized, but it does give this project an opportunity to use that existing road in new ways.

Q: Are there any plans to access Meals Hill via vehicles?

A: The conservation easement does not allow for motorized use. With that said there was no preconceived notion about vehicle access going into the project. From the survey, it doesn't appear there is community priority to have vehicles access the site though emergency responders will need access.

Q: Thank you all for your dedicated time and energy toward this project! I have heard that Meals Hill may hold a sacred significance for our Alaska Native community members, has there been any further conversation or follow-up on this?

A: The project also has a more focused Meals Hill Planning Committee. The committee includes a representative from the local tribe, and she has been participating in the process and how we can develop the Alaska Native cultural identity of the site. Survey respondents would like an active representation of the cultural significance of the site.

Q: Would there be an option for motorized access to the top of meals hill for mobility challenged people?

A: Varying levels of accessibility came up in the survey. Motorized recreation isn't allowed with the Conservation Easement we do want to look into how to create ways for accessible recreation.

Q: There is currently no winter camping opportunities in Valdez. Is this a consideration on Meals Hill?

A: Based on survey data, respondents strongly indicated that they do not want to allow overnight camping on Meals Hill. Trash, fire hazards, and noise were some of the concerns mentioned.

Q: Do you have a plan to maintain a uniquely Alaskan experience—not apparently too overdeveloped or controlled—for locals and visitors?

A: Yes, we want to approach the plan in a way that reflects community and works for the Parks and Recreations long-term maintenance. The intention is to provide the city with some management guidelines as well. The plan will address what's there and how you manage it.

Q: Will The Port Valdez interests be worked with the museum?

A: We've had some conversations about what the role would be with the Museum, and it's a good fit based on the history of the Port Valdez Company. There are opportunities to have some connectivity between the town and community and Meals Hill.

Q: Is “pack in pack out” more effective than trash cans?

A: Meals Hill may encourage independent travel and levels of risk, and an intro to being in a more remote area but with lower stakes. Trash cans could be available because without them you end up with trash, coupled with a Leave No Trace message as well.

Q: What does “shaping the public image” mean in the second guiding principle?

A: Shaping the public image means that Meals Hill could be viewed as a city landmark. Meals Hill could become a top recreation attraction for locals and visitors alike.

Q: Will the committee address The Port Valdez Company sales agreement stipulation to honor their founders and the founders of Valdez?

A: Absolutely, the city is very interested in working with The Port Valdez Company to develop the vision for Meals Hill and honor the history.

Response from the attendee: Thank you, Nick. The Port Valdez Company has some suggestions, but we do want to make sure the community is in support. The connection with the museum is important. We think it helps connect the community.

Q: Considering interpretive signage along the trail, is there any possibility of merging geofencing with iPhone delivered video or text?

A: Thank you for the suggestion, we are interested in creative ways of providing outdoor education as a part of this project. We will consider opportunities like the one you have suggested.