



**BENTON COUNTY PARK BOARD**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

April 13, 2021, 6:00 p.m.  
Benton County Justice Center  
Kennewick, WA 99336

Meeting provided by Video (via Zoom)

**Board Members Present**

Dave McNeal, Vice Chair  
Karla Brown, Secretary  
Robin Emmingham, Member  
Diana Ruff, Member

**Benton County Employees**

Adam Fyall  
Robert Blain  
Peggy Brown

**Board Members Absent**

Laauli Faamausili, Chair  
Yessica Rosas, Member  
Richard Nordness, Member

**Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance/Roll Call**

Board Vice Chair, Dave McNeal, called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m., and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Review & Approval of Agenda**

When the April meeting was called to order, there was not a quorum to review and approve the April 13, 2021 agenda as submitted.

**Approval of Minutes**

The Minutes of March 9, 2021 were approved as submitted once a quorum was reached.

## Monthly Reports to the Board

### Chair's Report

There was no report at this time.

### Committee/Subcommittee Reports

The Horn Rapids Signage Subcommittee deferred their report to the staff report from Adam.

### Staff Report Update

Adam mentioned a new caretaker at Two Rivers Park-Juan Manzo. At Hover Park, an Arbor Day event is being featured in May. May 12<sup>th</sup> is a scheduled compliance inspection at Two Rivers. If all goes well, the June park board meeting is being planned to meet outdoors at Two Rivers Park. The Horn Rapids Signage project is going well. Adam mentioned that the road at the summit of Badger Mt. needs to be improved and how can the board meet that challenge.

## Business

### ▪ **Electric Bicycles-questions, comments, and discussion of policy & parks compatibility:**

This was an informal discussion among and between the Board and interested public in attendance. As many as 23 people were in attendance at one point, which is the most at a Park Board meeting in some time. Adam facilitated and the two-hour discussion proceeded in more or less the order of hands raised.

- The discussion began with Board members leading off. Member Ruff noted in particular that E-bikes are mostly allowed in Washington state and that speed limits have become a common mitigating measure. Member McNeal added that there is a gravitation toward 'modern amenities' in general, E-bikes just being another one of those. He noted that the E-bikes discussion reveals a tension between the park system's desire to be accessible and values around safety, conservation, and protecting our investments.
- Craig Groendyke, Chinook Cycling Club; John Burke, Chinook Cycling Club; Laila Krowiak, Bike Tri-Cities; and Dave Beach, Bike Tri-Cities, among other E-bike owners agree that banning use of E-bikes on County owned/maintained hiking trails should not be the main issue. They agreed that communication and trail etiquette while riding is the key to success between E-bike riders and others using the trails. Echoing the sentiments of others, Ms. Krowiak added that her E-bike allows her to bring along some cargo whether that be her kids or groceries; and that the E-bike takes strain off of a bad knee affords access

to areas more distant from her home.

- Other E-bike owners voiced positive aspects of E-bikes. Francesca Maier noted that E-bikes encourage exercise and access for those with mobility issues, it's a new and emerging mode of transportation, and it can increase revenue for small businesses i.e. bike shops. The Board was also encouraged to test ride E-bikes.
- Dan Chappel and Carole Schuh, Rattlesnake Ridge Riders, voiced concern that E-bikes can scare horse/rider if E-rider is going too fast or does not communicate with the equestrian rider. Mr. Chappel emphasized that continued and ongoing education for all users is the key to good trail use culture. Mr. Chappel also offered to participate in specific live training, videos, or other methods of educational outreach.
- Mickie Chamness, Native Plant Society, also voiced concern for those who are just walking the trails. Bike/horse riders take up the whole trail so walkers are forced off the trail to let them pass. She mentioned how crowded the trails are becoming as more people are enjoying the outdoors.
- Debbie Berkowitz noted two groups that might be a little underrepresented in this meeting were walkers and wildlife advocates and asked if E-bikes by their presence or nature scare wildlife or have other discernable ecological impacts.
- Acknowledging that continuity of rules across the area (Tri-Cities) would be ideal, Ms. Schuh also advocated that we should not be overly hesitant in making necessary rules and applying them "as needed" to specific properties. She added that she likes the approach Richland seems to be taking that would restrict E-bikes from soft-surface trails.
- When asked about his observations from the Badger and Candy preserves, Jim Langdon, who is the Trailmaster for Friends of Badger Mountain who has led every trail construction project on the two mountains since 2005 and oversees the standard maintenance, said he has not observed any particular uptick in E-bike usage specifically, nor has he assessed notably more trail wear that he could attribute to E-bikes. He did note that it appears that they can climb faster and come upon hikers quickly. Multiple speakers mentioned that E-bikes have a tendency to climb faster than purely muscle-powered bicycles but don't usually descend faster-often slower.
- Cindy Faith, Purple Sage Riders, noted that New Mexico requires E-bikes be equipped with bells for exactly some of the reasons being discussed at this meeting.
- John Burke noted competition culture that exists for many riders of either

style bicycle where some riders try to time trial against established times on certain routes. This is often associated with the online program Strava.

- A few guests spoke very little or not at all but those who did voiced appreciation for the opportunity for this discussion.
- In closing, Member Ruff asked rhetorically how much of an issue E-bikes specifically will really be within the two preserves; and Member McNeal elaborated on "outlaw culture" that can be tough to tackle with issues such that we are discussing, and he broached the idea of scheduled use days on one or both of the mountains.
- The discussion ended with those in attendance mostly agreeing that regardless of any future policy direction, education for all trail users and certainly for E-bike users is vital to the success of the emerging trend.

The discussion ended with appreciation from all in attendance. No decisions were made and no schedule was set for continuing with the topic, but the sense was that the Board would come back in May or June to set a course of action.

### **Public Comments/Poll of the Board/Adjournment**

There were no further comments from the public.

The Board had closing comments.

Robin Emmingham wanted to thank all who attended the meeting. He learned a lot about E-bikes. He feels we should follow state rules regarding E-bikes, but maybe modify them for our area. He feels that guidance versus enforcement would be more successful on the issue of E-bikes. He plans to take the challenge of testing out an E-bike. He also mentioned that mini hydros are at Two Rivers this weekend.

Dave McNeal appreciated those who came to the meeting. He expressed his thanks for moving forward on the signage at the parks. He mentioned that there's a plant & wild flower walk at Horn Rapids on Saturday. He's also open for ongoing comments/discussion on the E-bike topic. He also commented that several present at the meeting repeated "the need for more trails".

Diana Ruff appreciated all the comments and fresh perspectives of those in attendance at the meeting. She feels it's important the Board take some kind of action on this topic. She was pleased with the organization and safety precautions of the Badger Mt. event she participated in. It was a wonderful event.

Karla Brown wanted to express how nice it's to work as a community on the issue of E-bikes. She feels education is the key to success. She test rode an E-bike and loved it. She feels that the Board needs to continue the discussion on E-bikes.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

The next regular meeting will be held on the second Tuesday in May via Zoom.