



ForeverGreen Trails

Connecting Pierce County Communities with Trails

Annual Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 16, 2023 4:00-5:30 PM

Online Membership Resources: <https://www.forevergreentrails.org/resource>

The 2023 Annual Meeting was called to order at 4:02 PM by Roxanne Miles, FGT Board President, Pierce County Parks Director.

Other meeting participants were invited to introduce themselves:

Jennifer Dvorak, FGT Board Individual Member; Shayla Miles, FGT Board & Conference Committee Chair, ED of Foothills Rails to Trails Coalition; Cody Geddes, City of Puyallup Parks Director; Mary Dodsworth, FGT Board City of Lakewood Parks Director; Alisa O'Hanlon Regala, FGT Board, Metro Parks Tacoma; Bob Myrick, FGT Board, Tacoma WA Bicycle Club; Kerry Samudio-Whittaker, Mount Rainier Business Alliance; Tristan Fields, Individual Member; Levon Williams, Blue Zones Parkland Spanaway; Kim Field, All Things Fun Sports!; Michael Faulkner, Bruce Dees & Assoc.

Joining after introductions: Fred Wert, Palouse to Cascades Trail Coalition & Principal at Rail Trail Planning Services;

Grant & Partnership Announcements – Larry Leveen, Executive Director

The Rails to Trails Conservancy has awarded FGT \$5,000 for its public outreach campaign for the Tacoma Mountain Division Trail. This corridor is an abandoned, publicly owned railroad, that extends from the Tacoma Dome Station south through the Eastside of Tacoma to the city limits at 72nd. The corridor is listed in the Tacoma Transportation Master Plan as a future trail, and we are asking the City Council to approve a public plan process for redevelopment of it. We will use the grant to co-design and deliver public outreach in the neighborhood regarding this project. We will solicit their ideas and feedback and use it to guide our future advocacy for the trail. We plan to have an outreach event in the first half of 2024 regarding this project. FGT is still working on soliciting the City of Tacoma to become a member jurisdiction so that we can better help them build out trails within their boundary. Our longer-term goal is to get this section of the trail built, so we can approach Rainier Rail which owns the section south of the city limits, about extending the trail toward Frederickson.

ForeverGreen Vision Statement:

All of Pierce County's communities are connected by a system of trails, sidewalks, bike lanes, and local pathways that provides for safe, convenient, non-motorized travel and recreation for all ages and abilities. Residents and visitors use, value, and care for this network because it contributes to their health, wellbeing, livability, and local economies.

ForeverGreen Mission Statement:

ForeverGreen Trails supports a system of trails throughout Pierce County, WA, via education, advocacy, promotion, collaboration, and stewardship.

The REI Cooperative Action Fund has awarded FGT two \$10,000 grants — one for 2023 and one for 2024 — to support our equity-oriented work for trails. The mission of the REI Cooperative Action Fund is to create a more equitable outdoors by bringing together the collective strength of our community. These unrestricted funds will help support our ongoing efforts not only with projects like the Tacoma Mountain Division Trail, but also in support of high-needs areas like Parkland, Spanaway, Eatonville, and Roy.

The following jurisdictions, businesses, and nonprofit partners joined FGT in 2023:

- City of Edgewood
- City of Bonney Lake
- City of Roy
- City of Buckley
- Town of Eatonville
- Blue Zones Project Parkland Spanaway – business member
- All Things Fun Sports! – nonprofit member (501c3 run/walk promoter)

New event-oriented partnership for 2024

All Things Fun Sports! (ATFS) not only joined as a nonprofit member but will be donating to FGT based on the registration numbers for three of their events next year: January's Bridging the Gap 10k/half-marathon in Sumner, Go Your Gnome Way in March, and Mount Rainier Trail Fest, a three-race challenge in May. Additionally, they will provide an opt-in donation to FGT on their registration forms for another FOUR of their events.

Board Elections - Larry

FGT's membership structure and voting rules were reviewed. The draft nominee slate consisting of Cody Geddes, the Parks Director for Puyallup was presented. He was appointed to fill a jurisdiction vacancy on the board in 2023. According to the bylaws, appointees only serve until the next Annual Meeting. Cody has indicated he is willing to serve a three-year term. There are two additional vacancies, another one for a jurisdictional member and one for a nonprofit member. Kim Field, the Director of All Things Fun Sports! indicated she is willing to serve in this capacity.

Mary Dodsworth moved the slate of candidates consisting of Cody Geddes representing a jurisdiction seat and Kim Field representing a nonprofit seat.

The motion was seconded by Roxanne Miles.

The slate was approved unanimously by the membership present.

Breakout Sessions

Breakout discussions occurred in two groups — Jurisdiction Members and Business, Nonprofit, and Individual Members. No business was conducted in these breakout

sessions though notes were taken by the two facilitators (Roxanne and Larry) that will be conveyed to the board. The breakout sessions were not recorded.

Once the group reconvened, a final question was posed about what projects local jurisdictions are seeking grant funding for from the Recreation and Conservation Office.

Roxanne reported that Pierce County will seek funding for Gonyea Park and while they also want to secure funding for extending the Parkland Community Trail to Gonyea, they might not be able to do so this grant round.

Alisa reported that Metro Parks Tacoma had recently been awarded Conservation Futures funding for the acquisition of additional land to add to Swan Creek Park. They will be seeking a grant from RCO for additional acquisition funding for this purpose.

The ED mentioned that all local jurisdictions will be polled to see if they are seeking RCO grant funding to help identify where FGT might use its resources to support them. Priority will be given to member jurisdictions.

Shayla mentioned that RCO is looking for volunteers to serve on the grant advisory committees.

Work Plan Review

The Executive Director (ED) provided a report about the progress made in the 2023-2024 Work Plan. Highlights included a lot of progress in most Goal areas. However significantly lower completion in the Objectives and Actions under Goal 6 dealing with developing sustainable funding and talent to maintain FGT operations. It was noted that the Organization and Development Committee (ODC) is helping with the creation of a fundraising plan to support the revenues identified in the budget.

Shayla asked if there was sufficient staff time to achieve the Objectives and Actions in Goal 6. The ED replied that there was not sufficient time given all the other staff responsibilities. Shayla followed up with a question about whether there is capacity in the budget to help pay for development support like a consultant. The ED said he would carry this discussion topic to the board.

Roxanne reminded the membership that among the new board's first tasks is to review and approve the budget at the December meeting.

The ED added that the ODC is helping to prioritize development work regardless of who is doing those tasks (staff or a development contractor). Also, the board could and should dig in and help support the organization's financial health (growing the membership and boosting donation and event sponsorship revenues). The plan will help outline and facilitate how they can do this and will roll out a plan early in 2024.

Shayla asked if the Tacoma Mountain Division project has been included in the Work Plan and if anything needed to be pushed out to 2025-2026 to accommodate it. The ED replied that while it is not mentioned by name in the work plan, it falls under "Goal 1: Improve and help implement trail and mobility plans at local, county, and state levels" and to an extent "Goal 2: Advocate for policies, standards, and programs that support active recreation and mobility."

Roxanne also added that the Executive Committee and the Board will have the opportunity to adjust the work plan if needed early next year.

No additional questions or comments were offered regarding the Work Plan.

Draft Budget Feedback

Roxanne introduced the draft 2024 budget and provided some context about the main driver of organization expenses (payroll). She explained how FGT's membership fees for jurisdictions was adjusted and other revenue lines were boosted to accommodate for WA-mandated minimum compensation increases. The ED pointed out that the color-coding of 2023 revenue and expense figures indicates how budgeted amounts compare to actuals to date this year. Most budget lines are "on target or better" (i.e. higher than budgeted for Revenues and lower than budgeted for Expenses). Additional comments in a column on the right help to provide further context and confidence in the proposed draft budget. The ED added that past challenges with securing grants can be addressed by boosting less restrictive forms of income like Event Sponsorship. The membership was asked if they had any questions or feedback for the board regarding the budget, but there were none.

Other Announcements

The ED reminded the membership that Giving Tuesday is on November 28th and let them know that FGT will send out a newsletter and make additional appeals for this and end-of-year fundraising to help support the budget.

Michael Faulkner mentioned that final comments are being received for the Yelm Prairie Line Trail study that his firm created for Pierce County.

Kim Field mentioned that All Things Fun Sports' first event in 2024 is the Bridging the Gap 10K & Half Marathon on January 27th. This event will connect the Puyallup Riverwalk Trail and Sumner Link Trail in an out-and-back event.

Roxanne thanked the membership for their support and their involvement, noting the wide variety of backgrounds, interests, and expertise areas represented.

The 2023 Annual Meeting was adjourned at 5:30 PM.