

Village of Ruidoso

MEMO

Date: April 16, 2018

To: Mayor and Village Council

 From: Debi Lee, Village Manager

CC: Department Directors
Parks & Recreation Commission
Planning & Zoning Commission
Watershed Committee

Re: Moon Mountain Community Meeting – April 4, 2018

On April 4, 2018 at 6pm the Village of Ruidoso invited the public to participate in a community meeting where over fifty citizens attended. Also in attendance was the Mayor and every Council member, along with a variety of Village Directors and staff members. As citizens came into the Council Chambers, they were offered the opportunity to write their answer to “What does Moon Mountain mean to you” and place it on a flip chart. This yielded a variety of responses, which is reflected in the summary below.

The meeting began with a welcome from Mayor Lynn Crawford who also described the purpose of the meeting. An overview of the two leases (629.977 acres and 1 acre) with the State Land Commission was also discussed and copies were available for the public should they wish to read it. Next, the citizens were separated into three groups where they would select a scribe to write the answers to two specific questions. They also selected a spokesperson from each group to present to the full group their responses and comments in the group setting. Below is a summary and responses from the community participation.

SUMMARY:

What does Moon Mountain Mean to You?

- Attached is a complete listing of the comments made from the group; however, there were three common themes: 1) Protect the area from urban development with implemented fire mitigation; 2) Outdoor recreation (hiking, biking, trails); 3) Green Space/Open Space (nature trails with animals)

The first group, identified as RED, were asked to discuss the advantages of the Village leasing Moon Mountain through 2024 and how can the community benefit from it. Listed below are the questions and their responses.

Question 1

What are the advantages of having Moon Mountain under lease by the Village of Ruidoso?

The consensus was that the Village would be more responsive to ensuring that the citizens' best interests are taken into account as they develop a plan for public use; thus not allowing residential development. This group felt that the Village would implement fire mitigation to protect the community, monitor the area for vandalism and develop trails for hiking and biking using the natural terrain but include a buffer zone or green space to support the wildlife. Below are their comments.

- If Village does not do something with the area then the State will
- Village has control
- No more hunting
- State will fulfill responsibility for education
- Cannot be sold for residential development
- Clean up of area and continued maintenance
- Design can be made to be beneficial to wildlife
- Design can include buffer or green zone
- Property values would increase
- Fire mitigation will help protect community
- Village Police would monitor area
- Good design would cut down on vandalism
- Smart design of natural terrain in neighborhood
- Old dumping ground would be cleaned up
- Overall better management of Moon Mountain

Question 2 –

How can the Village of Ruidoso benefit from Moon Mountain?

Benefits of the Village leasing Moon Mountain were identified by this group, with outdoor recreation as a primary theme, which would create additional revenue for the Village; thus providing options for the visitors who come to our community. This group also identified the need to involve and educate students in good stewardship of public land, given its location adjacent to the High School. This group also indicated an interest in protecting the natural habitat and did not want to negatively impact wildlife. They also discussed their concerns related to the costs of development and if poorly designed it would be a detriment to the community, especially the adjacent property owners. Below are their comments:

- Biking and hiking would bring more revenue
- Concern with funding to pay for development of area
- Concern about human impact on wildlife
- Concern about fires due to more humans
- Will be able to compete with other areas for recreation
- Increase lodgers tax
- Generate more revenue
- Another option for visitors to Ruidoso

- Involve students in good stewardship of the land
- Economic development – mountain biking
- Frisbee golf tournaments
- Adjacent to schools – introduce outdoor activities to youth
- Deer very sensitive to a lot of activity – may disappear
- 2nd Road was done very well (efficient)
- Higher wildlife attraction
- Healthier forest
- Will Not Benefit because:
- Cost of infrastructure
- Other funding priorities
- Loss of wildlife
- Human impact on wildlife
- More exposure to fire
- Hunting/close proximity to neighborhood
- Move from passive to active recreation
- Poor design would have negative impact
- Missing revenue is going to Colorado

The second group, identified as BLUE, were asked to discuss in detail the challenges associated with Moon Mountain and list their concerns. They were also asked to identify potential solutions. Listed below are the questions and their responses.

Question 1 –

What are the challenges?

There were several challenges identified by this group. There was concern about the old dump ground that was previously located there, and if an environmental assessment should be done, whereby they could expose unknown issues, if any were uncovered. The impact to residents in the neighborhood was listed as it related to parking, roads and cleanup. The challenge of enforcing ordinances specific to keeping the area clean and parking to access the trailheads was also listed. Everyone was in agreement that thinning Moon Mountain was a priority for fire danger. Listed below are their specific comments.

- Old dump ground closed 40 years ago – do we know what is buried there
- Exposure from uncovering unknown issues
- Do we need an environmental impact study?
- Minimizing impact to adjacent neighbors – access/parking, utilize existing trailhead, location
- Where will funding/fees come from to develop or maintain
- Roads/parking - where will they be placed?
- Water sources
- Incorporate multi-use – Equestrian?
- Elk & Deer –get them to use Moon Mountain
- Bike trails
- Need income from development
- Clean up and maintenance of the area
- Who will thin the forest?
- Enforcement of ordinances

Question 2 –

What are your concerns? Identify suggestions or solutions for each.

Concerns were identified in each group but the Blue Group specifically discussed enforcement and how to fund the improvements, possibly with gross receipts taxes and lodgers' tax, as a return on the investment. They also voiced concerns on how Moon Mountain would be maintained and recommended that the Village continue to use EcoServants and the Bike Club in organized field days. They also discussed the concern of fire danger and recommended that a Fuel Management Plan be prepared. They suggested that the Village coordinate with the State and County through grants that could fund thinning, specifically near houses and on the south slope. The Blue Group addressed the need for emergency vehicles to access hiking and biking trails in case of emergency and for maintenance. Lastly, this group addressed enforcement and felt that the Village should ensure that the park ordinance is enforced. Listed below are their comments.

- Cedar Creek – example we can follow
- Funding – Indirect recapture of GRT, Lodgers Tax, etc.
- Maintenance – Biking Club, EcoServants, organized field days cleanup
- Fuels Management Plan – Coordinate w/state & county, apply for state grants, thin near houses first, thin on south slope, sustainable management yields
- Access – emergency vehicles, use hiking trails
- Enforcement – VOR control, park ordinances, limit hunting and fires

The third group, identified as GREEN, were asked to answer questions that would identify opportunities through defined uses and discuss specific areas on Moon Mountain that could be designated as recreation or for conservation. Listed below are the questions and their responses.

Question f:

Identify Uses of Moon Mountain. What opportunities do you see through defined uses on the Moon Mountain Master Plan?

The green group was very creative and provided a list of ideas centered on outdoor recreation. They believe that defined trails for biking and hiking would generate economic development opportunities in the community that could help spring up new businesses or expand businesses. They also discussed the equestrian users and the need to have an area for horse trailers to park and turn around. Members of this group did express that Ruidoso had enough trails and needed to limit the uses on Moon Mountain to nature trails, bird watching, etc. They wanted to reduce the impact to the wildlife that currently exists. This group agreed that the Village should develop Moon Mountain in a phased manner and be considerate of the residents that live nearby. Below are their comments.

- Destination spot for recreation
- Interconnection of trails
- Opportunity for revenue
- Economic development
- Outdoor activity
- Bring in more outdoor enthusiasts
- Hiking & Biking – will keep the area in good condition
- Develop in a controlled manner
- Schools can use the area for education/sports
- Horse trails – there will be issues – need parking area, need water tank
- Traffic is concern – access to neighborhood backyards
- Concern of impact to wildlife
- Concern that there are already enough trails in Ruidoso – only 1 Moon Mountain
- Concern that there will be problems if we don't manage
- Concern with fire danger – when more human contact then more fire
- Concern with Forestry management to thin Moon Mountain

Question 2:

Are there specific areas on Moon Mountain that could be used for Recreation or for Conservation – Describe where.

This group described the need for education of our children using Moon Mountain as a location for instruction and the use of interpretive signage. They also discussed star gazing and had a strong interest in wildlife preservation. They suggested that the west side be restricted to hiking and the east side for biking. Much discussion occurred regarding special events and many did not support camping on the Mountain. Below are their comments.

- Protection for wells
- Reserve space for education for children – local and statewide
- Center bowl for star gazing – access with interpretive signs
- Conservation areas to preserve wildlife and neighborhood
- Stream area – conservation & education
- Concern with special event – 400 people camping
- Restrict west side to hiking & east side to biking

Proposed Master Plan Map – Notes from Participants

After hearing the reports and comments from the three groups, participants were given the opportunity to review the proposed master plan map and make suggestions and revisions that support the results from group discussion. Listed below are the comments that support the attached map.

Opportunities:

- Trails-Sustainable multi-use trails could be incorporated throughout the leased area with special attention paid to sensitive areas surrounding neighborhoods. A combination of both downhill and cross country trails can be constructed.

Down Hill Trails would need a parking area situated at a higher elevation to be most beneficial.

- Parking Areas /Trail Heads/Picnic Area- Two parking areas should be incorporated to allow for the construction of downhill trails with picnic tables for day use by visitors.
- Star Gazing Observation Area – The area to the south of the High School should be designated for stargazing as it has a natural buffer which blocks out artificial light from surrounding areas.
- Campgrounds – Campgrounds should only be considered on a special event permit basis. The Village should utilize its existing event application process which takes into account numerous event requirements such as increased traffic, emergency access, solid waste, adequate restrooms, and fire restrictions.

Access:

- Although Moon Mountain is situated between four major roads, Paradise Canyon, Hull Road, Gavilan Canyon, and Warrior Drive, it has limited access points.
- The easiest access is from Hull road as you enter High Loop Drive and turn west onto Madera road where the Village has created a new road to their existing water tank lease. This road will be maintained by the Water Utility Department for access to water tank creating the most cost effective maintenance of access roads to Moon Mountain. Observers on this particular site are afforded spectacular panoramic and framed views from various vantage points of the property.
- Development of this site could maximize views. This area is relatively flat which could potentially incorporate some ADA accessible trails, day use/picnic areas, and access to dramatic views of Sierra Blanca. This proposed entrance would increase traffic to the High Loop Neighborhood.
- An access point along Gavilan Canyon on the east side is owned by the Ruidoso Schools. This potential route passes by the High Schools and travels south through the former landfill area and eventually to the internal logging roads. This route would either require an access easement with the Ruidoso Municipal School District or an improved crossing on Village of Ruidoso property to include a bridge or culvert to create a crossing of Gavilan Creek, which will be costly.
- Other Potential access points are possible but will require extensive improvements to roadways. Foothill road is the most Direct Route. Although this is unpaved Village Road exceeds 14% slope in some points it passes

directly through a west boundary of the site and could potentially be developed from this point to an interior road system. In a similar fashion, a portion of the site can be reached from Torreon Road if a new interior road were developed. Either of these options would require significant road development.

Annexation:

- Annexation will allow the Village to control the quality of developments to its standards and enforce its ordinances. Annexation does however eliminate access to Soil and Water Conservation funds for Noxious Weed and Invasive Woody species treatments. Enforcement of Lincoln County Ordinances could apply unless annexation is planned after the thinning has been completed and noxious weeds have been addressed.

Permit for Recreational uses:

- Campgrounds should only be permitted as a conditional use through the Village of Ruidoso Special Event Permit Application Process. Special attention should be applied to ensuring there are minimal impacts to neighborhoods and existing homes. Improvements in the direct line of sight should be avoided to avoid the spillover of sound and direct visual impact to both recreation users and homeowners.

Buffer Zones:

- Development of trails, parking areas, and consideration of any Special Events should be limited or excluded in close proximity to private property boundaries and take advantage of topography to mitigate adverse impacts to existing homes. These Zones should be clearly signed to inform users of any restrictions.

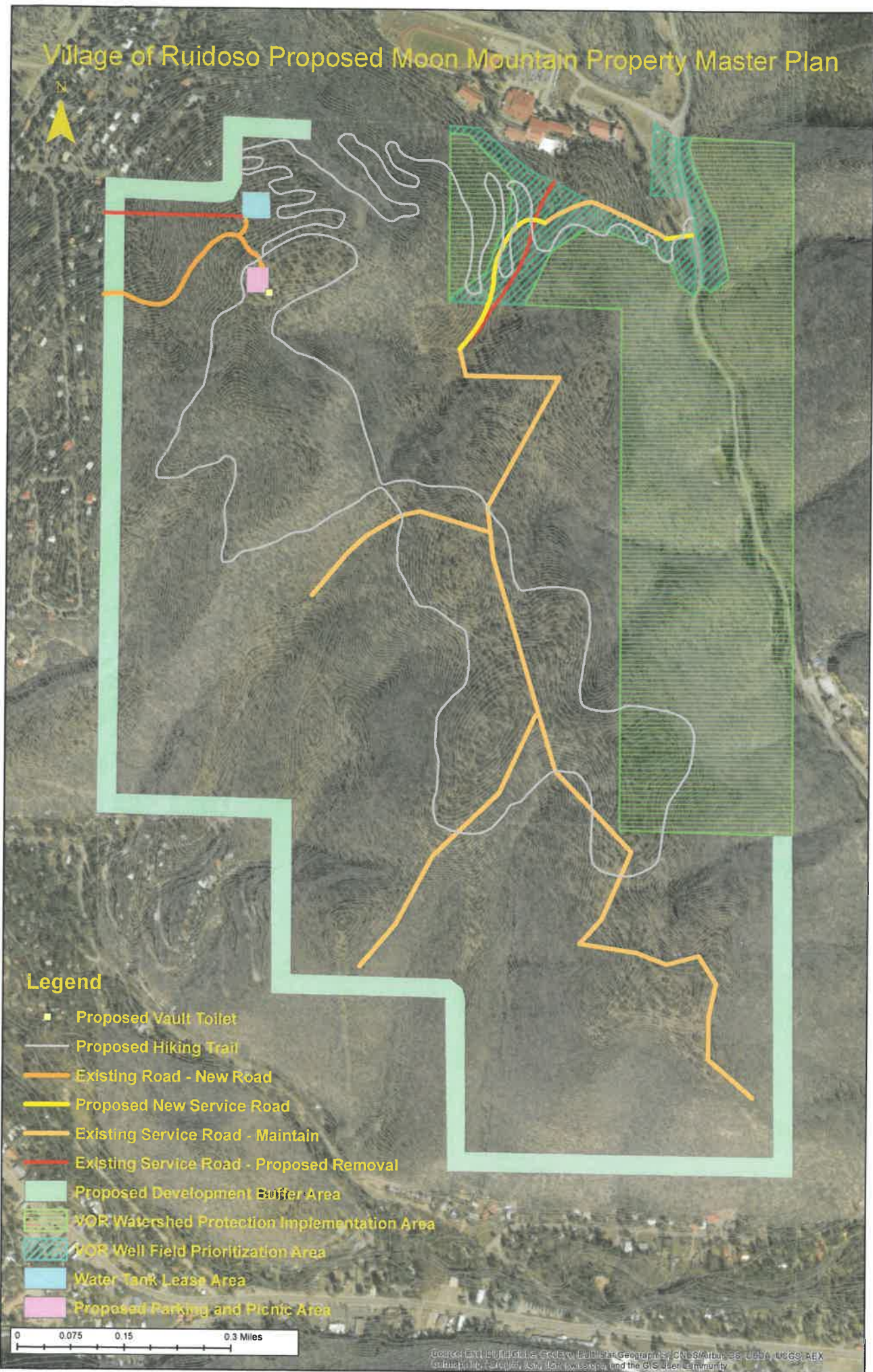
CONCLUSION:

The Community Meeting was well attended and every individual was given an opportunity to comment. By putting them into groups, it allowed those who may not have voiced their opinions or suggestions individually to participate in the group setting. The next step would be for the following committees to discuss the outcome of the community meeting and develop a consensus for the development of the Moon Mountain Master Plan. These recommendations would be submitted to the Parks Director who would prepare a draft plan. This plan would then be submitted to the governing body.

- Parks & Recreation Commission
- Planning & Zoning Commission
- Watershed Committee

Thank you all for your participation and concentrated effort on creating a community Master Plan for Moon Mountain.

Village of Ruidoso Proposed Moon Mountain Property Master Plan



Legend

- Proposed Vault Toilet
- Proposed Hiking Trail
- Existing Road - New Road
- Proposed New Service Road
- Existing Service Road - Maintain
- Existing Service Road - Proposed Removal
- Proposed Development Buffer Area
- VOR Watershed Protection Implementation Area
- VOR Well Field Prioritization Area
- Water Tank Lease Area
- Proposed Parking and Picnic Area



MOON MOUNTAIN MASTER PLAN

April 4, 2018 – 6pm

Question for Attendees: What does Moon Mountain mean to you?

Responses:

- Hiking/Biking
- More Outdoor Opportunities w/Multi-Purpose Use Trails
- Adventure
- Tierra Bonita
- Economic Opportunities
- Tourist Attraction
- Mountain Biking Mecca
- Very Important to the continued environment of our Village
- Wildlife
- No Camping
- No traffic
- Peace and Quiet
- Night Skies
- Elk
- Potential for beautiful recreational trails to benefit the community of Ruidoso by attracting tourists and enhancing the health and wellness of our residents
- Last hope to keep this treasure as a green space, watershed, wildlife sanctuary that is part of the unique charter of our Village
- Outdoor recreational opportunities to enhance tourism, health, quality of life
- Economic enrichment and growth
- Community involvement
- Exploration
- Economic development
- No non-resident traffic on my residential street
- Bike trails
- One of our last opportunities to preserve all the natural beauty we are known for
- Green space in the midst of our Village
- Recreation
- Flood Control
- Proper Development
- Ecosystem Health
- The reason I built my house where I did
- Plenty of room for trails

- Opportunities for more people in the community to enjoy our fabulous outdoors and wildlife
- A part of undeveloped land in the care of our Village that needs to be kept non-commercial, pollutant free and as natural as we can
- The land needs fire mitigation
- A waste of tax payer dollars
- Passive recreation – experiencing the wildlife and hearing the wildlife
- A fresh, green picture of peaceful forest
- No Parking Lots!
- No motorized vehicles
- No camping
- No hunting
- No fires
- Beautiful natural resource in the middle of our community
- Trail riding for horses and mules
- Multi-use trails/wildlife/family/joy
- Nature & wildlife
- Quiet Solitude
- Family Fun
- No camp grounds
- Green space
- Natural, low impact environment
- An untouched area that keeps one of Ruidoso's best neighborhoods private – we don't need or want the traffic or the people
- Turning an unusable area into an opportunity for tourists to ride and walk in nature
- Last large natural space in town
- Nature preserved
- Opportunity to enjoy our natural resources
- A chance for the public to connect with nature
- Opportunity to expand Ruidoso's trail system, drawing more outdoor enthusiasts to Ruidoso
- It WAS an untouched wilderness in the middle of Ruidoso.....not much left of that now
- Ability to generate revenue for our children's education
- Wildfire!
- Wonderful outdoor opportunities for locals and visitors
- Another opportunity for Ruidoso recreation to offset our economy in years of little or no snow