

July 25, 2018

Rod Tarullo
Director
Parks & Recreation Department
City of Golden
Golden, CO 80401

Dear Rod:

We are residents of the Stonebridge neighborhood which borders the existing Kinney Run paved trail and open space. We are also frequent users of Apex and the paved trail that connects Apex to Downtown Golden. Most of us are also parents and longtime mountain and road bikers. We are writing to express our concerns about the proposed “pilot project” to construct various soft surface trails (Single Track Sidewalks) most of which will be redundant with existing City trails.

We are very deeply concerned about the legitimacy and integrity of the process by which this “special interest” project has become a near reality with no effort by the City to solicit or secure public engagement and concerns about the substance of the proposal itself. We request a meeting with you to discuss our concerns some of which are presented below:

1. The City has been meeting with the proponents of various aspects of this project for some time, with no members of the public having been notified or included at the table. The project apparently consists of new soft surface trails, with only one segment in an area of the city which does not currently have trails and would therefore address connectivity of city assets and walk ability, issues of interest and priority of the public reflected in the Master Plan, Citizen Survey of 2016 and other official guidance documents resulting from extensive public engagement. Other segments of the pilot project are redundant trails that are irrelevant to connectivity issues, are described as primarily serving special interests – mountain bikers – and do not address issues identified or supported by any of the above referenced guidance. Further, it is acknowledged by you and Council members that the project will, in truth have a definite financial impact on City resources, as it will increase the City’s infrastructure and in spite of the representations of the special interests advocates, require City expenditures to maintain, and restore, if necessary. The result is that funds available for other projects will be reduced. A decision about future use of City funds seems to be inherent in the process of considering this proposal.
2. The pilot project is properly characterized by you and the City as a “special interest” project, defined as being proposed by a small group of members of a special interest group, GiddyupGolden, an unincorporated group of volunteers, and involving a proposal that is outside the Master Plan and other planning documents and processes. At the City Council October 19, 2017 study session, you stated that “We [the City] do not have an organized structured policy for how we deal with special

interest requests.” Despite this lack of policy and structure, the Parks, Recreation & Museums Advisory Board (Board) met many times with and engaged with the special interest individuals, GiddyupGolden, resulting in unanimous support of the special interest request, in spite of a long list of City staff concerns. The proposal now appears to be moving forward rapidly to implementation, despite no stated rationale for any urgency.

In fact, you stated that the Board was “very, very supportive” of the request. With no structure or process in place these actions by the Board, in the face of serious reservations expressed by City staff, meet the very definition of arbitrariness and capriciousness. Proceedings of the Board in 2018 reflect the Board also providing advice to the special interest individuals on how to make their request a reality. All of this was done with no attempt to inform, solicit or in any way engage or ascertain interest or opinions of the public, including residents of the neighborhoods affected by the requested project or with any discussion or explanation as to how the project meets any criteria for any project approval and expenditure of city resources contained in any documents governing such decisions and appears to be done without regard to City professional staff recommendations. In fact, such a special interest process should demand even greater effort to engage the public and affected residents and neighborhoods early on in the process.

3. The City staff has also apparently spent considerable time and resources regarding this special interest request. Prior to the October Council study session, you prepared a staff report that detailed a number of substantive and significant concerns of City Departments and staff. Many of these concerns were echoed and iterated by the Council members at the meeting. As with the Board, this meeting, deliberations, and ultimate decision by the Council to allow the special interest request to proceed apparently took place with no prior or current attempt to inform, involve or solicit input or engagement of any kind with the public and affected neighborhoods and without any suggestions or conclusions as to how the project would address the concerns expressed in the staff report and Council deliberations. It seems that the Board was also informed of the staff report concerns which it also did not address in its “enthusiastic support” of the request. Further, it is clear from the proceedings, that Staff and Council members raised questions about the cost impact of the proposal and no real assessment has been attempted. This in spite of repeated statements that the cost and maintenance of the proposed trails system and any needed land restoration will ultimately fall to the City.
4. We have been informed that the only opportunity for public engagement at this late stage in the process of this special interest request will be a public meeting, apparently now scheduled for August 28. As you know, the Board originally intended this meeting to take place on July 30 with barely a week’s notice to the affected neighborhoods. It was only because of our objections that this meeting has been delayed, though the date, process and costs for informing the public and affected neighborhoods and evaluating their input remains unknown, as does any

policies or procedures that must be followed to ensure due, fair and open notice and process.

Apparently additional public engagement will be through the GuidingGolden.com website. However, all the information on this website appears to have been crafted and framed by the proponent special interest group, GiddyupGolden and contains no critical analysis, alternative opinions, the concerns addressed in your staff report and the Council deliberations, and no discussion or explanation of the criteria or process used to weigh and consider public comment or the decision-making process and criteria to be used in determining the implementation of this special request.

5. There are additional numerous gaps and inconsistencies in the information provided to date on the GuidingGolden website, including inconsistencies in the exact purported location and nature of the proposed trails, particularly those segments redundant with the existing paved Kinney Run trail and Heritage Dells. GiddyupGolden (and the Board) describe and market the project, particularly the redundant trails as being for children and inexperienced mountain bike riders. However, their own proposal and commentary in Board and Council proceedings admit that these trails will be used by all bike riders, including those experienced and aggressive riders traveling to and from Apex Park, which will certainly create unsafe conditions for any inexperienced riders. As common sense and well-known trail experience dictate, these redundant trails will also be used by hikers, runners, dogs, bird watchers, etc. In other words, this proposal is for additional multi use trails redundant with existing paved multi -use trails. Importantly, an on the ground review of the area on the GiddyupGolden maps where the trail will allegedly be located reveals challenging terrain and topography not suitable for beginner or easy trails.
6. The information provided for public input is a one-sided promotional communication that includes no objective, quantifiable definition of any need, no budget (either capital or maintenance, immediate and future costs) City fiscal impact analysis, environmental and wildlife, hydrologic, engineering or cost/benefit analysis, reference to guiding design criteria or oversight, reference to protection of City fiscal outlays with bonds securing any performance by GiddyupGolden, and no full disclosure about the real intended and likely outcome of the “pilot”. The lack of all this information plus the other numerous inconsistencies and gaps regarding the true nature and intent of the project, its impacts, cost and responsibilities, capacity of the proponents of this project, whose mission includes establishing mountain racing in Golden, etc. prevent meaningful, open and fair public engagement and comment.
7. Finally, in spite of the Council’s repeated statements about the need for “Metrics” by which to measure the success of this project, the GuidingGolden website makes no statement about outcome measurements or process, or in fact, any statement about the expected or desired outcomes of a “successful” pilot.

We find ourselves in the unfortunate position of appearing to argue against what, at the surface appears to be a “good for all” proposal. As stated in the beginning, all of us are supportive of well-considered initiatives that advance the growth of cycling in our community and across age groups, but not at the unnecessary cost of other community benefits, including without limitation, creation of trails for unserved areas of the community, and maintaining precious open space and wildlife habitat. We are opposed to a process that allows a special interest group initiative to gain this level of momentum without what we consider to be the level of care and consideration and public engagement that should be assigned. And that appears to ignore the City’s own plans and the well-considered expert recommendations of professional City staff over the recommendations of an Advisory Board and special interest individuals.

Most of us first heard about the substance of this special interest request when we met with a key representative of GiddyupGolden in the hallway at the Board’s meeting last week. At that time he was dismissive of any of the resident concerns, stated emphatically that “no compromises” to the proposed project would be considered or made and that it is definitely “going forward”. As we learn more about how the City has been intimately involved with this project and its proponents and excluded the public and affected residents and neighborhood, we have come to unfortunately believe that this representative may have good reason to believe his assertions. We trust and hope that you and the City will agree to meet with us and reevaluate the process and substance of this special interest request and proposal before further action is taken. Please contact Ann Norton at 505-310-3347 to discuss further or, hopefully, to set a time to meet.

On behalf of:

Concerned residents of Stonebridge

Cc: Mayor Sloan and City Councilors
Jason Slowinski