

Earlier I posted links to articles about other communities involved with conflicts about mountain bike trails. In learning about other city's experiences what struck me is that it seems like the cities, including Vail, all have master plans that give guidance and requirements for the use and preservation of City open space and that Golden doesn't have anything like that. I emailed the City staff and the Mayor to confirm that we don't have any plan like that. So what are the criteria that the City uses to make decisions about impacts to open space and natural areas? Apparently, it's a "shoot from the hip" approach which doesn't seem prudent or wise, nor consistent with the expressed priority of Golden residents for preservation of existing open space/natural area like the Kinney Run corridor. With that in mind, and trying to put another leverage point on the table, particularly one that affects all Golden residents below is the email which I sent a while ago. I know you will all be shocked to learn that I have yet to receive any response from Slowinski, Tarullo or the Mayor.

"It seems that the opportunities for the acquisition of additional open space/natural areas are increasingly limited, which means that the open space we do have in public trust is all the more important to the community. If there is a lack of specific policies and regulations (criteria and processes) that guide any future use, and exploitation of the existing space, and we believe that is the case, these are important gaps that should be addressed before we compromise or jeopardize these existing important natural assets. Although this issue may be intertwined at some point with recreational desires and other issues, it is quite separate and distinct and should be handled and considered deliberately, not as an afterthought or an unintended consequence. We don't have to start from scratch as there are other jurisdictions who have successfully tackled this and developed policies and guidance that can lead the way.

Last evening, the PRAM decided that they needed to "research" a number of issues related to the proposed STS, most of which involve the use and exploitation of and will impact and compromise the open space/natural area. These are significant and serious issues that should require technical and scientific expertise, including soil impacts and degradation, wildlife, water and vegetation issues, etc. While the PRAM are all dedicated volunteers and seriously involved with mountain biking as a sport and industry, none of them have the experience or expertise to make these important determinations about this significant natural resource and its unique assets, nor perhaps should they. In our opinion, prudent management and decision making about this important natural resource held in public trust is not appropriate for an advisory body whose purview is primarily parks and recreation and is operating without any predetermined guidance, criteria or standards for the management of public open space/natural areas. Frankly, we have been unable to find anything yet that even provides PRAM with this authority. (Please let us know if it exists.) It may well be that the reason is that this is new territory for Golden. It is definitely new territory for PRAM - Cindy Szymanski recently admitted that "We [PRAM] have never done this before".

We submit that the decisions are so important and consequential for this and other of Golden's open space and natural resources and the community that such decisions should be handled in a separate process and with clear informed guidance developed by the Council with public input before any further action is taken. This does not mean PRAM can't continue its discussions about STS and develop separate criteria related to the concept. But if any are to be located within or so as to impact in any way our community's open space/natural areas, that should be the realm of a separate informed process and pursuant to appropriately developed guidelines and criteria.

We hope you will seriously consider our thoughts and opinions. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and to work with you on how to accomplish the desired outcomes for the preservation of Golden's important but limited natural areas assets and resources."