

**Citizen Backgrounder**  
**CITY COUNCIL MEETING**  
**MARCH 5, 2012**



The Klamath Falls City Council on March 5, 2012, will consider a matter related to preservation of the Link River Canyon. The Klamath Greenways Foundation urges all who care about the Link River Trail and surrounding canyon to attend in this meeting. We hope the Council will allow public testimony.

**What's the issue?**

The Greenways Foundation has asked the City to place a high priority on seeking a state grant to purchase a private subdivision that has planned home-sites in the Link River Canyon, and convert the site to a public park and vista point. Specifically, the Greenways Foundation believes the "Klamath Vista Point" project should be the city's No. 1 project proposal for Oregon Department of Transportation's "Transportation Enhancement" grant opportunity coming up in May.

The City Council needs on input on the question of whether to spend up to \$15,000 to pay for an appraisal of the property.

The Council also needs to hear from citizens on whether it should authorize use of City funds to satisfy the grant's match requirement, and whether the community would support the project, including making donations toward required matching funds.

**Frequently asked questions**

**What is the Klamath Greenways Foundation asking the Klamath Falls City Council to do?**

The Greenways Foundation is asking the City Council to direct City staff to alter its plans for an upcoming grant opportunity. The City has been planning to submit the Lake Ewauna Trail project for the Oregon Department of Transportation's "Transportation Enhancement" (TE) grant. The Greenways Foundation believes the Vista Point Project is a much stronger project, both in terms of likelihood for winning a grant, as well as the benefit that will be accomplished for the local economy.

**What are the key components of each project?**

The Klamath Vista Point project would use grant funds to acquire the 28-acre Link River Estates subdivision overlooking the Link River Canyon, and convert it to a public park and vista point.

The Lake Ewauna Trail project would use grant funds to construct a 540-foot geothermally heated sidewalk beside Veterans Park, and build 3,510 feet of gravel trail beside the TimberMill Shores property. Pipes would also be installed for installation of more geothermal sidewalk within TimberMill Shores in the future.

**Why does the Greenways Foundation believe the Vista Point project is more likely to succeed?**

The Vista Point project clearly meets two criteria for TE grant projects: Acquisition of scenic or historic sites, and development of facilities to support tourism. Furthermore, the Lake Ewauna Trail project has already been submitted for the TE grant, and was not selected for funding.

**Has ODOT given any indication of which project is a better fit for the TE grant?**

Yes, the grant program administrator has advised that the Vista Point project is a better fit for the grant criteria.

**Hasn't the city been working on the Lake Ewauna Trail project for several years?**

Yes, but that does not have any effect on how well the project fits the grant criteria. Furthermore, in terms of time invested, the Klamath Greenways Foundation (and other organizations before it) has also been working to protect the Link River Canyon for years. In fact, the Greenways Foundation made the same request regarding the TE grant opportunity two years ago, and was denied by the City.

**Are the other options for funding one of these projects?**

Yes, in fact the City is waiting to hear whether another grant will cover much of the cost of the Trail project. However, the Greenways Foundation feels time is of the essence, and believes the City should begin preparing now to put the Vista Point project forward for the TE grant.

**Isn't this pitting two good projects against each other?**

The City cannot propose both projects for the TE grant. It must select one project and put it forward.

**Has the Klamath Parks Advisory Board weighed in on this matter?**

Yes, the Parks Advisory Board on Jan. 5, 2012, passed a motion with three recommendations: 1, to make the Vista Point Project the highest priority for the upcoming TE grant; 2, to fund the appraisal of the Link River Estates tract; 3, to keep the Lake Ewauna Trail project in a state of readiness should the Vista Project fail to come together before the grant application deadline.

**The Lake Ewauna Project has matching resources identified for the TE grant. Can that be said for the Vista Point project?**

There are a number of possible options for providing the required 10.27 percent matching resources for the Vista Point project. The easiest way to satisfy the match requirement would be for the owner of the subdivision to donate some of the property. For this option to work, there must be an appraisal of the property, and that appraisal would have to establish that the property is worth MORE than the owner is asking. Under those circumstances, the property owner could donate the extra value to satisfy the match requirement. If the appraisal finds the property's value is less than what the owner is asking, this option would not be workable. Because of this uncertainty, it's essential to move forward with an appraisal as soon as possible.

It should be noted that a donation of property alone would not ensure success of the grant application. Additional cash and in-kind donations would be needed to strengthen the application.

### **How much is the owner asking?**

The owner, a mortgage firm in Grants Pass, has indicated it would like to recover its investment and costs, which it recently said totaled \$1.8 million. The mortgage firm has indicated it might be willing to accept a little less, but not much less.

### **Are there other options for providing match resources?**

Yes, it may be possible to use county road funds to develop better access to the Vista Point, and offer that as match. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has indicated it will provide an unspecified amount of funding to develop interpretive signage for the site. Volunteer labor can be used as match, and other in-kind donations can be used.

### **What if those alternatives do not provide sufficient resources to meet the match requirement?**

The Klamath Greenways Foundation is pledging to raise one-third of any funds required through donations from the community. It will ask the City to provide the rest of the cash match.

### **Why hasn't the Greenways Foundation already done more to raise funds for this project?**

At this point, it's not clear how much money might be needed, or how it would be used. An appraisal of the property would make that more clear.

### **Has the City or the Greenways Foundation considered other sources of grants, such as The Nature Conservancy?**

Yes, the Greenways Foundation has explored many possible sources of funding. Unfortunately, the nature of the property – with a road already constructed through it - makes it an unlikely candidate for grant funding. The one exception is the Transportation Enhancement grant, for which the Vista Point proposal seems to be an ideal candidate.

### **Why would the Greenways Foundation ask the City to allocate so much money for the match at a time when funding is so short?**

Even if substantial cash has to be allocated, the Greenways Foundation believes this is a sound investment of public funds. The City has a chance to acquire an enormously valuable piece of property for pennies on the dollar. The acquisition would not only protect one of the community's most precious recreation areas, it would also create a new scenic attraction that will dramatically improve the image of the community.