

Five Scenarios for a Potential Hogbacks Master Plan

Publish Date: 5/2/2008 Page: A8

Debbie Bell
The Daily Record

Five scenarios for a potential Hogbacks Master Plan were detailed Thursday night, including one choice of completely closing the entire area just east of Skyline Drive.

While considering the public input it has received, the Hogbacks Committee will formulate a final plan to propose to the Cañon City Council. That panel then is expected to place a final proposal before the voters in November. Most of the 50 or so in attendance at the Hogbacks Committee meeting at City Hall were in favor of immediately banning all activity, even saying they would rather see the entire area closed than continue to allow off-road vehicle use.

During the meeting, many spoke forcefully of their interest in preserving the archeological value that they said is suffering damage from motorized interaction.

"This is a publicly-owned entity that we have a responsibility to protect," said resident Dennis Jones. "I see history being washed away in front of my eyes."

Jones said the issue boils down to "Man vs. Machine," and he believes the city cannot afford to wait until November, when a ballot issue could be put to a vote.

"Something needs to be done before this ballot," Jones said in an impassioned plea. "Do something to prevent the further destruction of history."

His remarks drew rousing applause from the assembled crowd. "The urgency just seems to be the need for a time out for the area, just a breather for it all until a decision is made," resident Monica McGowan said after the meeting. "Allowing destruction and continued erosion for this period of time until the ballot vote seems wrong. The right thing would be to make it fair and equitable to all involved. Take a time out and allow some revegetation and true visions to be formed."

City Councilman Keith Hovland, the appointed chairman of the committee, said the group has received a surplus of invaluable input throughout the three-month process.

"We have received an awful lot of data and input to consider," Hovland said. He detailed results of a survey taken during an earlier committee meeting. One opinion of particular importance, Hovland said, was that virtually no one supported a tax increase to pay for any plan of action for the Hogbacks. Those in favor of an open space plan and those proposing a motorized recreation area were almost unanimous in their rejection of additional taxes. "We think we have to avoid a tax increase in this process," Hovland said, "because that would probably fail."

Karen Turner, who has lived in North Cañon since 2000, expressed frustration as she agreed with Hovland.

"I've never seen a town that won't spend a dime on anything," Turner said, "yet wants as much for free as they can get."

The five scenarios presented to the group were suggested by Casey Swanson, trail coordinator with the Colorado State Trails Program.

"What is feasible for us to do?" Hovland asked. "We will recommend one master plan to the council. We will come up with what we believe to be the best use of the entire Hogbacks area."