

## January 31st Meeting With Citizens and Council

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### Residents begin work on Hogbacks

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*The Daily Record*

A standing-room-only crowd turned out Thursday evening to help the city begin the first stages of a master plan for the use of the Hogbacks area just east of Skyline Drive.

More than 80 of the about 130 residents in attendance signed up to participate in subcommittee meetings to gather data and input during the process. Teams will work during the next few months in an aggressive schedule that aims to finalize a ballot issue for the November election.

"It's great to see such a turnout," said City Councilman Keith Hovland, the city's point man who will lead the charge. "We want input from the broad spectrum of citizens in this community. We want to come up with a good master plan for the utilization of this area."

Thursday's meeting was not to gather input yet, but instead, presented an opportunity for residents to listen to the project, ask a few questions and sign up to be involved. The diverse crowd represented just about every user group, from hikers to motorcyclists.

"It's going to be a tough challenge," Mayor Frank Jaquez told the group before Hovland presented the committee layout. "The key is the fact that for this to succeed, we have to have a working relationship with each and every group — ATVers, environmentalists and those who want to be able to take a walk up there.

"We're going to have to have the cooperation of each and every one of these groups," Jaquez said.

Hovland utilized slides and maps of the area to give an overview of the Hogbacks area.

The Hogbacks are roughly 514 acres of land crisscrossed by trails cut into the soil by years of use by both motorized vehicles and foot traffic. The City of Cañon City owns about 340 acres of that land, while about 40 acres still is under private ownership. Not all of the Hogbacks region lies within city limits, but Jaquez said only the area within the city is under consideration.

"We can only concentrate on what is in the city," Jaquez said, but he indicated the group would welcome county participation for the areas that lie outside the city boundary.

The northern one-third of the area currently is platted into lots for development, Hovland said. An area of about 35 acres of privately-owned land is just south of the plat, followed by the city-owned midsection of the property. Another strip of privately-owned terrain, about five acres, breaks up the middle section from the southern piece. Part of that is city owned and the remainder is under city control through a long-term, 99-year lease from the Colorado Department of Corrections.

Hovland said there is no supervision or regulation on the land.

"The intention tonight is not to take a lot of public input," Hovland said, "since we don't have a plan yet to receive comments on."

In addition to sign-up sheets for the individual committees, large posters were placed strategically around Council Chambers for written comments or questions. Participation in the process is not limited to city residents.

"Certainly, we want to take your input," Hovland said. "I encourage you to read the tasks, sign up and give written comments."

Because the city has no preconceived notions of the end result going into this process, Hovland said there is no estimate of cost to develop or utilize the land.

"We have no idea of what plan we will want to carry forward," he said.

The city's charter does not allow the city to buy a city park, develop a city park or spend city funds on a park without voter approval, but Hovland explained there may be ways to finance the final plan without asking voters for additional money.

"We may not have to ask for a tax to fund development of the Hogbacks area," Hovland said.

For example, the platted area in the northern section could be developed and the profit from that used to implement a plan of open space. Even that proposal, however, would require voter approval.

Those who signed up for subcommittees will be informed as meetings are scheduled at City Hall.

"We anticipate another full public meeting around mid-March to allow subcommittees time to gather data," Hovland said. "We anticipate several public meetings up to the refinement of a plan."

Members of the Skyline Hogbacks Preservation Campaign, who sparked renewed interest in the area last year, were pleased with the meeting.

"We would like to commend and thank the Cañon City Council members and staff for listening and reacting to the needs of citizens," said chair Monica McGowan. "The meeting was successful in bringing people together to be informed and also offered the opportunity to serve on committees to create a management plan."

Jaquez emphasized the process is something the city cannot do alone.

"Will we make everybody happy, even if we get a consensus? No," Jaquez said. "But we will try to accomplish something that will accommodate each and every user."

He said there will not be a perfect solution.

"But, maybe there is a solution where we can work hand in hand with each other to accomplish our goals," Jaquez said.

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