

October 15, 2009

Dear Mayor Adams,

I am writing to address an unfortunate letter by Marcy Houle regarding Forest Park. Ms. Houle accepted an invitation to join a committee to consider how we may add single-track bicycling to Forest Park.

However, after attending just one of the first three meetings, and after agreeing with committee ground rules to the contrary, she wrote a letter to stir opposition to the committee's mandate. The letter is inflammatory in tone, misleading regarding my position, the Forest Park Conservancy's (FPC) position, and others' positions. Additionally, her letter was written before the committee has had significant discussions, so it is only an expression of her opinions with no benefit of discussion.

I feel compelled to comment on a few statements she made:

- The FPC, I, and everyone on the committee care deeply about the health of FP. I am offended by implications to the contrary. Given all that the FPC has done, I find her comments about that group to be especially outrageous.
- Parks has made it clear that the Wildwood trail is not on the table for the committee at this time.
- Nobody is considering any action which will hurt the park in any way. To the contrary, we anticipate bringing more park supporters and funds to improve the care of what we have.
- Part of our charge is to add trails and sharing in such a way that user conflicts are reduced, not increased.
- Nobody is proposing anything that is in opposition to the 1995 Management Plan. The plan specifically places a priority on recreational uses, specifically supports cycling and adding cycling opportunities, and specifically calls for partnerships that bring private funds to bear on the Parks needs. Nobody has questioned whether Parks and the city will follow the legal rules and procedures – of course they will.

Given the above, and that we have not even started to discuss the issue, why is she objecting now? This sentence in her letter is telling: *"Presently, pedestrians have access to all the trails in Forest Park. That may change."* In other words, it's about sharing. She sees FP trails as being devoted completely and exclusively to the use she prefers and writes about – walking. Currently walkers have access to every inch of trails in FP while cyclists have access to less than a mile of true trail (like walkers, many cyclists do not value roads like trails). Commissioner Fish, Parks, and others see the opportunity to improve on this, and the committee's charge is to look for ways to add trail riding with minimal impact on current users and while bringing a net gain for the natural health of the park.

For our second meeting we toured FP with Dan Moeller and Emily Roth. We looked at a number of opportunities that would be win-win or have minimal impact on hikers by virtue of location. I wish Marcy had been there and heard the statements by committee members that are very concerned about protecting FP that there do appear to be good options for improving off-road cycling.

I felt compelled to address her letter and simply ask that you support the deliberative and inclusive process that Commissioner Fish and Parks have initiated to make FP and the city better.

Sincerely,

Frank Selker

Committee Member