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## South Hill Bluff Unauthorized Road Update

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### Recent Unauthorized Road Bulldozed in Bluff

The recent road that has torn through the forest that is the Bluff we all know and love to run, walk and bike prompted me to update you on what has happened and what is to be done to remedy the situation. Here is the information that was sent to me from Leroy Eadie Director of Parks and Recreation,

#### Overview

- April 10 and 11, a contractor built a road and removed trees on Parks conservation land along the bluff on the south hill (below Bernard and north along the bank of Latah Creek), adjacent to and across an Avista utility easement corridor, and on private property.
- There was an apparent misunderstanding regarding the authorization of construction of the access road and tree removal.
- The City did not receive or authorize a permit request for this work, which would involve property designated as conservation land.
- The contractor has been told in writing and verbally to stop all work. The City of Spokane's risk management department is assessing the damage.

- Spokane Parks and Recreation, Avista and The First Tee of the Inland Northwest are committed to learning all the facts and to communicate that information with the public.
- We're also committed to learning from errors that lead to this unplanned damage to Park conservation property to ensure they don't happen again, and to working with stakeholders to follow all appropriate processes to ensure restoration, mitigation and communication internally and with the community take place.

### **Related Project – The First Tee of the Inland Northwest Youth Golf Course**

- Parks and Recreation and The First Tee of the Inland Northwest, a private non-profit, are considering an agreement to build a par 3 youth golf course adjacent to The Creek at Qualchan golf course. Parks issued a tree removal permit to The First Tee of the Inland Northwest for the 6-acre par 3 youth golf course only.
- The agreement does not contemplate a building of the road along the bluff or tree removal on the road. The road work done was outside the scope of the potential agreement.
- Avista entered into a verbal agreement with The First Tee of the Inland Northwest to cost share an access road that could benefit both parties. Avista anticipates needing access to their utility corridor along the bluff Parks property through their easement in the fall of 2017 to replace power poles. The First Tee of the Inland Northwest anticipated using the access road instead of accessing the construction site through Qualchan golf course.
- City Legal is investigating utility easements across all Parks property in this area.

### **Update: Tree Removals Along Bluff on South Hill**

We continue to gather information as quickly as possible to better understand the actions that resulted in tree removals and the construction of a road within the south hill bluff on Parks property, Avista's utility corridor, and private property on April 10 and 11. This is what we understand to date:

#### **Contracts and Permits**

- The City did not receive or authorize a permit request for this work, which would involve property designated as conservation land.
- Parks did not have a bid or contract with the contractor to construct this road, or tree removals at this site. There was no plan, designs or contracts presented to approve.
- Parks issued a tree removal permit to The First Tee of the Inland Northwest for the 6-acre 3-hole youth golf course only.

- The proposed agreement between the City and The First Tee to build a youth course does not contemplate a building of a road along the bluff or tree removal on the road.
- The road work done was outside the scope of the potential agreement and any issued tree permit.
- A Parks arborist was called onsite, to provide guidance to the contractor around which trees were of highest priority to maintain and identify any hazard trees. This was the arborists' only role.
- The Parks arborist understood the project to be on the Avista easement. A few Parks staff understood that The First Tee would work with Avista to use a tree-free utility corridor to access the 3-hole golf course if built, and that any additional work to build access would be on the Avista easement done in partnership with Avista through permitting.
- Arborists from Parks are frequently called to sites by contractors for guidance, and it is the contractor and project manager's responsibility to ensure all permits are obtained.

### **Immediate Next Steps**

We are fully committed to working to restore this treasured Parks conservation land. Neither The First Tee nor Avista will make use of this newly-constructed road for their planned projects. We have outlined the following next steps and welcome input.

- Development of interim measures to prevent erosion and other environmental concerns, further damage and trespass.
- Restoration planning and implementation
  - Restoration workgroup - a group of experts and stakeholders to participate in restoration plan development. The plan will go through permitting with local and state agencies.
  - Agency surveys - the Department of Ecology and Department of Natural Resources were on site today, and will continue to inform the restoration.
  - Damage assessment - the parties and an independent consultant are assessing the damage to inform the site restoration efforts and environmental mitigation plans.
- Continued outreach to impacted land owners whose property is part of the road, to the stakeholders and to the larger community.

- Continued investigation into the misunderstandings and miscommunications, and assessment of process changes that should occur. The City intends to determine liability and accountability, and pursue reimbursement for damage and restoration.

As Bluff users both Council Member Breean Beggs and I are incredibly frustrated about the creation of this road and the lack of oversight that led to this happening. We both will be working with the parties involved to develop a plan to restore what has been destroyed and to make sure the parties responsible are held accountable. In addition I am currently working to update our tree ordinance to prevent a situation such as this occurring in the future. I appreciate those of you who have emailed me with your concern over this issue. I promise we will ask the hard questions and make sure we find out what led to this destruction.

I will continue the updates on my Council Facebook page for those of you who have Facebook. And as always you are welcome to email or call me to find out more information.

**We would love to hear from you about any concerns you may have. Email me at: [lkinnear@spokanecity.org](mailto:lkinnear@spokanecity.org).**



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