



## PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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### CITY OF LOVELAND OPEN LANDS ADVISORY COMMISSION

Regular Meeting Minutes – February 10, 2016

Parks & Recreation Conference Room, 500 E. Third St., Loveland, CO 80537

**Commissioners Present:** Rick Brent, Gale Bernhardt, Andy Hawbaker, Ross Livingston, Darren Pape, Jim Roode, Jean Whittaker, Bill Zawacki, Zac Wiebe (for Larimer County Liaison Kerri Rollins).

**Commissioners Absent:** Nathan Thompson, Hugh McKean (City Council Liaison).

**Staff Present:** Debbie Eley, Brian Hayes, Marilyn Hilgenberg.

**Guests:** Eric Blewitt, High Plains Environmental Center Staff.

**The public meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm.**

**Public Comment:** Kathy Hartman, 945 E. 6<sup>th</sup> Street, commented that there are concerns about the recent Open Lands purchase near a bald eagle nest. Her Unitarian Church has requested that Jerry Craig, former CPW raptor biologist, speak to their group on changing local eagle nests and habitats. Kathy also noted that she attended the South Platte Watershed Conference, which was excellent.

**Approval of January 13, 2016 Meeting Minutes:** Ross Livingston made a motion to approve the minutes as written; Darren Pape seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously as written.

**City Council Liaison Report.** Hugh McKean called in his report to note that a new Economic Development Director, Susan Grafton, has been hired.

**Larimer County Open Lands Advisory Board Report.** Zac Wiebe reported on the following items: 1) the next OLAB meeting (Feb. 25) will include a prioritization exercise with respect to the Open Lands Master Plan; 2) grants for the 2016 Small Grants Program will be awarded, with all 12 applicants receiving funding (max \$2,000) for projects such as community gardens and bison vegetation monitoring; 3) the county received a CWCB grant to research Alternative Transfer Mechanisms (ATM) for creative methods to share the burden of expensive water costs and keep irrigated land preserved; 4) the Devil's Backbone construction project will require closure of the parking lot/trailhead beginning Feb. 8 for approximately one month; the parking lot will be reconfigured to add 35 spaces and a new trail will be built to separate uses and accommodate increased public use; 5) the county submitted a concept paper for the large-scale GOCO Protect Initiative, which is likely to be an extremely competitive cycle; 6) projects in the Big Thompson Canyon are dependent on CDOT's Hwy 34 design and construction schedule, but more restoration projects may be funded by GOCO's river restoration grants (June applications, December awards). Jim Roode asked about signage for properties in the canyon. Zac explained that the Big T Plan outlined parcels with potential public access; when these are rebuilt, sites will be well-signed. Some sites may remain closed if public access is not feasible.

#### **Reports/Correspondence:**

**1. Open Lands Financial Report.** The 2015 year-end financial report and 2016 budget were presented. The annual report will include more detail. All projects and acquisitions are included in the

capital plan, with most of the \$7M available allocated. The projected 2016 revenue amount was prepared with the budget in April 2015, actual 2016 revenue is now projected to be \$400K higher.

**2. Property Acquisition Updates.** Closing on the 185-acre Luxor property in Ryans Gulch occurred on Jan. 22, with Larimer County and Berthoud as partners. A concept paper for the GOCO Protect Initiative will be submitted for this property. The contract on the E. 1<sup>st</sup> St. property will be sent on Feb. 11, after due diligence determined that water augmentation will be the responsibility of the gravel company (Coulson). This property could be a valuable site for implementation of the GOCO Inspire grant, with partners Loveland Boys & Girls Club, New Vision School, Timberlane Farm, and High Plains Env. Ctr. Soils are favorable for farming (possible community-supported agriculture site), and water may be available for irrigation.

**3. Open Lands Project Report.** The project report includes an update on trails, as the division now includes trails and the department is focusing on increasing connectivity of parks, open lands and natural areas. Funding for the Recreation Trail comes from Conservation Trust (Lottery) dollars. Funding for soft-surface trails in open lands comes from Open Lands.

GOCO Protect Initiative. Staff will submit a GOCO Protect Initiative concept paper for the Luxor property, requesting \$1.25M towards the \$2,604,000 purchase price. If the project is selected, full applications will be due in May, with grants to be awarded in June.

Quick Win Projects. Reconstruction of the Morey trail continues as weather allows. The former pond and wetland areas will be restored with native species, using CWCB grant funding, and a new trail will also loop through the property. Trails and small parking areas are under construction at King's Crossing and Old St. Louis natural areas.

Devil's Backbone Construction Project. The trailhead expansion project will begin Feb. 8 and the parking lot will be closed for 4 weeks during construction. Work on the new trail through Hidden Valley will begin once the parking lot project is completed.

Open Lands Staffing Updates. The new Parks & Open Lands Planner and Open Lands & Trails Crew Supervisor will both start in late February. Crews for the 2016 field season are being recruited.

#### Trails Update:

- Front Range Trail – CDOT approval was received for right-of-way and easement acquisition. The environmental clearance should be received by the end of February. Final trail design for the Loveland and Fort Collins sections should be completed in March with the project going out to bid when the County completes their plans, likely in May, and construction is planned to start mid-summer.
- Long View Corridor Trail – The IGA between Loveland, Fort Collins and Larimer County is on hold pending potential changes from Fort Collins. Design is underway for construction to begin this fall.
- Boyd Lake Trail Routing – The easement has been approved by both the City and the State. The easement exhibit is being prepared and once approved, all documents will be signed by the City Manager and the State. The spillway and trail construction are delayed due to weather and the detour route is being monitored to accommodate the spillway improvements.
- Namaqua Trail Easement (Segment 10b) – A trail easement has been secured from Namaqua Road almost to Rossum Drive and staff is working on the trail alignment. Staff worked with Water & Power to secure this easement for the trail and a new power line. JUB Engineering will work with staff to complete the bridge design for the GLIC ditch crossing. Acquisition of this easement is critical in our ability to complete the Recreation Trail Loop around Loveland.

- Wilson Bridge and Taft/Wilson Trail – Public Works staff is leading this project with Ayres Engineering and design work should begin in the next 30-45 days. Engineering should be completed this summer with construction anticipated to start this fall. FEMA’s final response on the scope change request is expected prior to construction.

#### Environmental Education.

January and February public programs included guided bird walks and PEEPs pre-school programs. Open Lands also participated in the Library’s “New Year, New You” event. Volunteer recruiting was advertised in the February City Update utility bill insert, and volunteer training for environmental educators and trail hosts will be held in March. A comprehensive new brochure for school programs was mailed to all local elementary and middle schools, for the environmental education field trip season April 19 thru May 25. All school programs will be moved to River’s Edge beginning this spring.

**4. 2016 Open Lands Capital Projects and Work Plan.** The capital projects and work plan were developed to apply the Master Plan, focus on trail connectivity, easements, acquisitions, quick-win projects, and management plans to set the stage to manage sites appropriately. Staff will reach out for assistance when needed, including Fort Collins, Larimer County, CSU, CNHP, volunteers, and contract services. Kathy Hartman asked about public involvement and finding out what people want. Public input will be part of the management plan process, including reaching out to interested neighbors and holding public meetings. Neighbors can also become involved as Trail Hosts, citizen scientists, or education volunteers.

#### **Discussion/Action:**

**5. 2016 Goals and 2015 Accomplishments for Boards & Commissions Summit.** The proposed goals and accomplishments were approved as presented and will be included in the program for the annual summit on March 3. Bill Zawacki and Ross Livingston volunteered to attend as OLAC representatives.

**6. Policies & Procedures.** The Open Lands Policies were updated as needed with minor changes to reflect current practices and procedures. OL-19 – Permits for Activities, was added to address special use requests and permit conditions. Darren Pape made a motion to approve the revised policies as presented; Jim Roode seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Policies OL-6 – Signage Policy and OL-18 – Management & Stewardship Policy will be updated and presented for review and approval at a future meeting. The policies will be added to the Open Lands website.

#### **Commission Member Discussion Topics**

1. Rick Brent noted that he observed seven large bull elk at Devil’s Backbone, from the west side.
2. Bill Zawacki commented that the heron rookery visible from Boise Ave. is active.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 pm.