



PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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CITY OF LOVELAND OPEN LANDS ADVISORY COMMISSION

Regular Meeting Minutes – May 11, 2016

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

Commissioners Present: Rick Brent, Andy Hawbaker, Ross Livingston, Jim Roode, Jean Whittaker, Bill Zawacki.

Commissioners Absent: Gale Bernhardt, Darren Pape, Nathan Thompson, Hugh McKean (City Council Liaison), Kerri Rollins (Larimer County Liaison).

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

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

Public Comment:

1. John Bonnema, 484 Split Rock Drive, President of the Quarry Lakes HOA, commented that the HOA would like to pursue replacing the utility poles that were removed from the north side of Mineral Lake, to provide raptor perches and possible nesting platforms.
2. Kathy Hartman, 945 E. 6th St., informed the commission about the Colorado Open Lands fundraiser on June 4 honoring all former Legacy Land Trust board members. Kathy also noted that dogs at Old St. Louis Natural Area could be considered a contradictory use with preserving wildlife habitat.

Approval of April 13, 2016 Meeting Minutes: Ross Livingston made a motion to approve the minutes as written; Jim Roode seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously as written.

City Council Liaison Report. Hugh McKean requested a possible presentation by the Police Advisory Board to OLAC. Staff has been working with the Police Dept. on enforcement, rules, and open lands locations/addresses, to protect resources and provide public safety. Communication has been excellent. Discussion will continue at the staff level and a presentation to OLAC is not needed.

Larimer County Open Lands Advisory Board Report. Marilyn Hilgenberg reported on the March OLAB meeting. The Horsetooth Visitor Center is under construction. The Carter Lake project is delayed due to a sewer system issue. Several job openings are currently posted, including a visitor services position in the Big Thompson District and a Resource Specialist position.

Reports/Correspondence

1. Property Acquisition Updates. Brian reported that the 79-acre Pfeiff property on E. 1st St. closed on May 5. Structures on the property will be removed by the seller within 6 months. Signage and gates will be installed. Funding from the Parks Division (\$300K) contributed to the purchase price, for a future neighborhood park co-located on the site. High Plains Foundation provided \$200K. The city will work together with Timberlane Farm, New Vision School, the Boys & Girls Club, and High Plains Env. Center on a visioning/master plan process to manage the site for multiple uses. The 8-acre Nicholson Tract T property east of Oxbow Natural Area on the Big Thompson is scheduled to close on May 20. Staff will also pursue a boundary line adjustment on the west Oxbow parcel, for ownership north to the river. The 12-acre Mihelich property east of Namaqua Skyline is scheduled to close on May 31. Staff is still

talking with the landowners of three additional adjacent parcels regarding possible acquisition. The 78-acre Ward Trust property west of Morey Wildlife Reserve may close as early as August. This is an option contract through the Trust for Public Land. The county will present an initial review to OLAB for their \$250K partnership and holding the GOCO-required conservation easement. A \$500K GOCO open space grant has been awarded and will also be used at closing.

2. Open Lands Projects Report. “Quick-win” Projects: Oxbow and Mariana Butte Natural Areas are open for walk-in access. All five new/restored sites, including these and Morey Wildlife Reserve, King’s Crossing and Old St. Louis, will open when sign kiosks with site maps and rules are installed. The May *City Update* utility bill insert featured open lands and natural areas that are open for public access throughout the city. River’s Edge Natural Area is the featured Open Lands *Site of the Month* for May. The milkweed planting project went well on May 7, with 70 volunteers planting 1,700 native milkweed plants. Blustery weather hampered other events, such as the bird walk and family nature walk. Dog Day Afternoon is planned for May 14, to educate the public about responsible pet ownership, natural area stewardship and places to recreate with dogs. Environmental Education programs are wrapping up, with more than 420 students and 75 adults reached this season. Staff and volunteers adapted to the new site and weather when needed. The April *River Ecology* public program was cancelled due to snowy weather.

3) Trail Updates. The Open Lands and Trails Division has been restricted and will now include open lands, natural areas, and trails. Open Lands funding will come from the County Open Space Sales Tax and the City’s Open Lands Capital Expansion Fee (CEF). Trail funding is provided by Conservation Trust (Lottery) proceeds and a Trails CEF. The City Manager has asked that OLAC help oversee and advise on trail issues, since the two areas overlap in many places. The trail system has gone beyond the Recreation Trail loop, and includes many soft-surface trails in natural areas and open lands. Connections to and through open lands are planned, as well as regional trail connections beyond Loveland. Trail updates and financial information will be provided regularly.

Discussion/Action:

4. Open Lands Policy Review – OL-18 Management/Stewardship Policy. Changes to Policy OL-18 included a provision to combine adjacent similar parcels with existing conserved open lands for management and stewardship plans and purposes. Also, four categories of management types were identified for purposes of public access, resource management, and maintenance tracking. Rick Brent made a motion recommending approval of Policy OL-18 as amended. Jean Whittaker seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

5. 2017 Proposed Open Lands & Trails CORE Budgets. Proposed budgets were similar to 2016, with cost of living increases and costs estimated for operations and maintenance based on management types, including an additional \$32K for management, primarily for weed control. Management and maintenance tracking in 2016 will help provide better financial information for future planning. Trail operations are funded from Conservation Trust Funds. City Council discussed CEFs at their April 10 meeting and reduced the rate for Police, Fire and General Government slightly. Other funds were not affected.

A Conservation Trust maintenance reserve policy sets aside 10% of Lottery funds for future trail maintenance. The reserve fund currently has \$3M, which is now needed for regional trail projects. The commission was asked to consider reducing the reserve to \$500K, approximately two years’ worth

of maintenance funding. Ross Livingston made a motion to amend the reserve policy based on staff recommendations. Jim Roode seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

6. Property Review – West Big Thompson River. The former Nomina Nursery property on Namaqua Road (currently owned by Paul Ehrlich) is listed for sale at \$3.2M. The 55-acre property includes approximately 25 acres of developable land above the floodway/floodplain, with 15 acres already annexed in DR zoning and suitable for low-density residential. The water rights include 3rd priority rights on the Big Thompson, which can be used on site or possibly on adjacent Loveland Ready-Mix property. The property is the historic location of Mariano Medina's homestead and ferry service across the river, dating back to the 1850s. The site does not appear to contain a valuable resource for gravel mining. The river corridor is a high priority for open lands acquisition and potential trail connections, and the historic value of the site is important to the city's heritage. Rick Brent made a motion recommending that staff pursue acquisition of the entire property, with the intent to sell off the developable portions. Ross Livingston seconded the motion. Jim Roode noted that he would prefer more flexibility to pursue various options for acquisition and working with the seller to determine the best option. The motion failed. Jim Roode made a motion that OLAC authorize staff to purchase the property in the manner they best see fit. Jean Whittaker seconded the motion. Rick Brent noted that the intent needs to be clear that we would dispose of the developable land. The motion failed. Jim Roode made a motion that OLAC authorize staff to purchase the property in the manner they best see fit, with the intention to dispose of some or all of the developable land if feasible. Rick Brent seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Staff will complete all due diligence, including researching the water rights/value and an appraisal, and will work with the City Attorney's Office on a contract. A site visit for the commission will take place on May 23 at 4:30 pm.

7. Waters Edge Annexation. At the May 5 Planning Commission meeting, an annexation request was presented on the Waters Edge development, north of CR 16 and the recent Luxor open lands acquisition in Ryans Gulch. Neighbors presented a signed petition recommending that the land be purchased for open space instead. The parcel was part of the property owned by the Luxor seller, and was previously reviewed by OLAC and determined not to be a priority for acquisition with limited available funding. The southern parcel was a higher priority based on the regional trail connection, the active golden eagle nest, and higher valued natural areas. The Planning Commission voted in favor of annexation, but also recommended that City Council should consider purchasing the land for open space. The commission agreed that property along the river corridor, such as the Ehrlich property discussed earlier, offers a much greater value and public benefit than this parcel.

Reminders:

PEEPs Program, "Of Trees and Stars" at Namaqua Park, May 19 at 9:30 & 11 am

June *Site of the Month* events at Morey Wildlife Reserve – volunteer trail-building project for National Trails Day, guided bird walk & family nature walk activities.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 pm.