



PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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CITY OF LOVELAND OPEN LANDS ADVISORY COMMISSION

Regular Meeting Minutes – October 12, 2016

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

Commissioners Present: Gale Bernhardt, Andy Hawbaker, Darren Pape, Jim Roode, Nathan Thompson, Jean Whittaker, Bill Zawacki, Hugh McKean (City Council Liaison).

Commissioners Absent: Rick Brent, Ross Livingston, Kerri Rollins (Larimer County Liaison).

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

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

Approval of September 14, 2016 Meeting Minutes: Darren Pape made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Andy Hawbaker seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Comment: Kathy Hartman, 945 E. 6th St., inquired about the public comments received regarding the Sunset Vista Management Plan. Marilyn Hilgenberg provided an update. Federal funding for the Long View Trail project requires concurrence from the state regarding historic resources, and the state is currently reviewing the historical report. The location of the trail with respect to the red-tailed hawk nest was re-evaluated in response to comments received and will be adjusted and mitigated as much as feasible. Staff is working with Colorado Parks & Wildlife and High Plains Environmental Center to inventory resources, draft the management plan and implement short-term management strategies. Development is dependent on the Long View Trail project, which is in the design stage, with construction scheduled for summer and fall 2017.

City Council Liaison Report. Hugh McKean reported on the following items: 1) The City Attorney has accepted a position with the Colorado Municipal League, so a new search will be opened for that position. A new Assistant City Attorney position is also in the process of being hired, to concentrate on real estate and water issues. 2) Council will begin review of the 2017 budget next week. 3) The Pulliam Building is being considered for refurbishment for city/community purposes.

Larimer County OLAB Report. 1) The Help Preserve Open Spaces 20th anniversary celebration was held on 9/22. A small but important crowd gathered for food and festivities and the debut of the 20th anniversary video, which has been posted to the LC OL website, YouTube and Facebook (1.5K views on Facebook so far). Commissioners are encouraged to view the video. 2) The final phase of the Roberts Ranch tire cleanup project wrapped up with a final number of 673 tons of tires removed! 3) We hosted a successful COSA conference in Estes Park on Sept. 12-14 with 300 registrations – a record high! Hats off to the many people involved with that! 4) GOCO open space grant for Little Thompson Farm had a site visit for the GOCO board on the morning of Oct. 3. LC OL requested \$800K. 5) Jennifer Almstead, our new Fund Development and Special Projects Coordinator, started on Oct. 3. Jennifer comes from VOC. 6) Fourteen applications for the Small Grants program were received. Site visits are being set up. 7) Chimney Hollow access easement for WAPA line is being worked on. 8) The new Horsetooth Area Information center opened last week at South Bay.

Discussion/Action

1. **Big Thompson River East Property Reviews.** Property reviews were presented for the Ward Construction and Osborn properties, adjacent to Old St. Louis Natural Area along Boise Ave. Both properties are along the river and provide potential future trail connections for an east Big Thomson trail, connecting Old St. Louis to the Pfeiff property. A trail easement was secured with the Pfeiff acquisition on E. 1st St., allowing for a connection from the Pfeiff property to the city's property at the waste water treatment plant (WWTP). The Ward Construction acquisition (13 ac +/-) would connect Old St. Louis Natural Area to Boise Ave., and the Osborn acquisition (1.8 ac +/-) would connect from Boise Ave. to the trail easement at the WWTP. Staff is working with the city's Storm Water Division on planned improvements for the Madison Street storm water outfall, through the eastern portion of Old St. Louis to the river, including possible wetlands/ponds and offering educational opportunities for the public. A potential trail connection from neighborhoods to the north would provide off-street access to trails and the river corridor. Other river properties in the area are still completing augmentation requirements from past gravel mining activities. Neither of the proposed acquisitions have water augmentation requirements. Gale Bernhardt made a motion to recommend that staff continue negotiations to purchase the Ward Construction and Osborn properties as fee simple acquisitions as presented. Andy Hawbaker seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

2. **Proposed Lease Agreement – Wild Natural Area.** The Sweetheart City Winery approached the city with a request to lease approximately 7 acres of the Wild Natural Area to plant some grapevines. The winery believes that the vineyard would be an aesthetically pleasing amenity to Loveland and the winery and compatible with the City's Natural Area. The plan would need to be consistent with management of the Wild Natural Area, and maintain a corridor along the river for wildlife habitat and public access trails. The lease would be based on a per-acre cost and the winery would be responsible for management of the leased property including weed control, similar to other agricultural leases on open lands. Fencing would need to be incorporated for wildlife management. There may be a possibility for shared parking. Commission members were generally in favor of considering the lease, and a site visit will be scheduled for the commission.

3. **Proposed Barnes Ditch Fish Passage Project – Oxbow Natural Area.** The Big Thompson Watershed Coalition has proposed a high flow channel for fish to bypass the Barnes Ditch diversion structure near Rossum Drive for greater movement up and down-stream. The US Fish and Wildlife Service funded the conceptual design and additional grant funding may be available from CPW, Trout Unlimited, or USFWS for implementation. The channel would enhance wildlife habitat and would be naturalized (not rip-rap) and restored with native vegetation. The current design would require a headgate to divert water at times of high flow. The estimated cost based on conceptual design is about \$250K. The cost and practicality of the project need to be analyzed. The commission agreed with continuing to explore this option, as well as obtaining additional fish survey data for this stretch of river and implementing other fish habitat improvements in this area.

Reports/Correspondence

1. **Property Acquisition Updates.** The Namaqua West property is still under contract to close December 10. The due diligence process is underway, including a Phase I environmental report, survey and appraisal.

2. Open Lands Projects Report.

- Brian Hayes was appointed to the Conservation Easement Oversight Commission (CEOC) for the State of Colorado. This commission oversees the statewide conservation easement tax credit program.
- The Namaqua Skyline property is being analyzed for trail options including possible connections to adjacent lands including the Dakota Ridge CE and Devil's Backbone Open Space. Staff will meet with representatives from the Hidden Valley HOA to discuss the city's potential plans for public access. Resource surveys are ongoing to study wildlife, vegetation, archeology, soils, etc.
- Loveland and Larimer County are partnering on a project to remove invasive Russian olives, Siberian elm and tamarisk from 3 city natural areas, with funding from a Colorado Water Conservation Board grant.

3. Trails Update. Bids have been received on the Taft to Wilson Ave trail and pedestrian bridge reconstruction project, and the contract will go to City Council for approval on Oct. 18. The project will be funded by a GOCO Flood grant, FEMA funding and insurance, and is expected to be completed by May 2017. Easements for the trail from Wilson to Namaqua Rd. are also moving forward. Bids were also received for Trail Segment 10b from Namaqua Rd. to the US 34 underpass and the contract is routing for signatures and award.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm.