



PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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CITY OF LOVELAND OPEN LANDS ADVISORY COMMISSION

Regular Meeting Minutes – February 8, 2017

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

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

Commissioners Absent: Darren Pape, Nathan Thompson, Leah Johnson (Interim City Council Liaison).

Staff Present: Debbie Eley, Brian Hayes, Marilyn Hilgenberg, Michele Van Hare.

Guests: Jennifer Almstead (Larimer County Open Lands).

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

Approval of January 11, 2017 Meeting Minutes: Jean Whittaker made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Gale Bernhardt seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Comment: None.

Larimer County Open Lands Advisory Board Report. Kerri introduced Jennifer Almstead, the county's new Open Lands Fund Development and Special Projects Coordinator. Jenn was previously the development director at Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado and will attend OLAC meetings in Kerri's absence. Jenn reported that the county will be conducting visitor satisfaction surveys at Red Mountain and Horsetooth Mountain open spaces, to obtain concrete data on visitor counts and demographics in preparation for management plan updates. Kerri reported that Larimer County is working with Boulder County and Colorado Open Lands to set up a field trip to the Malchow Farm during the Land Trust Alliance's national conference in October. Also, an IGA with a municipality will allow the Malchow Farm water to be shared and still maintain a viable agricultural farm. The Open Lands Advisory Board approved 13 small grants at their January meeting, awarding \$19,000 total.

Discussion/Action:

1. Election of Vice Chair. Bill Zawacki nominated Andy Hawbaker as Vice Chair for 2017. Rick Brent seconded the nomination and Andy accepted the nomination. The commission unanimously voted to elect Andy Hawbaker as Vice Chair.

2. 2017 Division Work Plan. At the beginning of each year, the divisions of the Parks and Recreation Department set goals and work plans for the upcoming year. Based on citizen feedback, priorities set by the Open Lands Advisory Commission in 2016, and available resources, staff have established the following 2017 goals for the Open Lands and Trails program: 1) Acquisition of several priority open land parcels including along the river corridor and additions to existing protected lands; 2) Development of management and stewardship plans for the Big Thompson River corridor properties, and Sunset Vista, Prairie Ridge, and Skyline natural areas; 3) Project Outdoors Inspire Initiative planning, community outreach, and implementation grant; 4) Development of local and regional trails, trail connections, and acquisitions to complete missing trail linkages; 5) Field and development projects including public access improvements, noxious weed management, and property management

projects, and 6) programming and community outreach, including increasing the number of programs, outreach events, participants, volunteers, and stewardship projects, with the help of the CO Health Foundation Grant, if successful. Budget funding is appropriated for each of these work items.

Reports/Correspondence:

3. Project Outdoors Update. The GOCO Inspire Initiative aims to connect more Colorado youth and families to the outdoors. Loveland has been working with the Larimer County Project Outdoors coalition to develop a plan for places, programs and pathways to nature in the southeast Loveland project area, including the Boys & Girls Club, schools, and natural areas and trails in the Big Thompson River corridor. The community has been engaged in the planning process and more than 75 participants of all ages provided valuable input during an open house event in January. Feedback indicates that citizens are interested in more access to natural areas and parks for free play and guided programs, trails for connectivity, bicycle skills and safety, a “gear library,” and urban agriculture. Barriers to recreating outdoors include lack of awareness of programs and places, time, transportation and location. The planning process will also involve working with local program providers to identify opportunities for youth and family programming, supporting state curriculum standards, promoting stewardship, internship and leadership pathways for youth, and developing sustainable partnerships with other local entities. Next steps include a teacher engagement workshop, site visits, school district coordination, additional community engagement, and prioritization of projects. Implementation grant requests of \$1-3M are due to GOCO in July.

4. Property Acquisition Updates.

- The Namaqua West property is still under contract. The adverse possession and prescriptive easement claim has not been resolved. The remainder of the property will be surveyed for purchase separately. The city will assume the current leases on the buildings and ag land once the acquisition is completed to continue current operations and maintenance practices for the near future.
- Boundary line adjustments on the two Boise Ave. properties are expected to be completed in 60-90 days to enable these acquisitions to close.

5. Open Lands Projects Report.

- Annual Report – The Open Lands and Trails Division 2016 Annual Report was distributed and will be available on the city website, in accordance with the requirements of the Larimer County Open Space Sales Tax.
- Parks & Recreation Dept. Photo Contest – Amateur and professional photographers of all ages are invited to enter their best original images in categories for each Parks & Rec Dept division. The contest will be open until May 31 and cash prizes will be awarded for winners in each category. See www.cityofloveland.org/ParksRecreation/photocontest for details.
- River’s Edge Natural Area – The new 1st St. parking area will be opened this spring when trail connections are installed and final striping and planting are completed. Limited snow and warmer days have allowed high public use of River’s Edge this winter. Although use of the site is encouraged year-round, due to unpredictability and risk, ice skating and ice fishing are not permitted on City of Loveland Open Lands and Parks water bodies. All areas have been posted with signage indicating “Unsafe Ice.”
- Ryans Gulch II Property. The house acquired with the Ryans Gulch II property has been renovated and is available for lease through the city’s property management company. All revenues will be returned to the open lands fund.

- Environmental Education/Volunteer Program – Volunteer educator training begins March 20. Details about topics and programs are available on the Open Lands website: www.cityofloveland.org/openlands and information to sign up for education and trail host training is available on Signup Genius: www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0A4EA8AD2EABF49-open. Staff is updating curriculum and materials for all EE programs for the spring season. The Bucks to Buses transportation scholarship program is open and funds are available for schools with high numbers of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch. Michele is available to present information about the Bucks for Buses program to any group that may be willing to support the scholarship.
- The February PEEPs program will be “Who is that Hooting in My Backyard?” about Great Horned Owls. The January programs on river otters had 36 participants.
- The February guided bird walk at River’s Edge will be led by Ron Harden from Foothills Audubon.

6. Trails Update.

- Wilson Bridge and Taft/Wilson Trail – The Wilson Bridge piers and abutments were installed in January and the bridge is scheduled to be placed on February 15th. The 404 permit was approved in January and work on the stormwater avulsion is also progressing. The contractor has moved several car bodies and old metal parts on the south river bank, which is being lowered to create a floodplain bench to help mitigate velocity and convey more flow within the channel during flood events. The trail will remain closed from Wilson to Taft for the entire duration of construction.
- Trail Segment 10b – Namaqua to W. US 34 Underpass – JAGS construction completed forming the bridge abutments and poured concrete in January. The bridge from Viestenz-Smith should be set in mid-February. The schedule is still tracking for the trail to open in this spring.
- Front Range Trail – CDOT completed final office review in January. Minor plan corrections are almost completed. Construction will be bid in mid-February for a May start and late August completion. Clearances for Utilities and final environmental review are in progress.
- Long View Corridor Trail – Staff completed review of 35% plans and the biological report. An updated cost estimate is in progress. The most recent schedule now puts the project bidding in June 2017 for a construction start in the fall of 2017.
- Trail 10a – Wilson to Namaqua Avenue – Minor trail alignment changes are in progress, which include the new Namaqua Ave. trail underpass location. Once the conceptual alignment is approved by the City, staff will meet with the landowner to discuss the final easements and needs for this trail section. Funding has been appropriated in the 2017 budget for design and construction.
- Grant awards – Staff will be presenting the GOCO Connect Initiative Planning Grant for \$97,000 to Council on February 6th for approval. This grant will fund 75% of the design of the Namaqua Avenue Trail Underpass. Staff will be bringing the TAP grant agreements to City Council for approval in March. The \$600,000 construction Transportation Alternative Program grant will provide almost one-half of the needed funds to construct the underpass in 2019. The Namaqua Avenue Trail Underpass will provide a safe grade-separated connection between trail segments 10a and 10b at Namaqua Avenue.

Commission Member Discussion Topics. Rick Brent noted that he disagrees with the renaming of the Namaqua Skyline property, due to the natural association with the adjacent Namaqua Hills subdivision. Rick Brent asked if a webcam could be placed at the bald eagle nest site for public viewing. Staff noted that a game cam is installed in the Morey Wildlife Reserve area, a barn owl nest box webcam will be online soon, and bald eagle monitoring is underway at the Boedecker nest site.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 pm.