



PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Civic Center • 500 East Third Street, Suite 200 • Loveland, Colorado 80537
(970) 962-2727 • FAX (970) 962-2903 • TDD (970) 962-2620

www.cityofloveland.org

CITY OF LOVELAND OPEN LANDS ADVISORY COMMISSION

Regular Meeting Minutes – January 10, 2018

Parks & Recreation Conference Room, 500 E. 3rd St., Loveland, CO 80537

Commissioners Present: Gale Bernhardt, Rick Brent, Andy Hawbaker, Mike Hinterberg, Ross Livingston, Darren Pape, Jean Whittaker, Don Overcash (Council Liaison).

Commissioners Absent: Jim Roode, Bill Zawacki, Kerri Rollins (LC OLAB Liaison).

Staff Present: Brian Hayes, Marilyn Hilgenberg, Debbie Eley, Kelly Smith, Shanen Weber, Laurie Stirman.

Guests: Joe Donnelly (NCWCD), Jim Struebel (NCWCD), Tim Meyer (Larimer Co.), Meegan Flenniken (Larimer Co.)

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

Approval of June 14, 2017 Meeting Minutes. Ross Livingston made a motion that the minutes be approved as written. Darren Pape seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Approval of November 8, 2017 Meeting Minutes. Gale Bernhardt made a motion that the minutes be approved as written. Ross Livingston seconded the motion. Members present voted in favor of the motion. Members absent voted in favor of the motion via email following the meeting. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Comment. None.

Reports/Correspondence:

2. Chimney Hollow CE Powerline Easement. Loveland holds the Chimney Hollow Conservation Easement on property owned by Larimer County. An existing powerline will need to be moved on to the CE property in a 700' corridor identified in the CE, for purposes of the planned Chimney Hollow Reservoir project. The property's conservation values will be protected during the project, including towers of weathered steel for less visual impact, a raptor and migratory bird plan, and revegetation and weed management plans. The CE allowed a 230 KV line; the new line will be 115 KV, located within a permanent 100' easement. Temporary roads for the relocation project will take advantage of existing two-tracks where possible. Permanent vehicle access will be needed to all towers after construction of the reservoir. Roads will be used for maintenance and emergency purposes only; no public vehicle access. Roads will be 12' wide with gravel surface. The cost for an underground line would have been approximately 10 times higher. Loveland and GOCO can approve the powerline easement as long as it doesn't harm the conservation values. Rick Brent made a motion to approve the relocation of the WAPA powerline easement as presented. Darren Pape seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

3. Big Thompson River Conservation and Recreation Update. Meegan Flenniken presented an update on the plan for post-flood improvements in the Big Thompson canyon. After the 1976 flood, the county acquired 163 parcels, including 4 parks – Sleepy Hollow, Forks, Narrows and Glade. The plan

addressed possible acquisitions after the 2013 flood, the previous 163 parcels acquired, possible recreation opportunities, USFS, Loveland and Estes Valley Land Trust lands, and re-opening of the 4 county parks. Public input identified needed improvements for bicycles, fishing access and restrooms. At Glade Park, a small parking area and a possible trail for river access were identified for possible reconstruction, along with river restoration, instream work, and an overflow channel. At Narrows Park, a small parking lot and river restoration were identified and have been completed. At Forks Park, a medium size parking lot and trail for river access were identified for reconstruction, including possible re-use of the restroom outside the 100-yr floodplain. Restoration by CDOT in conjunction with Hwy 34 repairs will begin in March 2018. Most of the park facilities survey the flood at Sleepy Hollow, including the vault toilet and picnic tables. The area was regraded and reopened. At Cedar Cove, the county acquired several parcels following the 1976 and 2013 floods. Future public access is planned, with a potential connection to Loveland's Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park. River restoration was completed in 2017; a management plan will be developed after the Chimney Hollow project, in the early '20's. Marilyn Hilgenberg presented information on the City of Loveland properties in the canyon, including Viestenz-Smith, Round Mountain Trail, and Horseshoe Curve. At the mountain park, the park has been reconstructed on the north side of the river, after moving the river back to its flood alignment. The new park will be more natural, with river access and some picnicking, but no irrigated landscapes. Phase I has been completed and Phase II work is getting started. The park is planned to open in fall 2018. The parking lot at Round Mountain Trail will re-open in May 2018 when Hwy 34 re-opens, with access to the Summit Trail, Nature Trail and other mountain park property to the east, with a possible parking area in the area being used for rock spoils from the road construction project. At Horseshoe Curve, CDOT has altered the highway alignment and abandoned a section of the old roadway, which will provide river access, parking and trails. A site tour for commission members will be planned in late spring when Hwy 34 re-opens for the summer.

4. Big Thompson River East Property Review. A 56-acre property in the east river corridor, including 25 acres of water in two ponds, is for sale and under a primary contract. The property would add to existing conserved lands, including the Koppes/Sports Park CE, the county's Kauffman CE, Colorado Open Lands' Flying W CE and Big Thompson Ponds State Wildlife Area. Loveland has backup offer in place, contingent on OLAC approval. The property could provide parking, trails, pond access, fishing and possible connections to other river properties. A possible house site could be located on the property above the 100-year floodplain. Commission members who had visited the site praised its scenic views, ponds, and addition to other conserved river lands. Gale Bernhardt made a motion to recommend continued negotiations and approval of the contract to purchase. Mike Hinterberg seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Gale Bernhardt made a motion to recommend that staff continues to pursue negotiations on the adjacent 137-acre river property for purchase and public access. Darren Pape seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

1. Election of Officers. Rick Brent nominated Ross Livingston as Chair of the commission for 2018. Gale Bernhardt seconded. Ross was elected Chair unanimously. Rick Brent nominated Darren Pape as Vice Chair for 2018. Jean Whittaker seconded. Darren was elected Vice Chair unanimously.

5. Addition of Youth At-Large Commission Member. Several boards and commissions are considering the addition of a youth at-large member, to encourage youth participation and hear from the youth perspective. Commission members were in favor of having a non-voting youth member, preferably a junior or senior high school student, and possibly rotating through other commissions. This year, all commission members are invited to the annual boards and commissions appreciation event on March 8.

6. Colorado Parks & Wildlife Grant Presentation – Prairie Ridge Trail Project. Kelly and Marilyn presented the Prairie Ridge Trail and Trailhead Project grant request for \$200,000 in CPW funding. The project will include 3.2 miles of soft-surface trail (with 1 mile ADA accessible), a 26-car trailhead parking area, prairie and wetland restoration, a drainage crossing, vault toilet, road widening/turn lane, and educational/ interpretive signage. Future connections to Fort Collins' Coyote Ridge Natural Area and Loveland's Recreation Trail system are also planned. Public outreach indicated a great need for more trails and trail access in the area due to overcrowded conditions at other nearby open spaces. Partnerships and collaboration with Larimer County, Fort Collins, CSU, CPW, and local service groups will make the project possible. Grant funding is also being requested from GOCO. Both grants will be awarded in March 2018.

7. Property Acquisition Updates were provided during the Big Thompson River East property review (# 4 above).

8. Open Lands Projects Report. Staff provided the following project updates.

Properties/Facilities/Projects/Maintenance/Operations

- Work to replace a failing pipe under the Recreation Trail at River's Edge Natural Area began Jan. 2 and will require a 3-week closure of the Recreation Trail. A short detour runs through River's Edge.
- Electric service is being restored to the storage building on Oxbow East, lost during the 2013 flood.
- All conservation easements held or co-held by Loveland were monitored in 2017, with no major violations. Staff will renew Loveland's certification to accept conservation easements with a donative component. The Colorado Division of Real Estate requires this certification to be renewed annually.

Partnerships and Planning

- On January 1, members from the local Audubon Society conducted the annual Christmas Bird Count on numerous open lands in and around Loveland. Access was provided to closed sites for this valuable citizen science project that gives Loveland and other local agencies a snapshot of the species and numbers of birds in our area. Several bird species were found only on Open Lands properties and no other location in the entire Loveland count circle (~175 sq. mi.), indicating the importance of conserving these lands.
- Staff met with Berthoud's Parks, Open Lands, Recreation and Trails Committee to mentor them on how Loveland has gone about the development of a comprehensive recreation trail system.
- Open Lands was awarded a GOCO grant for \$18,000 to fund the Larimer County Conservation Corps for two weeks of saw crew time to help remove and treat Russian olives and other invasive species at the new Ward Boise property, which will greatly improve habitat in this stretch of the river.
- Funding from a Colorado Water Conservation Board grant through Larimer County will be used to complete Russian olive removal from Oxbow Natural Area and the river corridor through Fairgrounds Park this winter. Old St. Louis and Cottonwood Run Natural Areas were treated in 2017 using this grant funding and the treatments have been very successful. Staff from Larimer County Weed District provides assistance by mapping treatment areas, creating photopoint records, monitoring and retreating cut stumps as needed, and compiling reports for submittal to CWCB.
- Loveland Fishing Club is working with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to improve fish habitat in Bass Pond at River's Edge Natural Area by bundling recycled Christmas trees and weighting the bundles to sink in deep water, which will provide structure for fish and other aquatic species.

Programs/Environmental Education/Volunteer Program

- Staff and volunteers hosted a successful “Opt Outside” bird walk and trail hike at Mariana Butte on Nov. 26. Dozens of citizens enjoyed the opportunity to get outside and enjoy the great weather.
- An Open Lands and Trails Volunteer recognition dinner was held on December 7. Volunteers provided over 5,000 hours of service to the City in 2017 and are an integral part of the programming and stewardship of the Loveland Open Lands and Trails Program.
- Open Lands staff is piloting a new after-school environmental ed. program at Bill Reed Middle School this year with funding from Colorado Health Foundation. The 2nd quarter “Art in Nature” program was very successful, with students learning about and using a variety of media and techniques in outdoor spaces including River’s Edge. The 3rd quarter session will cover orienteering and map & compass navigation and the 4th quarter class will use GPS units to learn about mapping and GIS. These classes will be transferable to other middle schools interested in offering after-school outdoor programming.
- A new Raptor Nest Monitoring program is being implemented for the 2018 nesting season as a citizen science initiative to systematically compile data on nesting raptors. Volunteers will be trained to identify raptors and collect data on nesting species on Open Lands properties. Training will be offered jointly with Larimer County and Fort Collins.
- Spring environmental education planning is underway, with reservations for school groups now available, additional program information going out to schools/teachers later this month, and volunteer training scheduled for the week of March 19.
- Several volunteer stewardship projects are being planned for spring, including early season Weed Warriors and other habitat improvement projects. Projects will be listed on Offero, the city website and event calendar, Facebook, and other social media and news outlets.

9. Trail Updates. Staff provided the following trail updates.

- Construction of a new connection to the City’s Recreation Trail from Rossum Drive is nearing completion and is planned to be complete in early 2018. This trail link will connect Mariana Butte neighborhoods to the City’s Recreation Trail System for the first time. The new connection adds about ¾ mile of additional paved trail in Loveland to be open in early 2018.
- The north Front Range Trail officially opened in November, providing the first paved trail connection between Loveland and Fort Collins. Loveland is working with Larimer County on the development of an IGA to share maintenance duties related to this trail. Loveland will mow, take care of trash, and perform snow removal. Larimer County will complete weed management and safety services.
- Construction of the Long View Corridor Trail is underway. This joint trail project with Larimer County and City of Fort Collins will provide a safe, off-street trail connection from Sunset Vista Natural Area at 57th and Taft to Cathy Fromme Prairie in Fort Collins. Rough grading of the alignment is continuing and bridge abutments for drainage crossings will be installed next.

Commission Member Discussion Topics.

1. Jean requested an update on the Skyline property. Baseline data collection is complete, but walk-in and parking access are not available yet. The Hunters Run subdivision will help provide a pedestrian connection and is moving through the development review process. A final inholding parcel also needs to have clear title before acquisition.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm.