



PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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CITY OF LOVELAND OPEN LANDS ADVISORY COMMISSION

Special Meeting Minutes – November 14, 2018

Larimer County Courthouse, 200 W. Oak St., Fort Collins, CO 80521

Commissioners Present: Mike Hinterberg, Ross Livingston, Darren Pape, Jim Roode, Jean Whittaker, Bill Zawacki, Gale Bernhardt.

Commissioners Absent: Rick Brent, Andy Hawbaker, Don Overcash (Council Liaison).

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

Guests: 1) Gary Buffington, Director, Larimer County Natural Resources Dept. 2) Scott James, CATS member, interested in Open Lands and Trails.

The public meeting was called to order at 6:40 pm.

Approval of October 10, 2018 Meeting Minutes. Bill Zawacki made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Darren Pape seconded the motion and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Comment. None.

City Council Liaison Report: Marilyn Hilgenberg reported that she recently led Mayor Jackie Marsh and Councilor Kathi Wright on a tour of Open Lands sites.

Discussion/Action:

1. Larimer County Fee Study Update. Gary Buffington reported that public engagement regarding proposed increased fees at Larimer County Parks and Open Lands included 4 Parks Advisory Board and Open Lands Advisory Board meetings; 3 public open house meetings including Loveland, Fort Collins, and Estes Park; joint meetings with OLAB/OLAC members and Parks/OLAB. Media coverage included newspapers and 3 Denver TV stations. Options to be considered include a discounted pass for low-income residents and continuation of a discounted pass for disabled, senior and veteran residents. Changing the county's percentages for acquisition/operations/flex would require a public vote. If necessary, the county would delay planned improvements. The 5-year capital improvement plan is easier to predict than 20 years out. OLAB and Parks Advisory Board will review the proposed budget spreadsheet, which includes 6-7 new open spaces over the next 25 years. Gary also reported that OLAB will consider Loveland's request for a 10% partnership for the east Big Thompson River properties for final review at its Nov. 29 meeting.

Reports/Correspondence:

2. Big Thompson River Restoration Project Updates. The Big Thompson Watershed Coalition received grants for two major river restoration projects that include city properties. Both projects will begin this winter and be completed by summer 2019. Reach 30-31 extends from Rossum Drive to Wilson Ave. and includes improvements at Oxbow Natural Area and Medina's Crossing as well as private property (Loveland Ready-Mix). Northern Water will also provide funding for this project as mitigation for disturbance to wetlands at the Chimney Hollow Reservoir project. This reach also includes the relocation of the Rist-Goss Ditch on Medina's Crossing to remove the diversion structure

that spans the river and move the headgate upstream with a smaller diversion structure. Larimer County's Namaqua Bridge project is also within Reach 30-31, but is a separate project with its own funding source. The Reach 28 river restoration project runs through the Wild property and several adjacent private properties. This project will create a more meandering course for the river channel, providing flood resiliency, river frontage for property owners as much as feasible, and enhanced aquatic and riparian habitat. The driveway to the Wild property will be moved to align with Glade Road in accordance with CDOT requirements for safety. A small parking area and soft-surface trail will be developed with assistance from Planning staff once the river project is complete.

3. Property Acquisition Updates. Staff provided the following property updates: 1) The East Big Thompson River properties are scheduled to close in January. Ongoing due diligence includes obtaining an access easement and trail easement through neighboring properties needed for future use. Larimer County OLAB will consider the 10% partnership request for final review at their Nov. 29 meeting. Access through the county's adjacent Kauffman conservation easement may be requested for a future trail and parking. 2) The Hwy 402 corridor plan is considering several factors that involve open lands and trails in the area, including viewsheds, river corridor, bike lanes and pedestrian access. North-south connectors will also be important, including replacement of narrow bridges that could allow for underpasses for the east river trail.

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

Properties/Facilities/Projects/Maintenance/Operations

Annual monitoring of 14 conservation easements, where the City of Loveland holds or co-holds a conservation easement or owns fee simple property with an easement held by another entity, have been completed for 2018 to ensure that conservation values are continuing to be protected.

Four Open Lands and Trails employees (Jonathan Huey, Michele Van Hare, Bree Knouse and Thomas Shields) were recognized by the City as "Shining Stars" at the annual Employee Recognition Event as a result of their excellent service.

Partnerships, Planning and Grants

The recently-donated Open Lands & Trails van has been wrapped with eye-catching graphics to identify and promote the Open Lands & Trails Program. The interior will also be fitted with racks and shelving to maximize available space to hold and organize materials for public outreach and environmental education programs and events.

Programs/Environmental Education/Volunteer Program

Michele Van Hare, Environmental Education Coordinator, has completed all requirements and earned certification as a "Certified Interpretive Guide Trainer" by the National Association for Interpretation (NAI). This allows Michele to train the environmental education volunteers which is significant to Loveland in sustaining and growing our environmental programs.

The Division utilizes volunteers to accomplish the majority of our stewardship projects on open lands. The number of volunteer hours donated in 2018 for all programs, events, activities and projects far surpasses previous years' totals. A full report will be provided with the Annual Report in early 2019.

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

The unpaved section of the Recreation Trail between Namaqua and Wilson Ave. will be improved with grading to level the surface and application of Class 6 gravel material to provide a consistent base with a 9 ft. wide tread. A contract has been signed with a local construction company to install the improvements.

Volunteers from the Colorado Addicted Trailbuilders Society (CATS) and other local organizations have helped improve and build new trails at several sites planned to open to the public, including Boedecker Bluff, Boise Bend and Willow Bend.

The Northern Colorado Bike and Pedestrian Collaborative organized a “leaders” bike ride in October to give local councils, dignitaries, commissions, etc. an opportunity to ride paved trails from Fort Collins to Loveland to experience the trails, learn about design challenges, funding, programming and ask questions. About 40 leaders enjoyed the ride including the mayor, advisory commission members and staff from Loveland.

Public Works and Parks & Recreation are working together on connectivity issues throughout town and a “Safe Routes” grant to address missing sidewalks that will improve safety for the community.

Commission Member Discussion Topics:

1) Mike Hinterberg asked about the status of the Boise Bend Natural Area. The property is open to the public and a new trailhead kiosk and signage will be installed by December. The opening will be announced with a press release and on social media.

2) Jean Whittaker asked about the osprey nests at Boise and Namaqua Ave. The nest platform at Boise will be evaluated with CPW to be moved across Boise Ave. along the river, to avoid conflict with the new trailhead at Boise Bend. The Namaqua nest platforms may be temporarily impacted by the river restoration and bridge projects and will also be evaluated with CPW. An eagle cam is still under consideration with input from local experts, CPW and USFWS.

3) Mike Hinterberg asked about the 6’ width of the Willow Bend trails. This width allows for multi-use access, side-by-side travel and passing along the trail.

4) Jean Whittaker asked whether horses will be allowed at Prairie Ridge. The parking lot will not accommodate trailers, but equestrian use will be permitted from the Coyote Ridge trail system.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 pm.

/s/ Ross Livingston, Chair