



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 – October 10, 2018

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

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

Commissioners Absent: None.

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

Guests: Nan Daniels, Curt Cole, members of the northern chapter of Colorado Native Plant Society.

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

Approval of September 12, 2018 Meeting Minutes. Darren Pape made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Bill Zawacki seconded the motion and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Comment. None.

City Council Liaison Report: Don Overcash reported that: 1) The Council budget process is moving and the budget is expected to be approved. A budget subcommittee will be formed for the 2020 budget. 2) A Council decision on community broadband is expected on October 23. 3) The City Council retreat planned for the end of January 2019 will look at the city's strategic plan and a financial contingency plan. 4) Proposed fracking for oil and gas on county land meets the current easement requirements and the applicant will apply for a site pad following geologic studies. The COGCC denied Loveland's extension request, so a neutral response was filed.

Discussion/Action:

1. Discussion of Potential Devil's Backbone Open Space Fee Structure. Gary Buffington, Director of Larimer County Department of Natural Resources, presented information about a proposed fee increase at parks and open lands based on a fee study prepared by Harvey Economics. Gary distributed a public engagement schedule for the process of reviewing the proposed fee schedule, including a committee of OLAC and OLAB members and public open house meetings. In 2019, allocation of the county's share of the Open Space Sales Tax will change to 50% towards long-term management and development, 35% to acquisition and restoration, and 15% flexible. The county's overall share of the overall tax revenues will increase from 42% to 50%. Under this scenario, the funds would not be sufficient to fund long-term management until the end of the current sales tax period, in 2043. Visitation to county parks and open lands have seen significant increases in the past two years, with corresponding increases in degradation of resources, medical emergencies, vandalism, and maintenance and enforcement needs to maintain the county's identified "B" level of service. Funds collected at Devil's Backbone would be required to be used at that site, according to the agreement with Loveland for Larimer County to manage the property. Staff and commission members noted that sales tax funding, including the additional percentage the county will receive beginning in 2019 – approximately \$500K annually, was not considered as a source of funding for Devil's Backbone

management in the fee study. Seniors and other fixed- and low-income populations that would be impacted by proposed fees should also be considered, possibly with a tiered system. The overall system needs to be addressed, considering which county open lands are free and which require a fee. Charging a fee at Devil's Backbone could result in additional visitation at other nearby sites, impacting Loveland open lands and natural areas. Alternatives need to be explored more extensively. The numbers provided as justification for a potential user fee at Devil's Backbone are not clear. Staff will compile commissioner's comments prior to the joint subcommittee meeting. Transparency and financial accountability would be beneficial to the process.

2. Open Lands and Trails Financial Update. Revenues and expenses for all open lands and trails funds and capital expansion fees were provided for 2018 to date, including operating expenses and capital expenditures/acquisitions. Major projects included development of Sunset Vista/Long View Trail, Oxbow/Rossum/Namaqua/Wilson Trail, planning for Prairie Ridge, Willow Bend, Old St. Louis, Boedecker Bluff, Medina's Crossing, Skyline, and Big T East properties and trails. Other projects in planning include Copper Ridge trail connection, Namaqua Bridge and underpass, and Centerra Trail.

Reports/Correspondence:

3. Property Updates. The East Big T properties are still on schedule to close in January. Due diligence for road access easements and trails are being worked out. Mineral rights would not be acquired with the Flying W property, but the property is in the floodway and restrictions with respect to public trails would be in place.

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

Properties/Facilities/Projects/Maintenance/Operations

- Open Lands and Trails staff will be participating in the Highway 402 Corridor Master Plan process to ensure that planned trails and open land areas are included in the long-term visions in this area of town. Commission members were encouraged to participate in the public survey.
- A game camera helps staff understand wildlife movement patterns and effectiveness of conservation areas.

Partnerships, Planning and Grants

- The Division participated in High Plain Environmental Center's fall habitat fair and supported their recent designation by the National Wildlife Federation on September 20.
- The grand opening of Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park was held on September 28. About 50 attendees were present, including commission and council members, consultants, contractors, partners, and staff, to celebrate the restoration project. Visitors appreciate the new design and amenities the park offers.
- The October Astronomy Night event is planned in partnership with Sylvan Dale Ranch, to take advantage of dark skies west of town. Volunteers from Northern Colorado Astronomical Society bring telescopes and enthusiastically provide information about galaxies, nebulae, clusters and planets visible in the night sky.
- A site visit with Larimer County and the CO Native Plant Society is planned for the small grant request for pollinator garden plots at River's Edge.

Programs/Environmental Education/Volunteer Program

- Programs for school groups and the public continue to take advantage of good fall weather.
- Volunteers stay busy helping with trail-building, trail maintenance, clean-ups, bird walks, educational programs, and administrative work.

- Training for volunteer environmental educators and trail hosts has resulted in recruitment of several new active volunteers, helping to be the hearts and hands, and eyes and ears of the Open Lands program.

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

The IGA with Larimer County has been signed to include a pedestrian trail underpass with the County's bridge replacement project on Namaqua Avenue and the Big Thompson River. The City of Loveland will pay for the extra cost of the underpass utilizing 2019 trail funding.

The new Long View Regional Trail at Sunset Vista Natural Area is getting a great amount of use by the public. A trail counter has been installed to allow the City to have a good understanding of the volume of use the trail is receiving. Trail users continue to voice frustration that there is a missing trail link from Sunset Vista east to the existing recreation trail and that there are no bike lanes on 57th Street. Parks and Recreation is working with Public Works to find solutions to the missing trails, sidewalks, and bike lanes in this area of town. This missing trail linkage is the number one priority for Loveland's trail program.

The City's Recreation Trail and all connections on Wilson Avenue are closed to accommodate the construction of the Wilson Avenue Flood Mitigation Project. At the completion of the project, citizens will have better trail connections at this location, as well as additional parking.

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.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.

/s/ Ross Livingston, Chair