



PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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CITY OF LOVELAND OPEN LANDS ADVISORY COMMISSION

Regular Meeting Minutes – May 8, 2019

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

Commissioners Present: Gale Bernhardt, Mike Hinterberg, Scott James, Ross Livingston, Jim Roode, Jean Whittaker, Bill Zawacki, Don Overcash (City Council Liaison).

Commissioners Absent: Rick Brent, Darren Pape, Cindy Ticer (alternate).

Staff Present: Bryan Harding, Brian Hayes, Marilyn Hilgenberg, Dan Willadsen, Debbie Eley.

Guests: Curt Cole, Colorado Native Plant Society; Bob Volk, Foothills Audubon.

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

Approval of April 17, 2019 Meeting Minutes. Bill Zawacki made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Ross Livingston seconded the motion and the minutes were approved unanimously.

City Council Liaison Report: Don Overcash reported on the following items: 1) Groundbreaking for the Police Regional Training Facility took place recently at the Fort Collins-Loveland Airport. The facility is expected to open in 2020 and many northern Colorado agencies have expressed interest in using the facility. 2) The 2020 budget process is underway. 3) Bonds to fund the city's new broadband system were issued recently and raised \$6M. 4) Community Marketing/ Economic Development's tourism annual report is available at www.visitlovelandco.org. 5) The Foundry is nearly complete and 70 events are booked already. 6) A public survey showed support for a citizen-driven sales tax initiative to fund several city-wide projects. 7) Renovation of the Pulliam Community Building has started. 8) Police assistance on open lands and trails is data-driven; issues should be reported for police response and for patrol scheduling and management.

OLAB Liaison Report: Marilyn Hilgenberg 1) distributed a synopsis of Larimer County's Visitor Use Survey of Horsetooth Mountain and Red Mountain Open Space and Horsetooth Reservoir. Findings might translate to Devil's Backbone Open Space and help with visitor use management; 2) toured the River Bluffs restoration project (GOCO-funded) and also noted that the county and 3 other entities were invited to submit a Connect Initiative application for the Poudre River trail from Fort Collins to Greeley; 3) City staff met with the county regarding management of Devil's Backbone and offered assistance such as volunteer trail host patrols, cleaning restrooms, etc; 4) The county sales tax financial report shows Loveland's revenue share down ~\$60K/mo, or \$300K/yr, slightly more than forecasted to change due to the 2015 ballot initiative. City budgets are holding steady with revenues flat as well; 5) applications for OLAB are due in April for terms beginning June 1.

Discussion/Action:

1. Drone Policy. Marilyn presented information about the use of drones, existing regulation by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), possible uses for management and operations, and potential issues with public uses in natural areas. The FAA controls the airspace but the city can regulate where drones may take off and land from. Currently, remote-control motorized vehicles are not allowed in Loveland natural areas. Many cities and counties along the Front Range prohibit the private use of drones in open spaces. **Ross Livingston made a motion recommending that a drone policy be developed to include a permit system that is consistent with the values, needs and goals of**

the open lands program and takes into account the sensitivity of wildlife and resources. Bill Zawacki seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

2. 2019 YTD Financial and Proposed 2020 Open Lands and Trails CORE Budgets. Open Lands and Trails budgets are separate and each has two funding sources. The 2018 actual and 2019 revised budgets were provided, along with the 2019 YTD and proposed 2020 budget, for each of the four funding sources. A small increase in the open lands personnel budget was requested to align with increased maintenance and operations for additional sites, and capital expenditures match the projects identified in the capital plan. Open Lands revenues are expected to decrease slightly in 2019 based on the changes implemented in 2019 due to the county sales tax initiative. In Trails, final payments for Long View and Front Range trails have been made, and a sales tax initiative is being considered to provide funding for underpasses to support public safety and transportation infrastructure.

2. City Manager Steve Adams, Boards & Commissions Survey Results. The City Manager is visiting with all boards and commissions to follow up on the voluntary survey that was sent to all members. Four responses were received from OLAC. These commission members were generally satisfied with the commission, their role, and staff assistance. Due to the low response rate, the City Manager's Office will resend the survey to those members who have not responded and Steve Adams will revisit the commission at a future meeting.

3. Land Conservation, Planning, Projects & Programs Work Plan. An update was provided on 2019 current and planned projects, including public access improvements, restoration projects, education and public programming, grant funding, property management/leases, acquisitions, planning, and partnerships with other departments, agencies and organizations.

Reports/Correspondence:

4. Property Acquisition Updates. Brian reported that a preliminary request from the owners of the Walden West Conservation Easement property has been received. The property currently consists of two lots, which the owners would like to split into 3 lots to better separate ownership of individual parcels and a common area. The owners donated a perpetual conservation easement valued at \$80K on the 31-acre property. No public access is granted by the easement. The terms of the easement would remain the same under the amendment. A formal request will be brought to the commission for review and approval at a future meeting.

5. Open Lands Project Report. Staff provided the following project updates.

Properties/Facilities/Projects/Maintenance/Operations

- Heavy construction continues along the Big Thompson River near Namaqua Avenue. ECI has completed significant in-channel improvements from Rossum to Wilson as a result of grant funding through the Big Thompson Watershed Coalition. The county's Namaqua bridge replacement project includes a new underpass for a future trail connection.
- River work also continues in Reach 28 along the Wild Natural Area. The river has been re-channeled back closer to the original alignment and will provide fishing opportunities for the public from Wild Natural Area in the near future.
- A new vault restroom has been ordered for Sunset Vista Natural Area and the trailhead for the regional Long View Trail. The restroom will be delivered and installed later this summer.

Partnerships, Planning and Grants

- Science classes from Front Range Community College are getting in-field environmental experience by removing invasive tree species from Loveland's open lands properties every Friday during the spring semester. Thanks to their efforts, hundreds of trees have been removed and treated at Willow Bend Natural Area.

- Utilizing GOCO grant funding, more than 200 invasive trees have been removed from the Medina's Crossing Natural Area in conjunction with the other restoration projects.

Programs/Environmental Education/Volunteers

- The barn owl camera is live on the City's Web page to allow citizens to watch live the activity of barn owls. Five eggs were laid by this pair and the first egg hatched on May 3. The kestrel nest box web cam is also live, and eggs should be laid soon.
- More than 60 volunteers helped on April 20 building a trail, cleaning up trash & debris, and removing invasive species at Willow Bend Natural Area. It was the first public event on this not yet opened site, and volunteers were very excited to get a sneak preview of this scenic property along the Big Thompson River corridor.
- In association with the Colorado Native Plant Society, volunteers planted shrubs at River's Edge on April 20 funded by a grant from Larimer County Department of Natural Resources. This project will continue in May with watering by community volunteers and planting of native grasses and plants.
- Staff participated in the annual Colorado Parks and Recreation Association Trade Show to share best practices and talk with vendors.
- The annual Fishing Loveland Open Lands event was held at River's Edge on April 27, with more than 50 participants learning about good fishing stewardship, invertebrate identification to see what fish are eating, fishing skills, and where to fish in Loveland.
- We have had a very robust spring for our environmental education program for school groups coming to River's Edge and Seven Lakes Park. Hundreds of volunteer hours have been donated by trained and certified education guides.

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

- The Prairie Ridge trail project will be bid for construction in May. This natural area property in northwest Loveland will provide citizens with a new soft-surface trail system and the north-south trail alignment will connect to Fort Collins' Coyote Ridge Trail.
- Staff continue to work on closing the missing trail gap, known as the Copper Ridge Connector, at 57th Street and the BNSF Railroad. Permitting with the BNSF Railroad is underway and plans will be submitted to BNSF and PUC. The Copper Ridge Development has started rough grading and installed a ditch crossing. This last stretch of missing trail will be constructed by the developer with their subdivision.
- Trail crews continue to implement ADA site improvements with regards to trip hazards on the trail, surfacing around benches and trash cans, and signage.

Commission Member Discussion Topics:

1. Jim Roode is a member of the Connector committee for Connect Loveland, the update of three of the city's transportation plans. Public outreach for the new plan is underway.
2. Jim Roode also noted that the Loveland Fishing Club supports a change in management of the Big Thompson River fishery, with regulations for catch-and-release fishing using flies and lures only, and no fish stocking from Estes Park to I-25. The goal is to keep wild fish in the river, strengthen the fishery, and attract anglers to the area.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 pm.

/s/ Gale Bernhardt, Chair