

LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES

Tuesday, February 12, 2013, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.,

Larimer County Courthouse Office Building, Boyd Lake Room, 200 W. Oak St., Ft. Collins, CO

The mission of the Larimer County Parks and Open Lands Department is to establish, protect, and manage significant regional parks and open lands, providing quality outdoor recreational opportunities and stewardship of natural resource values. We are committed to fostering a sense of community and appreciation for the natural and agricultural heritage of Larimer County for present and future generations.

PRESENT:

Parks Advisory Board members:

Steve Ambrose
Mark DeGregorio
Russ Fruits
Rob Harris
David Hattis
Ron Kainer
Linda Knowlton
Forrest Orswell
John Tipton

Absent:

Frank Cada
Frank Gillespie

Staff:

Shannon Barnes
Gary Buffington
Mark Caughlan
Chris Fleming
Steve Johnson, Commissioner
Rob Novak
Dan Rieves
Deb Wykoff
Heather Young

Public: None

The February 12, 2013, meeting of the Parks Advisory Board was called to order at 5:31 p.m. Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

BOARD MEMBER REPORTS – None

LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

PUBLIC COMMENT: Items not on the agenda - None

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- Natural Resource Events for this month: See website <http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources>.
- We need to appoint a Parks Advisory Board member to serve on the Artist of the Year selection committee for 2013. David Hattis has agreed to serve on the committee.

PRESENTATIONS:

- *Volunteer and Education Program 2012 Annual Report* – Rob Novak, Community Relations Specialist; and Heather Young, Education Assistant: See project report attached.

Rob reports the Volunteer Specialist position is currently vacant, and will be filled by mid-March.

Heather explained that we are beginning work to develop a Jr. Ranger program. Board members John Tipton and Linda Knowlton are Volunteer Ranger Assistants. The Loveland Fishing Club spearheaded a Fishing is Fun grant project at Flatiron Reservoir. They did most of the work installing five sets of stairs to provide safer access to the water.

Rob also reported on the Plug Into Nature Study, which has won 3 awards, including the GOCO Starburst Award. They gave 15 presentations about the project. An action plan has been developed for Phase I implementation with local nature program providers. Phase II implementation should begin next week. They will focus on awareness and school partnerships. A single source website for event information debuts next week on 2/20 www.getoutdoorscolorado.com. GOCO will be implementing two more follow-up studies in other communities; they have also funded a schoolyard initiative to enable teachers to provide natural resource education onsite at their schools.

Facebook and Twitter are two new efforts by the department to expand into social media marketing. Rob encouraged Board members to “like” us on Facebook and Twitter.

Board & Staff Comments:

Mark DeGregorio: Asked for examples of special request programs.

Heather Young: School groups, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Health Fair etc.

Russell Fruits: His family really enjoyed the Tiny Trekkers program last year.

Gary Buffington: Are we at capacity with existing staff?

Rob Novak: We are approaching capacity. Participants are going up. With focused targeting on larger groups for programs, we hope to expand capacity through efficiency. With one seasonal position, and one fulltime position, we are doing well.

Linda Knowlton: Volunteer Ranger Assistants also work with City of Fort Collins. Do our numbers in this report include the hours spent on Fort Collins properties?

LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

Rob Novak: No. We can generate reports by program. The total miles hiked (2133) was for the combined program.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Pinewood Campground Improvements – Chris Fleming, Blue Mountain District Manager

See attached project report.

Chris reviewed the key components of the renovation project, including an outdoor classroom with seating for 50, a natural playscape, and completing the trail around the reservoir. We would like to have campground programs at Pinewood. A GOCO grant application will be submitted at the end of February, and other grant opportunities will be pursued. Construction is slated to begin in September, 2013. Bureau of Reclamation approval is pending.

Board & Staff Comments:

Linda Knowlton: Asked about the use of Motorboat Access grant funding. What would it be used for? Are motorboats allowed on Pinewood?

Chris Fleming: Yes. No-wake boating is allowed. This grant funding might be used to improve handicapped fishing access.

Rob Harris: Will the reservoir be dredged to provide fill to expand the campground?

Chris Fleming: Yes. We cannot increase or decrease the net capacity of the reservoir.

David Hattis: Were the residents supportive of the project?

Chris Fleming: Yes they were. We received positive feedback from the residents. They were excited about the trail, and agreed updates were needed to the facilities.

Dan Rieves: He and Chris met in advance with several residents to address anticipated concerns. We will help the homeowners' association realign their water line. This will be a good partnership effort.

Russell Fruits: Do they draw from the lake?

Dan Rieves: Yes.

David Hattis: Is the number of campsites being expanded, and where?

Chris Fleming: We will be eliminating camping at Blue Mountain, and increase the total number at Windy Pines and the Launch Area. The total number of campsites will not increase. This was another piece of the public outreach – a direct link on the webpage which highlights the main improvements, and allows the public to comment. About five comments have been received, which Chris has responded to individually.

David Hattis: How much funding is the BOR providing?

Chris Fleming: So far \$175,000, with about \$100,000 more expected, to be matched with Lottery and GOCO and other grants.

LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

Gary Buffington: Most of the funding will come from Lottery.

ACTION ITEMS – None

STANDING AGENDA ITEMS:

Park District updates and Parks Master Plan Implementation Progress report – Dan Rieves, Visitor Services Manager, Chris Fleming, Blue Mountain District Manager, and Mark Caughlan, Horsetooth District Manager

- Automated pay stations: All remaining pay stations were installed in October. The first machine at HTMOS has now passed the one year anniversary. We have done 13,000 transactions so far and had very few problems. Over \$27,000 have been collected at the newly installed machines which did not have to be counted by hand. The machines at the main entrances are drive-up accessible. The program has done really well.
- Annual permits redesign: Now the permits are good for a year from date of purchase. Sales YTD, Dec – Feb, are down about 15%, probably due to people waiting to purchase them at a later date. There is a \$10 increase in prices which is bridging that gap. The public feedback has been extremely positive. The public loves the changes we have made. Our biggest issues with the permits are the questions about the walk-in/bike-in pass. There is a little bit of a loop-hole with the slip customers, but with some education the customers have been very compliant.
- A 31 ft. Airstream was delivered last Friday. We bought a 2006 Classic 75th Anniversary model. The first Airstream deal fell through. We took a break and re-analyzed what we wanted. We plan to do some upgrades to the new Airstream like wood floors. We have a meeting with a designer on Thursday. This summer it will be reservable at Horsetooth in the full-service campground. The Airstream sleeps 4. It has a stand-up shower and stainless steel appliances. The interior is all new, so replacement parts are readily available when needed.

Board & Staff Comments:

Linda Knowlton: Did we lose any money?

Dan Rieves: No.

Gary Buffington: We will have a grand opening for the PAB.

Ron Kainer: Will it cost the same as the cabins?

Dan Rieves: No, it will cost a little more, around \$99 per night.

- Water Levels: The season should start off pretty well. Northern Water expects to set a 60% quota in April. We've been working on improving communications with our partners and concessions. We've been meeting with the Bureau of Reclamation to discuss how water was moved in 2012.
- Campground reservations & Field Manager: The 3-day window for reservations has been reduced to a 1-day window. This should help drive customers to make reservations ahead of time. We will have camper registration sites. Camper registrations will be handled at the Administrative Office for Blue Mountain and by the camphosts at Horsetooth.

LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

Blue Mountain:

- The Pinewood renovation project is taking up a lot of time.
- Seasonal hiring process is underway. We hire up to 50 seasonal employees a year.
- The ranger staff attends a lot of trainings this time of year, Wilderness First Responder Recertification class, etc.
- Drive-through of all park areas by staff to assess conditions has been completed.
- Annual review with Estes Valley Parks & Recreation District on the Estes campgrounds is scheduled.
- Most of the Special Events are coming in for the summer and being processed.
- Ranger staff and deputies did a ride-along program which was very productive. It promotes team building and is a great experience.

Horsetooth:

- Warm weather has kept visitation high.
- There was a suicide attempt at Sunrise Swim Beach area today. Sr. Ranger Jim Hawkins handled the incident very successfully, and kept the victim safe. Mark stressed the importance of trainings for ranger staff.
- Fishing at Inlet Bay has been pretty good; climbing on the east side of the reservoir has been busy.
- The Fishing Expo is coming up – poster was circulated for PAB members to see.
- The Aquatic Nuisance Species inspection program is in hibernation, it will start back up in March.
- Rainbow smelt is coming back at Horsetooth and doing well.
- Visitors were able to boat through December.
- The Fort Collins Rowing Club 70x30 ft. floating boathouse is being built by Inlet Bay Marina which the club will maintain and lease. It will become their permanent home. They used the old steel from the old building at the Ranch. This should hopefully increase the capacity for the club.
- The Polar Bear Plunge at Horsetooth was a success.
- Next year is the 60th anniversary of the department. We'll be working on ideas to celebrate this milestone.
- Parking on the east side of Horsetooth is becoming increasingly difficult to manage. We are working on coordinated improvements. The 45-minute free parking areas are a major contributing factor to parking issues. Board members are encouraged to drive up Centennial Drive and look at the parking at Rotary and the other areas to see the issues.

Board & Staff Comments:

Commissioner Steve Johnson asked if any of our rangers attended a training for mass shooters. He attended this training and thinks the training would be beneficial. The training covers signs and patterns of behavior of mass shooters. The county is developing a central reporting system and emergency response system for this type of incident. If we keep track of the incidents at various agencies throughout the County, we may be able to see those patterns.

Steve Ambrose: How will the new marijuana laws affect our enforcement efforts?

Dan Rieves: The biggest current issue is public consumption. That won't change. Smoking in public will still be prohibited. It will change the definition of paraphernalia, searching of vehicles, use of canines, and how

LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

cases will be prosecuted. We will be taking direction from the DA and Sheriff. The question is, what is public consumption? Can they smoke inside a camper or tent? We will be enforcing when it contributes to a larger problem – noise, destructive behavior, etc.

David Hattis: Regarding the parking areas on the East side of Horsetooth, do we do all of the enforcement, or do we get help from the Sheriff as well?

Dan Rieves: If there is a BOR closure and it is signed they will help enforce.

David Hattis: What about the equestrian facilities at Hermit Park? What sort of response have we received, how many reservations have been made?

Chris Fleming: They are just now open for reservations. There has been a lot of interest from the equestrian community. We expect it to be very popular.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

- Dan Rieves is assuming responsibility as the Board liaison; and Shannon Barnes will be taking over admin support for the Board from Deb Wykoff.
- Windy Gap Firing Project (Chimney Hollow) is moving forward. Northern Water hopes to begin construction in 2018. It will be the largest flat-water body in the State. It will be a paddling facility with trails and boat ramp. We may do some connecting trails between the south end of Carter Lake and Chimney Hollow. That could start in the next couple of years.
- Glade Reservoir project is still under consideration as well, but on a longer timeline.

Board & Staff Comments:

Russell Fruits: Is fracking having an impact on our properties?

Gary Buffington: We have been working on Energy by Design. It is a voluntary plan for working with energy companies to limit development of mineral rights to specific locations where the environmental impact will be minimized.

Linda Knowlton: The energy companies are not involved so far. Just the government agencies like ours.

Mark DeGregorio: What is the potential at Red Mountain and Soapstone?

Gary: Test wells didn't produce much.

David Hattis: What is the update on Robert's Ranch?

Gary: In July of last year, Catherine Roberts contacted us about gifting the Robert's Ranch to Larimer County. There are already two conservation easements on the property, held by The Nature Conservancy. We signed a letter of intent with her. We began the evaluation and public input process with the Open Lands Advisory Board, per our normal process. Catherine came under tremendous pressure from family members and neighbors to reconsider her gift. She decided to withdraw her offer. The Commissioners decided to act on the OLAB recommendation so we are prepared if/when the offer is renewed. We have prepared a budget and informational handout for Catherine. We have asked to have one more final meeting to give her the budget and

LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

management plan. We have completed the process and the commissioners approved the acquisition if she decides to gift it to us again someday. Plans include a working ranch, agriculture demonstrations, cattle leases, educational programs, living history, and other exciting opportunities.

David Hattis: Did the Commissioners vote to accept the property?

Steve Johnson: Yes.

Mark DeGregorio: Would we be able to maintain it as a working cattle ranch?

Steve Johnson: Yes, there are a lot of different options to achieve that.

Gary Buffington: We are currently managing quite effectively many acres of open space with grazing and diverse natural resources.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Barnes

APPROVED:

Russell Fruits, Chair

Next regular meeting: March 12, 2013, Larimer County Courthouse Office Building, Boyd Lake Room, 200 W. Oak Street, Ft. Collins, CO

Public can view agenda and minutes at www.larimer.org/parks
