

# LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

## MINUTES

Tuesday, November 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

John Gaffney

Frank Gillespie

Rob Harris

David Hattis

Ron Kainer

Chris Klaas

Linda Knowlton

Stephanie Sigler

John Tipton

#### ***Absent:***

Forrest Orswell

#### ***Staff:***

Shannon Barnes

Gary Buffington

Mark Caughlan

Chris Fleming

Steve Johnson, Commissioner

Dan Rieves

#### ***Public: None***

The November 12, 2013, meeting of the Parks Advisory Board was called to order at 5:29 p.m. Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

#### **BOARD MEMBER REPORTS – None**

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT - None**

## LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

### GENERAL INFORMATION:

- The public meeting on trailhead carrying capacity issues and proposed changes at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space area was held on October 28, 2013. Most of the attendees were nearby residents. The information and comments have been processed. We will be making a decision in the next couple of days.
- The Noco Nature Fest (formerly the Northern Colorado Birding Fair) was canceled due to issues related to the flood, however staff redirected the event's silent auction to a fundraiser at Bath Nursery and helped raise over \$6200 to donate to the Community Fund for Northern Colorado for flood relief efforts.
- There will be no December PAB meeting.
- The All Parks Boards Christmas party will be on December 12, 2013. Invitations will be coming soon.
- Natural Resource Events for this month: See website <http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources>.
- To sign up for Parks Advisory Board minutes go to <http://larimer.org/subscriptions.cfm> put in your email and click 'subscribe', then check "Parks Advisory Board" box

### PRESENTATIONS:

#### *Larimer County Life After the Flood Video* – Steve Johnson, Commissioner

The Parks Advisory Board viewed the "Life After the Flood Video". The video was put together by the County and showed some of the challenges the County faces after the flood in September, along with ongoing recovery efforts. The video includes interviews with county employees including the Commissioners.

#### Board & Staff Comments:

Gary Buffington: Our department's damages are estimated at 2.2 million dollars. Most of the damage is on our Open Spaces. Hermit Park was our biggest hit. The roads were severely damaged. We are hoping to re-open Hermit Park by May or June. We are on the list with FEMA and our engineering department, we will see what happens.

David Hattis: Are you pretty optimistic you will get the funds to repair the damage?

Gary Buffington: Yes, we have dollars available to us. Time is more of the issue.

Mark DeGregorio: What discussions are the Commissioners having about rebuilding smarter?

Steve Johnson: FEMA will reimburse their share of expenses to restore things back where they were. A big question is where the river will end up. I don't think CR 43 will change much. It's uncertain.

David Hattis: Has there been any discussion about how to get information out to the public about the progress of Estes Park so that visitors can make plans?

Steve Johnson: Yes, especially at the State level. There will be a state wide marketing effort.

Russ Fruits: The city is being very proactive. We had a beer festival last weekend in Estes Park. 28 breweries were represented from all over Colorado. We had a big turnout.

## LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

### ***Larimer County Employee Survey Results – Gary Buffington, Natural Resources Director***

Gary presented the results from the employee survey. The survey was redone this year with some new questions. A committee comprised of representatives from different departments went over the results of the survey.

- Natural Resources had a 89% response rate. The average per department was 78%.
- Most employees responded money was not the driving factor for employment.
- Compared to the rest of the departments, Natural Resources scored better than average.
- Results were good, but there is always room for improvement.
- The results from the 2012 survey compared with 2013 were very similar.
- The Senior Management Team will be meeting next month to discuss results and come up with possible solutions.

### Board & Staff Comments:

Linda Knowlton: The number of employees from Fleet, are they part of Natural Resources?

Gary Buffington: No, right now our equipment and vehicles are outside of Fleet. We will be joining the Fleet group next year.

David Hattis: What kind of changes will you make based on the results from the survey?

Gary Buffington: We will be presenting the results to the Leadership team and come up with possible changes at that time.

Dan Rieves: To give you an example from last year's results; there were some comments regarding senior management decisions not being relayed to staff. Employees were finding out after the fact. We made some adjustments, and when the Senior Management Team meets, the Minutes are now available to everyone.

Gary Buffington: In previous years, we have had some comments about staff wanting to have more input with the department's decision making and strategic planning. At our all department staff meetings, we ask what the staff would like to see in the future and we set goals. One of the suggestions from staff was the need for cell phone boosters. We bought 12 of them and they have worked out well. Every year we try to take care of 1 or 2 of the goals set by the staff.

David Hattis: Did the seasonal employees take the survey as well?

Dan Rieves: Yes

### **DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

#### ***Short-term and Long-term Concessionaires Snap Shot – Dan Rieves, Visitor Services Manager***

Dan gave an overview of our short-term and long-term concessionaires: Definitions, Application process, Procedures and Requirements.

## LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

- The long-term concessionaires include: Carter Lake Marina, Inlet Bay Marina, Sail and Saddle Club and the Carter Lake Sail Club.
- In 2007, we collected \$1,604 from the Sail and Saddle Club. Currently we collect approximately \$9,000 per year.
- Inlet Bay Marina pays \$12,000 per quarter. This includes revenue for: Slips, moorings and boat rentals. We do not collect anything from the storage lots etc.
- Carter Lake Marina pays 4% of their gross. The rent for the new buildings is included in that number. The marina pays \$2500 a quarter for rent of the county buildings.
- Carter Sail Club pays \$15,000 per year.
- Our partnership with the Marinas and the Sail Clubs are going well.
- We administered a survey for both of the Marinas. The results from the surveys are coming soon, and were what we expected.
- Long-term concessions can sub-contract with the County's approval.
- Short-term concessionaires are generally year-to-year: Stand-up paddle board rentals, scuba companies etc.
- Short-term concessionaires can pay a flat fee or a percentage of their yearly gross, which typically ranges from 3% to 8%.
- We have 9 short-term concessionaires in 2013 including: Alpine Scuba, Beer and Bike Tours, LLC, Fishful Thinkers, Mile High Wake Boarding, etc.
- The County receives very little money from short-term concessionaires.
- Last year we made \$319 from short-term concessions.

### Board & Staff Comments:

Gary Buffington: If you did the math, the Inlet Bay Marina should be pushing toward a 1 million dollar gross. They were between \$800,000 - \$900,000 last year. The Carter Lake Marina should be around \$400,000. The Inlet Bay Marina brings in about twice as much revenue as the Carter Lake Marina.

Mark Caughlan: The Inlet Bay Marina is twice the size and the visitation is about twice as much compared to the Carter Lake Marina.

Mark DeGregorio: For the benefit of the new board members, a few years ago there was a lot of concern about the renewal of the contract with the current operator of the Carter Lake Marina. The contract was subsequently renewed. Are there any lingering concerns, or has it been rectified to your satisfaction?

Gary Buffington: The real authority is in the contract wordage. We tightened up the contract and it is well written compared to the previous contract.

Dan Rieves: The new contract is much more detail oriented. There are a lot more requirements and expectations. Communication between the Marinas and the County has improved dramatically. Some of the underlying concerns still exist. The new facilities combined with the new contract have really improved things.

Frank Gillespie: How many years ago was the renewal of the current contract?

Dan Rieves: We are in year 4 of the first 5 years.

David Hattis: Is the 4% to 8% gross pretty standard of the industry?

## LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

Dan Rieves: There isn't a standard. Some marinas are as high as 12%. Overall it is probably pretty low. I think it is a fair number.

Gary Buffington: State Parks is our biggest comparison. It depends on the location. At Cherry Creek and Chatfield State Parks you would be looking at about 10%. Navajo State Park would probably be 2%. It really depends on the economy and location.

John Gaffney: Have you ever thought of using the concept of building an average percentage?

Dan Rieves: We have discussed it. I think the opportunity for that type of model is when there is something the marinas would like to do outside of the contract or an amendment : Adding new slips or docks etc.

Gary Buffington: I think it is a good point. The next time we get to a renewal situation, we should have that conversation.

John Gaffney: It is a very low percentage compared to real estate. Your expense of lease verses your profit.

Dan Rieves: The Carter Lake Marina has a flat rate of \$10,000 per year. The Inlet Bay Marina is different because they own all of the facilities: The building, shop, docks etc.

Linda Knowlton: Have you made any attempts to capture the staff time it takes to process these applications? The City of Fort Collins has a processing fee.

Dan Rieves: A concessionaire renewal takes about an hour. A new concessionaire takes about 7 hours.

Steve Ambrose: I think it is reasonable to charge an application fee. It would deter the concessionaires who aren't that serious.

Dan Rieves: We have done that with one of our short-term concessionaires and it worked out well.

Rob Harris: In reality, the biggest expense for concessionaires is insurance. A \$500 application fee would pale in comparison of the cost of insurance.

Russ Fruits: Is there a push by staff to see if there is a need for some of these types of concessionaires? Are they fulfilling some type of outdoor recreation need?

Dan Rieves: If we see a need for a certain type of concessionaire, I would rather send it out for RFP and have businesses bring proposals to us and bid competitively. It would be a major change to what we are doing now.

John Gaffney: Has a long-term concessionaire ever complained about a short-term concessionaire; what they can provide or not provide etc?

Dan Rieves: No, we haven't had any complaints, but they are a little territorial.

Russ Fruits: What kind of direction are you looking for from the board?

## LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

Dan Rieves: Right now it is about awareness. We are looking at possibly making some changes to the process as early as this coming recreation season.

Chris Klass: With the amount of staff time the process takes, you should have an application fee that is sufficient enough to cover the staff time, but also be a deterrent to those concessionaires who are just floating an idea.

Dan Rieves: In 2012 we had a lot of discussion about allowing horseback rides on our Open Spaces. We had a horseback concessionaire that did a little bit of business and didn't come back the next year. It really sparked the idea of putting a RFP out. If we are going to open up to do a horse concessionaire, maybe we should open it up to bid. The concessionaire who is awarded the contract would be the equestrian outfitter for Larimer County Department of Natural Resources.

Russ Fruits: I see by all the nodding heads, no one on the board would be opposed to seeing a change in the short-term concessionaire process. Either an application fee, increase of fee or some change to the current process.

Chris Klass: Currently is there an application fee?

Dan Rieves: No

### **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***

Blue Mountain District:

- Carter Lake Marina is closed for the season.
- Some of our campgrounds are closed to help reduce staff and maintenance cost.
- Flood work is keeping us busy particularly at Hermit Park.
- Several of our Big Thompson properties are a complete loss: Glade Park, Forks and Narrows.
- We are planning to start the Pinewood project in the Spring.
- GOCO awarded us about half of what we requested for the Pinewood project but it has not been finalized.
- Revenue numbers are looking pretty good despite the closure of the Estes Campgrounds.
- East Portal and Mary's Lake closed a month earlier than normal due to the flood. Hermit Park closed 3 months early.
- 2 post certified seasonal rangers have completed their field training program (FTO).
- Fishing at Flatiron and Pinewood has been amazing.

## LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

### Horsetooth District:

- Inlet Bay is closed for the season.
- Half of the South Bay campground is closed.
- Shower Houses are closed.
- 7 to 9 displaced flood victims are staying in our full hook-up sites until the end of February.
- Airstream has been winterized and is closed for the season.
- Computers are ordered for some of our rangers vehicles.
- ANS hours are reduced to Wed – Sun 8am to 12pm.
- Visitation is good on warm days.
- HTMOS and Devil’s Backbone are very busy.
- Steve Peck our senior maintenance worker is retiring after 25 years of service. We will be conducting interviews for a Maintenance Tech III position at the end of the week.

### Board & Staff Comments:

David Hattis: Will there be any overlap/training with the new maintenance tech employee and Steve Peck?

Dan Rieves: Yes, about a month.

Dan Rieves: I want to give kudos to Chris, Mark and Travis’s staff on the handling of the flood work. It has put a strain on staff and they have done a great job.

### **DIRECTOR’S REPORT:**

After the September flood, there are about 17 miles of Big Thompson property that need restoration. In the 1976 flood, 50% or more of the damaged private property was bought out. I hear FEMA will not be doing that this time. We will have 17 miles of Big Thompson property that includes a lot of public property with some pockets of private property that won’t be rebuilding. It’s going to be a mess in terms of recreation, wildlife values, riparian values. There might be some opportunity in deciding what these public properties should be. The focus right now is on the bridges and roads to Estes Park and getting them built. Trailheads and riparian restoration will be important 2 years from now. Hopefully there will be some foresight into how we rebuild the Big Thompson canyon.

### Board & Staff Comments:

David Hattis: Do you know how long it will take to restore the fish habitat in the Big Thompson river?

Gary Buffington: Surprisingly, the fisheries aren’t as bad as people think. Parks and Wildlife have done some surveys and there are a good number of fish that have survived the flood. I think it will come back in the next 2 to 3 years.

## LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

The meeting was adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Barnes

APPROVED:

Russell Fruits, Chair

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*Next regular meeting: January 14, 2014, 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](http://www.larimer.org/parks)

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