

# LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

## MINUTES

Tuesday, August 12, 2014, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.,

Natural Resources Administrative Offices, 1800 S. County Road 31, Loveland, 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  
Rob Harris  
Ron Kainer  
Chris Klaas  
Forrest Orswell  
Deborah Shulman  
Stephanie Sigler  
John Tipton

#### *Absent:*

Steve Johnson, Commissioner  
Frank Gillespie  
David Hattis

#### *Staff:*

Gary Buffington  
Mark Caughlan  
Chris Fleming  
Dan Rieves  
Deb Wykoff

The meeting was called to order at 5:32 pm. The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Dan welcomed Deborah Shulman to her first meeting as the newest board member. He reported that after the last meeting, he received over 60 emails commenting on the future of the former sports cycle track north of Horsetooth. That area is one that remains to be addressed from the current Parks Master Plan. Assisted by Deborah, they were able to address the concerns of neighbors.

The presentation at the last meeting by the citizen who was interested in putting the area to use is what set off the issue. Deborah met at the site yesterday with a group of the neighbors and encouraged them to think about what is acceptable to them for development of the site, and to advocate positively for their position – not just shoot down every idea that comes up. She realizes from her interactions with them that the residents in that valley tend to react rather than be proactive. They expect to remain informed at all times of anything affecting the Bellvue area. They are working on development of an historic district for the whole valley, which is one reason for their heightened concern about any proposals which may affect the area. Dan explained that when we are proposing something specific for the area, we always do make a comprehensive effort to contact and communicate with all residents of the area.

Dan also noted that board members are not expected to develop constituencies in the community, but we hope this may happen naturally based on the widely varying spheres of interest and influence of all the board members. He took responsibility for the miscommunication – he failed to realize that was a possible consequence of the discussion at the last meeting. He thanked Deborah for her role in creating a bridge to the neighborhood.

## LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

### GENERAL INFORMATION:

- The Board of County Commissioners approved two ballot measures for the November 4<sup>th</sup> election. One resolution extended and amended the Help Preserve Open Spaces sales tax Initiative and the other resolution referred an issue to the November's ballot for a county wide sales and use tax to finance a new Animal Care and Control Facility.
- The open space sales tax extension would be for 25 years, with 50 percent dedicated to development and long term management; 35% dedicated to acquisition of new properties; and 15% to be used flexibly. There is no organized opposition at this time. The communities will receive 50% of the tax proceeds, reduced from 58%, because the County needs more of the tax. Almost every project we've done has been in partnership with the cities, and could not have been accomplished by the cities alone. So the cities all benefit from the funds retained by Larimer County and invested in the interest of all partners.
- There is an outside citizen campaign group promoting the tax; staff must not be involved during working hours or while representing the County.
- The City of Loveland just bought a nice property in NW Loveland for \$1.5 million; we contributed \$200,000 toward that purchase.
- GOCO is doing a listening tour of the state. Tomorrow night from 6-8pm, they will host a meeting at the Courthouse in Ft. Collins. Board members are encouraged to attend.
- Planning for annual Departmental attendance at the New West Fest & Corn Roast festival is underway. The festivals will be held the weekends of August 16 and 22, respectively.
- The Roberts Ranch tire removal partnership project will wrap up at the end of July. So far about 16,500 tires have been removed.
- A public meeting regarding the Devil's Backbone OS management plan was held July 30 at the Natural Resources Administrative offices.
- Our first Bioblitz was held at Chimney Hollow Open Space on July 12. A mix of scientists, volunteers and members of the public attended. Over 300 species of plants, animals, fungi and diatoms were identified. Nice work team!
- 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

### ACTION ITEMS:

#### *Election of Officers*

- Nominations were opened to the floor. Russell Fruits was nominated for chair by Forrest Orswell. Nominations closed on the motion of Rob Harris, seconded by Forrest Orswell. Rob Harris was nominated for Vice-Chair by Ron Kainer. Nominations were closed. Both motions were approved by acclamation. Dan thanked both for their continuing service to the Board.

### PRESENTATIONS:

#### *Master Plan Projects Update – Dan Rieves, Visitor Services Manager*

- The current Parks Master Plan (PMP) was adopted in 2007. We have two construction seasons left before a new plan will be required in 2017. Dan encouraged the Board to read the plan – there is a lot of good information about history and trends, as well as about the board, which Dan read: "A new board

## LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

will be working diligently to implement the plan within the next 10 years – a goal which we are confident of achieving!” The plan was ambitious, but also targeted, with the knowledge of what we knew would be possible.

- Dan displayed the Implementation Plan from the PMP, showing the status of all the projects identified in the plan. Projects were identified as Priority 1 or 2, or as a Special Project. Priority 1 wasn't necessarily our greatest need, but was one which could return revenue.
- Most of the Priority 1 projects at Horsetooth have been completed. Some projects which were a lower priority got done because circumstances came together to do it – like the rowing facility at the Inlet Bay Marina. Other projects dropped in priority (like the proposed archery range) because challenges remain.
- The Carter Lake Marina was a huge project, implemented at a cost almost matching the cost of all the Horsetooth projects. So few other projects were completed in the Blue Mountain District, other than a new camper services building at Eagle Campground. The proposal to move the county road to develop the quarry area is no longer viable as described. The South Shore campground is scheduled for renovation in 2016.
- The Pinewood Campground renovation is currently underway, to be completed by next season. The new trail along the east shoreline was developed as a VOC project just last weekend.

### Staff and Board comments:

Rob Harris: Is there some reason cabins are not slated for more areas? Is it mostly a locational issue? Carter Knolls is a great location for cabins – much better than tent camping, due to the wind.

Dan: At Eagle, the leach field for the shower house is now located in the general area where the cabins were slated to go. He calls Carter Knolls the “3 Little Pigs” campground – whatever we put in there will blow away, until finally we build a brick house!

Dan noted that the Bureau of Reclamation is now asking for our plans for 2017 – they budget that far out; so we must also be prepared that far out.

Gary: Over the past 8 years, we have put around \$8 million on the ground. We must have the money to back up our plans, like we did in the current plan. About half of that was County money – the rest was leveraged through partnerships, grants, etc. – a testament to effective financing!

Russ: Just the cost of blasting the rock out for the Carter Lake Marina would have funded four projects at Horsetooth.

For the 2017 plan, Dan envisions:

- New facilities: Revenue generators
- New Experiences: Addressing recreation trends (e.g., SUP's are now everywhere!)
- New Infrastructures: Like paving parking lots, re-leveling campsites, etc. – not sexy but necessary to maintain the quality of our services, even though it may not generate a dime of revenue.

In preparation for the new Parks Master Plan (which is specifically for the 4 Bureau of Reclamation reservoirs) these are the types of projects we need to begin generating. At Horsetooth, we need a “front door” facility. Throughout the department, we need more office space and shop space.

## LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

### Staff and board comments:

Russ: What do we see from visitor surveys and public comment? What do people want?

Dan: A lot of what people say they want, we've done already, like the shower facilities, full hook-ups, etc.

John Tipton: Where does Chimney Hollow fit into the picture?

Dan: We purchased it from Hewlett Packard, like Hermit Park. If Chimney Hollow Reservoir is built, it will be owned by Northern Water shareholders. The distribution system is operated and owned by the Bureau of Reclamation. We own the upland areas. Our preliminary plans include wakeless boating, trails, and day use. It will be an open space area, managed for public recreation. Northern Water is currently projecting a 2019 completion date – but that has changed often. Had it been built two years ago, it could have been filled within months this year instead of the two years usually required.

### **DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

#### ***Pinewood Project Update – Chris Fleming, Blue Mountain District Manager***

- Chris explained that the bid has been awarded, and work will begin in the fall.
- The project started with a VOC project at Pinewood to put in the new east side trail last weekend.
- The restrooms have been put out to bid.
- We lost six campsites along the shoreline due to Corp of Engineers requirements; but those have been replaced with additional walk-in sites at Windy Pines.

### Board and staff comments:

Gary: Construction is going crazy right now – the bid for Pinewood came in \$200,000 higher than expected. But we're going to move ahead, rather than waiting on the market; it's past time to upgrade the Pinewood campground.

#### **Review of Fee Structure – Dan Rieves, Visitor Services Manager**

- No fee increases are proposed for 2015.
- Myth-busting: Dan displayed a table showing fees over the past 14 years. Day permits have not increased in price since 2004 – 10 years! On open space areas, the price has never changed.
- In 2013, we revamped the entire annual permit system. But prior to that, Annual Resident permits had not increased since 2004; boat permits since 2006. Disabled permits have never changed in price.
- Camping permits have not increased since 2010 for boat-in, electrical and full hook-up sites. Non-electrical sites and cabins have not changed in price since 2008.
- The fee structure at State Parks varies by location and facility. Boating fees are lower at State Parks because they receive part of the boat registration fees collected every year by size of boat.
- By comparison, it costs \$300 to put a boat on Boulder Reservoir. We have avoided the model of a tiered or elitist price structure.
- The Parks Master Plan talks about various funding models.

### Board and staff comments:

Mark DeGregorio: What percent are county/non-county residents for annual vehicle/boating combo permits?

Dan: We sell very few non-resident combo permits.

## LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

Gary: Most of those are at the marinas.

Russ: Has there been any discussion of a discount for shoulder season camping?

Dan: The price discount is not enough to change behavior – other factors control those trends. Like winterizing your camper, kids in school, etc. Discounting prices does not free up people’s calendars. Waterfront sites are definitely preferred; but we have resisted the “premium” site differential – it’s not our philosophy. Dan described typical industry practices with parking management – higher price for limited supply. People will pay a premium to jump the line and get their boat in the water. But we don’t capitalize on that.

Gary: Fees are a decision made by the Commissioners. It is a challenge to convince them to charge their constituents more money! We must have a compelling justification.

### **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***

- Shannon Barnes has left the department. With her departure, Dan has lost his “research and development department.” Everyone has stepped up to cover during the interim for campground reservations, etc. We are in the process of assessing options. We have had no fire or flood this year, but losing Shannon has been the major disaster of the season, for all of us.
- Dan welcomed Mark back! His crew did a great job of covering while he and Mike Rossi, Maintenance Supervisor, were both out recovering from surgery.
- The weather is the big story: It’s beautiful! Water is high; flowers are still blooming; there’s nowhere to park; there’s no swim beaches! We’ve only had one week with temps over 100. This is the most beautiful summer Dan can remember!
- Estes Valley Recreation and Park District lost a staff member to a car accident last week. Effective at the end of the season, our management contract for those campgrounds will terminate.

#### **Horsetooth:**

- The reservoir is 10 inches down from full. It has never, ever, in 61 years, been this full! We can fit 360 boats on Horsetooth, but we can only park 320 boat trailers, max. The wave action from boats is causing some problems with facilities like the swim beach and the riprap along the pavilion and day use areas.
- Our weekday use has been 60-70%. We’ve had no open campsites for the past month. We don’t have enough staff to take care of that level of use.
- Special events: Last weekend we had 76 do a 10k swim, and a larger group did shorter swims.
- Triathlon sports have increased significantly over the past 3 years.
- The Fort Collins Rowing Club has a floating boat house at the IBM.
- The entrance to South Bay is being expanded in the autumn; the S. Bay entrance will be closed; we will use the entrance by the shower facility.

#### **Blue Mountain:**

- The tipis at Flatiron are set to arrive on Thursday! We’ll do a soft opening for the first 2 weekends before they go on the reservation system on 8/28.
- The rangers participated in a multi-agent active shooter training, with 76 participants. It was a great training exercise – very well coordinated.
- Chris is working on the transition with the EVRPD campground manager and personnel.
- We continue to meet with FEMA and Reclamation on funding related issues.

## LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

- In the Big Thompson Canyon, we will be repairing Sleepy Hollow this fall. The restroom at Forks is still hanging over the river.
- Water rescue training, including a mock rescue with a sunfish, was done in cooperation with the Carter Lake Sail Club.
- We're also enjoying high water levels at Carter; and next year is expected to be the same.
- Hermit Park is fully open again, with the exception of the Homestead Meadows connector trail to the USFS property.
- The pavilion at Hermit Park will be getting a major facelift this fall, ready for next spring.

### DIRECTOR'S REPORT - 10 minutes

- We are celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> birthday of the department! There will be a celebration planned with the Commissioners. We developed a special seal to commemorate the event. We're also developing a commemorative poster.
- The 15% flex in the sales tax extension is available to the four reservoir parks, which were in existence when the tax was originally passed. The park system has demonstrated over the past 10 years that it can survive with a sales tax, but it will be available to us for future needs.
- Russ requested that board members suggest topics for presentations at future meetings. These topics were suggested:
  - Emerald Ash Borer
  - Revenues and budgets for 2015 (Dan prefers to wait until February to talk about the past year – so many things can change. We haven't experienced the volatility of cancellations, etc. this year, but it's too soon to talk about what we've brought in this year.)
- Gary asked about the number of meetings the board has had this year – all agree that six or seven meetings per year is a good balance.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Debra Wykoff

APPROVED:

Russell Fruits, Chair

---

*Next regular meeting: September 9, 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)

---