

LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES

Tuesday, November 10, 2015, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.,

Boyd Lake Room, Larimer County Courthouse Office Building, 200 W. Oak, 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

Nick Clark

Russell Fruits

John Gaffney

Frank Gillespie

Rob Harris

Chris Klaas

John Tipton

Stephanie Vann Dyken

Ron Kainer

Staff:

Gary Buffington

Mark Caughlan

Dan Rieves

Deb Wykoff

ABSENT

Steve Johnson, Commissioner

Mark DeGregorio

Deborah Shulman

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

BOARD MEMBER REPORTS –None

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- 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.
- Larimer County and partners have been recommended for funding through the GOCO Inspire initiative. We partnered with the cities of Ft. Collins, Wellington and Loveland; and with the Larimer County Boys and Girls Club.

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- Twelve applications were submitted for the Small Grants for Community Partnering program requesting over \$20,000. The committee is currently doing site visits. Funding recommendations will be presented at the November Open Lands Advisory Board meeting.
- The [NOCO Bike and Walk Conference](#) was scheduled for November 5th at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley. The Governor and CDOT Director are planning to attend to present their vision for cycling in Colorado. Mark Fenton, a national Active Transportation Consultant and PBS Host will give the keynote speech and conduct a walking audit.
- Staff has been engaged in ongoing outreach for the [Laramie Foothills Bison reintroduction project](#) at Soapstone Natural Area and Red Mountain Open Space. The bison were released onto their new open space home during ceremonies on November 1, with over 500 citizens and dignitaries in attendance. Lots of good press has resulted from the Bison release – everyone is very excited about the program.
- New river gauges were installed along the Poudre River Trail at the County Road 13 bridge (near Windsor) and the McMurry bridge in Fort Collins. The gauges allow Poudre River Trail users to instantly measure flow and highlight the importance of flow for environmental, municipal and agricultural purposes. Larimer County served as the fiscal agent for this project and participates in The Poudre Runs Through It, the organization responsible for coordinating the project.
- A new segment of the Poudre River Trail is complete. Larimer County partnered with the Town of Timnath to build a 0.6-mile segment of trail from the Wal-Mart east of I-25 to Stonefly Court, west of I-25. This section of trail utilizes the underpasses at Harmony Road and County Road 5 and is part of the GOCO River Corridor Initiative. A grand opening will be scheduled for spring/summer 2015.
- Our new Restoration Ecologist, Danielle Cassidy Levine, has joined the department. Danielle brings a wealth of experience from her previous work for Boulder County Parks and Open Space.
- The plans for the river bank stabilization project at Lions Open Space have been finalized and sent to FEMA for review. The new design will slow water through the site to reduce energy and downstream impacts. Features such as rock veins and boulder clusters were recommended by the CWCB and CPW and were incorporated into the design. Construction is expected later this year or early 2016.
- Ongoing work continues to remove Russian olive trees from the Three Bell I CE. The Colorado State Forest Service volunteers felled the trees and LCDNR volunteers dragged and chipped them and Larimer County DNR Weed staff painted the stems with herbicide. Everyone had a great time, dozens of these invasive plants were removed and there were no injuries.
- An application was submitted for the GOCO Youth Corps grant for four weeks of two crews to assist with trail construction at Hermit Park Open Space in 2016. Awards are made in December.
- The regional open space board meeting will be on November 18, in Loveland, at the Chilson Senior Center, Cherry Room.
- Open Space Operations: The free firewood program continues to be popular and has been extended by 2 weekends. There have been vehicle break-ins at Devils Backbone, Eagles Nest, and Rocky Mountain National Park. Rangers have had some success catching suspects recently. Hunting season at Red Mountain Open Space also continues to be extremely popular.
- There will be no holiday party this year. Only 27% of Board members responded positively, so it has been cancelled.
- Gary requested that we send out the NR News to all Board members. Deb will notify Teddy Parker-Renga, Community Relations Specialist, to add them to the distribution list.
- Ken Brink has been hired as the Visitor Services Manager, and will be starting in mid-November. He is a 30 year veteran of Colorado State Parks. He will supervise all four District Managers of our parks and open spaces.

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DISCUSSION ITEMS:None

ACTION ITEMS: -

Inlet Bay Concession License renewal – Mark Caughlan, Horsetooth District Manager

- Inlet Bay Marina (IBM) is one of the top marinas in the state. Concessionaire, Glenn Werth, is always working to improve his operation and increase revenue streams. They replenish their fleet regularly, and they generate a lot of revenue from that.
- Complaints received from the public tend to relate to the cost of repairs to rental boats; and the 100 person waiting list for slips – they don't even take names anymore. It's a \$500 deposit to get on the list. Mark would like to find a way to put people on the list and track them, even though the current wait is 10-12 years out. There have also been complaints from neighbors about the parking lot being used for storage – even though he's really just staging to get all the boats mobilized. And there are complaints about the \$60 towing fee. However, we need the marina to provide that service because we cannot (and should not) often do it.
- Glenn's offsite storage is a separate business entirely – we do not receive a percentage of that revenue, because it is not on Federal property.
- Glenn sells \$100,000 in fuel from his dock. He requests and Mark recommends that the 5% license fee not apply to fuel sales, because this is paying tax on the fuel twice.
- This license will increase the slips to 250, for a total of slips and mooring of 300.
- Glenn provided dock storage to the Rowing Club – this will be included in the new license.
- We have shared fuel storage with the IBM, to avoid pulling our boats out every day to transport and refuel them. We pay the bill directly to the supplier for our share of the fuel; actual usage is just estimated, not tracked. This will also be included in the contract.

Carter Lake Marina Concession License renewal – Dan Rieves, Carter District Manager

- Both marina licenses are 10 year agreements, with a 5 year renewal option at the end of 5 years.
- There are some significant differences between the two marinas:
 - CLM pays rent on the new building, so their license fee is lower.
 - The two amendments to the license, which increase the boat dry storage to 30 boats, will be included in the new license.
 - The marina also expanded with electrical slips, which have sold out, and are added to this license.
 - There have been zero failures to comply with reporting requirements by the marina during the past five years.
 - There have been a few complaints from customers over the years, but those have been resolved jointly. We meet annually with them.
 - The marina passed its annual inspection with the highest score they have ever received from the Bureau of Reclamation!
 - The mutual relationship between the County and the marina operators is the best it has ever been.

Board and staff comments:

Nick Clark: What were the nature of the complaints?

Dan: Customer service issues. The owners need a “front” person like daughter, Dawn, who has done a great job with customers. If we get a complaint, we look into it – a couple were found to be unfounded. Dan cited a specific example of a situation in which a potential conflict was amicably resolved, with the marina owners responding on behalf of a customer's special requests.

Rob Harris: The rental fee for the building seems low.

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Dan: They only occupy the building five months of the year. So the fee is reasonable.

Russ Fruits: Also, there were some major improvements required – to upgrade the rental fleet, and adding the electric slips – which required large out-of-pocket investments by the Marina. They also provide search and rescue assistance to staff on the lake.

Dan: After the next term ends, both marina licenses will be required to go out to bid, by Federal requirement.

John Gaffney: Will there be any competition for it at that point?

Dan: Last time, nobody but the current concessionaires submitted bids.

Russ: It's a difficult investment to make a go of – short season, expensive facilities, etc.

Dan: We are also asked why the County doesn't run it themselves – too labor intensive for the revenue generated.

Chris Klaas: Are the docks and other waterfront facilities owned by the concessionaire? Do we have any idea what percent of the revenue comes from the slips and moorings, versus the store?

Dan: Yes. Probably 80% of the revenue is generated from the slips and moorings.

Gary: The revenues and our fees are gradually increasing. The success of this venture depends on a tight contract, well-administered.

Chris Klaas: Why are the totals for 2014 at CLM lower than prior years?

Dan: We'll check that – it appears that 2014 does not include the building rent.

Frank: Great article in the newspaper about the IBM!

Deborah Shulman: What about the buildings at IBM?

Dan: Owned by the marina.

Gary: The BOR does not like to have privately owned buildings on Federal property, so we will need to look at this in the next Master Plan.

Rob Harris: Is the marina shop on land?

Dan: The shop is on land; the store is on the dock.

Ron Kainer: The staff is well-trained and helpful; the gas is good quality. He thinks the marina owners do a great job – he has had a slip there for 5 years.

Gary: The formal agreements will be reviewed and approved by the County Attorney, and then approved by the Commissioners at Admin Matters before the end of the year.

Rob Harris: Seems like not all the moorings were rented this year.

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Dan: Your boat is pretty vulnerable on a mooring. If slips are available, people are taking them.

Motion to recommend to the Board of Commissioners approval of the CLM license renewal, with inclusion of the prior amendments, was made by Rob Harris, seconded by Chris Klaas, and approved unanimously.

Motion to recommend to the Board of Commissioners approval of the IBM license renewal, as amended, was made by Deborah Shulman, seconded by Ron Kainer, and unanimously approved.

STANDING AGENDA ITEMS: - 10 minutes

Park District updates and Parks Master Plan Implementation Progress report – Dan Rieves, Carter Lake District Manager; and Mark Caughlan, Horsetooth District Manager

- Pinewood monument sign: Contract was final signed, and should be up in the next couple of months.
- S. Shore Campground renovation plan: The plan is changing; we had a kick-off with the engineers recently. Expect to break ground next September. Dan will be bringing the proposed plans to the Board in the next couple of months. S. Shore is one of our few flat sites, and we want to take advantage of that.
- ANS Inspection Program: Initially, this program was about zebra and quagga mussels – to date, none found in Horsetooth or Carter. However, additional species have been added to the list of ANS, and those have showed up in 28 Colorado reservoirs (not in HT or Carter.) But every boat from those 28 locations must be flushed before it can put on our reservoirs. The result is a huge increase in flushes – up to over 900 at Carter alone. This blew our budget faster than usual. We requested additional funding for next year; but for the remainder of this year, we are chipping in the extra bucks to keep our reservoirs open through the end of the season.
- Horsetooth buildings: The bid solicitation is out. We expect to begin construction around March and have the office building done by the end of the summer, 2016.
- Horsetooth S. Bay entrance: The platform was raised so the exit is flatter, with better visibility, and the road was widened in lieu of a turn lane.

Board and Staff comments:

Russ: What problems are caused by the water fleas?

Dan: We don't know. If Reclamation will sign off that it is not a concern on Federal waters, perhaps we can change what we're doing. In California, they do no flushes – if a boat tests positive, it's off the water for 30 days. We are happy to do whatever the State requires, as long as the State provides the necessary funds to do it. We are not willing to assume the cost of doing it.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Gary Buffington, Director

- Gary, Dan, Mark, Travis and Chris made a trip last week to visit Santa Clara County Parks, and two regional open space parks.
- Dan: Everyone has the same problems we do; we looked at their ballot language, and at how their ranger, maintenance and admin programs are structured.
- Mid-Peninsula Regional Park, East Bay Regional Park District, and a national park in the area were also visited.
- Santa Clara is the premier-quality system, similar to ours; but much larger than our system. We saw issues we may face in the future, such as:
- Specialization of functions has become a hindrance to efficient operations – better to remain generalists.
- Due to housing costs, many staff members are commuting from 2 hours away. Providing temporary housing for seasonal employees is an issue they are facing.

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- ExampleS of management issues we observed:
- An urban park which does not admit public until 8 am; but cars circle the block for 2 hours, waiting to get in.
- Excess spending on acquisition, with nothing left for long-term management, resulting in sparse, deteriorating facilities, and demoralized staff.
- One open space area had a 40 car parking lot, and has 300 vehicles parked in the surrounding neighborhoods on a typical weekend.
- The drought has affected their operations: “Brown is the New Green” is one of their slogans – no watering of grass.
- One area sells a max of 180 boating passes per day. Capped due to boat emissions causing water pollution. After those have all come in, that’s it, even if the reservoir is empty later in the day. That caps revenue as well, so their fees are much higher.
- Most of them had NO funding issues. It was all property tax-funded.
- We got some ideas we can discuss for the new Master Plan, but found no “magic bullets.”

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Debra Wykoff

APPROVED:

Russ Fruits, Chair

*Next regular meeting [if needed]: December 8, 2015,
Natural Resources Administrative Offices, 1800 S.
County Rd. 31, Loveland, CO*

Public can view agenda and minutes at
http://larimer.org/boards/minutes/parks_advisory_board.cfm
