



LARIMER COUNTY OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Thursday, September 25, 2008 – 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Loveland, Library, Loveland

The mission of the Larimer County Open Lands Program is to preserve and protect significant open space, natural areas, wildlife habitat, and develop parks and trails for present and future generations. These open lands provide opportunities for leisure, human renewal and protection of our natural and cultural resources.

Present:

Jeff Hindman	Don Griffith
John Ericson	Jean Carpenter
Trudy Haines	Brian Hayes
Bill Newman	Nancy Wallace
Bob Streeter	Sue Sparling

Staff:

K-Lynn Cameron	Justin Scharton
Sandy Marks	Meegan Flenniken
Rob Novak	Charlie Johnson
Kerri Rollins	Gary Buffington

Absent:

Ted Swanson	
Ben Manvel	

Chair, Nancy Wallace called the meeting to order at 5:10 pm

Sue Sparling motioned to approve the August meeting minutes & Trudy Haines seconded.

INTRODUCTIONS

The two new Open Lands interns were introduced by K-Lynn: Sandy Marks and Michelle Bowie. Sandy Marks spoke about her background at Vermont Law School and Rob Novak introduced Michelle Bowie, who wasn't at the meeting.

INFORMATION

Red Mountain Grant – Kerri spoke about the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) trails grant that we have received for \$338,000 towards trailhead and trail development. We will also apply for the Roundup Riders grant for \$25,000, to pay for a portion of the well at the trailhead. Bob Streeter asked if the well will require electricity as well. Meegan told him that the well would be solar-powered.

Hermit Park Open Space Grand Opening – Kerri and K-Lynn showed a slideshow of pictures from the dedication ceremony on September 13th. Bob Streeter commented that the new banners that the department do not show Open Lands in a prominent way and that it appears that the name “Open Lands Program” is being lost. Gary noted that if “Open Lands Program” is not visible enough on materials, then that is a problem.



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COSA – K-Lynn gave update on COSA, she spoke about the key-note speakers and the other sessions. Bill Newman spoke about the session with Trust for Public Land and how he enjoyed it. Sue Sparling echoed that she enjoyed her sessions and field trip as well. Jean Carpenter commented that COSA was a great way for people to get together and network with people from diverse backgrounds.

Northern Colorado Birding Fair – Rob updated the Board about the upcoming Birding Fair at Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space, including the scheduled events of speakers, educational opportunities and bird releases. The event will take place on September 27th from 7:00 AM – 1:00 PM.

Division on Public Works Leadership Team – K-Lynn spoke about the Picture Public Works Project, the first project of the newly created Public Works Communication Team. The project was created to get interesting pictures of public works employees doing their jobs. Kerri Rollins and Justin Scharton won awards for their pictures taken at the Corn Roast Festival and Kruger Rock Trail, respectively.

Jerry White – K-Lynn announced Jerry’s impending retirement, and how he was the second person hired in the Open Lands Program. Jerry will be leaving an amazing legacy of protected lands and will be greatly missed. He will be working through December.

Whole Measures Workshop – The purpose of this Whole Thinking Workshop, conducted by Center for Whole Communities, November 12-14 is to answer the question “How can open space programs be more responsive to community needs?” The workshop will bring together a diverse group of people from the region and is hosted by Larimer County, the City of Fort Collins and Colorado State University. Together, participants will engage with one another on the complexity of problems facing our County; the role of land in creating a more just and healthy society, and the connection between issues such as land preservation, a sustainable food system, clean and affordable water, access to open space, and affordable housing that serve all Larimer County residents.

Natural Resources Tech I Open Position – We have received 69 applications for Windy’s position, and anticipate potentially having her replacement hired by October.

Volunteer Strategic Plan – Kerri updated the progress on the plan. She asked for board volunteers for the planning process. The first meeting will be Nov. 6th, 1-4pm. Trudy Haines volunteered.

OLAB Holiday Party – The holiday party will be December 18th, 2008. Location will be decided at future meetings.

Water Tank by Devil’s Backbone – K-Lynn noted that the demolition of the water tank at the entrance of Devil’s Backbone will be going out to bid soon and will be removed in Jan/Feb, 2009. Additionally, the Crowder property is still under negotiation to be donated to the county – this is the site for the Devil’s Backbone Open Space geology loop trail.

Blue Grama – Meegan spoke about the Blue Grama award Larimer County won at the COSA Conference last week in Estes Park. Larimer County won in the outstanding ecological management category, for forestry management at Ramsay-Shockey Open Space.



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CSU Green Project – K-Lynn updated the board about the recent CSU wind power project meeting held September 22, 2008. K-Lynn and Jerry White attended this meeting. She spoke about the 1041 powers that are under consideration by the county and how these powers would give the County authority to approve or disapprove this project. CSU agreed at the meeting that they would hold off on the project until the county could adopt the 1041 Regulations. Once those regulations are adopted, Wind Holdings, Inc. will be submitting an application to develop wind energy on CSU's Maxwell Ranch. There will be a series of meetings in November. K-Lynn noted project details including the process of working with EDAW and CSU to scale back the number of wind turbines and their proximity to Red Mountain Open Space and Soapstone Prairie Natural Area. The major visual impact will be to the west and on the 287 corridor, north of Livermore. The transmission lines may be located parallel to an existing WAPA line that runs from Maxwell Ranch through lands south of Red Mountain Open Space. John Stokes, Director of Fort Collins Natural Resources, was at the meeting and commented that regional planning for the energy development in northern Larimer County is important to pursue to avoid piece-meal planning or incompatible development.

The City of Fort Collins is bringing in an intern to research wind energy development and its impacts. K-Lynn hopes that we can benefit from the research that is done. Jean Carpenter commented that one of the driving forces that OLAB had in protecting Red Mountain Open Space was unobstructed wildlife corridors, and we need to keep that in mind. There was some discussion and clarification of how the wind power logistics work, and how the 1041 powers will work if the BOCC passes them and the powers the county would have in relation to this project. John Ericson asked what OLAB's role might be in this issue, and K-Lynn and Nancy Wallace spoke about how OLAB may be asked by the BOCC for a position on the project as an adjacent landowner.

BOARD COMMENT

Loveland Open Space Monies – Trudy Haines stated that she has had four people approach her asking why the City of Loveland has not spent a large amount of their Help Preserve Open Spaces Sales Tax dollars allocation. Trudy feels like there is a mandate by the voters to wisely use the monies, so she asked Brian Hayes his thoughts on this. Brian said that there are currently 3 properties under appraisal, and if they were to buy those properties, they would spend five of the \$6 million currently in Loveland's funds. Brian said there are also two or three deals in line behind that. The difference, Brian said, was that land is more expensive in town so you better have a bigger checkbook. Trudy asked if there would be public access to these properties, to which Brian said there is some potential for public access. Bill Newman added that he and K-Lynn met with the various agency's that receive Help Preserve Open Space dollars and felt comfortable that the accounting and expenditures of the tax dollars were being done competently. Bob Streeter added that these projects are sometimes extremely complex and take time. Brian Hayes noted that he would informally update OLAB if there is significant movement on the projects that are under way over the next months.

LTA Accreditation – Bill Newman spoke about the new LTA accreditation process for land trusts around the country, amid some "shady activity" by a few land trusts. There are 1,700 land trusts across the country and LTA granted 39 accreditations this year. Five of the 39 were from Colorado, including Estes Valley Land Trust!

Annual Report – K-Lynn presented the board with the 2008 annual report for our department.



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ACTION

Education Strategic Plan – Rob asked for questions or feedback on the plan. Jean Carpenter asked if they could measure contact hours of attendees instead of just counting how many people attend. This would more accurately describe how much contact time was made with participants. Sue Sparling submitted comments in writing – mostly edits. Jean Carpenter motioned to approve the plan, and Don Griffith seconded. A voice vote was offered and the motion passed unanimously.

Roundup Riders Grant Application – Kerri reviewed the Letter of Support for the Roundup Riders grant for the board to sign. Sue Sparling motioned approval of signing the letter of support and Trudy Haines seconded. A voice vote was offered and the motioned passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION

Windy Gap Firing Project – K-Lynn updated the board on the Windy Gap Firing Project. K-Lynn gave the history of the project, including the partnership of Larimer County & NCWCD. The open space is part of the Blue Mountain Conservation Area we have protected over the last 11 years, tying in with a larger area of lands in the region both fee and CE. The Windy Gap Draft EIS has been released, and the public comment period is currently on-going. An existing IGA between the water district and the county allows future non-commercial and non-motorized recreation, (does allow electric motors) as the reservoir is a drinking water source. There is a WAPA power line that will be moved from its current location in the floor of the valley to the west of the proposed reservoir. Larimer County's position is that we are supportive of the NCWCD to exercise its reservoir plans.

The water in the proposed reservoir will be Windy Gap water, currently held in Lake Granby. NCWCD has said that the water fluctuation of Chimney Hollow reservoir will be less than Horsetooth Reservoir or Carter Lake.

Impacts on water quality, land and wildlife were discussed. There will be some potentially negative impacts to water quality, land and wildlife. Mitigation will be done by the Water District. There will be one access point at the north end of the reservoir for a boat ramp. Trudy asked what need will this reservoir meet that is not being met now. K-Lynn explained that the first water that spills when Lake Granby is Windy Gap water, and so this provides a storage vessel to contain that water. Trudy expressed distress that another valley was going to be lost to a water storage project. K-Lynn replied that a public process has already been gone through and these issues have been talked about, but agreed that Trudy had a valid point. The construction of this reservoir is currently slated for 2014, originally slated for 2009. Bob Streeter made the comment that we need to make sure that mitigation is done to address effects on the other reservoirs, and Nancy reminded Bob that we have an agreement that somewhat spells out what we can and cannot do, or can and cannot ask for.

Red Mountain Open Space Trail Names – Meegan noted the current naming process is underway with Brian, Nancy and Don on the subcommittee. They will be prepared to present to the group at the October meeting.



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Meeting Etiquette and Ground Rules – Commissioner Randy Eubanks came to the meeting to discuss how the last time he was at the OLAB meeting, he felt uncomfortable with the way he might have expressed himself. He explained that he was somewhat worn out from a hard week of battling in the trenches about important issues, and he might have not expressed himself in the most professional manner. Commissioner Eubanks felt that the advisory boards are extremely important, and as a board liaison, he feels strongly about many issues, but should be a little more impartial. K-Lynn added that she feels that it is very important to bring together people with diverse opinions and positions, and the progress made from the diversity is very valuable. She asked for any input on how to increase the way we convey opinions at meetings so that we can be as respectful and beneficial as possible. Commissioner Eubanks added that he has been on many interview teams and values the diversity of people's opinions and how they don't seek carbon copies of people. Trudy offered to take the Board through exercises of how to communicate more effectively, as this is what she used to do for a living. Nancy Wallace added that being the liaison between the OLAB and the Planning Commission is an awkward position at times, as she has to have perspective from different positions on different boards. She added that when strong feelings and important issues are at hand, it is important to express those feelings and positions while respecting others and allowing everyone's opinions to be heard. Don Griffith added that it is good to have different views that we are all passionate about.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Hermit Park Open Space Development Costs – Meegan noted that \$1.35 million has been spent to date and it is anticipated that the 2008 development budget should come in just under the budgeted \$1.4 million.

Hermit Park Open Space Revenue – Gary spoke about operational revenue – By the end of the year it is anticipated that \$100,000 in revenue will have been collected for 2008. Annual operational expenses are \$150-\$200k for Hermit Park Open Space, which will leave us \$50k in the hole that will come half out of the Open Lands Long term Management dollars and half Lottery Dollars. We will be partnering with the Stanley Hotel to do offsite weddings.

Bill Newman added that they haven't been regularly directing Estes visitors to the open space as of yet, but will start to do that in the future. Trudy expressed that we don't want to overrun Hermit Park with people though. Gary added that a 20% increase in day use has happened since the signs were put up on Hwy. 36.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Solid Waste Loan – Gary spoke about the loan that Natural Resources is getting from Solid Waste. The loan will total \$1.245 million. Gary said that this loan essentially kicks off Parks Master Plan projects at Horsetooth Reservoir, many of which are revenue drivers. Showers will be installed at the reservoir for the first time in 50 years. We will be paying back the loan with 4% interest using lottery dollars over five years.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Poudre River Trail: Windsor to Timnath – Trudy motioned (24-6-402(4) (a) C.R.S. Purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer or sale of any real or personal property interest, and Bob Streeter seconded the motion to go into executive session.

Meeting ended at 8:25 pm