



LARIMER COUNTY OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, January 28, 2010 – 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Loveland Library, 300 N Adams, Loveland CO

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:

Patricia Brennan	Trudy Haines
John Ericson	Steve Vessey
Nancy Wallace	Ted Swanson
Brian Hayes	Commissioner Tom Donnelley
Peter Kast	

Staff:

Gary Buffington	Travis Rollins
Kerri Rollins	Zac Wiebe
	Charlie Johnson

Absent:

David Roy	Don Griffith
Bill Newman	Jeff Hindman

Ted called the meeting to order at 5:12 pm.

INTRODUCTIONS:

Everyone present introduced themselves

REGULAR MEETING:

- Approval of the meeting minutes for November 19, 2009.
- Nancy motioned to approve the October meeting minutes, Steve seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**
- Review Agenda and enclosures

PUBLIC COMMENT: Items not on the agenda.

Norm Rehme, Loveland: is an avid photographer, introduced himself and expressed his disappointment about limited access to eagle viewing at Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space (FCRROS). He showed example photographs of Eagles comparing three different lens sizes and pointed out how small the Eagle appeared in the pictures taken at FCRROS. He recommended a blind as a solution to the problem. Kerri mentioned that there is an existing blind and that the County follows a Division of Wildlife (DOW) recommended buffer area. Travis responded that management plans are written to balance resource protection with public access and the planning process resulted in the trail closures. Trudy said that the Eagle watching experience is still good and up to 90 Eagles have been seen before. Kerri pointed out that before the property was managed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) there were no eagles present. Norm stated that he was unhappy with public relations concerning the Eagle watch program; the DNR shouldn't promote it when they are so hard to see. Ted thanked him for his comments and reiterated the difficulty of striking a balance between resource protection and recreation. Ted also mentioned that management plans are revisited and are subject to change in the future. The board thanked Norm for his comments.



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INFORMATION:

- 2010 Board meeting schedule - The Library will be under renovation beginning in June. The meetings will be held in the Loveland City Council Chambers starting then. A meeting schedule and locations was included in the Board packet.
- 2010 Board and staff contact info – please review and let us know of changes. The Board updated contact information.
- Gary appointed Kerri Rollins as the Interim Open Lands Manager. Kerri will be in this temporary position assignment through May 2010. At that time a number of factors will be evaluated and a decision will be made regarding the process of permanently filling the position.
- Jerry closed the Miller Simon Bokovoy easement donation of 78 acres in the Buckeye area on 12/28/09. The parcel was originally part of the Mountains to Plains project. The family will pursue tax credits.
- Hermit Park conservation easement amendment update - Gary reminded the Board of the cabin situation and that the DNR was allowed a moratorium on moving the cabins. Steve clarified that the plan is to move them in 5 years.
- Negotiations on Fossil Creek IGA between Larimer County and the City of Fort Collins are complete and the IGA is signed. Travis commented that it should be a seamless transition for the public and has been a smooth transition with the City of Ft. Collins.
- A \$200,000 GOCO grant was awarded to Larimer County for a Colorado Youth Outdoors project at Swift Ponds for a fishing pier, restroom and outdoor classroom.
- Russ Crowder Open Space at the Devil’s Backbone - geology loop trail project update. The DNR did a media tour and stories were run in the Coloradoan and the Reporter Herald.
- Colorado photographer John Fielder presented his new book *Ranches of Colorado* on November 20th at CSU, an event Larimer County helped organize. Over 300 people attended. Proceeds totaled between \$3000 and \$5000 and benefited the Legacy Land Trust.
- Natural Resource Events for February. See website <http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources>
- Report from the OLAB liaison to the Parks Advisory Board – Trudy
None at this time.
- Report from the Open Lands Operations Manager – Travis
 - The DNR is currently renewing grazing leases and they won’t change very much.
 - The well at Red Mountain Open Space (RMOS) will be installed soon.
 - The DNR has been working with CSU and Ft. Collins on a study of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). 100 doe deer were collared in three days with no injuries or mortality. It’s a five year study and deer are tested for CWD when they’re captured. Rather than culling positive animals, they are tracked. Nancy clarified that it was Tom Hobbs’ study.
 - Limited hunting will begin in 2010 at RMOS. There has been great interest from the public so far. Over 200 applications so far and applications will be accepted through the end of January.
 - The Boxelder corridor was fenced off and recently completed.
 - A trespasser entered Haygood canyon in RMOS, a closed area, and harvested rare plants. He was ticketed. Trudy asked how he knew where to look and what fines there are for that type of offense. Travis responded that there are specific fines for removal.
 - DNR has tried to accommodate the public by bucking more logs and hope to offer more firewood days in the spring and summer.
 - There have been some hunting trespassing issues at Devil’s Backbone Open Space (DBOS) but the offenders were caught this week. There has been historical poaching on some of the open spaces, especially DBOS.



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Tom asked when the Boy Scouts were coming to Hermit Park Open Space (HPOS). They will be there on September 24th and 25th. Tom asked what they will do and Kerri clarified that they aren't doing service projects but stations instead. Gary mentioned that they're taking over the entire HPOS for those days.

- The Artist of the Year reception for Diane Findley (the 2009 artist) was held January 15th in the Commissioners Lobby. Her piece, The Poudre River, will be on display this year in the lobby (2nd floor of the County Office Building) and then permanently on display in one of the county buildings. The Board needs a new representative on the Artist of the Year committee. The time commitment will total about eight hours. Peter clarified what it entails and offered to be the Board representative to the program.
- The Boards naming subcommittee will meet to name trails at the Crowder trail at DBOS and the snake bypass trail at RMOS. Nancy recommended that the Board submit name suggestions.

FINANCIAL REPORTS:

- 2010 City's & Towns Help Preserve Open Spaces tax dollars spending report
 - Town of Estes – Steve McFarland, Chief Financial Officer

See handout. Steve gave a financial presentation about Estes' spending of tax dollars since 2005. Estes gets around \$200-250,000 from Larimer County and got a grant for trails this year. He highlighted some of the projects that the money has been spent on and will be in the future. He showed a map of the Fish Creek Trail and some pictures of completed projects including Hermit Park Open Space (HPOS) in 2007. Peter asked how the concrete trails hold up. Steve wasn't sure as he is the accountant. He showed some 2010 projects including a design layout for improvements to Bond Park. John pointed out that any events will be moved to Macgregor Avenue instead of trampling Bond Park. This was a result of public input. It will take a few years to implement but will be successful. Trudy asked if they had other money for conservation projects. There is the lottery's Conservation Trust Fund that gets about \$30,000 annually and a very small amount from the town's general fund. John clarified that funding is primarily from Open Space sales tax dollars. Brian clarified where the festival booths will be on Macgregor Ave. Peter asked what the surface for the ice rink would be in the summer. It will be accent paving. John said there would also be sculptures. Kerri asked how they would be acquired. John answered that they will be acquired through donations from non profit groups, which is a common occurrence in Estes Park. Estes Park spent \$20,000 resurfacing the green area of Bond Park last year. Kerri asked if any Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) grants will be applied for. Steve wasn't sure because the Public Works department writes most of the grants for the town. John said that the focus in Estes Park will be on Stanley fairgrounds and a new grandstand will be built. Trudy appreciates the money put towards HPOS and asked if there are any other acquisition opportunities. John answered that there are not and that the current focus is on Bond Park and putting in new stables and a potential new indoor arena for winter programs. Steve commented that Estes Park is surrounded by National Park and National Forest, making acquisition opportunities limited. The town has focused on trails and visitor experience.

- Towns of Timnath and Johnstown - did not attend
- City of Fort Collins – Mark Sears, Natural Areas Program Manager; John Stokes, Director of Natural Resources

John S. expressed gratitude for the open space tax dollars. Mark gave a presentation on the use of sales tax dollars (see handout). He highlighted improvements at Soapstone, Bobcat, Pineridge, North Shields pond, Gateway and Red Fox Meadows natural areas. John brought up the sunset for the open space sales tax in 2018 and asked to participate in any discussions about a future tax. Peter mentioned that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) needs to get the public on board and mentioned the unsatisfied member of the public from earlier in the meeting. He sees the next few years as critical for the ballot measure. The programs have done



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great things but they might be a victim of success. He also mentioned getting kids in nature and wondered how they can become engaged. The public needs to be engaged in the land. Together the OLAB and DNR need to think about these issues now, not in five years. Perhaps too much weight is given to the rattlesnake instead of the public. John Stokes reviewed some of the city processes that resulted in the overall message of welcoming and shared stewardship. Part of the strategy was to enhance volunteer and outreach programs. They've had over 10,000 volunteer hours and schoolchildren participation. There was a big effort to weave the story of the natural areas into the population of Ft. Collins and make citizens feel welcome rather than reading the rules right away. Trudy mentioned looking at the data and knowing how people are looking at open space. The city did a survey, and natural areas ranked extremely high. She is not worried about the citizens of Ft. Collins getting on board. She worries more about other communities. John S. brought up the change of focus in spending towards capital and maintenance instead of acquisition. It is all intended to get people on the properties. Mark mentioned doing a vacant land inventory to more evenly distribute natural areas throughout the Ft. Collins growth area. Kerri clarified the name "neighborhood natural areas". Mark mentioned the Whole Communities idea and reaching out to the entire community. John S. mentioned that the city is building a new museum on Cherry St. The discovery science center and the Natural Areas Program are funding it. The museum will include some messaging about the Natural Areas Program and offered to include the County. Steve clarified that it would replace the old museum. Kerri mentioned that she's heard frequently that citizens won't vote for a tax that is the same as the existing one. John S. said that Ft. Collins has been writing curriculum requirements into their education programs. Mark mentioned reaching 11,000 kids through school programs last year. He also mentioned the City and County being part of the children in nature movement. Kerri thanked them for their partnership. It's an unprecedented partnership and very appreciated. John S. agreed.

- Updated: Natural Resources Capital Development and Acquisition Summary 2009 - 2011.

Gary pointed out the new balance change and that it has increased because the Red Mountain Open Space (RMOS) trailhead came in under budget.

- Review of the Open Space ¼-cent Sales Tax Projections presentation – Lori Smith

See presentation handout. Steve clarified that the bond debt service expires in 2018. Gary gave the take home message that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is on par because we have done a good job spending our dollars, bonded when we needed more dollars and taken advantage of acquisition opportunities. However, acquired lands mean maintenance costs have increased. Steve asked about the worst case scenario of the tax not passing. Gary commented that we would have to find alternative ways to maintain DNR properties. Nancy said that the DNR needs to consider the tax early and really consider what the tax will be. Should maintenance be separate from acquisition? Tom asked what would happen if sales tax revenue doesn't return. Lori said that they have considered that while making projections and projected very conservatively. The 2018 projection is about the same as 2009. Tom clarified that the projection is sustainable even at 0%. Trudy suggested forming a committee with various members to focus on the tax. Gary mentioned that staff wants to strategize timing and not compete with other taxes.

More of the presentation was shown and Steve asked why the maintenance costs increase so quickly. Lori responded that it is related to the amount of land that has been opened. Nancy wants to ask the city if their maintenance costs have increased as much as ours. Lori discussed the 5% increase and pointed out that it is related mainly to salary. Kerri pointed out that Ft. Collins has much more staff. Mark commented that the City has to spend a lot due to the mandatory pay increases. Gary mentioned that there are future ways to save money; increasing fees or fewer full time employees. He also mentioned changing some of the percentages that the municipalities get. Steve asked if GOCO is going to change and fund maintenance. Kerri said no, but mentioned that GOCO is doing a strategic plan and considering letting maintenance projects compete against each other,



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not against new projects. Peter mentioned thinking creatively about getting money for maintenance, perhaps creating an endowment fund. Steve said that if the vote were tomorrow it wouldn't pass. Trudy said that this shows that the volunteer program needs to be emphasized. Kerri agreed. Trudy wondered how the US Forest Service does what they do with limited resources. Travis commented that things are spread thin but the DNR utilizes volunteers heavily. Patricia talked about the challenges of a small business and asked Tom about other departments and how the County is handling economic difficulties as a whole. Tom responded that County employees won't get a raise in 2010, and the County rebid the health insurance program. Costs will increase eventually. Last year 23 jobs were cut and this year 32. It's the only way to sustain, but it diminishes the level of service. Trudy said that the staff is lean and suggested charging out-of-county visitors more. Kerri mentioned that another Colorado county does that and the DNR should investigate its success. Tom said that the Board of County Commissioners wouldn't support charging people for access to land they've already paid for. Lori pointed out that extending the sales tax won't fix anything as the entire ¼-cent is needed to maintain the lands the DNR already have at current projections.

BOARD COMMENT: Items not on the agenda

ACTION:

- Small Grants & Community Partnering presentation and award decision – Sue Burke
See handout. Nancy asked about the policy that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) doesn't fund projects in cities that receive tax dollars. With the revised guidelines, projects within city limits can be funded. Kerri commented on partial funding and how some projects may not be able to be completed without full funding. Zac commented that the committee did consider that in the grant review process. Trudy agreed and suggested adding a sign to the projects. Sue mentioned that it would be difficult to ensure good maintenance and there shouldn't be a sign on projects that may look bad in the future. Nancy suggested having signs during construction.

Brian made a motion to approve the recommendations of the Small Grants committee, Peter seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- 2009 Open Lands Program highlights – Kerri handed out the staffs highlights for 2009. There were no questions.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Items not on the agenda

On March 3, at 7:00 the Department of Natural Resources will host a hockey booth at a Colorado Eagles game as an appreciation event for the OLAB. RSVP to Kerri or Zac.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: 8:04 p.m. Pursuant to (24-6-402(4) (a) C.R.S. Purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer or sale of any real or personal property interest. **Nancy motioned to enter into Executive Session. Peter seconded and the motion passed unanimously.**

Nancy motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 pm. Peter seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned by Ted Swanson at 8:24 pm.