



LARIMER COUNTY OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 25, 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:

David Roy	Trudy Haines
John Ericson	Steve Vessey
Nancy Wallace	Linda Knowlton
Brian Hayes	Commissioner Tom Donnelly
Peter Kast	Bill Newman
Don Griffith	Hugh McKean

Staff:

Gary Buffington	Travis Rollins
Kerri Rollins	Zac Wiebe
Meegan Flenniken	Jerry White

Absent:

Ted Swanson	Jeff Hindman
Patricia Brennan	

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:16 pm.

INTRODUCTIONS:

REGULAR MEETING:

- Approval of the meeting minutes for January 28, 2010.
- Review Agenda and enclosures

The end of year 2009 sales tax report will be ready by the March meeting. It is not available yet due to a 2 month delay in reporting of revenues.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Items not on the agenda.

INTRODUCTIONS:

The Board and staff introduced themselves to Loveland Council member Hugh McKean, the new City of Loveland Open Lands Board liaison.

INFORMATION:

- Clearance for the Habitat Conservation Plan that involved 6 years of restoration/mediation work for Preble's meadow jumping mouse was received from the USFWS at Eagle's Nest Open Space!

Meegan gave an overview of the resource mediation progress. After 6 years of monitoring, the criteria set by the US Fish & Wildlife Service has been met.

- Trail naming subcommittee results for new trails at Red Mountain and the Crowder Area at Devil's Backbone.

Nancy, Don, and Brian met with the committee to name two trails. The Russ Crowder area, adjacent to the Devil's Backbone Open Space is about half a mile of trail that will focus on geology education. The name that



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the subcommittee settled on is the “Morrison trail” due to the local rock formation. It will be constructed this spring and opened in August. The snake bypass trail at Red Mountain Open Space was recently completed. The committee decided on the name “Rising sun” due to the fact that it is a loop connected to the Sinking Sun trail and is on the east side of the parking area.

- GOCO draft Strategic Plan was emailed last week. Comments and feedback are being collected by Kerri and must be submitted by March 10th.

GOCO held several public meetings around the state, held a staff retreat and has developed a draft plan for public review. Land, Water & Wildlife, Outdoor Recreation & Trails, and Youth, Families and the Outdoors will be the three core program areas. Most of the comments from this summer’s meetings were incorporated. Comments are due to GOCO on March 10th. Please send your comments to Kerri.

- Hugh McKean will replace Brian Hayes as the City of Loveland liaison to OLAB.
- The Department of Natural Resources will present a framed photo to outgoing County Commissioner Kathay Rennels. Please sign the frame matting.
- Report from the Open Lands Operations Manager – Travis
 - Red Mountain Open Space (RMOS) is reopening on March 1, weather dependent.
 - The hunting drawing for RMOS took place recently. There were 338 applicants for seven spaces. There has been a very positive response by the public and all of the successful applicants were from Larimer County. A big project underway is adding signs, etc for hunting.
 - The well for the horse trailer lot is being drilled this week. Peter asked if the County maintains the stock tank. Travis responded that we manage two stock tanks and the new Salt Lick trail provides access to one of them.
 - Grazing leases for 2010 are all completed.
 - Leases at the McGraw and Soderberg houses have been renewed. The phone line, cistern and shed have been improved at the McGraw house.
 - The Chronic Wasting Disease study at RMOS is going well. 80 deer have been collared in the RMOS and Soapstone area. Only two have tested positive so far but it is a five year study. One collared deer has been killed by a predator.
 - Horsetooth Mountain Open Space rangers have been helping with the firewood program when time is available. The program is so popular that he would like to do more days in the spring.
 - There was a recent death at HTMOS. An out of state man had a heart attack on the trail. There was also recently a lost hiker and the rangers worked with Emergency Medical Services to find him. Trudy asked if he was injured. Travis responded that he was lost due to bad weather and fog but not injured. He was also from out of state.
 - Zach cook, a seasonal ranger is being deployed to Afghanistan.
 - The Keyhole trail at Devil’s Backbone Open Space will be closed seasonally for raven nesting.
 - The pier at Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space will be reconstructed this summer.
 - The COSA ranger training is coming up soon.



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- Report from the OLAB liaison to the Parks Advisory Board (PAB) – Trudy

Trudy reported on the PAB dealing with clubs that have a long history of being able to use the parks. An example is the rowing club that has to move due to the new swim beach construction. Trudy also recommended that the OLAB review the Parks Master Plan. The volunteer program presentation was great, it is a strong program. Also, diligence has been great concerning public access to the river on the Big Thompson parcels. Tom mentioned that good management of these parcels a high priority for the County Commissioners and the burden of maintenance has fallen to the neighbors in the past. The County hasn't been good stewards of the land and the County needs to take care of the river as a priority. Gary and Charlie did a good job of negotiating the entire river. Tom also thanked Linda for her hard work on the project. Bill asked Gary if the department should be on the Estes Park Chamber of Commerce reservation site now that there are three campgrounds in the area. Gary responded that the department is checking on the requirements to do so. John mentioned that the Convention and Visitors Bureau would be a good place to start.

- Website is currently being renovated and will be completed soon.

Zac asked the Board if putting OLAB contact information on the website was agreeable. The Board is fine with it. Gary asked about protocol for public comments that the board receives. It was agreed that any comments be brought to the attention of the rest of the Board.

- Natural Resource Events for February. See website <http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources>
- Tax credit update: Jerry White

Jerry reminded the board about tax credits for conservation easement (CE) donations. With the current financial crisis the state started looking for places to cut and the tax credit program is an option. It looks like there will be a cap of \$135,000 credit for each individual project. Only 50% of the value of each CE donation is eligible for a tax credit. There will also be an annual cap of state money to be spent on the program. The cap will be 29 million per year for 3 years. The bill has been approved by the House of Representatives and is now awaiting approval by the Senate. Bill clarified that the new credit program would start in 2011. Nancy asked if the credits will be issued on a first come first serve basis. She also wondered how the state will know since everyone's taxes are filed at the same time. Jerry answered that it would be based on when the transaction takes place. The state Dept. of Real Estate will be responsible for tracking CE transactions. Peter asked what will happen after the three year period. Jerry answered that it will go back to the way it is now unless legislation changes it again. Trudy asked how much was used last year. Jerry answered approximately \$63 million and mentioned that new regulations will hurt land trusts more than local governments because they rely heavily on donations.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

- 2010 City's & Towns Help Preserve Open Spaces tax dollars spending report, cont'd from January

- Town of Windsor – Melissa Chew, Director of Parks & Recreation

See presentation.

Trudy asked if Windsor had any interested in an open space tax. Melissa answered that it is discussed in the park master plan but they don't know how they would fund maintenance and don't have staff expertise in that area. For a small town, Windsor has a fair bit of open space and is looking at other partnerships that might preserve the open space but not be managed by the Town of Windsor.

- Town of Wellington – Larry Lorentzen, Town Manager



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Wellington has received approximately \$980,000 since 1996 from the open space sales tax. The revenue is usually spent as it comes in on developments in the area. A recent example of use was for construction of a batting cage on land dedicated by a developer. The biggest emphasis has been on the Boxelder trail corridor. There has been about two miles added to the trail through developer dedications. As for open space, there isn't a lot of valuable land to protect; nearby land is mostly agricultural. Valuable land east of Wellington includes Indian creek but it is mostly private or owned by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. This is another reason that Wellington's emphasis has been acquiring land for the Boxelder trail. Trudy asked about Wellington's opinion on community separators. Larry answered that it hasn't been much of an issue. A few surveys have asked that question but people haven't been too concerned about. Peter asked about growth of the town. It is about 6% on average. Kerri asked about any projects on the horizon that Wellington might save money for. Larry answered that revenue is usually spent each year, not saved, and will hopefully be used to match grants in the future.

- City of Loveland – Brian Hayes, Natural Areas Program Manager

See handouts and presentations

Brian mentioned the city's \$6 million dollar available open space sales tax revenue. Loveland plans to spend it but there have been problems. There are three projects on the horizon, all conservation easements. Peter asked if the three projects add up to \$6 million. One is about \$2.3 million, another around \$2 million but the Agilent property worth is unknown. It's in a floodplain which complicates appraisals. Trudy asked if the Loveland City Council has discussed creating destination activities for the millions of tourists that pass through on the way to the mountains. Hugh answered that they have in Loveland's newly created marketing commission. One of the continuing discussions about open lands concerns what can be provided and how much it will cost to maintain. The City doesn't want to get into a position of not being able to afford maintenance. Trudy talked about her seat on the Ft. Collins Land Conservation Board and its approach of buying land sooner while it's cheaper and opening it to the public when maintenance can be afforded. Bill asked if Loveland has researched who primary users are on its properties. Brian answered that most visitors are local but there hasn't been a formal survey. The impact of tourism is something they should keep in mind. Trudy mentioned a survey at nearby Bobcat Ridge Natural Area that showed 1/2 to 1/3 of its visitors are from Loveland. Gary asked if land near the mouth of the Big Thompson canyon is of interest. Brian answered that they would want a part but haven't heard back. Travis asked if there will be access to the Wild parcel which is adjacent to County property. Loveland hopes to acquire a conservation easement but is sensitive to public impact to neighbors. Trudy asked who does negotiation for properties. It is mostly Brian but also the director Gary. Kerri asked where the Loveland sports park conservation easement is. It is across from ??? It was purchased for two reasons; it connects to the Kaufmann conservation easement and provides water for the sports park.

- Town of Berthoud – Jeremy Olinger, Director of Parks & Recreation

A representative from the Town of Berthoud was not present and will be at the March meeting.

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

Kerri pointed out the larger surplus due to funds that were appropriated but haven't been spent. David asked about the notation that on the Mountain to Plains line about "Commissioners approved, 600k with 2 year delay". Gary answered that the money had to be moved. Kerri answered that it was being held for a conservation easement (CE) that fell through. Bill clarified that the budget will change with the approval of the Hermit Park CE agreement with the \$50k allocated for cabin removal going back to fund balance. He also asked that the report be clarified to not say "cabin relocation".



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ACTION:

- Natural Resources Volunteer Strategic Plan overview, recommendation on final draft – CJ Cullins, Volunteer Program Coordinator

See handout showcasing volunteer hours and presentation. David asked about the phrasing on the five guiding principles. The “we believe we can contribute” quote is subjective and not as encompassing. Kerri thanked Linda and Trudy for being on the work session. Gary mentioned that the volunteer program is funded by general fund dollars, which are in danger of being cut. The presentation will be shown to the Board of County Commissioners. Gary clarified that volunteer hours were worth over a million dollars. CJ has solidified the tracking of hours. Gary talked about the outreach component and how it can help with the possible sales tax extension.

Steve motioned that the board recommend the adoption of the Volunteer Strategic Plan to Gary. Nancy seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

- Hermit Park Open Space conservation easement agreement amendment – Jerry White

When Hermit Park Open Space (HPOS) was purchased, the County reserved two building sites as collateral until full funding was raised for the purchase. At that time, the County would extinguish those lots and incorporate the sites in to the conservation easement (CE). Loveland contributed \$400,000 over a three year period and one building envelope has been conserved. This amendment will conserve the other site. It was also agreed that the two cabins located in the wetlands would no longer be used and would be relocated. The County worked out an agreement with Estes Valley Land Trust (EVLTL), the holder of the CE, to get a five year extension on moving or demolishing the cabins. The EVLTL had a provision that if the cabins greatly hindered resource values they could give the County 90 days notice to stop use. David asked what the negative aspects of having the cabins there were. Meegan answered that the issue is that they are built next to a wetland but the County is not adding any additional negative effect. David asked how much it would be to move the cabins. Gary responded that it would be \$20k or \$30k and they might not even withstand the move. Meegan said it would be a better deal to demolish them and rebuild. Kerri said that they are the most sought after cabins at HPOS. Gary said closing the road has helped with dust and vehicular access along the wetland. David asked how much revenue they generate. Gary said that they are \$100 a night with approximately 70% occupancy. Kerri mentioned they are \$20 more than the other available cabins. Peter suggested studying to see the impact that they have. Meegan said the bigger problem would be getting EVLTL approval to keep the cabins there indefinitely. David suggested putting the revenue they generate aside for moving them in the future.

David motioned that the board approve the amendment to the conservation easement agreement. Steve seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

PRESENTATIONS:

- 2009 Department of Natural Resources Community Outreach – 20 minute video

Kerri introduced the Outreach, Education & Volunteer presentation. Peter suggested adding statistics about the number of special events that the County has on its properties. John asked who the target audience is and Kerri answered that it was developed for the Parks Advisory Board, Open Lands Advisory Board and the Board of County Commissioners. John suggested editing it for the public. Trudy’s interpretation was that it was for potential volunteers. Kerri said that the presentation is a more dynamic way of presenting the info. Steve suggested getting it out to the public because he was unaware of all of the volunteer positions. Peter suggested promoting volunteer opportunities on the website and changing the language of the leveraging ratio statistic to include the volunteer hours figure. Gary commented that there are three relatively new commissioners and they may need to be convinced of the importance of the outreach program.



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BOARD COMMENT: Items not on the agenda

Peter reminded the board of a previous OLAB board visitor complaint about limited eagle viewing at Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space. Trudy called him and told him that Mark Sears and she took his issue to the Fort Collins Land Conservation Board. She also gave him maps of Ft. Collins areas for other options. She wants him to feel comfortable that his input is valued. Kerri called him as well and remarked that he was surprised and pleased to receive the calls. Peter wondered if the department could make limited concessions for visitors like him.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Items not on the agenda

Gary asked the Board if they were interested in the Board appreciation event, the Eagles game on March 3rd.

Nancy mentioned that applications for various commissions are due soon and the Planning Commission is lacking people from the southern part of the County. If anyone is interested or has a recommendation, let her know.

Steve motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 pm. David seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned by Peter at 7:55 pm.