



LARIMER COUNTY OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, March 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	Patricia Brennan
John Ericson	Ted Swanson
Nancy Wallace	

Staff:

Gary Buffington	Travis Rollins
Kerri Rollins	Zac Wiebe
Meegan Flenniken	Jeffrey Boring

Absent:

Peter Kast	Bill Newman
Trudy Haines	Steve Vessey
Don Griffith	Commissioner Tom Donnelly
Hugh McKean	Jeff Hindman

Ted called the meeting to order at 5:24 pm.

REGULAR MEETING

- The meeting minutes for February 25, 2010 were not approved due to lack of quorum.
- Review Agenda and enclosures

PUBLIC COMMENT: Items not on the agenda.

None

INFORMATION:

- Jerry closed on the 105-acre Miller conservation easement in the Buckeye area on March 11. It was a donated easement.

- Red Mountain well drilling update
 Travis reported that drilling for the well began two weeks ago. Nearby wells were 180 and 165 feet and the drilling bid allowed for 200 ft. At 200 ft. the well was dry so another 100 ft was drilled. Some of the cost savings from the trailhead construction was used to drill the additional 100 feet. A pocket of water was discovered but didn't recharge overnight after pumping. The decision was made to discontinue drilling. Kerri talked to the Roundup Riders of the Rockies about returning the money they donated for the well. They would like the County to keep the money and use it in another manner. Travis commented that the Salt lick trail will provide water for horses.

- Many staff completed a Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) course offered through the National Association for Interpretation held at the Bison Visitor Center. Mary Ann Bonnell and Linda Strand taught the CIG course. It was a great training that certified 12 staff.



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- Linda Hoffmann has put together a project advisory team for a Regional Food Assessment called From Plant to Plate. Kerri represents the Open Lands Program and will keep us abreast as the project moves forward.
- Staff also attended the CCLT conference in Denver 3/15-16.
- Report from the OLAB liaison to the Parks Advisory Board (PAB) – Trudy was absent. Mark DeGregorio reported that the PAB made a recommendation on the concession policy and will be reviewing the concession held by the Carter Lake Marina.
- Jeffrey reported that the department’s Great Outdoors Colorado grant proposal for the Three Bells conservation easement is ranked number one and will likely be awarded. Grant awards are announced on April 1st.
- Report from the Open Lands Operations Manager – Travis
 - Rangers have recently attended meetings with the Northern Colorado Quarter Horsemen’s Association and the Overland Mountain Bike Club. The rangers work closely with them and maintaining partnerships like these is beneficial.
 - Several rangers attended the Certified Interpretive Guide training.
 - The department received approval for volunteers to use chainsaws. The firewood program will open again in May and staff won’t be needed to cut down timber.
 - The Nomad trail will be closed from April 1 through July to protect a rare butterfly. Meegan commented that there are six species in that area that are only found along the Front Range.
 - Red Mountain Open Space (RMOS) was reopened on March 1st. There has been a lot of visitation already, especially by equestrians.
 - A well pump at one corral area in RMOS was replaced with a solar pump.
 - The rangers are preparing to close the vehicle lot at RMOS for rattlesnake monitoring. John clarified that this is the time of year when they emerge. Travis explained how rattlesnakes disperse in the spring.
 - Replacement signs updated to the new design standards will be installed at Longview Farm Open Space.
 - Special events taking place this summer include; one trail race at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space, the Horsetooth Mountain Trail Race, one at RMOS, the Red Mountain half marathon, and one on the Blue Sky trail, the Blue Sky Marathon.
 - There have been several trail closures lately due to wet conditions.
 - The Colorado Open Space Alliance ranger training will take place the first week of April. There are currently 11 agencies and over 45 rangers attending.

David asked if the public is missing out by not being able to access RMOS from the Big Hole Open Space and if the department could facilitate access. Meegan answered that the public is missing out on RMOS and Soapstone trail systems because the city of Cheyenne doesn’t yet have the resources to create access or patrol Big Hole Open Space. Travis mentioned that there is a lot of traffic from Wyoming at RMOS.

- Natural Resource Events for April. See website <http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources>

FINANCIAL REPORT:



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Kerri reviewed the annual sales tax distribution report. Overall, 2009 tax revenue was down to \$3,614,183 – almost the equivalent of what was generated in 2003. It was down 8.7% from 2008.

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

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

Jeremy gave some history of past projects in Berthoud. One example is an 80 acre open space called Wagner Park that was purchased by the Town. Future plans include a recreation center and office space. Berthoud also invested in Hermit Park Open Space. In recent years the Town has focused on preserving and maintaining current open spaces and trails. Berthoud recently used a Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) grant to preserve Hilldale Park. Berthoud is leveraging \$100,000 of sales tax money for a GOCO grant totaling almost \$800,000 to further develop the existing Pioneer Park. It will be used to make Pioneer Park a community park with several new amenities. Berthoud has also been saving the money the last couple years to work with neighboring entities to develop a regional trail system.

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

Gary mentioned that the Department is looking to spend some available funds. Chris Fleming will present an update on the savings at Hermit Park Open Space soon.

PRESENTATIONS:

- Larimer County Weed District presentation – Casey Cisneros, Weed Control Technician

See presentation. Casey handed out the Weed Management Reference Guide and a noxious weed ID guide. Meegan mentioned the possible expansion of the weed district in the future. A member of the public asked if the department has tried grazing on invasive species. Meegan explained the previous use of grazing. Another public member asked if all of the open spaces had equal priority for weed management. Casey answered that weed control takes place on all open spaces and it depends more on existing weeds and time of year. A member of the public clarified that there are no class A weed species at Eagle's Nest Open Space.

- Ecological Integrity Assessment – Jeffrey Boring, Resource Specialist

See presentation. A public member asked if the tool incorporates wildlife. Jeffrey answered that it doesn't, it is assumed that if the plant life is healthy, the wildlife will be too.

BOARD COMMENT: Items not on the agenda

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- Natural Resources Financial Status: agenda and handout for a 4/19/10 work session with the County Commissioners

Kerri introduced the agenda for the work session and reminded the board about Lori's September financial presentation. Her report showed that the Department doesn't have enough funding to continue past 2018. Kerri solicited board input on options and scenarios for continuing a sales tax, and also if the sales tax isn't extended. David asked if this agenda is intended to be scary in regards to putting the idea of selling open space on the options list. Ted responded that there are new commissioners that may not be familiar with open space and part of the strategy is to highlight that funding is necessary to continue management. Kerri doesn't want to assume that the commissioners support the sales tax, and all options must be considered. David recommended showing what could be done with a tax extension in addition to what will happen if it doesn't get extended. Nancy agreed that starting with worst case scenario isn't the best strategy and also recommended highlighting what the issues are now, and how the department will plan for the future of the open space during the next eight years. Then, if the tax extension fails, this is what could happen. David pointed out the data in Larimer County



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showing the positive impact of open space to our county and that the commissioners should be able to be convinced. The Board can't assume that the commissioners are supporters but statistics should help gain their support. Ted asked Nancy if she was suggesting a different tax. Nancy responded that it should be considered. Perhaps there will be a distinction from acquisition and maintenance. It doesn't have to be the same tax that exists right now. A lot can change in the coming years and it's difficult to know what the situation will be. Mark asked if anyone has considered raising the tax. Nancy responded that there are many possible combinations.

Kerri moved ahead to the next steps category. See handout. Nancy recommended having a citizen component. Gary wondered if citizens should come to the Board so that the Board has more control on where the movement goes. Nancy pointed out that the last tax was a citizen initiative and not powered by the Board or subcommittees. She would like to discuss the citizen component further and commented that the tax extension should be a public groundswell. Ted mentioned that while the citizens were very active to support the ballot measure, they didn't write it. He thinks that initial steps should take place more internally. Kerri agreed that keeping it more internal in the early steps is a good idea. Nancy said that she isn't suggesting that the steps are changed but that the citizen component is extremely important. She is not sure when it should come into the process but it should be there. Kerri will add a citizen component to the list. Nancy thinks that public should be in the "who" category. Kerri wondered if municipalities should also be included. John asked what the department is hoping to accomplish on Apr. 19. Kerri answered that we are hoping to get a feel from the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) on where they stand on the open space sales tax. Gary mentioned that there are some competing taxes coming up and the department wants to know where it stands in the bigger picture. John wondered who the audience is and if the commissioners know the history of the Open Lands program. Kerri answered that Lori's presentation will be the informational piece before getting a general idea of the BOCC's thoughts. John clarified that it will be very general and recommended being somewhat cautious. Ted mentioned that no one knows how much the commissioners know about the Open Lands program and the history of it. David suggested listening to the commissioners about their views on the Open Lands program for the first part of the presentation. This might help frame the rest of the presentation and discussion. Gary mentioned the importance of presentation and that it will be refashioned to focus on the positive.

Needs to consider: Ted wondered how the department can increase public awareness and support of the program. Patricia mentioned that it is important to talk about how well the program has done with the money it has received

Methods to consider: Meegan mentioned going above the cap. John mentioned considering the political environment and that there are big anti-tax movements.

Outside influences: Nancy recommended removing the citizen group, it appears competitive.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Items not on the agenda

Gary gave an update on some of the Big Thompson flood properties. 17 parcels of the Hayden property at Drake were sold to a neighbor and the County kept 900 feet of river front. The Department made \$33,000 for future management. Charlie has done an outstanding job of working on this long and arduous project.

David motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 pm. Ted seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned by Ted at 7:36 pm.