Apply by April 30 for Larimer County Boards & Commissions Openings

Special to the Surveyor

The deadline is Friday, April 30, 2010, to apply to one of the current openings on Larimer County Boards and Commissions. The spring application process is now underway so that new members can begin their terms in July.

Citizens can apply online at www.larimer.org/boards, or pick up an application at a County office, contact Diane Tokarcz in the Larimer County Commissioners’ Office at 498-7015, dtokarcz@larimer.org for more details.

A short video and Q&A session addressing questions about serving on a board is online at www.larimer.org/boards. These boards have current openings:

- Board of Adjustment
- Board of Appeals
- Board of Health
- Community Corrections Advisory Board
- Environmental Advisory Board
- Estes Valley Planning Commission
- Extension Advisory Committee
- Fair Board
- Flood Review Board
- Juvenile Community Review
- LaPorte Area Planning Advisory Committee
- Larimer Integrated Family Enhancement (LIFE) Board
- Office on Aging Advisory Council
- Open Lands Advisory Board
- Parks Advisory Board
- Planning Commission
- Rural Land Use Board
- Weed Control District Advisory Commission

Also online at www.larimer.org/boards is an explanation of each board or commission, what they do, who the members are, and when they meet. Over 300 citizens provide Larimer County government with valuable insight by volunteering on nearly 30 County Boards and Commissions. If you would like to receive an e-mail notification any time there is an opening on a board or commission please go to www.larimer.org/subscriptions.cfm, and sign up.

Your government at work

City Council to look at Cleveland Avenue zoning regulations

When: Loveland City Council
When: 6:30 p.m., Tuesday
Where: Council Chambers
500 E. First St.
TV/Internet: Comcast Channel 16

At Issue: During a study session, meaning no formal action will be taken, the Loveland City Council will look at rates for converting residential properties to commercial uses on Cleveland Avenue between 13th Street and where it merges with Lincoln Avenue. A major component would be to reduce or eliminate some of the infrastructure expansion costs that are in the city’s code for development that occurs outside of the city. It would also lower the standards for the paving width of the alleys in the light corridors alongside North Cleveland Avenue.

Commissioners to look at rules for pet foster homes outside cities

When: Larimer County Board of Commissioners
When: 9 a.m., Tuesday
Where: Commissioners Conference Room, 200 W. Oak St., Fort Collins
TV/Internet: www.larimer.org/bc/broadcast.cfm

At Issue: The commissioners will consider an update to the land use code that will address pet foster care facilities. The Larimer County Planning Commission approved the rules unanimously at its March 17 meeting. The definition to be added: "Foster Home for Pet Animals. A foster home for pet animals is a site which, through a written agreement with a Pet Animal Care Facilities Act (PACA) licensed pet rescue facility, provides a temporary home for the care and/or rehabilitation of pet animals."

County parks board to look at water sports

When: Larimer County Parks Advisory Board
When: 5:30 p.m., Tuesday
Where: 1800 S. County Road 31, near Carter Lake
TV/Internet: None

At Issue: The Parks Advisory Board has several water sports-themed topics on its agenda for Tuesday. Members will hear a proposal to add a kayak dock on the Cache la Poudre River near LaPorte. Also, the board will talk about potential new locations for the Fort Collins Rowing Association at Horsetooth Reservoir. Renovations to the swim beach at the reservoir will require the county to find a new storage location for members' boats. The change will be required by this summer, according to documents provided to the board.

Planning Commission to look at changes for Dairy Queen access

When: Loveland Planning Commission
When: 6:30 p.m., Tuesday
Where: Loveland City Council Chambers, 500 E. Third St.
TV/Internet: Comcast Channel 16

At Issue: Commissioners will hear a request from the owner of the Dairy Queen, 300 E. Eisenhower Blvd., for the city to vacate its alley right-of-way between the restaurant and the vacant property to the east. According to information provided to commissioners, the owner wants to expand the restaurant's parking lot and create a smoother flow for its drive-through traffic. If approved, the city would gain an access easement from the property to Jefferson Avenue on the property's east side.
Grant aids Poudre trail expansion

BY KEVIN O'CONNOR

The Poudre River Trail is expected to move closer to completion with the help of a $1 million grant from Great Outdoors Colorado.

The Larimer County open land program is on top to receive the GOO grant for the 160-acre Three Bells I project, which would include an easement for the trail north of River Bluffs Open Space near Colorado Highway 92 and west Windsor.

As part of the project, a conservation easement would protect about 0.6 miles of the Poudre River corridor, including critical wildlife habitat, officials said.

When combined with a conservation easement proposed for the adjacent Three Bells II project, more than 330 acres between Windsor and Timnath will be preserved, including 1.3 miles of river corridor.

Kevin Collins, interim open lands manager, declined to discuss the exact location of the easements, citing the sensitivity of ongoing negotiations with a landowner.

Fort Collins and Windsor are financial partners in the deal, Collins said.

The grants were announced Thursday by Gov. Bill Ritter and the GOO board of directors.

Fort Collins received a $500,000 grant to extend the western portion of the Fossil Creek Trail to connect it to Spring Canyon Community Park. The trail extension will include an underpass of County Road 38B.

The total project is expected to cost about $1.2 million, said Craig Foreman, park planning manager for the city.

"It's a great project and great to have the help of Great Outdoors Colorado," he said.

The Poudre River Trail runs through LaPorte and Fort Collins as well as from Greeley to Windsor.

The final segment of the trail would connect Fort Collins to Windsor via Timnath, which is working on its portion of the trail.

If the Three Bells easements come through, the trail would be extended 1.2 miles by the county.

Fort Collins eventually will extend its portion of the trail from the Environmental Learning Center under Interstate 25 to a site near the Walmart store in Timnath.

By KEVIN O'CONNOR

Boating hours and vessel inspections at Carter Lake

Reservoirs opened to boating April 1, 2010. The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources, in order to comply with State of Colorado Aquatic Nuisance Species Regulations, will continue with boat inspections and vessel inspections at Horsetooth Reservoir and Carter Lake for the 2010 recreation season.

Reservoirs opened to boating April 1 - Sept. 30, 2010: 8 a.m. - 10 p.m., 7 days a week (Opening may be delayed for snow).

Oct. 1 - Oct. 31, 2010: 6 a.m. - 10 p.m., 7 days a week, weather permitting.

For further information about Carter Lake and Horsetooth Reservoir only please go to www.larimer.org/naturalresources/boating inspections.htm.

For information about requirements at parks managed by Colorado State Parks (Boulder Lake, etc.), please go to: http://naturalresources.colorado.gov/acquatic nuisance/species.

For information about aquatic nuisance species from the Colorado Division of Wildlife, please go to http://wildlife.state.co.us/Wildlife-Species/Profiles/AquaticSpecies/ZebrasomacloudedMussel.htm.
Our View

Big Thompson River deal a true win-win scenario

County protects public access while respecting private property

Larimer County officials have negotiated a successful compromise that will allow fishing access to the Big Thompson River while respecting the rights of property owners.

At issue was an 800-foot section of the river near the Hayden Subdivision, an area popular with fishermen, picknickers and day-trippers. The series of deals put together by the county will allow public access to both sides of the river in that area, without trespassing on adjacent private property.

"I think this project is a good model to use in other parts of the county," said Gary Buffington, director of the county's Department of Natural Resources. "This is a win-win for public and private interests."

The challenge was created as the county tried to deal with 155 river parcels it acquired following the 1976 Big Thompson Canyon flood. The county has been selling off the properties, and property owners in the Hayden Subdivision wanted to buy flood parcels adjacent to their land.

That concerned fishermen, who wanted to maintain public access to the river. The county accomplished that goal through a series of deals that let the county maintain ownership of the river shore in the area, along with two parcels that allowed access across the river.

"People will be able to walk to the river, step in and fish, and get out on the other side," Buffington said. "They'll be able to step in and out of the water without worrying about trespassing."

Through careful negotiation, the county was able to protect public access to a local treasure while respecting private property rights. That is indeed a win-win scenario.
Signs of Spring

Spring has arrived, and area residents will get a chance to enjoy it with a naturalist-led “Hey Kids! Signs of Spring” walk and the annual “Spring into Archaeology” event.

Those more focused on the coming year than the new season will get the chance to learn more about the school district’s budget situation this week.

SATURDAY

Hike to focus on ‘Signs of Spring’

Larimer County Parks and Open Spaces will offer a naturalist-led “Hey Kids! Signs of Spring” walk at 9 a.m. Saturday, to look at new signs of spring at Devil’s Backbone Open Space, off U.S. 34 on Hidden Valley Drive.

Participants should dress appropriately for the weather and bring water for the trail.

The program is for ages 4-11 and a parent or guardian must accompany children. It is free and no registration is required.

For details, call Res at 679-4851 or visit www.larimer.org/naturalresources.
Respect the Rattle

No reason to be scared once you know the facts about snakes

BY PAMELA DECKMAN REPORTER-HERALD STAFF WRITER

They are equipped with natural night vision.

They are born with the chemical equivalent of a homing device.

They could be the key to a breakthrough in breast cancer research.

No, we’re not talking about super-scientists, but the prairie rattlesnake.

The poisonous snake with its menacing collar and diabolical-sounding rattle is actually an integral part of the ecosystem and a possible medical breakthrough.

These snakes live throughout Colorado including in open spaces in Larimer County.

Once the snakes come out of hibernation this month or next, hikers may spot them at the Devil’s Backbone or Red Mountain Open Space.

But contrary to what many people think, the rattlesnake is not itching to bite people.

It will strike if it feels threatened, but if people back away and show the snake they are no danger, it will likely slither on its way.

Rattlesnakes are cold-blooded carnivores that need their venom to hunt and to hunt, explained Rob Novak, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources education specialist.

The venom immobilizes their prey and helps them digest their food, he said.

“Venom is kind of like their shopping cart,” said Novak.

“It’s the way they collect their food. ... The snake really has no interest in wasting its venom on us. It takes a huge amount of energy to produce more.”

Added Steve Macko, a professor and researcher who specializes in snakes: “In Colorado the risk of being struck by lightning, in matters of magnitude, is a hundred times greater than being bitten by a rattlesnake. For that matter, being stung by a bee and having complications is more common.”

What is so cool about rattlesnakes?

Researcher and professor Steve Macko, M.D., offers some tidbits.

1. Rattlesnakes feed beautiful birds of prey including owls and other raptors.

2. The venom of poisonous snakes, including prairie rattlesnakes, is broken down into proteins and peptides used in medical research. Some is used in medication to control blood pressure and prevent blood clots.

3. Macko’s research led to determining that bitting is — and showing great promise in — battling breast cancer.

4. Rattlesnakes hibernate together deep enough below ground to stay warm. These hibernacula can have as many as 100 snakes in the winter, although ones of that scale are becoming more rare as people kill off the snakes.

5. The majority of rattle-snae bite victims are white men ages 18 to 30 who are most often handling the snake and under the influence of alcohol.

6. A rattlesnake’s forked tongue will detect chemical smells and tastes, allowing them to know where prey is with a great deal of precision.

7. Male rattlesnakes will engage in a “glorified shoving match” for the attention of a female. During mating season, the males will crawl belly to belly straight up, to at least half their height, and try to push the other down. The winner gets the girl, and the loser slinks away.