



OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD (OLAB) Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 25, 2014

5:00- 8:00 PM

Civic Center Municipal Bldg • Council Chambers • 500 E 3rd St., 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.

Members Present	
Carl Sorrentino	At-large
Ladonna Lee	At-large
Peter Kast	At-large
Suzan Fritchel	At-large
Trudy Haines	At-large
Gerry Horak	City of Fort Collins
Hugh McKean	City of Loveland
Nancy Wallace	Planning Commission
Paul Alaback	Town of Berthoud

Staff Present
Gary Buffington, Natural Resources Director
Kerri Rollins, Open Lands Program Manager
Charlie Johnson, Senior Land Agent
Alex Castina, Land Agent
Meegan Flenniken, Resource Program Manager
Sandy Werkmeister, Department Specialist
Travis Rollins, Open Space Operations Manager
Zac Wiebe, Fund Dev & Spec Proj Specialist
Jeffrey Boring, Resource Specialist

Members Absent	
Mary Banken	At-large
Steve Vessey	At-Large
Ward Nelson	Town of Estes Park

1. CALL TO ORDER /INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Peter Kast called the meeting to order. Kerri announced that Loveland has hired Rick Anderson. He has been in the open space business for many years, having worked his way up at Adams County and serving as the manager of the Open space program for several years. He retired, but seeing the Loveland opportunity, decided to lend a few years of his experience to the program. He was not able to make it tonight, but he will come to a future meeting.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT – none

3. AGENDA REVIEW – no changes

4. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF LAST MEETING MINUTES

Motion by Suzan Fritchel and second by Paul Alabeck to approve the August 28, 2014 meeting minutes as submitted in this month’s packet. Motion carried unanimously.

5. INFORMATION & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a) Kerri – Big Thompson Canyon Recreation & Conservation Plan has been awarded to [Logan Simpson Design](#), who has been a consultant for our master planning process and has been an integral part of the Big Thompson River Restoration effort as well. She reminded the board that this is a GOCO funded planning effort as part of their flood relief dollars.
- b) Kerri - Open Space Regional Board Summit meeting will be November 12 at the County Courthouse. Our November meeting will take place the same evening after the regional agenda.
- c) Zac – He and Kerri largely organized the [Colorado Open Space Alliance](#) conference, hosted by Eagle County this year and held at the beautiful Vail Marriott resort. It was one of the most successful conferences as far as attendance (over 270) and sponsorship. Many staff attended; several of them giving presentations.

- d) Zac reminded the board that we obtained a GOCO mini grant to supplement the grant for Pinewood improvements. The mini grant will cover environmental education components such as a natural playscape and an osprey viewing station. The contract has been executed and work can begin!
- e) Meegan said right now we have geo-pdfs (geo-referenced maps) that people can download to their device and use on our trails, with the right app. Cell service is not needed to use them. The challenge is that the app is public. Our GIS department is interested in test driving some County data in a private app developed by them [... so a team has been formed to work on a Larimer County Natural Resources Mobile app.]
- f) [KDVR/Jennifer Broome](#) did a segment on Devil's Backbone Open Space for her morning show.
- g) Kerri – We celebrated LCNR's 60th anniversary with the Board of County Commissioners (see poster, attached separately.) The poster (retro looking) has been very popular!
- h) The [2014 NoCo Nature Festival](#) is Saturday, September 27. The event will be hosted at the Fort Collins Nix Farm.
- i) Trudy Haines/Glen Colton will host the annual board holiday gathering. The date will be finalized soon.
- j) The Commissioners Annual Boards & Commissions reception is Monday, October 27, 4:30-6:00 PM at The Ranch Bar & Grill at the Budweiser Event Center. Expect a formal invitation with RSVP information in 1-2 weeks.
- k) Report from the Open Space Operations Manager – Q&A and highlights
 - Travis reported that the pre-hunt meeting for the 9 hunters selected for Red Mountain is this Saturday. The number of applicants fluctuates between 600-850 each year. This has been a great way to connect with the sportsmen community.
 - The person with the pit bulls at Devil's Backbone Open Space off leash was charged.
- l) Sales Tax Report from prior month – no questions

6. DISCUSSION & UPDATES

a) [Boulder County Open Space Agricultural Resources](#) Tour with the [Agricultural Advisory Board](#)

Kerri thought the tour was great, but staff have not had a chance to debrief. Kerri asked the Board members that attended to share what they thought.

- Suzan – Appreciated what the farmers had to say about their long term experience; that it took some time to work through the strife between private and open space farmers, government regulations and requirements, but overall very positive about it.
- Several like that there are incentives for planting organic.
- Paul – They [farmers] said one of the advantages of farming open space is that the lease money always goes back into the land to make it more productive. It is clear that agriculture would be very different or non-existent in Boulder County if not for the program. Of course, Boulder County has a tremendous amount of money.
- Kerri – Boulder County has the equivalent of 6/10 of a cent and they receive 27 million per year of which 22 million is for acquisition. Their County general fund covers most of the operations and management of properties.
- Ladonna – Interested that it sounded like, at some point, they had switched from giving the lease to the highest bidder. Rather, staff set a price point and then evaluate the applicant based upon their capacity, operation, experience and equipment.
- Paul – most common complaint by the farmers is the length of the lease (3 years) which isn't long enough for them to decide to invest in expensive equipment. Boulder County finds the lease time useful for evaluation, and since they have a waiting list for the program, they can refill the lease quickly if they need to terminate a lease or if someone just changes their mind. Paul also thought it they only choose really productive farms, nothing marginal, that will not be successful.

- Carl – Assumes there was a rough history, but they seem to be on a good path now. There were some farms that were 5th generation of a family working the land, which speaks highly to the County and families working together.
 - Kerri - They also strategize with the farmers to benefit all, for example, by storing grain for one year, waiting on a better price.
 - Nancy – They are willing to sell land to people for farming. They are not complete land barrens. Their water structures are amazing. They have more ditches & storage than we (DNR) has even thought about in Larimer County. It isn't enough water for their ag land individually, but it works with their water system.
 - Kerri - reminded the Board that they own 100 million in water rights for their 25,000 acres of agriculture land and they receive 27 million per year in revenue share (compared to our 4.7 million.) We will have to be very innovative in our program.
 - Trudy asked why Boulder County chose to buy land outright rather than using conservation easements to protect privately owned land.
 - Suzan & Kerri – responded that often someone is just wanting out. 80% of the property they buy is already being leased to someone else. Early on, Boulder County identified agriculture as a non-renewable resource and the program made a commitment to conserve it.
- b) **Open Lands Master Plan Update & Policies Review – Zac**
- Zac has received the first draft of the master plan from the consultant. He will send it to the Board, and was hoping for comments from the Board in one week, by Friday, Oct. 3. Anyone can still submit comments after, but he would like to incorporate Board comments before putting it out to the public.
 - Zac also presented the Board with a summary of changes he is making to polices that affect open spaces. Adoption of the plan may serve as an adoption of the policies that affect open spaces or, Kerri added that generally Gary Buffington will adopt the (operational) policies, with the exception of the Acquisition and Management Plan policies, which may be adopted by the Board and the Commissioners.
 - Zac added an info item relating to small grants - We received 12 applications. The sub-committee and Zac will begin site visits in October.
- c) **Corridor Properties discussion - Alex Castiono** updated the Board that the paired down list the board received is the result of the group (Loveland, Fort Collins, Larimer County and Legacy Land Trust) removing the properties that are not operating under a covenant, because changing them to a single owner with a conservation easement held by the two minority owners would not necessarily simplify the management situation. The paired down list is only the mixed owner properties operating under a covenant.
- d) **Regional trail connections and potential grant project partnerships - Jeffrey Boring** presented the proposal for two trail projects that will connect the Loveland and Fort Collins trails systems. He reiterated that both of these projects are partnerships between Larimer County, Loveland and Fort Collins, the result of multiple meetings pouring over maps and budgets. Jeffrey presented the proposed maps, budget and trails details to the Board. The Board received the presentation and it is available to the public by request to the department.
- Colorado Front Range Trail: 2.24 miles, concrete, 10' wide, connects FC's Fossil Creek Trail with Loveland's Recreation Trail, non-motorized, multiuse, all easements/land secured, no trailhead at this time. The need for a trailhead can be reviewed in the future if there are neighborhood issues.
 - i. For this particular project, North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization (NFRMPO), a regional transportation program that receives federal dollars for their Transportation Alternative Program (TAP), dedicated to non-motorized transportation.

There is a million dollars available, and they have encouraged us to apply for 450,000 of that money for this very significant project.

- ii. Kerri briefly explained the State's Recreational Trails Grants, which are funded by GOCO, the Colorado Lottery, the Federal Highway Administration's Recreational Trails Program and the U.S. Interior Department's Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) so when you apply you must be careful not to match GOCO dollars with GOCO dollars.
- BNSF Trail (a working title only, taken from a bike plan): 4.45 miles, concrete, 10' wide, connects 5 natural areas/open spaces (Cathy Fromme Prairie to Loveland Recreation Trail), non-motorized, multiuse, all easements/land secured, new trailhead.
 - i. GOCO announced a second Paths to Parks Trail grant cycle. Kerri explained that GOCO regularly touches base with the counties to see what they need. The last three years counties have asked for more money for trails (which is never part of the regular grant awards.) Construction prices have increased by almost 30% in the last year or two. For a long time we used \$350,000 per mile for concrete trails. Today that cost is running at an average closer to \$600,000 per mile.
 - ii. Kerri went over roles & responsibilities for this project: Larimer County will lead the grant application processes. If successful on funding, Loveland has asked Larimer County to bid the project as one project and oversee the construction. Fort Collins agreed.
- Jeffrey went over an optimistic timeline that could build both trails in 2016. This will depend on obtaining the funding and finalizing intergovernmental agreements (IGAs.)
- Kerri asked about site visits or a media tour. The board said they do not need a site visit of the BNSF trail, but a couple may be interested in a site visit of the Front Range trail connections. The Board supported the idea of a media tour about these two projects in October. Kerri will broach the idea with the partners.

7. EXECUTIVE SESSION: Pursuant to C.R.S. 24-6-402 (4)(a) for discussion regarding the purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer, or sale of any real, personal, or other property interest, at 6:40 PM, motion by Nancy Wallace that the Board move into Executive Session, second by Suzan Fritchel. Motion carried unanimously.

8. ADJOURN – Meeting adjourned at 7:15 PM.