



OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD (OLAB)

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 22, 2015

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

Paul Alaback	Town of Berthoud
Mary Banken	At large
Suzan Fritchel	At-large
Peter Kelly	At-large
Trudy Haines	At-large
Gerry Horak	City of Fort Collins
Carl Sorrentino	At-large
Nancy Wallace	Planning Commission

Staff Present

Gary Buffington, Director
Kerri Rollins, Open Lands Program Manager
Charlie Johnson, Senior Land Agent
Travis Rollins, Open Space Operations Manager
Meegan Flenniken, Resource Program Manager
Alex Castino, Land Agent
Zac Wiebe, Fund Development & Special Projects
Tim Meyer, Land Agent
Steve Gibson, Senior Ranger
Bob Loomis, Ranger

Members Absent

Jason Brothers	At-large
David Marvin	At-large
Hugh McKean	City of Loveland
Ward Nelson	Town of Estes Park

1) CALL TO ORDER / INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Bill Zawacki introduced himself; Bill is the chair of the Loveland Open Lands Advisory Commission and attended the meeting since Hugh McKean wasn't able to attend.

2) PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment

3) AGENDA REVIEW

4) REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF LAST MEETING MINUTES

Carl motioned to approve the minutes from September 24, 2015. Peter seconded and motion was approved unanimously.

5) INFORMATION & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Larimer County and partners have been recommended for funding through the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) Inspire initiative. The recommendation was approved by the full GOCO Board on 10/22. The project partners include the City of Ft. Collins, the Boys and Girls Club, Town of Wellington and City of Loveland.
- Kerri presented the Mountain to Plains project at the GOCO Board meeting on 10/22 to inform their upcoming "Protect" initiative grant cycle. Staff is considering partnership applications in the cycle with Fort Collins and Loveland.
- Twelve applications were submitted for the Small Grants for Community Partnering program requesting over \$20,000. The committee is currently doing site visits and will bring a funding recommendation to the November or January meeting. Carl and Mary commented on their enjoyment of the site visits.

- d. The [NOCO Bike and Walk Conference](#) is scheduled for November 5th at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley. The Governor and CDOT Director are planning to attend to present their vision for cycling in Colorado. Mark Fenton, a national Active Transportation Consultant and PBS Host will give the keynote speech and conduct a walking audit. Registration is required (see handout)
- e. Staff has been engaged in ongoing outreach for the [Laramie Foothills Bison reintroduction project](#) at Soapstone Natural Area and Red Mountain Open Space. A public tour will be held on 11/1. It filled up quickly with over 500 citizens planning to attend.
- f. New river gauges were installed along the Poudre River Trail at the County Road 13 bridge (near Windsor) and the McMurry bridge in Fort Collins (see photos). The gauges allow Poudre River Trail users to instantly measure flow and highlight the importance of flow for environmental, municipal and agricultural purposes. Larimer County served as the fiscal agent for this project and participates in the Poudre Runs Through It, the organization responsible for coordinating the project.
- g. A new segment of the Poudre River Trail is built. Larimer County partnered with the Town of Timnath to build a 0.6-mile segment of trail from the Wal-Mart east of I-25 to Stonefly Court. This section of trail utilizes the underpasses at Harmony Road and County Road 5 and is part of the GOCO River Corridor Initiative. A grand opening will be scheduled for spring/summer 2015.
- h. The new Restoration Ecologist, Danielle Cassidy-Levine, joined the department. Danielle brings a wealth of experience from her previous work for Boulder County Parks and Open Space.
- i. The plans for the river bank stabilization project at Lions Open Space have been finalized and sent to FEMA for review. The new design will slow water through the site to reduce energy and downstream impacts. Features such as rock veins and boulder clusters were recommended by the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) and Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW) and were incorporated into the design. Construction is expected later this year or early 2016. Mary clarified that a 404 permit was required.
- j. Ongoing work to remove Russian olive trees from the Three Bell I CE. The Colorado State Forest Service volunteers felled the trees and LCDNR volunteers dragged and chipped them and Larimer County DNR Weed staff painted the stems with herbicide. Everyone had a great time, dozens of these invasive plants were removed and there were no injuries.
- k. An application was submitted for the GOCO Youth Corps grant for four weeks of two crews to assist with trail construction at Hermit Park Open Space in 2016. Awards are made in December.
- l. Open Space Operations District Reports. Travis highlighted the Bison project and a staff presentation on hunting at the COSA conference. Also, the hunting program has begun at Red Mountain Open Space (RMOS) and the firewood program at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space continues to be popular and has been extended by two weekends. Trudy asked about the habitat partnership program. Meegan explained that it's a CPW program to reduce wildlife conflict. Travis also highlighted the grazing improvements at the Rawhide pasture at RMOS. Trudy asked for clarification of the term "smash and grab". Steve explained that thieves will break car windows and quickly steal visible objects. There has been recent success with catching suspects that have broken in to cars at Devil's Backbone and Eagle's Nest Open Spaces as well as Rocky Mountain National Park.
- m. Sales Tax Report from prior month – no comments
- n. The regional open space board meeting will be on November 18 at the Chilson Senior Center, Cherry room.

6) DISCUSSION & UPDATES

- a. Soderberg trailhead parking reconfiguration – Travis Rollins, Steve Gibson & Meegan Flenniken
Steve and Travis showed conceptual plans to replace the existing horse trailer parking spaces with car spaces and construct a separate lot for new horse trailer parking. Peter wondered if vehicle capacity could be increased, not understanding how this will alleviate capacity issues since the number of parking spots will not actually change. Kerri commented that a carrying capacity study may be completed to help inform any additional expansion. Paul commented that the carrying capacity from a social and resource perspective is needed first, this will inform the capacity. Gary added that there hasn't been a sentiment of crowding concerns from a social perspective, informed by our public outreach. Meegan then gave an overview of the public process. There was a public meeting on September 24 held at the trailhead. Twenty-five people attended, primarily neighbors. Neighbor concerns include increased traffic and illegal parking. Staff has drafted a document that outlines how these concerns will be addressed. Gary wondered if an additional seven parking spaces could be added to increase capacity. Meegan explained that the cost would increase significantly.

Nancy commented that staying with 30 spaces makes sense for the amount of work required to add more. Travis added that construction would take place in-house and due to weather and seasonal staff it would be great to begin soon. Trudy agrees that more could be added later, this plan seems like a cost effective way to proceed.

b. Future nature center & office building update – Kerri Rollins & Meegan Flenniken

Kerri showed slides describing the proposed building and mentioned previous presentations that have been given to OLAB, the City of Ft. Collins Land Conservation and Stewardship Board and the County Commissioners. The analysis of proposed locations has highlighted Fossil Creek Reservoir Natural Area (FCRNA) as the most feasible location. Trudy wondered if the new county building planned to be built in Loveland is a consideration. Kerri answered that the space is likely already spoken for and office space would have to be separated from the nature center in that scenario. Nancy suggested two buildings at FCRNA, the nature center in the proposed location and the office/visitor center closer to the road to minimize traffic to the reservoir and increase convenience to visitors. Gary commented that traffic on 392 is significant and a traffic light may be required. Charlie added that 392 will be increased to four lanes at some point in the future. A site visit for OLAB and the Ft. Collins Board is the next step, a meeting poll will be sent out soon. Kerri commented on feedback from previous presentations; The city would like a traffic, noise and pollution study to determine impact. BOCC advised considering airport encroachment. The nature center component has been consistently popular. Kerri also requested ideas on areas that haven't been considered. Trudy asked about the Strenge property but it is planned for gravel extraction for 10-15 years for road and bridge purposes before it could be considered. Trudy commented that separating the buildings makes a different discussion, including the new county building and thinks county general funds should be used. Peter wondered the status of site selection process. Kerri replied that after significant time and consideration, sites at Long View Farm and FCRNA were narrowed down and a deeper feasibility assessment and scoring exercise was completed. Long View Farm scored significantly lower resulting in the preferred location of FCRNA. Coyote Ridge Natural Area was suggested at a previous presentation and can be scored with the same criteria although speculatively is expected to score lower than FCRNA due to its lack of utility infrastructure and important viewshed. Trudy commented that the Coyote Ridge N.A. is a bad idea, primarily for viewshed impacts. Peter wondered about the River Bluffs Open Space area and mentioned that there are some developable sites. Staff answered that one challenge of that area is that there are GOCO funded conservation easements that would prohibit development. Paul is excited about the nature center and supports the FCRNA from that perspective along with the restored prairie component. He also agrees that two building makes sense to mitigate high traffic in the higher value natural areas. Travis pointed out that access to utilities is a strong consideration and FCRNA has good access. Carl discussed development near nesting areas and that the impact to birds seems minimal. Trudy thinks a nature center is a good idea but not an office building. She appreciates the openness and quiet at FCRNA while being close to town. Suzan and Mary agree that two buildings make sense. Peter asked if the funding is tied together for separate buildings. Staff replied that there are cost efficiencies with one building considering fundraising and the infrastructure required for two buildings.

7) ACTION ITEMS

a. Estes Valley Land Trust transaction costs – Seigfried Conservation Easement

Kerri described the transaction as a 28 acre land donation in the Estes Valley. The Estes Valley Land Trust has requested \$10,600 to help with transaction costs. **Suzan motioned that Larimer County contribute the funding, Carl seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously.**

8) EXECUTIVE SESSION: Susan moved to enter into executive session, pursuant to C.R.S. (24-6-402(4)(a) for discussion of the purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer or sale of any real or personal property interest. Mary seconded.

9) ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 7:39