

Larimer County Open Lands Advisory Board

The mission of Larimer County Department of Natural Resources is to establish, protect and manage significant regional parks and open lands providing quality outdoor recreational opportunities and stewardship of natural resource values. We are committed to fostering a sense of community and appreciation for the natural and agricultural heritage of Larimer County for present and future generations.

MINUTES

Scheduled times are subject to change.

Date: April 26, 2018

Time: 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Location: City Council Chambers, Civic Center Municipal Building, 500 E. 3rd St., Loveland, CO.

Contact: Please contact Emmy at ellisoea@co.larimer.co.us or 970-619-4462 if you are unable to attend.

Members		Staff		Guests
Carl Sorrentino	x	Alex Castino	x	
David Marvin	x	Charlie Johnson	x	
Gerry Horak	x	Gary Buffington	x	
Jason Brothers		Ken Brink	x	
Jeff Hindman		Todd Blomstrom	x	
K-Lynn Cameron		Meegan Flenniken	x	
Marilyn Hilgenberg	x	Steve Gibson		
Nancy Wallace	x	*Thomas Donnelly	x	
Peter Kelly	x	Chris Fleming	x	
Sherri Valentine	x	Lori Smith	x	
Suzan Fritchel	x	Sarah Watson	x	
Ward Nelson		Emmy Ellison (minutes)	x	

x = present

*commissioner

1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS – called to order 5:05 p.m.
2. PUBLIC COMMENT – none
3. AGENDA REVIEW
 - a. Moving 7a to under 7b.

4. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF LAST MEETING MINUTES

- a. Member question about item 7b (Organizational Chart) from last meeting, checking on updates. It was noted that direction from the County Commissioners is that the department name will not be changed. They decided to include the term “Open Space” in the Program Manager position title. Will hand out the updated Organizational Chart when it is ready. Gerry Horak moves to approve minutes, Nancy Wallace seconds, motion passed.

5. INFORMATION & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. Natural Resource events for this month: See <http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources>.
- b. To sign up for Open Lands Advisory Board minutes, go to <http://larimer.org/subscriptions.cfm>, enter your email, click ‘Subscribe,’ and then check the ‘Open Lands Advisory Board’ box.
- c. Larimer County wrapped up a renovation of the South Shore Campground at Carter Lake. The popular camping area was upgraded with additional electric campsites, new restrooms, resurfaced parking areas and improved boat ramp access. South Shore reopened to the public on Sunday, April 15 – Ken
- d. Natural Resources has selected Loveland mixed-media painter Amelia Furman as its 2018 Visual Artist. Amelia will spend the next year exploring Larimer County’s parks and open spaces and create a piece of art inspired by these scenic, protected places. Amelia graduated from Indiana Wesleyan University with a bachelor’s degree in art and has been a professional artist for the past 15 years. She has created commissioned pieces for numerous corporate and personal clients, including the new Elizabeth Hotel in downtown Fort Collins, and has showcased her award-winning paintings in galleries across the United States. View her work at www.ameliafurman.com and work by prior visual artists at www.larimer.org/naturalresources/photography-art/artist. Many thanks to Dave Marvin and Gerry Horak for serving on the selection committee! – Gary
- e. Trails staff have been working on improving/re-benching the Wild Loop Trail at Devil's Backbone Open Space where it has widened due to heavy use and become less sustainable (see photo F). They have also completed the new alignment/connection of the Sundance Trail in conjunction with the South Shore Campground renovations at Carter Lake (see photo’s D & E) of this partially ADA accessible trail – Meegan
- f. Staff finished applying soil amendments, seed and hydromulch at the Soderberg & Devil's Backbone trailheads to improve post-trailhead expansion revegetation efforts (see photo A) – Meegan
- g. Through a State grant, noxious weed brush stations that match a state-wide standard have been installed at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space & Soderberg trailheads (see photo B) – Meegan
- h. Construction of the 4-mile Long View Trail (connecting Cathy Fromme Prairie to Sunset Vista through Long View Farm Open Space) is going well and on schedule to open this summer (see photo C) – Meegan

- i. Plans for reconstruction of Forks Park and restoration of the Big Thompson River through Forks Park are finalized and construction is set for post high runoff/flows – Meegan
- j. In partnership with the Big Thompson Watershed Coalition, and with grant funds from the Colorado Water Conservation Board, Larimer County Natural Resources will conduct vegetation management of restoration projects implemented following the 2013 flood. This two-year, grant funded effort will ensure adaptive management and ongoing success of the 47 million dollar investment in these stream and riparian restoration projects – Meegan
- k. In partnership with CDOT, we are on track moving forward with river restoration and construction of the parking area at Forks Park in the Big Thompson Canyon this summer. The toilet that was in the south bank of the river post-flood was removed in mid-April and has been inspected and deemed re-usable, just needs some minor repair and cleaning! (see photo G) – Meegan
- l. Sales Tax Revenue Distribution Report – January and February’s distribution letters are included in the Electronic Packet. Last year’s reported numbers are still being used for the calculations and the contact at the Department of Revenue thinks the updated statistics will be available by the end of the month – Gary

6. UPDATES & REPORTS

- a. Open Space District Reports – Steve/Chris
 - i. Road maintenance at Hermit and Red Mountain in partnership with Road and Bridge, Hermit closed through today. Red Mountain and Horsetooth areas increased visitation, seeing increase in crime (vandalism in restrooms, iron ranger and gate vandalism), will be increasing patrols. Having success with trail cams and social media in locating criminals. Municipal courts.
 - ii. Big Thompson trailheads at capacity on weekends and some days during the week. New layout of district reports. Budget season for 2019. 50 bear boxes arrived and will be installed over the next two weeks. Camping season doesn’t start until mid-May. Hermit Park trailhead and day use areas will go out to bid this week, should be building this year. Done with FEMA this year.
 - iii. Member question about whether Larimer County will sell beetle kill wood. It was noted that they do not.

7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- a. RubinBrown Audit RFP proposal discussion – Gary/Todd
 - i. To hire an auditor: begins with Request for Proposal (RFP), they provide cost proposal, required to identify very specific needs (will not look at general program and give opinion). ‘Agreed-upon procedures’ from 1st paragraph means they perform a special review of something specific. Will be reviewing the ‘Help Preserve Open Space Initiative,’ revenues from sales tax created in 1995. 2nd paragraph is overall objective. 3rd paragraph details 6 tasks: 1) Confirm sales tax revenues to financial reports (going back to 1996 using County’s Comprehensive Annual Report information) 2) Confirm total distribution percentage to

- municipalities 3) Confirm distribution formula to municipalities 4) Confirm establishment of funds 5) Confirm distribution among County Funds 6) Confirm usage of County funds. Will take a sampling of projects, suggested 7 projects over 7 years (guaranteed record retention period).
- ii. Member question about frequency of audit. It was noted that County financial statements are audited yearly, however this specific audit on the resolutions is a first. Resolution does not require an audit. Driver is preservation of community trust in relation to the sales tax initiatives.
 - iii. Member question about auditor selection. It was noted that RubinBrown is the 3rd party auditor for the county, more manageable because they have already gone through the County financial statements, not going in cold. Auditors are periodically changed through bid process, RubinBrown is relatively recent.
 - iv. Member question about rationale for going beyond retention period. It was noted that a full look starting from the beginning of the sales tax was most useful. Have to start from beginning to verify the 70%/30% requirement.
 - v. Member question about whether the language of the tax ballot was double-checked in writing the RFP. It was noted that it was.
 - vi. Discussion of suggestions emailed from board member to Todd earlier in the day. Included request for identification and verification of how much of the 70% is going to regional parks. It was noted that getting into the detail of how much LTM is dedicated to park projects could be done but would be intensive. Can include parks vs. regional parks language in RFP. Will already be identifying regional park amounts in the 15% verification. Reservoirs are regional parks, can identify open space vs. reservoirs. Suggestion to include Hermit Park, need a consensus on whether it is open space or park. Auditor will not determine what is open space. How purchased is good indicator of classification. Clarification that the 70% is for acquisition and improvement, can be a park, open space or trail as ballot language states. The 15% park issue is not for anything that can be classified as a park, it is specifically and singularly for Carter Lake, Horsetooth, Flatiron and Pinewood. Hermit is not included in the 15% max because it is not a regional park. Can say how much of the LTM money was spent out of reservoirs, can be broken down by Hermit, Horsetooth, etc. Can bring the issue back for follow-up.
 - vii. Last month's LTM and Acquisition & Development expenses for last 5 years homework, any questions/comments. Member question about planning costs clarified by staff.
- b. Continued discussion of 2018 & 2019 CIP
 - i. Review criteria for setting priorities – Gary
 1. Member question about projects that were not funded. It was noted that some projects get pushed out. CIP is 90% of what LC wants to do in the next 5 years.
 - ii. Review potential projects and cost – Meegan/Ken

1. Updates on Capital Renewal and Capital Expansion. South Bay boat ramp, remove and replace, estimate higher than hoped, policy work, goal to build to 50-year standard. HT camper cabins, researching designs, goal is high-quality, dry camper cabin. Forks parking lot area, will get good product there, more of a park character, design will accommodate a school bus. AO connectivity, looking at it like a utility, locations are difficult, wind issues, re-alignment of microwave system, goal to improve reliability. Hermit Park trailheads, Long View Trail. Chimney Hollow moving along. Investigation study of Wastewater management, high operational costs, vault toilets, hiring specialized consultant outside the county for wastewater study, hauling waste, one truck per week, hoping to be more efficient. HTMOS management plan update. Satanka Bay and expanded parking. Biglandia, hoping to build group picnic site near south dam at Carter, add 20 or so sites there, possible pavilion. Primary hubs of operation for next 5 years are HT and AO. AO renovations proceeding.
2. Updates on Capital Expansion and Capital Renewal projects from CIP. River Bluffs OS starting this summer, \$1.5 million in grant funding, leveraging \$360k of Open Space Sales Tax. Hoping to increase amount of funds leveraged, used to be for every \$1 OS Sales Tax spent, \$1.70 returned. Glade Park River restoration, have \$20k earmarked this year for design (about 30% designed), CPW got money for cement spill in river and may earmark it for this project which could save that \$200k and finish project next year. Historic Structure assessment, earmarked \$50k each year for 5 years to stabilize system buildings, some being used for volunteer force at Hermit's cabin. At conservation easement in Hermit, LC is removing 2 cabins from wetland area, have to be out by the end of this year, Chris and staff are working on removal plan and access road study for replacement. HT Reservoir boat docks, plastic casing wears out faster than the metal, replacing, Mike Rossi investigating better design to avoid recurring replacement. Heavy equipment, county fleet program, put vehicles into fleet (trucks, trailers, backhoes, dump trucks, etc.), thought leasing would be easier, need a few pieces of equipment for items that should be on hand, \$30k credit with fleet.
3. Member question about changes in CIP from last month to current. It was noted that it is a continuing process that will be finished soon.
4. Commissioner question about the return on investment on the camper cabins. It was noted that the investment is expected to be recouped within 5-7 years. Can provide formal worksheet on that if requested. State study showed high return on cabins. Discussion of campsites vs. cabins. Space at HT is major constraint.



5. Commissioner question about return on investment on boat ramps. It was noted that because there is no current launch fee, the return is in the ability to attract visitation.
 6. Commissioner question about where the revenue generated by cabins goes. It was noted that if it is generated at the reservoirs, LC is contractually obligated to spend it at the reservoirs.
 7. Member question about how it is decided to split costs between lottery and sales tax. It was noted that parks is eligible, sharing funding sources, haven't used much for parks in last 20 years. If board wants the 15% number to be changed, they need to communicate that to the staff in order to plan appropriately. Eligibility does not necessitate approval.
 8. Reiteration of the resolution language for clarifying confusion.
 9. Member comment that the board is not inclined to approve money to be spent on parks. HT visitor center vs. cabins, primary users. It was noted that it is important to look at who pays the sales tax and that there are many active outdoor enthusiasts buy expensive boats and campers and expect that tax to come back in a way that benefits them. 82% is a huge number of supporters. Polling data was collected regarding how voters wanted the sales tax spent, recollection that the numbers were even, will confirm that.
 10. Proposal from Todd to develop the CIP with staff recommendations and will track every dollar in reservoir parks allocated to sales tax and that shall not exceed 10% of revenue from sales tax over the same 5 years. Discussion of ballot language and possible percentages both historically and moving forward. Concern for public disappointment if \$0 was spent for reservoir parks. Trying to find reasonable target.
 11. Member question about possibly going to voters for more money due to concern that there is not enough. It was noted that that concern may not be legitimate. New tax change to 35% has to do with the increasing costs of operating and maintaining increasing amount of open spaces. LTM has to grow as well.
 12. Member comment that the open space tax is not exclusive to the acquisition of open space. Have an obligation to spend up to 15% on parks and are not doing harm by staying within that framework. If parks were required to be managed to break even, the public may not react well to increased fees when they have already contributed to the sales tax. Not all about acquisition.
- iii. Final comments: have money this year to possibly purchase open space land up north and only park expansion ever purchased by LC. Will be doing some projections. Have never turned down an open space that LC wanted. Have great partners. CIP will be presented to commissioners for 2019-2023. The 2018 year is included but is very flexible because it is new. All capital expenses are included in budget.

- iv. Member question about future years in CIP, from year 21 on the numbers are variable, why drop it to that amount and will that change on yearly basis? It was noted that the 21-23 years are still dynamic and will change. Factors that will affect the numbers: fee study this year (hiring a consultant, haven't raised fees for 8 years), could charge fee at Devil's Backbone, GOCO grants and cycles.
- c. Follow up on Annual Sales Tax Review – Gary/Lori
 - i. Discussion of Annual Sales Tax slideshow. 1st slide is current ballot language and percentages (70, 15, 15). 2nd slide is actual, showing 73% spent on Acquiring Interest, Protecting and Improving Open Space, Natural Areas, and Wildlife Habitat and Trails; 21% on Cost of Operating, Maintaining and Administering of Open Spaces; 5% on Improving Existing Regional Parks including Carter, Horsetooth, Flatiron and Pinewood; and 1% on Cost of Operating, Maintaining and Administering of Regional Parks. Total Sales Tax Expenses from 1996 to 2017 is \$76,985,000. \$56.3 million spent on Open Space Acquisition and Development, \$3.7 million spent on Improving Existing Regional Parks including Carter, Horsetooth, Flatiron and Pinewood. Final slide is the Sales Tax Extension for 2019 through 2043. Changes include: Improvement, Management, Maintenance and Administration of Open Spaces, Natural Areas, Wildlife Habitats, Parks and Trails at 50%; Acquiring Interest and Protecting Open Space, Natural Areas, Wildlife Habitat, Parks and Trails AND Restoring and Enhancing Native Plant and Animal Communities and Other Habitat Related Restoration at 35%; Acquiring Interest and Protecting Open Space, Natural Areas, Wildlife Habitat, Parks and Trails AND Restoring and Enhancing Native Plant and Animal Communities and Other Habitat Related Restoration OR Improvement, Management, Maintenance and Administration of Open Spaces, Natural Areas, Wildlife Habitats, Parks and Trails AND/OR Improvements of Carter Lake, Horsetooth Reservoir, Flatiron Reservoir and Pinewood Reservoir at 15%.
 - ii. Hoping for target percentage number for parks from OLAB. Member comment that the number should be based on something particular.
 - iii. Great conversation and glad to have some direction, will develop further information.

8. ACTION ITEMS – none

9. OTHER BUSINESS

- a. Program Manager hiring process, have 6 applicants, Todd, Gary, Charlie, K-Lynn, Pete, Marilyn, Russell all involved, 3rd week of May to start interviews.

10. NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED: May 24, 2018 at City Council Chambers, Civic Center Municipal Building, 500 E. 3rd St., Loveland, CO.

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION: Pursuant to C.R.S. (24-6-402(4)(a)) for discussion pertaining to purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer, or sale of any real or person property interest. David Marvin motions to enter Executive Session, Suzane Fritchel seconds, motion passed at 7:10 p.m.

12. ADJOURN – 7:28 p.m.

Included in PDF:

- Agenda
- Photos related to info items
- Sales Tax Revenue Distribution Report
- Open Space Operations District Reports
- Sales Tax Review presentation slides
- CIP 2018-2023
- Acquisition & Development sheet

Attached Separately:

- Minutes of last meeting
- News articles
- Executive Session materials

This meeting will be recorded and archived according to law. Votes require a quorum.
Public can view agenda and minutes at:

http://legacy.larimer.org/boards/minutes/openlands_advisory_board.cfm

