



LARIMER COUNTY OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, April 23, 2009 – 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Loveland Library

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:

Nancy Wallace	Trudy Haines
Brian Hayes	Bill Newman
Ted Swanson	Don Griffith
Sue Sparling	Jean Carpenter

Staff:

Charlie Johnson	Rob Novak
Kerri Rollins	Commissioner Kathay Rennels
Gary Buffington	Commissioner Tom Donnelly
K-Lynn Cameron	Justin Scharton
Sue Burke	Jeffrey Boring
Jerry White	

Absent:

Ben Manvel	Jeff Hindman
Bob Streeter	John Ericson

Chair, Nancy Wallace called the meeting to order at 5:11 pm. All staff and members of the board introduced themselves to the visiting public.

Changes to minutes: Bill Newman - pg 5 reference to ‘CBB’ should be Estes Park Convention & Visitors Bureau (Estes Park CVB)

Jean motioned to approve the February meeting minutes (since the March meeting was snowed out) with the above change, Sue seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

INTRODUCTIONS

Board introduced themselves to Small Grants recipients and the audience.

PUBLIC COMMENT - none

INFORMATION

- Rob Novak was selected as the Volunteer Manager of the Year by DOVIA for his outstanding work with volunteers at Larimer County!! Great job, Rob and very deserving. DOVIA presented the award on April 9.
- Meegan is on maternity leave through July. April 22, 2009 is the baby’s birthday. Masen is a hefty 9 lb baby girl.
- The Parks Board approved the attached staff recommendation for the Hayden Subdivision at Drake in the Big Thompson Canyon.



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- Funding for the County Forester and Pine Beetle. With pine beetle issues at the forefront of forest management and media attention, we approached the County Commissioners on April 14th to discuss forest management. As a result they approved full funding for the county forester to address these issues in 2009. Commissioners also approved funding for a new sort yard in Red Feather. Thanks to Tom & Kathay!
- Steve Johnson and Tom Donnelly toured Red Mountain Open Space and the Mountains to Plains Project on 4/7/2009.
- The Open Lands Visual Artist of the Year has been selected. Diane Findley from Fort Collins has been chosen as the 2009 Open Lands program Visual Artist of the Year. Dianne is a painter who is very involved with the local art community and we are very excited to be partnering with her this year on her pieces and education program. She will be helping out at the Red Mountain grand opening with a painting demonstration.
- The Colorado Coalition of Land Trust's Annual Policy Conference was held in Denver March 18th-20th. Conference highlights included updates on progress made since House Bill (HB) 1353 was implemented, including the partnership of the Division of Real Estate and Department of Revenue, the State certification process, and HB 1014 that provided funding for the Land Trust and local government certification process. Numerous sessions on open space funding, stewardship of Conservation Easement programs, becoming Land Trust Alliance accredited and numerous networking opportunities.
- Bob Ramsay, donor of land for the Ramsay-Shockey Open Space, as well as \$250,000 towards construction of our offices, passed away on 3/11/2009. He also donated \$500,000 toward purchase of Ramsay-Shockey OS and help build trails and a trailhead.
- The Education Program is up 200% this quarter as compared to this time last year regarding the number of programs offered, and the number of people attending! Eagle watches at Fossil Creek, and moonlight hikes have been tremendously popular.
- Red Mountain Open Space – Crews have started work on the trailhead, education sign panels have been ordered and everything is still within budget and on schedule to be ready for the 6/6 opening.
- The prescribed fire at Devil's Backbone has been postponed to fall due to unfavorable weather conditions.
- The County Special Event process is now online. The Departments special event permitting process has now been merged with the County's process. All events happening at our parks and open spaces will now go through the County process, but will still be subject to Department review and approval.
- Staff is drafting a commercial use policy for open spaces that will be brought to OLAB for comment.

PRESENTATIONS

- **Open Lands Program Small Grant Awards Presentation** – Sue provided a background on the history of the SGP since inception in 1998 and thanked the subcommittee of the Board who assisted in selecting award recipients; Jean, Sue and Trudy. Recipients themselves took a few minutes to discuss their project while Commissioners Tom Donnelly and Kathay Rennels presented them their checks. A summary of recipients and their projects are in the April packet.

Commissioner Rennels noted that the Small Grants Program is a way to get the Help Preserve Open Spaces sales tax dollars on the ground, and told recipients to thank themselves as it is the money they voted for coming back to them. This money is a seed that they grow. Commissioner Donnelly also thanked the group saying it was a pleasure to learn about their projects.

BOARD COMMENT-Items not on the agenda

- K-Lynn announced her plans for the future. She has been with the County since 1983 as a parks planner (26 years!). She worked on the parks master plan (1993) which recommended dedicated funding for an open space program. Eventually, this vision came true and she was hired in 1995 to run the County's Open



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Lands Program. She has made amazing strides, accomplishing a program that is self-sustaining, and widely recognized around the state. She announced that it is time for her to move on after the grand opening of Red Mountain, near the middle of June. Working with the Open Lands Advisory Board has been a highlight of her career, and without them this program could not have accomplished the things it has, preserving the special places of Larimer County. The tax dollars need to go to the things the voters approved, and it is the charge of this board to make sure that happens. We need to provide for recreation opportunities, but we also need to preserve the resources and enhance them. This is another charge of the Board. The next time we go back to the voters we need to make sure there is no chance that it won't pass. It is a big responsibility of the Board to make sure this happens.

Kathay added that is a period of sadness and excitement, because she knows K-Lynn is not going away. K-Lynn has done great things, and former board member Pete Salg is a good example of someone who changed their sentiments once they learned more about the Open Lands Program. K-Lynn has set an incredibly high bar for open space in the State of Colorado. K-Lynn helped landowners to keep their easements, and went to the legislature to testify about the tax credit program. K-Lynn deserves to go on and do great things. Charlie J added staff have benefited from her leadership and character. Trudy thanked her for all the years of service and said she would be side by side with her working on the passage of the next tax. Nancy said we have so much to be grateful for in Larimer County and the open lands tax is a big part of that, and the struggles we went through to get there was spearheaded by K-Lynn's leadership. Several other Board members voiced their appreciation for her work.

ACTION ITEMS

- **Proposal for determining Level of Service and facility development on open spaces as part of the Management Planning Process** – K-Lynn introduced the topic and said that this is the second time the Board seen this proposal. She asked how much detail the Board wanted her to go into. We are looking at changing the first step of our management planning process and we have added a section to our evaluation process about what is legally required when developing facilities. For example, at Soderberg what was a required improvement? Paved roads were required by the county because of the location of the trailhead with other paved roads. Other examples are in the packet. Another change is the levels of development, ie levels 1-3, indicative of distance to amenities, expected visitation, etc. This will be now be identified at the management plan level which will help lesson “surprises” when facility development begins. Sue asked at the legal requirement stage that we have some type of certified document that says what we need to do before we buy it. She cited Hermit Park as an example of something that was not well planned for ahead of time, and there were too many surprises after the property was purchased. K-Lynn responded that we could estimate the cost of facility development prior to acquisition and that would only be able to be an estimate. Commissioner Rennels said that when you enter in to an agreement it would be good to know ahead of time, but she would hate to miss out on a project because of these costs. If you are building a large facility like Wal-Mart it is a different story. In projects like this, partnerships can form and communities can grant leeway. She hopes future costs never sway the decision for protection of a valuable piece of property like Hermit Park. Be very careful, protecting the land is what this Board is for. Protecting this Board is what the Commissioners are for. Jean clarified “legally required improvements, if it reflected some sort of minimum or basic standard. At least adding “anticipated” in front of LEGAL REQUIREMENT would help. Nancy noted that Bob Streeter provided supporting comments, even though he is not here.

Jean motioned to approve the amended document with the condition of adding “anticipated” in front of “legal requirement” as stated above. Sue seconded and the motion passed unanimously.



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FINANCIAL REPORT

- Gary reviewed the new Capital Development & Acquisition Summary spreadsheet. Changes from last time this was seen include Hermit Park, \$30,000 for Camp Area 2 in 2009 and \$50,000 in 2010 to move 2 cabins in the wetlands and replace portable restrooms in the camper cabin area that is required by the Health Department. Gary requests the Board to recommend approval for this added amount. Other changes include a \$10,000 funding increase for the Small Grants Program, and \$100,000 more for future office space, making office space a total of \$200,000 dollars. Current thought is to create new office space at the current Horsetooth office site. Gary said there is potential for this money to be matched by Parks dollars. Also added was a line item for resource projects. He would like to have a conversation with the board to change the 70/30 percent ratios to get \$10-\$20,000 for resource projects. Gary noted the spreadsheet reflects a positive balance since our meeting last month and this is due to stimulus money coming in for the River Bluffs project.

K-Lynn noted that the City of Fort Collins has said we could continue to use Fossil Creek office space for free, with no end date, as they currently have no plans to use it. It is important for the Board to know this before opting to allocate dollars. Ted asked about the certainty of the potential matching funds coming from Parks. Gary said he'd have to take it to the Parks Board for their recommendation. Gary said that bids have been good for parks master planned facility development projects and that about \$100,000 has been saved. The Parks Board will need to recommend additional master planned projects to be used for the savings. The parks master plan calls for a new office building at Horsetooth. The current modular office, which staff has already outgrown, would be replaced with a new building. Trudy asked for clarification on how costs are broken down, relative to how many open space vs. parks staff are housed there. Gary said that we will need to look at this in the future prior to finalizing the funds.

Nancy asked if Hermit Park Camp Area 2 had gone to bid. Gary said no, he trusted our outstanding construction manager, Todd Juergens to negotiate directly with Connell for a good price. She asked what would happen if OLAB recommended that the \$30,000 not be allocated to the Hermit Park campground. Gary said 15-20 campsites would not be completed for the summer camping season, there could be a loss of over \$20,000 in revenue in 2009 and the GOCO grant would be in jeopardy with their dollars only being used to construct a road.

He recalled an earlier comment from Bill who had said that Rocky Mountain National Park won't be able to open about 100 campsites due to campground closures associated with the pine beetle. Gary said because these conditions in the Estes Valley exist, the campsites in Campground Area 2 will be very popular. Jean confirmed there are 38 sites in Camp Area 1, and opening Camp Area 2 would about double the camping capacity at Hermit Park, therefore doubling the revenue generation. Don confirmed that if we waited on this would it cost more down the road to remobilize. Nancy never thought that the Open Lands Program (OLP) would be involved in campground construction. The public never intended or thought that this would happen and is outside the purview of the OLP. Hermit Park is a creeping case of more and more money. She hopes it doesn't keep happening, but once you get started, it's started. She is frustrated with yet another expenditure that is costing more money, and we need to guard against that for future issues. The public likes Hermit Park and she is not arguing that, but the money is going towards things it was never intended for. She wanted that on the record because it is a near and dear issue to her heart. Gary wanted to clarify that \$50k is for 2010 and \$30k is for 2009. The \$50k in 2010 is for moving 2 cabins out of the wetland and restrooms for the cabins. Ted said he couldn't agree more with Nancy. It has come up in a rush, and it's now tied our hands in ways we didn't anticipate. Once we start we can't really stop. That said, he would approve the \$80k. Trudy said we would have been crazy not to preserve Hermit Park, but we can say yes or



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no to campsites. Nancy said no campsites, no revenue. K-Lynn said it was originally a partnership deal with Parks that would be shared. It just hasn't happened in the way we hoped it would. Gary said he only agreed to the shared operations piece. The capital piece was not shared as parks didn't have the money. Gary wants a consensus to proceed with \$30k to finish Camp Area 2. Trudy recommends he goes to the Parks Board for the \$30k. Don said he agrees with Gary, in for a penny in for a pound, and even though campsites are not in the Open Lands purview the citizens of Larimer County will benefit from giving a full \$80k. Brian recommends the \$80k for the campground and the cabins, with hope the revenue is going to be there. He would like to hear more on how reservations are going as he looked at July and it looked quite free. Jean would like to get it open. She would vote for the \$80k and put the squeeze on Parks. Sue said she would support the \$80k and confirmed with Gary that he already has contracts on the \$30k that confirms that costs would not go up. Bill would approve \$80k. Gary talked about potential revenue going towards Hermit Park if the County takes over the Estes Park campgrounds. Trudy wants to know why we charge \$85 for out of county and \$65 for in county, she says we should charge out of county people more and they would pay it. Gary said that he agrees with that concept, however, Hermit Park is still being discovered and until that happens, it would be unwise to raise prices especially in this economy. Don said it is an important concept if Larimer County residents get a discount and out of county residents pay more.

Nancy said that any discussions about the future office building need to come to OLAB before any commitments are made, before there is any urgency. Gary agreed.

Nancy said that given the new structure of the OLP, it would be a really good idea to have the chief ranger attend these meetings. They could then hear the board directly as to their concerns, which is a lot different than hearing it from top down. There is so much discussion about rangers, and their expanding duties that it would be good to have him here. Gary said this would be Travis Rollins, who is the manager that oversees open space operations.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- **Volunteer Strategic Plan** – Kerri updated the Board on the progress of the strategic planning for the Volunteer program. A second facilitated session was held mid-April and included all staff that work with volunteers plus volunteers from many aspects of the Department. Trudy again represented the Open Lands Board and Linda Knowlton represented the Parks Board. Outcomes from this session has provided staff with concrete ways to fulfill the vision “To create and sustain the most sought after volunteer opportunities in Northern Colorado that meets the needs of LCDNR, its visitors, and the natural resources it protects.” Kerri expects the plan will be in rough draft by July.
- **River Bluffs Archaeological and Funding Update** – Jeffrey handed out development phase maps. River Bluffs Open Space (RBOS) is 160 acres on the east of I-25 at CR3 and CR32. The Poudre River Trail ends at RBOS after coming 22 miles from Greeley. It will be over 42 miles to Fort Collins if we can connect it. We were given \$600,000 from the stimulus package to build the underpass (Bob will be pleased that we will not be putting a penny of open space tax dollars in to it). We also got \$500k from State Parks State Trails program to build the trail, trailhead and underpass. We will be asking them if we can redirect \$180k that was slated for the underpass to now improve the road widening and paving required for the trailhead.

Now the location of the trailhead may also have to move due to the discovery of a potential Native American burial site. We have slated \$10,000 to perform a shovel test at the site. If evidence is found, the trail route and trailhead will need to move to the area in pink on the map. This would require us to build a bridge across the Poudre that we had not planned, but since we saved over \$600,000 on the underpass, this



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should not be an issue. Since we plan for the trail to travel northeast from the property, we would likely have needed a bridge in the future anyway. Additionally, the bald eagle nest is on the southeast side of the adjacent property so we have a limited timeframe (August, September and October of each year) to build the facilities as most of them are within the buffer area around the nest. There will be a public meeting about the road improvements and updates to the project in July.

- **Site Themes for open spaces** – Rob showed a Power-point presentation. Rob is proposing creation of design standards where every document is not made from scratch so it is more professional, and easy for everyone to use. It would have pre-selected colors, fonts and graphics to help us give visitors a structure, better connect them to our areas, gives us a visual identity, and makes our products more consistent. Banners and site themes are becoming the industry standard. This could apply to any and all media we produce. The process to accomplish this will be long, but it will make everyone jobs easier.

Nancy likes the overall idea and it helps to have the continuity, and she commended Rob for pursuing it. Everyone agreed.

Discussion particular to the proposed 3 site themes for Red Mountain Open Space (RMOS) ensued. 1 = Life on the edge; 2 = Diversity on a Living Landscape; 3 = The past meeting the present where the mountains meet the plains. Students in the audience were asked their opinions and picked “Life on the Edge”. More discussion ensued about the connotations of each and which were more thought provoking and which were more descriptive of RMOS. Rob will rework 1 and 3 for the Board to review.

- **Small Grants Program (SGP) expansion proposal** – Trudy, Nancy and Sue are on a subcommittee to look at expanding the SGP in to a “Community Partnership Program”. We will keep on doing what we’re doing but also expand it. We want to partner with others in the community and do a better job in connecting people to the land. It is time to look at the program because when it was originally developed we were in the acquisition mode and now we want to connect people to the lands we’ve protected. Kathay asked if we are really looking at something that connects communities. Should we require/encourage partnerships between community partnerships, i.e get City of Fort Collins money, Lions Club volunteers, material donations from local businesses, etc. Trudy agrees that projects like those will get more points, etc. Ted asked if we should just limit it to non-profit agriculture, as suggested in the draft, if we are really trying to reach out. He would really like to see the non-profit requirement go away. Don said that could be sorted out in the review process too. The Board agreed that the expansion is moving in the right direction.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Gary discussed his report that was included in the packet. The Commissioners gave about \$70k to fund a position and a collection site for mountain pine beetle. He hopes volunteers can be used to go out and ID and tag trees. May 4 is the Board of Commissioners hearing date for the recommendation of the Parks Board regarding the Big Thompson parcels.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Pursuant to (24-6-402(4) (a) C.R.S. Purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer or sale of any real or personal property interest, Ted motioned to enter into executive session. Sue seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned by Nancy Wallace at 8:40 pm.