



## LARIMER COUNTY OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, January 26, 2012 5:00 - 8:00 p.m., Loveland Municipal Building, 500 E 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.*

Present:

Peter Kast	At-large	Nancy Wallace	Planning Commission
John Ericson	Town of Estes Park	Mary Banken	At-large
Steve Vessey	At-large	Hugh McKean	City of Loveland
Jeff Hindman	Town of Berthoud		

Staff Present:

Kerri Rollins	Open Lands Manager	Gary Buffington	Director
Charlie Johnson	Land Agent	Travis Rollins	Open Lands Operations Manager
Meegan Flenniken	Resource Stewardship Manager	Zac Wiebe	Natural Resource Technician

Absent:

Gerry Horak	City of Fort Collins	Don Griffith	At-large
Trudy Haines	At-Large	Suzan Fritchel	At-large
Patricia Brennan	At-large		

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:09 pm.

**REGULAR MEETING**

- Approval of the meeting minutes from November 9, 2011

**Nancy motioned to approve the November 9 minutes, John seconded and the motion passed unanimously.**

- Review Agenda and enclosures

**PUBLIC COMMENT: Items not on the agenda.**

**INFORMATION:**

- RSVP's for Larimer County Suite at The Ranch for the Eagles vs. Idaho Hockey Game on 2/15/2012. The suite will accommodate a maximum of 16 people, so get your RSVP in early to reserve a spot!  
Invite Steve
  - 2011 Raptor Report – Meegan updated the Board, see handout. Travis commented that there are 30-40 bald eagles at Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space this time of year.
  - Response to public comment from October meeting – attached
- Kerri reminded the Board about the OLAB response to Joanna Darden, the county won't be taking any action. John commented that the letter was distributed to Estes Park officials and Joanna has moved on to another topic.
- Association for Responsible Development (ARD) panel in Estes Park – Kerri, Mary from EVLT, and a City of Boulder Open Space representative assisted on a panel as the group considers an open space tax. The purpose of the group is to create a funding mechanism for wildlife movement corridors. Mary described it as an exploratory effort and Kerri did a good job of informing the community of the types of things Larimer County is doing, it was very useful. Kerri commented that the panel wanted a hard and fast definition of open space. There were about 60 people in attendance and a very positive response.



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- Artist of the Year reception was 1/13 and Jim Digby's piece is displayed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Courthouse. One volunteer for Artist of the Year subcommittee is needed - commitment is a few hours total in Feb at a meeting to review applications and select an artist for 2012. Meegan commented that it's worth visiting the courthouse to view the piece, a lot of detail comes out in the print. She also explained that the selection committee consists of a member of both the Parks and Open Lands Boards, last year's artist and a member of the community. She solicited an OLAB member and John volunteered.
- Hermit Park OS updates:
  - All of the construction is completed for the Hermit's Hollow campground renovation project. The only component left is the vault toilets, which should be installed by the spring. The campground turned out amazing! Staff is very proud of this project and would love to show it off- please advise if you would like a tour!
  - Hermit Park Open Space is closed Dec. 20th until March 1st.
  - With all of the snow, staff has been able to burn a lot of the slash that was piled up from the forestry project, 50+ piles and counting.
  - Volunteer camphosts are already committed for the 2012 season.
  - Field Manager pilot program was a success and staff will be operating the 2012 season with a full implementation of this program to test its feasibility for the entire department.
  - Staff will be investigating what it will take, financially as well as labor-wise, to manufacture our own bear proof boxes for the campgrounds. Staff is looking at what all is out there and has been talking with RMNP on what success they have had with the system they are using.
  - Will have final revenue numbers and a full report from Hermit Park OS in March. Gary thanked Mary for her work on the campground project.
  - Kerri reminded the board about the two projects that DNR is submitting grant applications for, one for the Kruger Rock trailhead, the other to redevelop the Kruger Equestrian Campground.
- Heron Lakes Phase I closed 12/28 with all partners attending – yeah! All partners attended the closing and a meeting about phase 2 will take place next week.
- Friends of Colorado's Outdoors (FOCO) and lottery funding. Kerri commented that the constitution for lottery can only be amended in even years and there is much talk about redirecting lottery dollars. The FOCO group is looking to gather information about community impacts from the lottery via a survey that's been distributed.
- PIN draft (60%) is being reviewed, will go to the advisory commission next week, the final rollout will be the evening of March 7<sup>th</sup>, OLAB and the media is invited.
- Report from the Open Lands Operations Manager - See handout
  - Attended regular Agricultural Advisory Board and Habitat Partnership Program meetings
  - Installed concrete base for automated pay station at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space. Visitors will be able to use a credit/debit card and it will greatly reduce staffing costs. If it goes well, it'll expand to other areas. Gary commented that it's a solar powered unit and works off a wireless antenna that goes straight to the bank. Steve clarified that an annual pass still is allowed.
  - On line Red Mountain hunting applications process begins February 1<sup>st</sup>. Charlie clarified that it's \$10 per application.

### Patrol-

- Ranger Zach Cook begins Adam's County LE Academy on January 17th
- Hired a 400 hour intern to assist operations while Zach is gone
- Rangers searched for and found two overdue hikers at Horsetooth Mountain
- Extensive vandalism done at Horsetooth Mountain trail head with paint balls



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- Mountain bike wreck at Devil’s Backbone, patient was transported by Thompson Valley ambulance with a dislocated shoulder

### **Maintenance-**

- River Bluff’s bathroom was closed and winterized
- Maintenance/project crew finished work at River Bluff’s on Fossil Creek restoration project
- Crew completed major week-long clean up of Red Mountain Open Space, over \$1,200 worth of metal was removed from the property and recycled
- Completed drainage improvement work at Red Mountain school house. Peter asked about the goal for the school house. Meegan answered that it’s been re-roofed and a company that restores old buildings came to evaluate it. It’s not likely to fall down but public can’t go into it without some improvements. The long term plan is to make sure it doesn’t deteriorate further. They also looked at moving it but it was cost prohibitive. Kerri asked about the requirements of the conservation easement. Meegan commented that it’s a bit of a gray area. The Ft. Collins Museum feels that the historical context can be where it’s located and staff prefers to leave it in place/context.
- Completed Red Mountain trailhead work on drainage issues
- Meegan updated the board on the last phase of the restoration work at the Indian Creek portion of Devil’s Backbone Open Space. 50 ac on the west side of the property was burned with spraying to follow. The Nature Conservancy is helping execute the burns.
- To sign up for Parks Advisory Board minutes go to <http://larimer.org/subscriptions.cfm> put in your email and click ‘subscribe’, then check “Parks Advisory Board” box
- Natural Resource Events for February. See website <http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources>

### **DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

- Annual Reports from Cities and Towns – Johnstown, Windsor, Fort Collins  
John Franklin, Town Planner for Johnstown, gave an update. He expressed appreciation for the funds they’ve received, a little over \$250k. Their parks, recreation, trails and open space master plan forecasted the need for a regional trail along the Big Thompson corridor but that area hasn’t been annexed yet. There are no projects planned this year but they are looking to annex and work on trail corridors in the future. John also commented that Johnstown is happy to be a part of the regional open space study. Peter asked if there would be any easy connection from the future planned trail to the Poudre River Trail. John answered that it’ll be difficult. Steve clarified that Johnstown’s portion of the sales tax revenue must be spent in the Larimer County portion of town.

Wade Willis, Parks and Open space manager for Windsor, explained Windsor’s fund balance, see handout. They anticipate using the funds for three projects, see handout. He also expressed appreciation for the funding.

Mark Sears updated the board on the City of Ft. Collins projects, see handout. Their primary focus is maintaining and improving the services they provide and focusing on stewardship. Peter asked if the Soapstone parcels referenced in the handout are owned by the State Land Board. Mark answered no; it’s an 80 acre homestead. The owner lives out of state, has never been to the property, but doesn’t want to sell.

John Stokes commented on Ft. Collins’ major plans and explained the change in department. The changes have affected his role because he used to manage the Natural Resources, which included several other programs that will now be under a new division called Sustainability Services. He’s excited to spend more time working on Poudre river issues and his new role as the director of the newly named Natural Areas Department. One of the needs that he’s perceived is someone that serves as a connector between city internal efforts for the river. While he represents the environmental and recreation aspects of the river, there are lots of interests in the Poudre. He



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also mentioned the ecological model of the river to help leadership and city council create a healthier river. There's lots of language about a healthy river but no science. The city is working with many scientists from many different organizations to put create a model for city council in late march. It will help the community begin to understand what it will take to have an ecologically functioning river. There are many challenges, geology, morphology, water quality, etc. Peter commented that public vision of the river ranges from the San Antonio model to extremely pristine. Where is the middle ground? John answered that the city has planning documents developed over 20-30 years ago specific to the river corridor that sketch out a vision of 300 ft. setback, some areas allow development right to the bank. He doesn't sense a desire in the community to change the current plans, they seem to be working. There are 26 diversions before it gets to Ft. Collins. He sees the challenge in the ecological model acceptance. They're just beginning to understand the impacts that have happened to the Poudre. He's trying to develop some of the answers in the ecological model. He wants people to be grounded in reality. It's going to be a community discussion, the vision is good but reaching it will be difficult. Peter asked about the proposed kayak park. John answered that the current plan not a park per se, but a water feature. They'd liked to create some features designed for more amateur users and tubers at low water. They're looking for funding to do engineering and design work/planning.

John then discussed Energy by Design, a Nature Conservancy model for responsible oil and gas development. Ft. Collins has been working with Larimer County, The Nature Conservancy, the State Land Board (SLB) and oil companies to discuss possible drilling on Meadow Springs Ranch, Soapstone Prairie and Red Mountain Open Space. He doesn't think the state has done anything like this and they're glad to be part of it. The mining issue will be very big in the future. He mentioned the staggering amount of drilling that'll be happening in northeast Colorado. It's moving west and could change our future pretty dramatically. Peter asked if John sees drilling as a source of revenue. John answered only as surface owners and any impact fees. All mineral rights are severed and revenue from extraction will not go to the city. There may be opportunity to negotiate royalties if there is an oil company that's willing to consider it. They've brought that to the SLB and they've mentioned it to the major players. He thinks that these properties are very minor compared to other projects that the oil companies are working on. Nancy asked if GOCO is going to review its policy to include remoteness letters. John doesn't know about GOCO policies but they've done studies at soapstone. In 2003, the Niobrara shale wasn't considered suitable for drilling but better technology is changing the dynamic, there's a new possibility of extracting resources. Kerri mentioned a mineral handbook that GOCO works on with CCLT that was recently updated. GOCO is being more flexible with oil and gas development than sand and gravel. Nancy commented that it makes more sense, the deep wells don't impact open space as much.

Hugh asked about the plans for access to the Strauss cabin. Mark hasn't been there recently but is aware of the bridge issues. They inherited the cabin late last fall and haven't had time to do anything but the intention is to restore public access to the area. As for the cabin itself, there has been little discussion about rebuilding. John commented that the long term plan is to restore and open it. Depending on cost, it may just be interpreted but not actually rebuilt.

- WAPA Power Line upgrade through Chimney Hollow Open Space – Charlie/Meegan  
The Western Area Power Authority (WAPA) will be upgrading its power line through Chimney Hollow Open Space (CHOS). Charlie explained the power line changes, see map. There are currently wooden post towers that will be replaced with 100 ft. steel towers. Charlie commented that some of the existing posts are 60-70 years old. The line is on an existing easement, WAPA has the right to upgrade. John clarified that the electricity goes to Estes Park; it's the hydroelectricity from Carter Lake. Meegan has written a letter to WAPA, the main focus is on the roads, see handout. The upgrade won't happen until 2014 or so, partly because of some controversy around pole hill. Steve asked if abandoning the current alignment had any advantage to us, could WAPA



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convey it to DNR. Charlie commented that the advantage is visual only. The easement crosses private property for miles, they couldn't automatically convey the easement to us, and it's for the delivery of power only. Nancy asked about the n/s line. Charlie answered that it's not a part of the project now but will move onto our open space when the reservoir is built. There's been a lot of interaction about where the line should be. It was initially going to be along the boundary but they're now considering moving it west. DNR can't stop it but can mitigate the impact to the open space. Peter asked about the status of Chimney Hollow reservoir. Hugh answered that the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has been approved but no Record of Decision has been issued. The construction funding will be a hurdle. Peter clarified that the only hurdle is the construction. Nancy commented that the controversy is minimal. Hugh commented that another challenge is that the improvements be done in a way that the EIS isn't compromised.

- Major program goals for 2012 – handout

- Update on Regional Study process – Kerri

The first kickoff meeting was yesterday. With the exception of Estes Park and Johnstown, every municipality was represented. The RFP will be edited and hopefully posted within the month. It'll be an approximately year-long process.

- Poudre River Trail Corridor grant update – Kerri

Kerri reminded the board that DNR were asked to submit a full application for the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) river corridor initiative. GOCO has increased the available funding to \$32 million. Greeley was asked to submit their project in partnership with Larimer County Loveland was also asked to submit a full application. The hard part will be picking the elements that will be included to make a competitive grant. Staff has already met with GOCO and Greeley. Peter thinks Greeley is too far away. Kerri commented that both entities share the Poudre River. Kerri has the feeling that GOCO is very interested in the neighborhood access components of Greeley's applications. Nancy asked if Greeley is contributing financially. Kerri answered yes, they are also partnering with their storm water department. The application is due March 16<sup>th</sup>, there will be a 30 minute presentation to the GOCO board sometime after.

- Prioritization exercise – Kerri

The current prioritization exercise is due to expire this year. There are lots of opportunities and now is a good time to reprioritize. Kerri and Charlie will update OLAB on the Poudre River Trail acquisition process. They've also put together a willing landowner opportunity sheet. In the past, the board has gotten a packet of information on each acquisition including maps, readiness, price, etc. then participated in a dot exercise. Then it goes to the commissioners for them to add dots. Gary clarified that the list includes development. Kerri anticipates that initial information may be available in March. Kerri asked the board if they'd like to visit the areas or will a slide show suffice. Steve would like to see the project but doesn't need a field trip. Mary would like to visit each site. Hugh wondered about access so he can go himself. Peter suggested scheduling a couple dates and if board members can't go, they can go on their own. Charlie mentioned that, at a minimum, there will be photos. Nancy commented that she doesn't need to visit the ones they've seen a lot but if there is property that no one has seen, they should commit to going. Kerri mentioned that they'll provide the list, discuss, and then decide which to visit. Peter pointed out that preferences will differ for each person. Hugh likes the idea of emailing a list, and everyone will respond with preferences, and then see which should be visited. Travis commented that he's willing to incorporate field staff to help with individual tours. Peter finds it helpful to go as a group. Nancy commented that the planning commission has a field trip every month, it's an expectation and there should be a similar commitment with OLAB. Peter thinks that property visits are one of the best things OLAB does.



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Steve asked about the sales tax initiative, when would be the soonest it would appear. Kerri doesn't know but has some thoughts. As the regional study progresses if it is learned that open space is very favorable, then the initiative may go forward right away. If it's not favorable, then there would be a process to determine what people need, then go forward. That scenario would be 2014. Gary commented that there will be a lot of discussion and it will obviously be before 2017. There needs to be enough time to have a second chance should it not pass. Kerri commented that it won't go forward till it's known what the public wants.

### **FINANCIAL REPORT:**

- Update: Natural Resources Capital Development and Acquisition Summary 2011 – 2013 (no new requests, reflects November changes)

Hugh asked what phase II Heron Lakes will entail financially. Kerri commented that initial discussions include Berthoud contributing \$800k, Loveland \$150k and \$400k from Larimer County for the entire project. There is still money from the partners for phase II along with a Division of Wildlife grant. Hugh clarified that the initial partner setup will be the same. Gary asked if there will be a phase 3. Kerri answered that it's possible since GOCO pulled money from their open space grant cycle to fund the river corridors initiative. Her recommendation will be to pursue a third phase. Hugh wondered if it was worth applying to GOCO since they've diverted funds. Kerri answered yes; they still have a fair amount of funding available in that cycle.

### **BOARD COMMENT: Items not on the agenda**

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Items not on the agenda**

Gary followed up from the November meeting and reminded the Board that the county is looking at a gradual three year cut to come up with the \$7-10 million savings. It could affect our program, the Big Thompson properties and volunteer program are funded with general fund. The senior management team will decide in March how to cut \$300k over three years. Nancy commented that it's unfortunate that the county can't figure out a way to convey to the public the impact that the failed jail tax will have. There were no consequences. Hugh commented that it's not just the failure of the tax, it's also lower property taxes, when valuations go down all services suffer. Jeff commented that people vote for personal benefit, that's why open space and trails do well, most people don't see a personal benefit to a larger jail. He suggests that the County Commissioners consider adding a road tax, something that the public sees a benefit. Nancy also thinks that the criminal justice system could be less expensive but agreed that it's hard to see the benefit. Gary thinks most people saw a tax but didn't research further and voted for no tax. Gary pointed out that Arapahoe County passed an open space tax with 70% of the vote. A large recreation complex got a bond approval in the same election. Jeff thinks the state is making the same mistake with education.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:** (24-6-402(4)(a) C.R.S. Purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer or sale of any real or personal property interest.

*Next regular meeting: Thursday, February 23, 2012; Loveland Council Chambers, 500 E 3<sup>rd</sup> St., Loveland*