



OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD (OLAB)

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 24, 2014

5:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Loveland Public Library • Gertrude Scott Room • 300 N Adams Av, 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
Peter Kast - At-large
Carl Sorrentino - At-large
Suzan Fritchel - At-large
Mary Banken - At-large
Nancy Wallace - Planning Commission
Gerry Horak - City of Fort Collins
Paul Alaback - Town of Berthoud
Ladonna Lee - At-large
Hugh McKean - City of Loveland
Members Absent
Trudy Haines - At-large
John Phipps - Town of Estes Park
Steve Vessey - At-Large

Staff Present
Gary Buffington, Director
Kerri Rollins, Open Lands Program Manager
Zac Wiebe, Fund Development & Special Projects
Meegan Flenniken, Resource Program Manager
Sandy Werkmeister, Department Specialist
Charlie Johnson, Senior Land Agent
Travis Rollins, Open Space Operations Manager
Heather Young, Education Specialist
Jeffrey Boring, Resource Specialist
Rob Novak, Community Relations Specialist
Dave Neff, Ranger
Commissioner Tom Donnelly
Guests
Small Grants for Community Partnering awardees
Tom Hobbs

1) CALL TO ORDER & INTRODUCTONS

Kerri welcomed Dave Neff, who was hired into a new full-time Open Lands Ranger position. Dave told the Board he has worked seasonally in the department for six years, mostly in Estes Park and Carter Lake. He is excited to see this side of the operation.

2) PUBLIC COMMENT

Eric Sutherland of Fort Collins Colorado addressed the Board about Larimer County’s involvement at Lions Park. The land is adjacent to a farm owned by Rose and Jim Brinks. He says it is under threat from the construction of a pipeline by the City of Greeley, which he believes should not have been granted by Larimer County in the first place, as he thinks it is a violation of the preservation act. He further says that the Larimer County attorney has knowingly and willingly withheld open records about the process used to grant access to the City of Greeley. Finally, he says that we are completing mitigation work for the pipeline that does not fall into the “operations and maintenance” access rights we have to the road on the Brink’s property. After Mr. Sutherland left, Gary Buffington informed the Board that the issue is with the County Attorney, and the Department cannot comment. Commissioner Donnelly was able to provide an update to one of the issues presented, informing the Board that the “easement” Mr. Sutherland mentions used to be a dedicated County road. At Rose Brink’s request, the County vacated the road so it wouldn’t be *designated and signed* as a County Road, thus helping keep trespassers off her property. At that same time, Larimer County kept an easement on the road to retain access for maintenance and operations. The County has had a good relationship with the Brinks for many years and he asked that anyone looking at the issue, to look deeper than what they heard today.

3) AGENDA REVIEW – No changes were made to the agenda.

4) REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF LAST MEETING MINUTES

Motion by Nancy Wallace and second by Suzan Fritchel to approve the minutes from February 27, 2014. Motion carried unanimously.

5) INTRODUCTIONS – covered at beginning of meeting

6) INFORMATION & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. Open Lands Master Plan public kickoff is April 30, 5:30-8 PM in the Agave Room at the Rio Grande Mexican Restaurant in Fort Collins. Stations will be set up for an open house style of feedback on various topics. OLAB members are encouraged to attend.
- b. Staff attended the GOCO board meeting and press conference with Gov. Hickenlooper announcing successful flood recovery grant applications. Our application was successful to fund repairs at Hermit Park and move forward with the Big Thompson Conservation and Recreation Assessment in partnership with the City of Loveland. Yeah!
- c. Due to recent natural catastrophes, Engineering staff, including Charlie Johnson, has been dedicated to those catastrophes. We have approval to hire a new Land Agent I position, in partnership with the Engineering Dept., to assist Charlie in achieving our conservation and acquisition goals. Position closes on May 4.
- d. NR News is a new monthly electronic newsletter developed to keep everyone abreast of Departmental projects, events and opportunities. This is in addition to the events calendar you are used to seeing. You can subscribe to the newsletter and read past editions here: <http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources/newsletter.cfm>.
- e. Loveland Open Lands 2013 Annual Report – No comments
- f. City of Fort Collins 2013 Natural Areas Department Annual Report is out. John Stokes is coming to present in May.
- g. Report from the Open Space Operations Manager – no comments
- h. Sales Tax Report from prior month(s) – Kerri reminded the Board that our sales tax percentage is collected on a 3-month lag, so this is the month that we see the total accumulation from 2013 sales tax revenue. We are up about 7% from 2012. This is \$600,000 (above the budget numbers) for Larimer County.
- i. Kerri announced that the public dedication for the Big Thompson Elementary Playscape, for which the Board invested in last year, is on May 8 at 4:15.

7) DISCUSSION & UPDATES

- a. 2014 Small Grants for Community Partnering – Zac Wiebe thanked his sub-committee members (Paul, Suzan and Carl.) He asked a representative from each project to come up when called and give a brief verbal description of their project, after which they would receive their check from Commissioner Tom Donnelly and OLAB Chair Peter Kast. After the presentations, Zac thanked all the recipients for their projects and work, inviting them to stay for dessert. The summary presentation of the projects is available with this meeting's materials.
- b. Chronic Wasting Disease Study – Tom Hobbes from CSU said he was very pleased to present the results of the Chronic Wasting Disease Study at Red Mountain Open Space. He reminded the Board that he first came here requesting funding five years ago. The presentation and summary sheet of findings are available with this meeting's materials. TAKE HOME MESSAGE: Chronic wasting disease appears to persist at low levels in mule deer populations over long periods with relatively minor effects on population growth rate. It does not appear that the disease will cause local extinction.
- c. Education and Volunteer Program 2013 summary – Heather reported that Pam could not attend, and due to such a tight agenda, she distributed a printout of the PowerPoint presentation that shows all the numbers for 2013. Overall attendance is going up. For this coming year, we are focusing on citizen science and a junior ranger guide to provide some interpretation without a guide, which we hope to have out by Memorial Day.
- d. Citizen Science Projects – Paul Alaback is excited that Larimer County is exploring citizen science! The best way to engage the public is to remember that most people learn by doing, not listening to a lecture. Scientists

can benefit in a powerful way with more observations and locations available to them as long as they rethink what kind of data to collect that will work well. Citizen science has been endorsed by some prestigious organizations such as the National Academy of Sciences and others. He went over the key elements of a successful citizen science program and showed the Board Project Budburst, which he helped found in 2007. It is affiliated with NEON (National Ecological Observatory Network.) Due to our long agricultural history, there is data on when things were coming up and flowering going back several centuries, making comparisons over long periods of time possible. He encouraged everyone to check it out and use it observing something in his or her own back yard, or an Open Space. You can discover tremendous diversity and dramatic differences from year to year. For example, Paul said he has seen 130 species just on the Wild Loop of Devil’s Backbone.

Heather added that to help people get started, Larimer County has their own web page within Project Budburst where we highlight 10 plants to encourage people to collect data on them. There is also Project Noah, another web based application, where people can take a photo of a plant or animal species and post it. The department has a “mission page” within Project Noah where citizens can post their Larimer County photos and receive input from scientists when unable to identify a species. Starting in May there will be some classes on the trail to teach people how to use these new citizen science tools. Finally, the third citizen science project planned for this year is a bio-blitz (a 24-hour species survey) on July 11-12 at Chimney Hollow Open Space. There will be scientists’ on-site taking people out onto the open space to participate in their scientific methods of collecting data. Another component of the bio-blitz will be a public engagement fair on the 12th where people can learn about science, how the department uses it and why conservation is important.

- e. OLAB new packet format – Kerri went over the new OLAB packet format we are testing this month. Based on responses from the Board:
- i. Most people liked Draft Packet #1—the entire packet, except news articles, as a single PDF, with some exceptions for long documents or reports (10 or more pages), which can be attached separately.
 - ii. Use a format with numbers & letters to follow along easier.
 - iii. INFORMATION & ANNOUNCEMENTS – The majority like going over information items. We will highlight some of them as needed and as time allows.
 - iv. DISCUSSION & UPDATES – Depending on the items we bring to the Board, there will be a varying range of materials provided. Most of the time we will be able to bring items for discussion a month before the budget request/action item. Occasionally this may not happen.
 - v. PRESENTATIONS – The majority agreed that not having PowerPoint presentations in advance is okay, with the caveat that if a presentation is ready in advance, go ahead and share it with the Board. Since everything is public, ideally, we will share items from the meeting on the Larimer County OLAB web page but this will require a change to the current layout through the web administrator.
 - vi. ACTION ITEMS – The discussion item on this topic is whether there will be a flexible amount that staff would spend without coming to the Board first, and what that amount should be. \$50,000 or some other amount?
 - Hugh suggested setting aside a discretionary or contingency fund for staff to work with, set aside annually, without coming back to the Board.
 - Gerry suggested that moving money around should not require a vote, nor should items in the normal course of business such as maintenance//replacement items. New items or topics should require a vote regardless of amount.
 - Budget items will be noted on the agenda and at a minimum, will include a memo giving some basic information about the project. Nancy requested adding a column to the memo to explain the line item when necessary.
 - Nancy feels \$50,000 is too high and too broad. She felt that if something is truly urgent, we could alert the Board in an email before the meeting.

- Since a decision on changing the process is not required or urgent, the Board agreed to wait, watch and evaluate for some time.
- vii. EXECUTIVE SESSIONS – We will not have an agenda for Executive Session because if we have one, we cannot discuss anything else that may have come in after posting the agenda. Executive Session materials will be sent in a separate email marked confidential. Kerri also shared how Fort Collins and Loveland share their Executive Session materials, which is much more restrictive.
- f. Devil’s Backbone Open Space Mgmt Plan – Jeffrey Boring explained the purpose of an open space management plan, which includes a trigger document of items that warrant updating a management plan. He briefly went over the things happening at Devils Backbone right now that are being reviewed. We will write the plan internally but will need some consulting work. Anticipated cost is \$20,000 to \$25,000. The board discussed some of the new plans being considered.
- g. Open Lands Master Plan – Zac reminded the Board that the Our Lands Our Future study (OLOF) is the majority of the technical and public information collection needed for the master plan update. The next item is the first public forum on Wednesday, April 30. There will be different stations, including one particularly engaging station with keypad polling. Beyond the public forum, the consultant will reach out specifically to the agricultural community, Latino communities and the younger voting audience, age 18-24.
- h. Big Thompson Canyon Conservation & Recreation – See attached preliminary funding request. Zac reminded the Board about the grant and partners that have committed funding. Motion by Nancy Wallace that we approve up to \$20,000. Second by Hugh, moving the memo from preliminary to final. Motion carried unanimously.
- i. Sales Tax Public Opinion Survey – See attached preliminary funding request. Kerri reported that we are a little behind schedule. We had hoped to have polling results in April, but are now shooting for May. Citizen groups have been unable to raise any funds to pay for polling. Ladonna advocated for the higher sample, costing \$23,000, due to the diversity of this County.

8) ACTION ITEMS

- a. See item 7h (above)
- b. Sales Tax - Public Opinion Survey, requesting up to \$23,000 – See budget request form. Motion by Ladonna Lee and second by Suzan Fritchel that we proceed with funding the public opinion polling survey up to \$23,000. Motion carried unanimously. 2012-2014 CapDev&Acq Summary will be updated to \$23,000 to obtain a better sampling.

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

10) ADJOURN

11) NEXT MEETING: May 22, 2014