



OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD (OLAB)

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 23, 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

Carl Sorrentino	At-large
Mary Banken	At-large
Steve Vessey	At-Large
Suzan Fritchel	At-large
Trudy Haines	At-large
Gerry Horak	City of Fort Collins
Nancy Wallace	Planning Commission
Paul Alaback	Town of Berthoud
Ward Nelson	Town of Estes Park

Staff Present

Gary Buffington, Natural Resources Director
Kerri Rollins, Open Lands Program Manager
Charlie Johnson, Senior Land Agent
Alex Castino, Land Agent
Meegan Flenniken, Resource Program Manager
Sandy Werkmeister, Department Specialist
Travis Rollins, Open Space Operations Manager
Zac Wiebe, Fund Dev & Spec Proj Specialist

Members Absent

Peter Kast	At-large
Ladonna Lee	At-large
Hugh McKean	City of Loveland

1. CALL TO ORDER / INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Meeting called to order by Nancy Wallace.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT – No public comment.

3. AGENDA REVIEW – A couple of announcements added to Information items will be reflected in minutes.

4. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF LAST MEETING MINUTES

Motion by Paul Alabeck and second by Carl Sorrentino to approve the March 26, 2015 meeting minutes.

Motion carried unanimously.

5. INFORMATION & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. The NoCo Nature Festival is collaborating to plan a joint event with the Harvest Festival. The event will be called Nature's Harvest Fest and will be on Saturday, September 12 at the Gardens on Spring Creek in Fort Collins. This is a great way to reach a new audience and maximize efforts.
- b. Loveland Open Lands 2014 Annual Report was provided to the Board.
- c. DNR Grant Successes:
 - i. Larimer County received a \$350,000 State Trails grant for the Colorado Front Range Trail, Loveland to Fort Collins Segment. This 2.2-mile concrete trail will connect existing paved trails in Fort Collins and Loveland. The conceptual estimate for this trail is \$1,021,701 and Larimer County has received \$800,000 in grants for construction. Construction is planned in 2016.
 - ii. A GOCO Paths to Parks application was submitted by Larimer County, Loveland and Fort Collins for the Long View Corridor Trail. The \$999,550 request will match the \$1 million

CDOT grant received earlier this year, to build this 4.4-mile concrete trail and new trailhead at Sunset Vista Natural Area. Grant awards will be made in June. Construction is planned in 2016 and 2017 if the grant is awarded.

- iii. Larimer County received a \$73,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to develop a preliminary conceptual design for the Poudre through River Bluffs Open Space. This reach of the Poudre is in poor condition due to man-made levees and disconnection to the floodplain. The conceptual design will highlight physical improvements to the channel that will improve river function and will be compatible with surrounding land uses.

Kerri said Zac and Jeffrey have been really going after it. All these grant successes equate to \$6.75 dollars for every dollar we submit. Kudos to them!

- d. Construction of the Poudre River Trail, Timnath's Gateway Park to Stonefly Drive segment is underway. Concrete has been poured on the majority of this 0.75-mile segment and the project should be wrapped up later this summer.
- e. The Natural Resources Department is working with Greeley to transfer a \$150,000 Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) award to Larimer County for bank repairs at Lions Open Space. The CWCB award, in conjunction with FEMA funds, will be used to repair the banks caused by the September 2013 flood and 2014 spring runoff. Meegan said the restoration work will begin this fall.
- f. We have just offered the position of Community Relations & Communications Specialist, but have not received a definite answer back yet. By next month we may have someone for the Board to meet.
- g. Open Lands Master Plan adoption – Board of County Commissioner Worksession is in a couple of weeks, where they will make a recommendation to the Planning Commission to adopt the plan. The Planning Commission meets on May 20.
- h. Report from the Open Space Operations Managers
Travis reported sadly that they found a dead bald eagle out by River Bluffs. They are hoping it is not one of the pairs with chicks. Red Mountain Open Space opened on March 1 and has been quite busy. Travis shared with the Board that he asked his staff to put some numbers to what happens at the trailheads regarding over-capacity. At Horsetooth Mountain – on Saturday & Sundays they are turning around 600 vehicles each day. On Easter Sunday they turned away 1000 vehicles. The parking lot capacity is 84. Gerry asked if the parking lot capacity is the trail capacity. It would be helpful to know if it is a parking lot issue or “resource” capacity. Meegan explained that there are trails that will always be the most popular (Horsetooth Rock, Horsetooth Falls, Keyhole at DBBOS, etc.) because they lead to iconic landmarks so the capacity on those trails can dictate the capacity of the area.
- i. Sales Tax Report from prior month – since 2013-2014, sales tax revenue up by 12.5 %!!
- j. Mary announced the Geo-Fest this Saturday, April 25, 2015, a community-wide celebration of our planet, housed in the Estes Park Event Center & Pavillon at 1125 Rooftop Way... lots of activities for kids.
- k. Estes Park has been named the #1 best small town in America to visit... WHY? Wilderness-themed art exhibits, classes, films and concerts celebrates the park’s highlights—which include some of the tallest mountains in the continental United States and more than [300 miles of hiking trails](#).

6. PRESENTATIONS

- a. Small Grants for Community Partnering (SGCP) Awards – Board of County Commissioners
- b. Commissioners Donnelly and Johnson presented award checks to the 10 [Small Grant for Community Partnering](#) awardees. Each awardee spoke briefly about their project and were eager to get started if they hadn’t already!

Charlie Johnson took a group photo of the SGCP awardees for the website.

- Charlie Johnson took a photo of the Board for the department’s annual report.

- c. Kerri presented to the Board on *Division of Real Estate (DRE) Certification* changes and conservation tax credit updates. The presentation will be included with meeting minutes.

Things have slowed down so much the DRE is thinking of increasing fees again. They did not announce their 2015 fees until December 31, 2014. The Board discussed the changes occurring. DRE has also changed some processes, such as reviewing the appraisals before the tax credit can go through. The promise of this not bottlenecking the system is not real. Easements that were turned in back in December are still waiting with the DRE.

Mary Banken said having a landowner pay for something such as an appraisal (\$10,000 and higher depending on the acreage) with no promise of a result is too scary for the landowner.

Mary asked if this board would consider increasing the fund to help with transaction costs for local land trusts. With the new fees, donating \$5000 toward projects does not have the impact it once did. Appraisals were 10-20,000 in the past and will certainly be going up.

7. DISCUSSION & UPDATES

- a. Zac presented an update on the Big Thompson Canyon Recreation and Conservation Assessment, showing who the partners are, the evaluation criteria, public priorities and themes and property categories. The presentation will be filed with the meeting minutes. The Board also received a first draft of Chapters 1-3 of the assessment plan.

Paul Alaback provided several comments on the first draft. The Project Vision states “[...] mitigate flooding, which is not true. He thinks they are actually wanting to say “mitigate the impacts of flooding.” Paul wants to see some clarification of that vision. The best way to kill a river is to prevent flooding.

He went on to say he knows it is complicated to present this stuff, but there are very different sections of the Big Thompson River. He suggests writing the document to match the channel of the river. There are different ecosystems in the river so consider what is the natural expectation of that channel. Divide the river into these functional sections... to explain to the people better. Be especially careful with the Executive Summary, which will likely be the only thing the majority will read.

Last point... there is a figure that shows the slope, trees, etc. depicted as the riparian section, right next to cliffs... not realistic. Could do a better job of marrying information.

Zac thanked Paul for well thought-out feedback and said he would share it with the team.

Zac - There is approximately \$56 million of Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) funding through the Emergency Watershed Protection program that has been allocated for several counties in the state, including Larimer County, to assist with flood recovery. The funding requires a sponsor that has not been announced yet. Staff will continue to monitor the program and evaluate its potential for projects in the county.

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Motion by Carl Sorrentino that the Board move 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. Second by Paul Alaback. Motion carried unanimously.

9. ADJOURN