



**TOPS Working Committee Meeting**  
**Virtual Meeting**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, December 2, 2020**

**Members Present:** Bob Falcone, Blaze Panariso, Nancy Hobbs, Ingrid Richter, Bob Shafer, Paula Krantz, Hank Scarangella, Michael Merrifield, Stephanie Surch

**Alternates Present:** Wendy Thomas, Jeff Davis

**Parks Board Liaisons Present:** Carol Beckman, Greg Thornton, Jason Rupinski

**Staff Present:** Britt Haley, Kurt Schroeder, Karen Palus, Kim King, Gillian Rossi, Eddie Chappelle, Madison Peddy, Anna White

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TOPS Working Committee Chair Bob Falcone brought the meeting to order at 7:33 a.m.

**Agenda Preview**

Committee Chair Bob Falcone announced the agenda for the meeting.

**Announcements**

Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Director, thanked the members of the TOPS Working Committee for their patience in 2020 as we navigated through virtual meetings.

Alternate Committee member Wendy Thomas commended Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager, for all of her hard and quick work moving the most recent Corral Bluffs property acquisition through the TOPS Working Committee, the Parks Advisory Board, and City Council within a narrow time frame. Committee Chair Bob Falcone agreed with Wendy's sentiments.

Committee Chair Bob Falcone asked for an update on the yearly Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services calendar. Karen Palus responded that the calendar was moving along and had been sent to print, but she would get an update for Bob.

**Approval of Minutes** – November 4, 2020

**Motion:** To approve the minutes of the November, 2020 TOPS Working Committee meeting minutes.

1<sup>st</sup> – Nancy Hobbs, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Paula Krantz, Approved, Unanimously

**Citizen Discussion**

Bill Beagle, citizen, thanked staff and volunteers who helped clean up after the Barr Trail fire. He specifically thanked a gentleman named Trevor Becker, who was a motivating force in the cleanup process. The efforts of all to help demonstrate great respect for the Incline, while the fire was also a reminder of why fire mitigation and safety is so important in our community.

Corey Sutela, Executive Director for Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates thanked the Committee for all of their volunteer time in 2020.

Micah Rice, Executive Director for Pikes Peak APEX, thanked volunteers who helped coordinate the Pikes Peak APEX race in September. He said the event was very successful, and they are looking forward to next year's event.

### **Presentation Items**

#### **Manitou Incline and Northern Return Trail Update** (Gillian Rossi, Park Ranger Supervisor)

Gillian Rossi, Park Ranger Supervisor, presented the Committee with the Manitou Incline and Northern Return Trail Update. This presentation included information about the Free Incline Reservation System; winter operations; reservation totals; a graph showing a decrease in the average number of reservations as we enter winter months; zip code data from participants; response to the recent fire on Barr Trail; information about the completed Northern Return Trail; and finally, information about the Barr Trail parking lot and the funding that goes towards maintaining that parking lot.

#### [Link to PowerPoint Presentation](#)

#### **Potential Ballot Question to Extend or Modify the TOPS Sales Tax** (Presented by Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager)

Britt Haley invited Committee members to give their opinions on the potential ballot question of extending or modifying the TOPS Sales Tax on the April 2021 ballot. She gave a timeline of current movement towards this effort, including upcoming polling information. She encouraged the Committee to potentially come up with a memorandum of understanding of their suggestions for extension or modifications to then pass forth to the Parks Advisory Board.

Discussion centered primarily around three topics: whether or not to increase the TOPS tax and if so, to what percentage; extension of the tax, and if so, for how long; and finally, any modifications to the breakdown of the tax. The Committee agreed that they would like to hear input on staff of department needs, and Britt offered to draft a few possible memorandums and suggested using the typical December site visit scheduled for December 16 to instead have a special meeting to discuss the different options, as well as the order of importance of the options. Committee members were in agreement with discussing this during the special meeting. Committee Chair Bob Falcone added that he would like to use the special meeting time to craft language that could be passed on a recommendation to the Parks Advisory Board.

Susan Davies, Executive Director for the Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC), informed the committee that polling would begin in the next week or so, and that her organization was looking to identify what ballot language would resonate with people when considering an increase in the tax or an extension; the value of parks to citizens; and a suggested “sunset” timeline for a possible extension. Committee members urged Park Staff to add the Potential Ballot Question presentation item discussed in today’s meeting to the Park Advisory Board agenda for next week to give Park Advisory Board members adequate notice to their recommendation and time to discuss as well.

While there was concern about potentially not having polling results back before the December 16 special meeting, both Karen and Britt encouraged the Committee to still move forward a recommendation to the Parks Advisory Board from that meeting. There was consensus on forming a recommendation at the December 16<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### **Citizen Discussion**

Susan Davies, Executive Director for TOSC, appreciated everyone’s thoughts and ideas concerning the TOPS tax. She said it would be helpful if staff could put together a wish list of things they would like to accomplish using TOPS dollars that can’t be done with the current level of funding for the special meeting. She said examples of what could be done with increased funding, and potentially changes to the breakdown of the tax, would be good to have on hand to also present to City Council. Committee Chair Bob Falcone asked Britt if she could survey members of the department and potentially put together a list of projects and costs to present the Committee with at the December 16 meeting, to which Britt responded that she could do that. Bob also asked, if possible, if Susan could share what the polling questions are before the special meeting, even if polling hasn’t come back.

Corey Sutela, Executive Director for Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, said he would also like to see the polling questions to help make recommendations, even if polling hasn’t returned back.

Committee member Bob Shafer mentioned that there had been some articles in the Gazette a few weeks ago about rebuilding the railroad overpasses near the Tejon area, and asked if it affected completing the southern end of the Legacy Loop. Britt Haley responded that because Public Works is having to do the work we couldn’t afford to do, which is to build a reroute of the railroad to repair the bridges, we can be included on their project and have joined their design work to complete this piece of the Legacy Loop. We are still working on the acquisition of a trail corridor that would stretch south from that location to the Pikes Peak Greenway Trail.

Jennifer Peterson, Executive Director for the Rocky Mountain Field Institute, said RMFI had received about \$20,000 from Manitou Springs to continue their work on Barr Trail. They received an additional \$20,000 from the LART fund. Looking to 2021 and beyond, Jennifer presented to Manitou City Council a few weeks ago the need for another \$20,000 in 2021 to continue these efforts. While LART funding has been significantly impacted due to COVID and

requests are on hold, the Pikes Peak Ascent and Marathon stepped up to help. Since the Ascent and Marathon were cancelled, runners had the option to defer their entrance fee to 2021 or to donate the fee to a local nonprofit. Ron Ilgen, President and Race Director of Pikes Peak Marathon, said runners had donated \$13,000 to RMFI to continue their work on Barr Trail to support the races in 2021. RMFI has also been working with the Forest Service through the Great American Outdoors Act to help offset deferred maintenance on federal lands, and a request was put in to support maintenance efforts on the part of Barr Trail owned by the Forest Service, which would uphold work through 2022. There has been discussions about revamping the trailhead at Barr Trail, and RMFI had plans designed for a trailhead kiosk to mimic the trailheads at other mountains. Part of the Great American Outdoors request would go to development and improvement at the trailhead.

**Motion to adjourn**

1<sup>st</sup> – Hank Scarangella, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Nancy Hobbs, Approved, Unanimously