



TOPS Working Committee Meeting
Virtual Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 3, 2020

Members Present: Bob Falcone, Blaze Panariso, Nancy Hobbs, Ingrid Richter, Bob Shafer, Lee Milner, Paula Krantz

Alternates Present: Scott Lewandowski

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

Staff Present: Britt Haley, Kurt Schroeder, Karen Palus, Kim King, Anna White, Gillian Rossi, Kelly Rajab

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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, made a quick announcement that the 2020 Capital Improvement Project Recommendations action item on the agenda was incorrectly titled and should have been titled the 2021 Capital Improvement Project Recommendations.

Gillian Rossi, Park Ranger Supervisor, announced that the 2020 BioBlitz for the public at Stratton Open Space would be cancelled; however, the BioBlitz in Jimmy Camp Creek for scientists only would still take place in July.

Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Director, gave the following Covid-19 update:

- The Department received a set of guidelines and protocols in advance to review to be turned into the Health Department with comments and thoughts on procedures to reopen facilities, playgrounds, etc. These protocols will be distributed Thursday.
- Playgrounds would be opening Friday with ten children allowed. We will have signage. Committee member Blaze Panariso asked if playgrounds would be disinfected. Karen responded that staff would do their best to keep playgrounds as disinfected as they can, but parents would be encouraged to bring their own disinfecting wipes and hand sanitizer, and to maintain safe social distancing.
- Pools will be eligible to open by the weekend. The YMCA is reviewing these protocols.
- Youth and adult sports will resume with strict protocols.

- We are awaiting information on spray grounds.
- Day camps have resumed.
- Rockledge Ranch opened today.
- The Garden of the Gods Visitor and Nature Center will be open for retail operations. We are awaiting information on when exhibits can reopen.

Committee member Nancy Hobbs asked Karen if there was a spike in graffiti related to protests, as she had noticed more graffiti on the Rock Island Trail. Nancy asked if we had to put more money aside for that. Karen answered that we had seen an uptick since the pandemic began. Related to the protests, Karen said most people were respectful of public property, and there was minimal vandalism. Karen added that we took a small reduction in our regular graffiti removal budget, but Neighborhood Services offered to help us if graffiti continues to be an issue.

Approval of Minutes – May 6, 2020

Motion: To approve the minutes of the May 6, 2020 TOPS Working Committee meeting minutes with recommended changes.

1st – Nancy Hobbs, 2nd – Lee Milner, Approved, Unanimously

Committee member Lee Milner wanted to clarify on record that in last month’s meeting, he referenced an “administrative fee” when he meant “administrative settlement.” Lee’s other statement was that he had asked for the highest closed price per acre we have paid previously, and the answer had referenced Kettle Creek, which he stated has not been a closed sale.

Citizen Discussion

Susan Davies, Executive Director for the Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC), said the TOSC Board supported the acquisition of Mountain Shadows Open Space. She addressed the concerns of safety issues on the Manitou Incline. While she said TOSC does not agree with a fee to use the Incline, they will offer support to the Department where they can. Karen Palus responded that the Department was looking at implementing a free reservation system, similar to the model at Hanging Lake in Glenwood, Colorado. She said fees were discussed as part of a long-term solution, but not related to the closure related to Covid-19. Karen said parking strategies were being looked at as well. Susan asked how long the State of Emergency closure could be extended. Karen said that would have to be verified legally, but under the order, they can keep it closed. However, we would like to address the entire corridor at once, as even though the Incline can be closed, Barr Trail is still open. The resolution is interim until a solution can be found.

Action Items

Selection of Interim Vice Chair (Presented by Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager)

Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager, announced that Bob Falcone would be automatically be moving from the position of Vice-Chair to Chair in light of Lily Wiessgold's departure per TOPS Policies and Procedures. This now created an opening for the Vice-Chair position for the Committee to select and vote on for the remainder of Lily's term.

Committee member Bob Falcone nominated Nancy Hobbs. Lee Milner seconded the nomination. Nancy accepted the nomination and said he would enjoy the position in the interim.

Motion: To elect Nancy Hobbs as Vice-Chair for the remainder of the term.

1st – Bob Falcone, 2nd – Lee Milner, Approved, Unanimously

2021 Capital Improvement Project Recommendations (Presented by Kelly Rajab, Financial Analyst II)

Kelly Rajab, Financial Analyst II, presented the TOPS Working Committee the 2021 Proposed TOPS Capital Improvement Budget. This PowerPoint included information about the overall budget process; the TOPS Fund summary and 2020 estimated fund balance; TOPS fund future revenue projected from 2021 through 2025; estimated 2021 revenue; a breakdown of the TOPS Administration and Maintenance, and Trails category; proposed 2021 trails; a breakdown of the TOPS Parks category; a brief look at Panorama park; a breakdown of the TOPS Open Space category; Open Space wayfinding costs; a look at the stewardship program and its education, ranger, land management, and resource management components; stewardship funding history; and finally, stewardship funding percent of Open Space revenue.

[Link to PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Committee member Lee Milner asked if the 2020 projection for income was \$9.5 million. Kelly responded that the amount was \$9,884,000 but had not been adjusted yet. Lee's next question was if these numbers were from March or April's financial reports. Kelly answered that they were in the April report containing March collections. She added that the City was down 14% in revenue from sales tax in the first quarter, but that the numbers for April look better in the online revenue reports. Britt Haley also confirmed there was a partial March report that stated there was a \$100,000 loss at this point in time.

Board Vice Chair Nancy Hobbs asked if Open Space funds were allowed to be used for acquisition. Kelly Rajab responded that those funds could be used for acquisition and stewardship.

Parks Advisory Board Liaison Jason Rupinski asked how much funding we would plan to have in reserve for 2021. Kelly replied that the amount in the available fund balance is an amount we would allocate in addition to what we anticipate to see as revenue in 2021. We try to keep 10%

of the revenue amount in reserve, and we cannot keep that in the trails category because we do not have excess revenue. She added that this year we decided not to take any money from the 2020 fund balance in 2021, because we anticipate that revenue could be adjusted down.

Committee member Lee Milner asked if we were waiting to hear a downward adjustment that would reflect on the 2021 budget. Kelly said we would potentially be anticipating that. Kelly keeps the revenue flat in her predictions of future years, as we do not know what to expect. Kelly said that if the 2020 revenue were adjusted down significantly enough to affect 2021 revenue predictions, we would adjust these categories. Lee asked what would be a significant enough percentage. Kelly answered that we will wait for the Budget Office to tell us that information.

Parks Advisory Board Liaison Jason Rupinski asked if there was a critical point in time with the budget process where the budget would come back to the TOPS Committee to review for comments. Kelly said in prior years, adjustments to the projections have been small, and in the last five years, have been adjusted upwards. Kelly stated there had not been a downward adjustment in her time working with the TOPS budget. Britt Haley added that we can continue to give the Committee periodic updates, and if we have any downward adjustments, she will inform the Committee. She used the example of a 4% downward adjustment not being an issue but a 10% or more downward adjustment; decisions may have to be made with the Committee. A 10% downward adjustment is about a million-dollar reduction. This will not affect projects we have moving forward in 2020, but could affect the amount in the Open Space acquisitions category for 2021.

Committee member Lee Milner mentioned that with revenues going up, underspending is less of a problem than overspending. Kelly agreed with this statement. Lee asked for confirmation that in 2011, the TOPS ordinance was amended to allow money to be spent from the Parks Category on non-TOPS properties. Kelly confirmed this was correct.

Parks Advisory Board Liaison Jason Rupinski asked if the wayfinding funding was specifically for Blodgett Open Space or if it included other properties. Britt Haley responded that the funding presented for wayfinding would expand further into other Open Spaces. Money was allocated in 2019 for a wayfinding package in Blodgett Open Space, 2020 had money allocated for Stratton Open Space, and the 2021 money would be allocated for installation in Red Rock Canyon.

Committee Vice Chair Nancy Hobbs asked if the \$3.7 million for acquisition could be used in other categories or if it was solely for purchasing. Kelly responded that this money was for purchasing property only. Committee member Lee Milner asked if we could move that money to other categories, to which Kelly replied that these figures could only be changed if the 2021 budget is adjusted.

Parks Advisory Board Liaison Carol Beckman asked if we were hiring seasonals during the hiring freeze. Kurt Schroeder, Park Operations Manager, responded that we had hired some seasonals

before the hiring freeze, and that hiring can continue on a case-by-case basis. Committee member Lee Milner said we could make the argument that full-time staff was already there prior to the freeze. Kurt added that we could move ahead with advertised positions for seasonals, but not full-time.

Motion: To approve the 2021 TOPS CIP Budget as presented.

1st – Ingrid Richter, 2nd – Nancy Hobbs, Approved, Unanimously

Presentations

The Reserve at Corral Bluffs (Presented by Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager)

Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager, gave an update on Filing 5 for the Reserve at Corral Bluffs. This covers lots one through eight on the closest border to Corral Bluffs. There is a proposed drainage easement on the side of both lot one and lot eight. These easements lead directly to Corral Bluffs. Britt submitted comments to the process through the development review process via letter and through the El Paso County Parks staff to prepare them for the Public Land Dedication Ordinance (PLDO) discussion that would be happening in front of the El Paso County Parks Board on June 10. The El Paso County Parks staff submitted a similar letter to Britt's that asked the developer work with us to take into consideration and deal with potential areas that could harm Corral Bluffs. Britt identified two potential areas of harm. One is during construction and development; there is temporary construction for storm water impacts. Long-term effects from septic systems could cause damage to Corral Bluffs through run off and erosion. Britt felt it would not be unreasonable for the developer to be required to address these issues. The proposal in the letter would require all of the lots to be restricted in terms of buildable area to the acre furthest away from Corral Bluffs. There was a positive recommendation from El Paso County Parks staff in regards to this.

Bill Koerner, of the Corral Bluffs Alliance (COBA), said a great strategy would be to get El Paso County commissioners out to the site to see where our concerns lie. He added that COBA had submitted a request to purchase these properties in December 2017 and still would like to encourage consideration of acquisition.

[Link to Powerpoint presentation](#)

2021 General Budget Overview (Presented by Kelly Rajab, Financial Analyst II)

Kelly Rajab, Financial Analyst II, gave a brief overview of the City's budget process and timeline.

[Link to powerpoint presentation](#)

Citizen Discussion

TOPS Working Committee alternate Scott Lewandowski offered to fill in one of the regular Committee positions. Britt Haley responded that she would talk with him and Karen further about this.

Motion to adjourn

1st – Blaze Panariso, 2nd – Nancy Hobbs, Approved, Unanimously