



**TOPS Working Committee Meeting**  
**Virtual Meeting**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, November 4, 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

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

**Staff Present:** Britt Haley, Kurt Schroeder, Karen Palus, Kim King, Dennis Will 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**

Committee Chair Bob Falcone congratulated Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager, and the rest of staff on the Department’s new accredited status. Britt and Kurt Schroeder, Park Maintenance and Operations Manager, both thanked him. Kurt explained more about the qualifications and process for being accredited.

Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager, made the following announcements:

- Ballot initiative 2A appears to have passed. This was relating to allowing the City to use 2019’s base budget to help recover the budget after COVID-19. Kelly Rajab, Senior Analyst, will be working with City Budget, Finance, and Strategic Planning to rework the budget.
- Ballot issues 2B and 2C have passed, but the initiative with more votes will be the one adopted into the City Charter. As of right now, that appears to be 2B.
- According to the September Sales Tax and Use Report, TOPS is up 1.93% over this time last year. However, year-to-date it is still down 4.19%. This year \$5,786,496 has been collected into TOPS.

Committee Chair Bob Falcone announced that at the Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates Annual Hootenanny, Parks Advisory Board Liaison Carol Beckman received an award for her outstanding volunteer work and commitment. Dan Allen, Trail Construction Specialist, received the Land Manager Partner of the Year award.

Committee Vice-Chair Nancy Hobbs asked a question about the drainage projects near the Rustic Hills area and Rock Island Trail. She said there are bulldozers and pipes on the Open Space area. Britt said she would have Emily Duncan, Trail Development Coordinator, and David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect, check up on this and follow up with Nancy.

Committee Chair Bob Falcone also announced there would be no site visit this month. Instead, on the third Wednesday of the month, which is normally used for a site visit, the Committee will use this time to meet and discuss the TOPS renewal ballot initiative. Bob said he would prefer an in-person meeting and has discussed possible locations. The date will be November 18 from 3:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m., however if the meeting is outside, the time could change. Britt will continue working on details and location.

Committee Chair Bob Falcone also welcomed the new TOPS Working Committee Members and Alternate Members to the meeting. All of the new members thanked Bob and expressed excitement to be a part of the Committee.

#### **Approval of Minutes** – October 7, 2020

**Motion:** To approve the minutes of the October 7, 2020 TOPS Working Committee meeting minutes.

1<sup>st</sup> – Nancy Hobbs, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Blaze Panariso, Approved, 7 to 0, with Committee members Hank Scarangella and Stephanie Surch abstaining.

#### **Citizen Discussion**

Susan Davies, Executive Director for the Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC), congratulated the Department on their new accredited status. She informed the Committee that in the recent election, ballot initiatives 2A, 2B, and 2C all passed. She was happy to see 2A passed. She mentioned that while the organization supported the 2C Council Super-majority option, they are happy with 2B as well, as the outcome of the election shows how much people value their parks. TOSC is now looking towards the April 2021 election and the proposed renewal of the TOPS tax. She said polling will begin to take place later in November and there will be a sampling of 400 people. She hopes the initiative will move forward in January and offered to help the TOPS Working Committee form the discussion around TOPS renewal.

#### **Action Items**

**Corral Bluffs Expansion** (Presented by Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager)

Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager, presented the Committee with a potential forty acre expansion in Corral Bluffs. This presentation included a map of Corral Bluffs and the specific property being discussed; information about the recent scientific findings in Corral Bluffs; details about the property; a picture of the structure on the property; an aerial view of the property; and finally, some of the views from the property.

[Link to PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Committee Chair Bob Falcone asked Britt what would be left to acquire in Corral Bluffs after this property. Britt referred to the map, and detailed some areas we still need for connection. Some are owned by Banning Lewis Holdings. There are resource rich areas all along the Bluffs, both from a paleontological and wildlife perspective. There is a lot of development expected to be happening, and there are properties we could still acquire to protect wildlife amongst that area. She also made the Committee aware of a planning process for the area south of Corral Bluffs, which extends down to where the proposed Gary Bostrom Reservoir by Colorado Springs Utilities would be. This area will have a significant waterbody. Britt has begun to think about connections from Corral Bluffs to this area, potentially in the trail connectivity aspect. We still have to have a Park System Master Plan Process for the area identified as candidate open space. There are many amazing resources that we can protect with future acquisitions. The archaeological and historical aspects around the top of Corral Bluffs are also a big reason why we pursue these acquisitions.

Parks Advisory Board Liaison Jason Rupinski asked what the operations and maintenance of this property would be with the structure on it, and where the funding for this maintenance would come from. Britt responded that in the short-term, we would plan to keep the home on-site. The TOPS Open Space Stewardship budget would pay for electricity, but the structure has a well. So while it is not without cost, it's a lower cost. This could also be a ranger station in the future.

Committee member Bob Shafer asked what provisions for clean-up will be applied to the property if a contract is consummated. Britt answered that the owner must remove all personal property from the site with the exception of one semi-truck trailer that Britt has given the owner permission to leave on-site. She did not necessarily want to accept this, but it was needed to get the contract moving forward, and we can manage the removal of this through the Department.

Susan Davies, Executive Director for TOSC, said her organization supports this acquisition. She asked for an update on the long-term plan for Corral Bluffs in regards to money for a Master Planning process, and then in the future, access. Britt thanked Susan for all her help with guided hikes in Corral Bluffs, and support. Britt said in the past, if we could complete the acquisitions of the Jimmy Camp Creek Connection Properties, discussions with Nor'Wood Development, who own the Banning Lewis Holdings properties could begin. Easements for access will not be an issue, but bigger items are not ready in their strategic framework to discuss with Parks. They will work together on a good plan for acquisitions. However, we were successful in securing those Jimmy Camp Creek Connection Properties. With that, we can begin to conduct studies to support a Master Planning process. If these studies are done before the process begins, it can reduce the cost of the ultimate planning process. Once those are done, we can make a budget request for costs of the Master Plan process.

Bill Koerner, a member of the Corral Bluffs Alliance (COBA), thanked Britt for her hard work with this acquisition. He added that this property provides flexibility and access that had not been possible before. He also added that the price was not unreasonable considering the structure on it. He strongly encouraged the Committee to support this acquisition and said COBA supported this as well.

Sharon Milito, citizen, emailed comments to the Committee before the meeting regarding her support of this acquisition. Her comments read as follows: I would like to express my excitement and support regarding the possible acquisition by TOPS of the 40 acre Greco property at Corral Bluffs. As a member of the board of directors of the Corral Bluffs Alliance, a hike leader, a paleontology researcher and a naturalist, I have spent hundreds of hours in the field at Corral Bluffs over the past 11 years. This addition to Corral Bluffs would be beneficial in many ways. First of all, it would fill a somewhat awkward hole in the open space that prevents the ability to keep the area secure. Also, the property is on a nice flat spot with additional parking that would provide a good meeting spot for our guided hike attendees. The house on the property could be used as a research station, a meeting place, bathroom access, and eventually a visitor's center. The house is also located on an important point of COBA's Walk Through Time that takes visitors through one million years of time during the recovery of the Earth after the mass extinction. Wow! Talk about a great way to kindle the imagination; to be able to stand at the beginnings of our modern world!

**Motion: To recommend approval of acquisition of approximately forty (40) acres of property identified by tax schedule number 44000 00 505 and approval to expend up to \$478,000 for the property acquisition and transaction costs from the TOPS Open Space Category revenues.**

1<sup>st</sup> – Ingrid Richter, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Blaze Panariso, Approved, Unanimously

### **Presentations**

**Forestry Division Update** (Presented by Dennis Will, City Forester)

Dennis Will, City Forester, presented the Committee with the Forestry Division Update. The presentation about forestry restoration included aspects of a healthy forest; what forest restoration means; restoration standards; treatment timing and fire ecologies; pictures of various City parks and open spaces with untreated forests; pictures of those same parks after restoration treatments; the Colorado drought monitor; the Pikes Peak watershed; pictures of invasive species mitigation and control in various City parks and open spaces; and finally, a summary of the presentation.

[Link to PowerPoint presentation here](#)

### **Citizen Discussion**

Parks Advisory Board Liaison Jason Rupinski mentioned that the reservoir next to the Bluestem

Open Space had been drained, but was supposed to be refilled. He said it had not been refilled yet, and wondered if there was an update. Britt responded that the nature of the water rights is such that they can only fill during the winter months. They began filling last winter, but had to stop at a certain level due to the nature of the water rights, so she expects them to begin filling again soon.

**Motion to adjourn**

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