



**Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 8, 2021**

Members Present: Ron Ilgen, Carol Beckman, Dr. Daniel Bowan, Larry Bogue, David Siegel, Sarah Bryarly, Greg Thornton, Abby Simpson, Jason Rupinski

Alternates Present: Lisa Weiland

Alternates Absent: Andrea Perry

Staff Present: Karen Palus, Kurt Schroeder, Kim King, Britt Haley, Anna White, Connie Schmeisser, Blake Zink, Mark Tatro, Scott Abbott, Tilah Larson

Called to Order: Board Chair Ron Ilgen brought the meeting to order at 7:33 a.m.

Citizen Discussion

Susan Davies, Executive Director for the Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC), was delighted to announce the passing of ballot initiative 1A. She thanked the Board for all of their support. Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Director, thanked Susan and her organization for their tremendous efforts in the successful passing of 1A. She also said she would be hoping to see more details from staff during the May meeting concerning the eBike Pilot Program.

Cory Sutela, Executive Director for Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, said his organization is working with staff on potential trail layouts in the Austin Bluffs Open Space. Additionally, his organization is working with Kids on Bikes and the Cheyenne Mountain Cycling Club to put a beginner bike facility in the Cresta Open Space per the North Cheyenne Cañon Master Plan. They have created a crowdfunding platform to construct this

Approval of Minutes – March 11, 2021 meeting minutes.

Motion – To approve the March 11, 2021 minutes with proposed changes.

1st – Carol Beckman, 2nd – Jason Rupinski, Approved, 8 to 0, with Abby Simpson abstaining.

Action Item

Greenways at Sand Creek Park Design (Presented by Chris Lieber, Principal at NES Landscape Architects Inc., and Connie Schmeisser, Landscape Architect II)

Chris Lieber, Principal at NES Landscape Architects Inc., presented the Board with the Greenways at Sand Creek Park Design. This presentation included the park location and site

data; the development and maintenance responsibility; timeline; the approved concept plan; the overall site plan; and finally, The Hub landscape plan.

[Link to PowerPoint Presentation here](#)

Board member Carol Beckman asked why there had been a change to potable water. Kurt Schroeder, Park Maintenance and Operations Manager, responded that the goal is to hook up to potable water because it would be a more sustainable source. If this was the Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) non-potable water system it wouldn't be a concern, however he was concerned about the ongoing supply of water from the current source because it is from ground water. In the past, working with CSU, similar solutions had not worked at multiple parks where it was attempted. This water can be inconsistent based on how it is delivered, and with other development around this park, the potable water source is the best option. Kurt also stated that the fluctuating water levels in the pond could lead to safety issues if too much were to be used. Carol asked if this pond would likely freeze over in the winter, which could contribute to these safety issues as possible with North Slope reservoirs on Pikes Peak during the winter months. Kurt responded that this pond would only be used to irrigate, which does not happen during the winter months, unlike the North Slope reservoirs which contribute to utilities year-round. Chris Lieber added the pond had been used to irrigate the golf course, and while this was presented as an option to staff, staff felt more comfortable going with the potable water option. The pond and pump house will still be operated for irrigation purposes, to irrigate other common areas within the district. The district will bear that cost. Carol's next question was the cost of the bridge. Chris responded that bridges similar to the one proposed in the plan would be about \$200,000 overall. The cost of the bridge will be the responsibility of the City as part of the trail connection.

Board member Dr. Daniel Bowan made an additional comment to Carol's question about the change to potable water. He stated that if the previous golf course was irrigated with the non-potable water from the pond for 25 years, then the pond should be able to irrigate the park. He appreciated that NES had given this as an option for irrigating the park, and was disappointed to see the change that staff had requested. He asked if this park is a Metro District park, and if they are paying for the development. Chris responded that it is a combination of the district and the developer splitting the funding for the construction of the park. Jim Bolton with Classic Homes clarified that the park will be built by the developer, and was not sure of the Metro District's involvement. Connie Schmeisser said the Department's understanding was that the developer will construct the park, and the department will own and maintain the park. Daniel then asked if the City is responsible to maintain the park with general funds, if the Metro District has any financial responsibility. Connie said the simple answer was that the district was only responsible for providing the land. However, there will be further discussions at the administrative level with the District concerning the pump house and pond, but this will be a City park. Daniel asked if this was typically the standard with a Metro District, with the financial responsibilities going to the City. Connie said there are two scenarios: the land comes to the

City and we develop the park, or a developer or District will build the park and the District owns and maintains the park. In this case, it is being built and turned over to the City. Daniel asked if it would be ideal for the Metro District to maintain the park versus the City, or how this agreement was made. Connie responded that the developer does not have to create a maintenance agreement. Britt Haley added that this park is on the Sand Creek Trail owned by the developer which will connect to the future Coleman Park, so this park is easy to incorporate into the maintenance we already do in the area. Pertaining to the water discussion, Britt said that there has been a lot of consideration due to the current life expectancy of the water source in regards to the park. Daniel asked if there was an option to use the ground water first, then have an auxiliary source as a back-up. Britt had suggested that option, but was unsure if staff and NES had a chance to work this out with the District to see if this was an option. Chris Lieber said the costs of this option would need to be cost-shared, but he felt confident it was possible but would take some more research. Daniel requested that this opportunity be pursued and to report back. Finally, he said as we have discussed what we can maintain, the City doesn't necessarily have the money to maintain this park. If theoretically we add this park as an extra expense item, other parks in the region could see less money. This creates the issue that this park will be constructed and receive maintenance funding, while other parks are not finished. Chris responded that the creation of districts is elective and a developer can make them. In this case, if the developer did not choose to move forward with building this park at this time, this park would be vacant parkland. This will provide a service to the neighborhoods surrounding the park. The maintenance of this is an added tax that the residents of those districts pay. However, this park will be used by more than just those who pay into the district. When a community park is built in an area where mostly district tax payers will utilize it, it makes more sense to leave it in control of the District versus the City. While it may seem inequitable to accept a new park instead of building out of the backlog, when a developer provides the park and the construction, this is an opportunity for a resource and maintenance is part of the deal. Finally, Daniel did state he would like to see consistency in how metro districts are taxed as we look at overarching parks funding.

Board Chair Ron Ilgen asked if the obligation is not meeting the 17 acres of the Parkland Dedication Ordinance, how they make up for the remaining acreage. Connie responded that there is land around the area we would receive and develop. The trail corridor is also a component. Britt responded that you can receive the land or have the applicant also pay fees in lieu. When looking at the land component and the cost of developing, the developer will have more than satisfied the requirements.

Susan Davies, Executive Director for TOSC, appreciated Board member Dr. Bowan's questions, especially as we look towards a TOPS tax increase. She said the park is beautiful and she is very excited for it, but does understand Daniel's concerns about the funding sources for parks.

Board member Carol Beckman had another question about how the fees in lieu are paying for the park. Britt responded that there are no fees in lieu for this park. Britt said the complete park will more than satisfy the requirements of the ordinance. Carol's final comment was that she

shared Britt's concern about sustainable water for parks. She said the amount of water used is the same, but it is better if it comes from a sustainable source.

Board Vice Chair David Siegel agreed with the comments from Board member Dr. Bowan about parks funding and the backlog, and said he hopes this will be discussed at the upcoming Parks Advisory Board workshop to address sustainable funding. He added that he was very excited to see this park come to fruition.

Motion: To approve the 8.01 acre Greenways at Sand Creek neighborhood park design as presented.

1st – Sarah Bryarly, 2nd – Carol Beckman, Approved, Unanimously

Ceremonial Items

National Volunteer Appreciation Month (Presented by Blake Zink, Special Events Coordinator, and Mark Tatro, Park Ranger)

Blake Zink, Special Events Coordinator, presented the Board with the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Volunteer Program. This presentation included available volunteer programs; 2019 and 2020 volunteer contributions; and finally, the recognition for Outstanding Volunteer Service, which Mark Tatro, Park Ranger, presented to Christine Thomas of the Friends of Ute Valley Park for her continued service.

[Link to PowerPoint Presentation here](#)

Board members and staff thanked Christine for all of her work and accomplishments as a dedicated volunteer.

Presentation Items

2020 Rocky Mountain Field Institute (Carl Woody, Program Director for the Rocky Mountain Field Institute)

Carl Woody, Program Director for the Rocky Mountain Field Institute, presented the Board with the Rocky Mountain Field Institute (RMFI) 2020 Season Review. This presentation included RMFI's general information and mission statement; various locations of projects; how work is accomplished; 2020 City projects; 2020 project locations; 2020 work objectives; volunteerism in 2020 and 2021; 2020 work statistics; pictures of various projects throughout the City completed in 2020; partnership programs; 2020 volunteer groups; and finally, 2021 work plans.

[Link to PowerPoint Presentation here](#)

Board member Dr. Daniel Bowan said it would be nice to see how many volunteer hours created how

much return on investment for the City. He also suggested in the future, incorporating how the City can continue to help support RMFI's mission and vision.

City Nature Challenge (April 30-May 3) (Presented by Scott Abbott, Regional Parks Supervisor)

Scott Abbott, Regional Parks Supervisor, read a statement about the City Nature Challenge for the Board. The statement read as follows: "The City Nature Challenge is an annual, global, community science competition to document urban biodiversity. The challenge is a bioblitz that engages residents and visitors to find and document plants, animals, and other organisms living in and around urban areas. The goals are to engage the public in the collection of biodiversity data, with three awards each year for the cities that makes the most observations, find the most species, and engage the most people. Participants use the iNaturalist app so participants do not need to know how to identify the species; help is provided through iNaturalist's automated species identification feature as well as the community of users on iNaturalist, including professional scientists and expert naturalists. Because of COVID-19 the event has not been ran as a competition in 2020 and 2021, but just as a global bioblitz. In 2019 the last time it was a competition Colorado Springs placed 57th out of over 200 cities. For the event this year we will be doing advertising to spread the word to the public about the event and the Garden of the Gods crew will be running some programs to get the public involved."

Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department Annual Report (Presented by Tilah Larson, Senior Analyst)

Tilah Larson, Senior Analyst, presented the Board with the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Annual Report. This report included the mission and vision statements; a letter from Karen Palus; 2020 funding; parks and the pandemic; achieving accreditation; community impacts; capital, construction, and restoration projects; the Trails, Open Space, and Parks Tax; the Pikes Peak Summit Visitor Center; fundraising and partners; noteworthy impacts from our partners; recognition; looking forward to 2021; and finally, our core values.

Staff Updates

Preview of Summer Offerings (Presented by Kim King, Recreation and Administration Manager)

Kim King, Recreation and Administration Manager, presented the Board with a preview of summer offerings. This presentation included programming at the community centers; therapeutic recreation; Sertich Ice Center; youth and adult sports; and finally, aquatics.

[Link to PowerPoint Presentation here](#)

Board Vice Chair David Siegel asked for an update on the City Auditorium's use as an isolation shelter during COVID-19, and if there is an exit strategy for this use yet. Kim responded that she receives weekly updates from the entity running the shelter, and they are currently looking into another facility to move this operation to, as it is not cost effective to stay at the City Auditorium. There is no set date for the move yet. However, there is discussion of places that can be a facility for vaccine distribution, with the City Auditorium being one. David reiterated

that he understood the original emergency management plan's needs for the auditorium, but this is not the intended use for the auditorium, and there is a big need for the space as an events venue. He offered to help Kim with anything she needs to move the Auditorium back to its intended use. Kim said there are no bookings for 2021 scheduled as of now. There is still an RFP process that needs to be reengaged through procurement. Kim said she will continue to provide updates.

Board Chair Ron Ilgen said as the discussions continue about sustainable funding for parks, he would like everyone to remember the Department is more than just parks, all of the divisions work together, including recreation and programming. Ron then asked what the community impact of the community center services. Kim responded that the community centers had to pivot and adjust to serve the communities around them to adapt to COVID-19 restrictions while still providing services.

Board member Dr. Daniel Bowan thanked Ron for his comments about sustainable funding not being solely focused on parks, but the entire Department. Daniel asked if there is an National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA) standard or best practice for when recreation services and parks are all under one house, how funding is split up. He asked if staff could look at this to see how we compare as a city of our size. Kim said she could look into this. Board Vice Chair David Siegel echoed Daniel and Ron's statements, also adding we have to evaluate cultural services in this as well.

Sesquicentennial Update (Presented by Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Director)

Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Director, updated the Board on the latest happenings with the Sesquicentennial celebration. In mid-March, the Mayor kicked off the beard growing contest ahead of the Beards, Bonnets, and Brews festival in June. Tree planting is continuing, with Arbor Day on the 16th as part of the Tree Challenge. There will be a gala hosted by the Chamber, as well as a downtown celebration. Additionally, several breweries and distilleries are working on commemorative items. Karen encouraged the Board to visit the Pioneer's Museum for their Colorado @-150 exhibit.

Other Items

Kurt Schroeder, Park Maintenance and Operations Supervisor, thanked Carol Beckman for attending the Cottonwood Creek Park ribbon cutting for the new fields.

Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Director, informed the Board about a presidential commission that had been formed by City Council President Richard Skorman and City Council President Pro-Tem Tom Strand to discuss TOPS and parks sustainable funding. Board Vice Chair David Siegel and Board member Dr. Daniel Bowan are serving as representatives for the Parks Advisory Board on this commission, along with about 26 other representatives from different organizations. Karen said she would get in touch with David and

Ron about the upcoming meeting. The goal is to make a recommendation about TOPS to the Mayor and City Council in May. Polling is potentially happening in late April, which will help guide the conversation. Daniel asked if the TOPS Working Committee had already made their recommendation. Karen responded that they had made a recommendation in December which was brought to the Board in January. However, a Board recommendation was not made, instead just a consensus which was in alignment with TOPS. Due to polling previously conducted, the conversation was paused while the thirty-word limit required by TABOR for ballot issues regarding tax increases was addressed.

Board Business

Carol Beckman – Carol said the West Side Community Center RFP was progressing. She informed the Board about the discussions at the TOPS Working Committee pertaining to the TOPS Ordinance and the upcoming eBike pilot program. Carol referred to a citizen concern from a few meetings back about parking issues in North Cheyenne Cañon. Kurt Schroeder responded that he was working on addressing these issues with the citizen who raised the concern. Kurt would like to designate the areas as no-parking fire lanes, which he has discussed with the Colorado Springs Fire Department. We are also looking at hiring off-duty police officers to help monitor these issues and provide enforcement. Carol asked what the timing is for paving the lot. Kurt said the bids had been received and the work will begin later this month. They will be completed prior to Memorial Day. Finally, Carol asked if another citizen's concerns about inappropriate after-hours use in Laura Gilpin Park had been addressed. Kurt said this is a typical issue with parks, but he reached out to the citizen for more information and had not heard back.

Dr. Daniel Bowan – Daniel informed the Board that he and David Siegel were serving as liaisons to the Presidential Commission for Sustainable Parks Funding and would report back after meetings with updates. Next Daniel mentioned that the stagecoach playground feature in Thorndale Park had been removed, and asked Kurt how playgrounds are evaluated and inspected by the Department. Kurt responded that playgrounds go through routine maintenance checks weekly, and then a more thorough inspection annually. We have eleven staff members with their Certified Playground Safety Inspector certifications that do these evaluations. Finally, Daniel said he would like to look into the 2022 budget to the Incline Master Plan and Barr Trail. Kurt said he met with the leadership in Manitou the day prior, and they have been discussing the Master and Management plan. One main topic was setting a deadline for modifications and things to be revisited.

Sarah Bryarly – Sarah said Daniel had hit some of her points about the Incline. The Incline Friends are working through how they are going to utilize the donations they recently received in the best way possible and are exploring options. Permanent restrooms and the Northern Return Trail are the major contenders. Sarah has been talking to Kurt Schroeder about the reservation system currently in place and how to improve it. Ron asked what the impact of the Cog Railway reopening will be to the Incline. Kurt responded that there would be no direct impact, after doing some evaluation of the Incline reservations and peak reservation times. Kurt

felt the main impact would be on the Ruxton corridor, not on the Incline itself. Daniel asked if as a City, we could make a point in the reservation process to send the information about the Incline out so people are more aware of what to expect. Also, when discussing the funding going to Barr Trail, if the Incline reservation data could go to a preliminary study to help inform these decisions.

David Siegel – David informed the Board 2021 recommendations for LART have been made and know go to council for final approval. The LART committee will meet today to finalize the 2022 application and timeline

Abby Simpson – Abby said she had attended the recent Public Art Commission meeting to see the proposed tile mural that will be installed in Panorama Park. She invited Board members to come down to the Sand Creek Library to decorate a tile as part of that mural. There are 6,000 tiles that need to be completed.

Ron Ilgen – Ron stated that he attended the Garden of the Gods Foundation meeting. The Visitor Center will not be able to provide much in funding to the Department due to the impact of COVID-19 on their visitation numbers. However, they are continuing to have more business. Ron added that the existing visitor's center on Pikes Peak – America's Mountain is in the process of being demolished as construction continues on the new Summit Visitor Center.

Adjournment

Motion: Move to adjourn the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board meeting at 11:20 a.m.

1st – Carol Beckman, 2nd – Greg Thornton, Approved, Unanimously.