



**Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, December 10, 2020**

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

Alternates Present: Andrea Perry, Lisa Weiland

Staff Present: Karen Palus, Kurt Schroeder, Kim King, Britt Haley, Anna White, Dennis Will, Scott Abbott, Kelly Rajab, Connie Schmeisser

Called to Order: Board Chair Ron Ilgen brought the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

Closed Executive Session (estimated 1 hour)

In accord with City Charter art. III, § 3-60(d) and its incorporated Colorado Open Meetings Act, C.R.S. § 24-6-402(4)(b), the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, in Open Session, is to determine whether it will hold an electronic Closed Executive Session. The issue to be discussed involves consultation with the City Attorney for the purpose of receiving legal advice related to land use exactions.

There was unanimous agreement to move into Closed Executive Session.

There was agreement to move out of Closed Executive Session at 9:09 a.m.

Citizen Discussion

Susan Davies, Executive Director for the Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC), had mentioned that due to COVID-19, some cities in California had begun to close parks and playgrounds temporarily, and hoped that would not be the case here in Colorado Springs. She said it is very important to “keep the outside open, safely.” She mentioned that there will be a new City Councilmember joining Council following the departure of Councilman Andres Pico. She did say that the new member coming had made supportive remarks about Parks. She said there had been bids for replacement of the tennis courts at Thorndale and Boulder Park, and asked if there was an update on those bids. Finally, Susan commented on the Free Incline Reservation System, and said her organization does not support this indefinitely, as they did not find it worth the investment after COVID-19 relief funding is finished.

Jennifer Peterson, Executive Director for the Rocky Mountain Field Institute (RMFI), gave a quick season-end update. She said that RMFI completed 520 individual workdays, with 206 of those workdays being done on City property. She said she hopes to be back in front of the Board next year for a formal presentation on RMFI’s accomplishments and work. Finally, she

said RMFI will be having a season-end celebration, and will be recognizing Parks Advisory Board member Carol Beckman for her outstanding volunteerism.

David Adair, President of Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, commented on the Parkland Dedication Ordinance (PLDO) items from the previous month. He said his organization would like to see trails added to the ordinance as a level of service for parkland, as they are not currently mentioned in it. He said that his organization had begun walk-throughs with staff for potential trails in Cresta Open Space. David said that his organization has begun to seek funding to help with the building of the downhill mountain bike trail in the Pulpit Rock area of the Austin Bluffs Open Space. And finally, he thanked staff for all of their work in 2020.

Dana Duggan, citizen, emailed comments prior to the meeting, concerning PLDO, which read: "I am a resident of Colorado Springs and oppose the proposal to reduce the parkland dedication requirements for developers from 7 to 5.5. And, this quote from Ms Palus, "Palus says the update is needed because, based on Census data, the number of people living in one residence has decreased since the ordinance first passed, meaning less people using the parks.", is utterly ridiculous. The Broadmoor Land Exchange was sold as needing more parkland because our parks are "loved to death", a term that is often also invoked as an obstacle to maintaining our parks. You need to decide what kind of city you want and stop using parks as corporate welfare programs. It's one of the deciding factors for people wanting to relocate here -- including businesses. Check out what [Boulder did](#)....park protections and growth not contraction was exactly why so many top businesses moved and keep opening offices there. Twitter just announced an expansion into Boulder (following in the footsteps of Google, Apple, Facebook) not to mention all the robotics and AI companies head-quartering there. Green spaces are highly desirable and should be protected at all costs. And with respect to funding park maintenance, it might help to stop giving massive tax gifts in bad business deals to companies like Scheels who, arguably, shouldn't even be here (Boulder sure as heck wouldn't have taken them), and, more importantly, said publicly they would have come without it. Could pick up a lot of trash with \$16 million. Vote against contracting parkland, in general, and, for sure, to the benefit of developers who already have far too much power in this town as does the Strong Mayor which has turned out to be one of the dumbest votes of my life."

Cyndy Kulp, citizen, emailed comments prior to the meeting, concerning PLDO, which read: "We count on you to protect our parks and open spaces, you are the voices of the citizens and this is an important job you do. I know of no person who believes there are too many parks in Colorado Springs or too much Open Space. We all love our park system and want to see it expanded. For the life of me, I cannot understand why city leaders are trying to reduce park land with their proposal, that is not representing the desires of the entire community. The homebuilders do have an obligation to help preserve open space and build parks in new developments, and that is what is represented in the PLDO ordinance. Please leave it as is and

do not reduce that acres that homebuilders are to contribute to parks. I also want to share my concerns about the leadership in the Parks Department. I have never heard of a Parks Director taking the positions that Karen Palus has over the years. She seems to have very little commitment to preserving parks and open spaces, and has demonstrated over and over again that we cannot count on her to lead. This proposal to reduce the PLDO contribution, which she supports according to what I have read, is just the latest in a long line of actions she has taken that demonstrate her lack of commitment to this important job. I would be in favor of a leadership change, and replacing her with a professional parks person who does have a desire to parks protected and expanded. Parks are essential for our quality of life, for our mental and physical health. Please protect them with your vote tomorrow and reject this awful, pro-developer plan to lessen the acres donated to parkland."

Approval of Minutes – November 12, 2020

Motion – To approve the November 12, 2020 minutes.

1st – David Siegel, 2nd – Ron Ilgen, Motion Failed, 2 to 7.

Board member Carol Beckman expressed concern about changes to the minutes being substantial, and would like to see them again before approval.

Due to the motion failing, the minutes will be deferred for approval to the January 14, 2021 meeting.

Action Items

Urban Forestry Management Plan (Presented by Dennis Will, City Forester)

Dennis Will, City Forester, summarized his presentation from the previous month and asked the Board for approval of the Urban Forestry Management Plan.

Board member Carol Beckman had asked Dennis about the cost of the Urban Forestry Management Plan prior to the meeting, which totaled \$70,500, and commented that the price seemed like a great deal for all of the information it yielded.

Board Vice Chair David Siegel asked Dennis if City Council had any feedback after his presentation to them. Dennis responded that there were some comments about Scenario C in the plan, but no major concerns.

Motion: To recommend adoption of the Urban Forest Management Plan.

1st – Jason Rupinski, 2nd – Carol Beckman, Approved, Unanimously

Park Land Dedication Ordinance Fee Schedule (Presented by Britt Haley, Design and Development Manager)

Britt Haley, Design and Development Manager, stated that this and the next action item will be taken by City Council as separate resolutions along with the amended approval from the November 12 meeting of the Parkland Dedication Ordinance (PLDO) Updates, and therefore need separate recommendation for approval. Two exhibits have been prepared and the Board will need to choose the exhibit that reflects their decision of the proposed ordinance.

Board member Carol Beckman had a question about the current fee, and whether it is based on platted or unplatted land. Britt responded that the current fee is actually negotiated through the process identified in the current ordinance through a committee process. Comparables are used to get there, along with negotiations without using appraised values. From Britt's last review of the process, it appeared that those were platted values that helped them come to their negotiated resolution but they were not based on appraised value at the time. Carol then asked if the intent was to approximate platted values versus unplatted values. Britt said she could not confirm that for sure, as it was a negotiation made with an appraiser as part of the committee, but was not guided by appraised values. The ordinance requires that the parkland we receive be platted, so it would be logical for the values to be based on platted land. Carol's next question was if the proposal is based on unplatted land plus basin fees. Britt answered that the proposed ordinance changes it to unplatted plus the platting fees in any part of the City. Typically, the most expensive platting fees are the ones for the drainage basin fees, but that is not the sole fee that would be involved in the platting cost. Carol asked what other costs, or an amount, would have to be paid to plat the land. Britt said she could not answer this because the platting fees will be different for each one, but there are administrative fees along with the drainage fees. If we move this process forward, there could be changes to platting fees that would occur in the future. Carol, using an unplatted five-acre neighborhood park as an example, asked if Britt had an idea of the cost. Peter Wysocki, Planning and Community Development Director, answered that there are a number of different drainage basins within the City. When new development occurs, and plats are approved, there is a fee requirement in addition to the application fees and processing fees. As an example, Peter used a project in the Black Squirrel Creek Drainage Basin, saying the drainage fee would be \$14,593 per acre. There is also a bridge fee of \$1,667 per acre, and a pond land fee of \$3,739 per acre. When we would collect an in lieu fee, we would calculate the acreage that would have been dedicated and add those fees on top of the in lieu fee for the parkland. They are extensive fees, and they vary significantly based on the drainage basin. The most equitable way to calculate fees would depend on the basin the project is located in. Britt added that if this proposed PLDO is adopted, we would need to accumulate funds in the account identified, and when we have the funds to purchase the property to plat it, is when the costs would occur. Carol then asked for the fees that are included in the fees in lieu, if they are the biggest components of the platting fees. Britt said yes. Carol asked if Britt had an estimate on what the remaining fees would be. Britt replied she could not answer this. Carol asked how the split between community parks and neighborhood parks was determined at the 7.5-acre level of service. Britt answered that it is not broken out right now for the 7.5. In the past, the fees had gone into one single account and were expended from one single account. Chris Lieber, Principal at N.E.S. Landscape Architects, said the breakdown between the 2.5 and 3 acres to equal a level of service at 5.5 acres was

from the 2000 Park System Master Plan. The key standard and requirement for neighborhood parks at 2.5 has remained consistent. In 2000, the reduction was entirely on the community park side, and the reduction went from 5 acres to 3 acres. All figures go back to the 2000 Park System Master Plan and are reiterated in the 2014 Park System Master Plan.

Board member Jason Rupinski asked for clarification on Exhibit B, as it included the 5.5 acre data also included in Exhibit A and wondered if this should reflect instead the 7.5-acre value listed at the top of the Exhibit. Britt responded that the neighborhood park component did not change, but the community park component changed.

Motion: To recommend approval of the parkland dedication fee schedule as depicted on Exhibit B to City Council.

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

Park Land Dedication Ordinance Geographic Service Area (Presented by Britt Haley, Design and Development Manager)

Britt Haley, Design and Development Manager, explained that this was another housekeeping item from the amended recommendation from the November 12 meeting, and will have a separate resolution before City Council.

Board member Carol Beckman asked what the differences between the maps in the two exhibits were. Connie Schmeisser, Landscape Architect II, answered that there were two maps that had different labeling, though the Board was only intended to see the one titled Exhibit A, which matches the ordinance. The other is the same map that has different titling and was the map they had been working from originally. Carol noted that the write-up mentioned changes from October 30, and asked what the changes had been. Britt answered that there were no changes made to the boundary areas of neighborhood parks in the write-up. Britt said she would go back to the write-up, but the map that they would like a recommendation for has been the same map throughout the process.

Motion: To recommend approval of the Geographic Service Area Map as depicted on Exhibit A to City Council.

1st – Sarah Bryarly, 2nd – David Siegel, Approved, Unanimously

Reconsideration of Action Item #2 from November 12, 2020 Agenda, Parkland Dedication Ordinance Updates

Board member Sarah Bryarly reiterated that this process had been considered by many organizations within Colorado Springs, be it developers, but also many other organizations over the two year process. Sarah said there had been many hours of conversation in the meetings to make sure the updates to PLDO were fair and equitable, and the topic was not taken lightly, nor

was it directed by any particular group in the City. Sarah would like to see a reconsideration to align with documents that the City can support and use as evidence moving forward with implementing the PLDO ordinance. Sarah felt that it was unfortunate to recommend something to Council that essentially said they did not believe the work of the task force.

Board Chair Ron Ilgen said with having two Board members on the PLDO task force, amending the original recommendation invalidated their work over the last few years along with the Board members who had preceded them on the task force before being term-limited.

Board Vice Chair David Siegel echoed Sarah's sentiments. As a Board representative on committees and task forces, we have the job of representing the Board during discussions, and four Board members over the years on the task force have supported this compromise, as do City Council members who were part of the process. David would be happy to have more parkland and have the 7.5 acre standard level of service, but he cannot justify rough proportionally or rational nexus with the 7.5 acre standard, and thus cannot support moving forward and would like to have a reconsideration.

Board Chair Ron Ilgen added by the Board recommending the 7.5 acres, they would like to validate the recommendation before City Council, but City Council could still go through with the original recommendation of 5.5 acres for the level of service.

This item was not reconsidered by any members from the majority vote on Action Item #2 from the November 12, 2020 meeting at this time.

Presentation Items

Park Infrastructure Analysis (Presented by Kurt Schroeder, Park Operations and Development Manager, and Joey Garcia, Senior Project Manager for Jacobs Engineering Group)

Kurt Schroeder, Park Maintenance and Operations Manager, and Joey Garcia, Senior Project Manager for Jacobs Engineering Group, presented the Board with the Colorado Springs Infrastructure Report. This presentation included key city facts; impacts of the 2008 recession; funding sources; report outcomes; long-term benefits; project methodology; the interview process; asset categories and counts; the current portfolio; funding gaps; total departmental needs; major funding gaps in detail; largest funding gaps by asset per group; asset investment need; refinement opportunities; keys to success; and finally, next steps.

[Link to PowerPoint presentation](#)

Bear Creek Cañon Mitigation and Fire Response (Presented by Dennis Will, City Forester)

Dennis Will, City Forester, presented the Board with the Bear Creek Cañon Mitigation and Fire Response. This presentation included the treatment map for Bear Creek Cañon Park in 2016; an aerial map of the fire; an aerial view of the burn area; pictures of Bear Creek Cañon before

mitigation in 2016; pictures of Bear Creek Cañon after mitigation in 2017; observations of the fire; and finally, a summary of good forestry practices.

[Link to PowerPoint presentation](#)

Staff Reports

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

- El Paso County is currently in Code Red.
- Outdoor spaces are operating as normal.
- All Community Centers are still operating with reduced services.
- We are reduced significantly at indoor facilities, like the Pioneer's Museum and Sertich Ice Center.
- We continue to encourage people to take their own precautions, social distance, and practice good hygiene.
- Events are at a reduced capacity.
- The isolation shelter at the City Auditorium is still operating successfully.

Karen Palus also shared that the new restroom facility in Bancroft Park was named the "America's Best Restroom" by Cintas. As the winner, the City of Colorado Springs received a Cintas UltraClean restroom cleaning service and \$2,500 in Cintas products and services for restroom cleaning or facility management. The restroom also won an award for innovation from the Colorado Parks and Recreation Association, and a virtual ceremony will happen next week.

Karen Palus also thanked the Board for their patience with virtual meetings in 2020, and their continued engagement and hard work for the community.

Board Business

Trails, Open Space and Parks (TOPS) Program Potential Ballot Question Discussion (Presented by Britt Haley, Design and Development Manager)

Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager, presented the Board with a presentation ahead of the Trails, Open Space and Parks (TOPS) Program Potential Ballot Question Discussion. This presentation included information about the TOPS Sales and Use Tax Renewal Discussion thus far; estimated 2020 revenue; TOPS Fund future revenue estimated for 2020 until 2025; key discussion points; open space opportunities; a map of the candidate open space areas; trail opportunities; a map of trail opportunities; Park System Master Plan Recommendations; park opportunities; priorities; and finally, costs. Britt invited Board members to join the TOPS Working Committee special meeting on December 16 from 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm to formulate a recommendation to pass along to the Board.

[Link to PowerPoint Presentation Here](#)

Susan Davies, Executive Director for TOSC, informed the Board that polling questions would be gauging the value of parks to citizens, as well as their willingness to pay more in taxes if there were an increase to the TOPS tax. She reminded the Board of the Trust for Public Land's 83% success rate for ballot measures they supported in the November 2020 elections throughout Colorado. Board member Carol Beckman asked Susan when she believed polling results would be in. Susan responded that polling should be out in the next week, with preliminary results expected by Christmas. Britt said TOPS Working Committee members were concerned about not having polling back, but still want to make a recommendation regardless of polling to move forward to the Board. Board Vice Chair David Siegel would like the TOPS Working Committee to wait until polling has returned, as it will help both the Mayor and City Council form opinions as well.

Board member Dr. Daniel Bowan asked if staff had an inclination of what the TOPS Working Committee was thinking. Britt said the TOPS Working Committee Chairman, Bob Falcone, would have liked a recommendation at the previous meeting but members felt reluctant to do so. The TOPS Working Committee is meant to help the Parks Advisory Board, and while they have not formulated a recommendation, the opportunity for recommendations do not have to be mutually exclusive. However, hopefully after the special meeting next week, there will be a formal recommendation. Daniel then asked Susan what the objectives of polling are. The three main objectives are whether to increase the tax, and if so, to what percentage; an extension of the tax, and if so, how long; and lastly, if there are modifications to the breakdown of the tax. She said a big portion of polling would be the messaging and how to educate the public.

Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Director, asked the Board their general opinions on the extension of the Tops tax and an increase in the TOPS tax. There was unanimous consensus from the Board on both an extension and increase of TOPS. Board member Sarah Bryarly commented that parks have proven to be a necessity for people in 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and we should capitalize on the opportunity to explain that in why an extension and increase of the TOPS tax is valuable. In regards to modifications of the breakdown percentages of the TOPS tax, Board member Sarah Bryarly was in agreement with a change. Board member Carol Beckman asked if we could modify the breakdown after an extension or increase occurred, which is possible but would have to be on a later ballot. Board member Dr. Daniel Bowan agreed with Carol.

Karen Palus' next question to the Board was if they could only move one question forward on the April 2021 ballot concerning TOPS, would they prefer that question to be concerning an increase, an extension, or modifications to the TOPS tax. Board consensus was that an increase would be their top priority. Board Vice Chair David Siegel agreed with this, as long as polling supported an increase.

Board members expressed concern over the next Parks Advisory Board meeting falling after an upcoming City Council meeting, as this issue needs to move quickly before City Council to be referred to the April 2021 ballot. Karen Palus offered the option to move the next Park Advisory Board meeting up a week earlier, to January 7, following the TOPS Working Committee meeting January 6, so the Board could discuss the TOPS Working Committee's recommendation, as well as make their own recommendation before the City Council Meeting on January 12. Board member Dr. Daniel Bowan said he would like a presentation on the TOPS Working Committee's recommendation prior to the next Park Advisory Board meeting so Board members have more time to process the recommendation before making their own. Karen responded she would see what she could do.

Carol Beckman – Carol updated the Board on the conversations surrounding the TOPS tax at the previous TOPS Working Committee meeting. In regards to the 30th Street and Garden of the Gods improvement project, she said planning was completely finished and a project bid would go out in January with hopes to have a contractor selected by February. On the North Cheyenne Canyon bridge replacement, Carol related that a contractor could be selected by February, and, if Parks board wants, Aaron Egbert can provide an update on the traffic control plan at a Parks board meeting or with information to send out. On electric bikes, she noted Scott Abbott reported they received 1663 responses to the survey, with 2332 comments, and Scott plans to report later.

David Siegel – David said there was a LART meeting later in the day. The TABOR freeze will provide an additional \$1,000,000 to LART looking into 2021; however, these funds have not been allocated yet. David added the Public Art Commission has had several new members join, and there is more of an expertise in performing arts than there was previously.

Adjournment

Motion: Move to adjourn the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board meeting at 1:34p.m.

1st – Jason Rupinski, 2nd – Dr. Daniel Bowan, Approved, Unanimously