



**TOPS Working Committee Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 12, 2022**

Members Present: Bob Falcone, Wendy Thomas, Blaze Panariso, Hank Scarangella, Paula Krantz, Jeff Davis, Bob Shafer, Ingrid Richter

Members Absent: Hank Scarangella

Parks Board Liaisons Present: Larry Bogue, Greg Thornton

Parks Board Liaisons Absent: Abby Simpson

Staff Present: Britt Haley, Kim King, Eric Becker, Kelly Rajab, Anna White, Melody Horbach, Emily Duncan, Gillian Rossi, Stephanie Adams, Cassie Melvin, Sara Arfmann, Scott Abbott, Stephanie Surch

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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

Britt Haley, Director Nominee of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services, provided the following announcements:

- Britt Haley has officially been nominated as the Department Director, and the City Council will vote on the nomination on October 25, 2022.
- There will be a site tour on October 19, 2022.
- LNT Gold Standard Site Celebration was on October 13, 2022.
- TOPS 25th Celebration will be on October 21st at the Vibes Stadium.
- The City Auditor's office completed the bi-annual TOPS Audit, and the department is in compliance regarding the TOPS Program.
- Mayor Suthers has released the city budget for 2023, and the projections for 2023 were conservative due to recent inflation.
- The #1 unfunded priority is more staff for Garden of the Gods because that site sees up to 6 million people a year. Currently, there are three staff members, excluding volunteers. The Garden of the Gods Foundation agreed to fund vehicles and PPE for the additional staff. These additional positions will be permanently funded by the general fund.
 - Eric Becker, Acting Parks Operations Manager/SIMD Administrator, added there is a significant need for additional staff park-wide, and thankful for the added positions.
 - Committee member Paula Krantz added the motorless morning event at Garden of the Gods had volunteers for the event. Although they were unable to obtain as many volunteers as they would have liked, it was still a hugely successful event.

- The Chief of Staff and Finance asked if it would be valuable to have a ranger team to do work on urban trails to ensure citizens felt safer, and a request has been put in for more rangers, specifically one Senior Ranger and three Rangers 1's. Thus, six new positions have been proposed to be funded through the General Fund. Big thanks to Eric Becker, Kelly Rajab, and Scott Abbott for pulling together the budget details to fund these four positions.
- Regarding the progress of the Pikeview Quarry, the privately owned 100 acres are in the process of mine reclamation and accordance with state regulations. There should be a celebration event invitation soon as they are almost at the halfway point. They have moved over 1.2 million cubic yards to the quarry as part of the whole reclamation plan.
 - Chairman Bob Falcone inquired if there's acreage set aside from the buffer property to the quarry. Britt Haley, Director Nominee of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services, clarified there are 9.3 acres of undisturbed property that need to be put back into the native property. 23 acres have not been fully reclaimed, including an office building and a parking area. There are currently 9.3 acres utilized, and David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect, has done monthly visits to check on the progress.
 - Chairman Bob Falcone further inquired if the El Pomar Grant is to be used for a bike park. Ms. Haley responded that El Pomar is committed to \$100,000/year for the operation and maintenance of the bike park once it is built. However, because the property is not owned by the Parks department yet, a bike park cannot be built. There may be slight confusion because El Pomar also funded 2B projects for the historic downtown parks, totaling \$600,000. \$300,000 was split for Acacia Park and the remainder for renovations at Alamo Square Park including updating the gazebo, plantings, and signage.

Approval of Minutes

September 14, 2022

Motion: To approve the minutes of the September 14, 2022, TOPS Working Committee meeting with modifications requested.

1st- Wendy Thomas, 2nd – Paula Krantz, Approved Unanimously

Chairman and Vice Chair Election

Motion: To nominate Bob Falcone as Chairman of the TOPS Working Committee.

1st- Ingrid Richter, 2nd – Paula Krantz, Approved Unanimously

Motion: To nominate Wendy Thomas as Vice Chair of the TOPS Working Committee.

1st- Bob Falcone, 2nd – Blaze Panariso, Approved Unanimously

Citizen Discussion

Susan Davies, Trails and Open Space Coalition Executive Director, announced her board will be unanimously voting in favor of PPRTA 3. This would include projects, valued at close to ten

million dollars, with a focus on system trails. Ms. Davies requested on behalf of her board to spread the word for PPRTA 3, because it is an extension of the existing tax. One of the provisions is the item that would include putting money aside for a match. There is additional funding for improvements for years to come.

Thomas Lachocki, a new member of the El Paso County Parks Advisory Board, requested a clarification on the Colorado Springs Creek Plan. Britt Haley, Director Nominee, stated the next steps will be in the area of America the Beautiful Park and there is a master plan ready for it. She certainly thinks anything that will beautify the park will fulfill the park's master plan.

Action Items

Northeastern Property Exchange (Presented by Britt Haley)

Britt Haley, Director Nominee of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services, presented the Kettle and Pine Creek Habitat Project to the TOPS Working Committee. This presentation included: Overview map; the Kettle Creek and Pine Creek Habitat project; Donation property of 186.60 acres; Donation property of 165.72 acres; and finally, a motion to recommend that the City accept the 352.32 acres of habitat donation property into the TOPS Program.

Committee member Jeff Davis asked how the \$100,000/year for Open Space Stewardship compares to other projects. Ms. Haley responded when speaking to the property owners now, La Plata has not spent \$100,000 on other projects. However, because of the conservation plan on the properties the entire \$100,000 may not be spent on this property either. The funding includes fencing, removing weeds, and reseeding as someone decided to create an ATV course. Ms. Haley wanted to overestimate the funding required so the proper expectation is put in place. Mr. Davis asked if the funding includes improvements or controlling access to ensuring nobody else creates an ATV course. Ms. Haley believes there will be a land management plan. Chairman Bob Falcone asked if it would be conceivable to have a higher cost in the beginning and drop off after a plan is established. Ms. Haley replied she would expect to bring a plan that would cost more than \$100,000 and believes it will be less than that.

Committee member Blaze Panariso added he completely understands the question as \$100,000 seems like a lot. He would personally love to see the project utilize \$100,000 on open space because it would involve trails, staff, trash removal, portalets, etc. Mr. Panariso is aware the committee needs to be spending-conscious, but he would love to see the entire fund be used.

Chairman Bob Falcone would love to see the entire funding be spent too. He would like to start building funds into the master plan. Moreover, he is happy to see there is a starting point once the property is acquired to start on the project. He trusts staff to find a way to do that and determine budget constraints.

Committee member Greg Thornton inquired if the entire \$100,000 is not spent on this property if it can be spent on other areas. Ms. Haley responded it absolutely can.

Susan Davies, Trails and Open Space Coalition Executive Director, is very excited about this donation, and wonders if there could be some kind of guided hikes especially focusing on people that live in that area since there is a vote coming up in April 2023. Her board is also curious if this project is going to cost \$100,000. She also added there is a Briargate Friends group now and they would be a great resource for additional assistance.

Motion: To recommend that the City accept the 352.32 acres of habitat donation property into the TOPS Program.

1st – Bob Falcone, 2nd – Paula Krantz, Approved Unanimously

Presentation Items

Legacy Loop Update (Presented by Emily Duncan)

Emily Duncan, Trails Development Coordinator, presented the Legacy Loop Update to the TOPS Working Committee. This presentation included: Project Overview; Funding and Partnerships; Completed Projects; Ongoing Projects; Upcoming Projects; Pending Project; and finally, a slide for any questions the TOPS Working Committee may have.

Committee member Paula Krantz asked for more details on the connection from Van Buren to Templeton Gap Road. Ms. Duncan stated there is an alley and some wood fencing along the whole area. The area behind the wood fencing will be the new trail. Ms. Krantz inquired if there will be changes on the current crossing on Templeton Gap Road. Ms. Duncan added there is no on-street infrastructure on Templeton Gap Road for the trail. There is no crossing planned in this area other than what already exists. Regarding additional signage, that is handled by the traffic engineering department. Ms. Duncan believes they are looking to improve that crossing and will need to look into those details but is happy to pass it along.

Chairman Bob Falcone inquired if the section from Shooks Run east to the Rock Island Trail under the railroad is part of the reconstruction, which it is.

Committee member Jeff Davis requested updates in the most southern section of Legacy Loop near the Bear Creek area. Ms. Duncan responded that construction-wise, they are in place including maintenance. Hopefully, the new rangers can help with this area, but it can be a challenge. Ms. Haley added she believes it's about the total picture - it comes down to operations to make it a welcoming and clean place to be, and that's why there's an interest in additional staffing on urban trails. Mayor Suthers wants to partner with the Keep it Clean COS Program, and Public Works will be involved to ensure this place is much more welcoming and safer. The homeless outreach team has been contacted by the police department in the past. It is a big challenge but because there will be additional staffing soon to assist on this matter.

Mr. Davis asked if Dorchester Park is part of the Parks department. Ms. Haley added that it is, and it has been evaluated for several options to activate it to a more positive use so negative uses are pushed out. Mr. Davis added he is interested in all of the connecting pieces on the southern part of Legacy Loop. Ms. Duncan stated on the connectivity, there will be more people using the loop. She believes the creek plan will activate that area with the support of rangers and police. Mr. Davis stated the dynamics of the park changed drastically when concrete barriers were added at the park. He is pleased to see that it has stopped a lot of negativities. Eric Becker, Acting Parks Operations Manager/SIMD Administrator, appreciated this feedback as he's been working in conjunction with the police department on this. Committee member Paula Krantz added as far as timely reporting goes, she recommends using the GoCos app. Someone is monitoring that site constantly for any issues citizens may see around the city.

Committee Liaison Larry Bogue asked if there will be a chain link fence adjacent to the Legacy Loop. Ms. Duncan confirmed there will be. Chairman Falcone added he has been riding the Legacy Loop for years from his neighborhood to the north. He is excited to see the improvements.

[Link to PowerPoint](#)

City Code of Ethics Training (Presented by Sara Arfmann)

Sara Arfmann, City Attorney's Office, presented the City Code of Ethics Training to the TOPS Working Committee. This presentation included: Origin of City Code of Ethics; Purpose of City Code of Ethics; Why should you care?; Why do you have to sit through this training?; Primary Areas of Concern; Gifts; Conflicts of Interest; What is a Conflict of Interest; Independent Ethics Commission; Advisory Opinions; and lastly, a slide that stated any ethical issues are not clear cut.

[Link to PowerPoint](#)

Citizen Discussion

There were no further comments at this time.

Motion to adjourn

1st – Ingrid Richter, 2nd – Wendy Thomas, Approved, Unanimously at 9:12 AM.