



**Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 13, 2022**

Members Present: David Siegel, Carol Beckman, Dr. Daniel Bowan, Larry Bogue, Sarah Bryarly, Andrea Perry, Steve Harris, Abby Simpson, Greg Thornton

Alternates Present: Julia Sands de Melendez

Alternates Absent: Steve Lenzo

Staff Present: Karen Palus, Kurt Schroeder, Kim King, Britt Haley, Anna White, Melody Horbach, Gillian Rossi, Scott Abbott, Sarah Braun

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

Citizen Discussion

Susan Davies, Executive Director for the Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC), said she also attends the El Paso County Parks Advisory Board. At the most recent meeting, they had a report outlining vandalism that had occurred on their park properties. She suggested that a similar report with a rough estimate of damage would be helpful for the public to truly understand the impacts of vandalism. Susan also mentioned that the IndyGive fundraising initiatives had been very beneficial to the conservation sector.

Cory Sutela, Executive Director for Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, asked for an update on the progress of hiring a new grant writer for the Department. Kim King, Recreation and Administration Manager, responded that hiring for all positions has been difficult. However, the City Grants team had posted a similar position in which Kim will be on the interview panel for. The hope is that the Department could potentially piggyback off of this interview if there are equally qualified candidates. If not, the position will be posted sometime in the first quarter.

Approval of Minutes – December 9, 2021, meeting minutes with proposed changes.

Motion – To approve the December 9, 2021 minutes with proposed changes.

1st – Carol Beckman, 2nd – Steve Harris, Approved, Unanimously.

Action Items

Weidner Field Renaming (Presented by Kurt Schroeder, Park Operations and Maintenance Manager)

Kurt Schroeder, Park Operations and Maintenance Manager, informed the Board about the desire to rename Weidner Field, located in Norman 'Bulldog' Coleman Park, to Martin 'Ed' Ragain Field in recognition of the significant financial investment in infrastructure improvements funded by Mr. Ragain. Kurt provided background information about what brought the Switchbacks Football Club (FC) to Colorado Springs, and the original agreement signed in 2013 which led to the field being named Weidner Field. While the original agreement only detailed the need for about \$2,000,000 in improvements, Mr. Ragain went above and beyond by investing almost \$3,000,000 in improvements with \$2,000,000 of those being permanent. With the upcoming master plan for Coleman Park, staff felt that Mr. Ragain's investment was worth recognizing and that the Martin 'Ed' Ragain Field would be an anchor amenity for the community park.

Board Vice Chair Carol Beckman asked if it would be better to name the field "Ragain Field" instead of after one specific Ragain, since Ed's son Nick Ragain is also part of the Switchbacks organization. Nick Ragain, President of the Switchbacks FC, spoke on behalf of the decision to name the field after Ed, saying that Ed was the driving force of the movement to bring professional soccer to Colorado Springs, and the main investor, so it made better sense to name it after him.

Board member Dr. Daniel Bowan asked if Ed Ragain is currently a resident of the City, which he is. Daniel's next question was if Ed had made any other significant donations to the City. Kurt said that this stadium, along with the new Weidner Field downtown, proved to be more than significant donations worthy of the name change. Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Director, added that Mayor John Suthers was very supportive of the name change, as it reflected the great relationship between the City and Switchbacks FC and recognizes their value to the City.

Motion: To recommend renaming Weidner Field at Norman 'Bulldog' Coleman Park to Martin 'Ed' Ragain Field.

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

Fishers Canyon Supplemental Appropriation for Phase II (Presented by Britt Haley, Design and Development Manager/TOPS Program Manager)

Britt Haley, Design and Development Manager/TOPS Program Manager, presented the Board with the Fishers Canyon Supplemental Appropriation for Phase II. This presentation included the 2014 Park System Master Plan guidance; the Fishers Canyon Property Acquisition phasing map; trail and connection opportunities; the transaction overview; the tentative timeline; and finally, the proposed motion.

[Fishers Canyon PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Board Vice Chair Carol Beckman wanted to confirm the fees. The first being \$200,000 for professional services fee. Britt said this fee is correct and reflects the work of the Conservation Fund's staffing. The \$40,000 for interest is also correct. Other fees include the standard real estate transaction fee which is \$30. Britt said that is a document recording fee, but there are other closing costs, usually around \$2,500, which include title insurance, the cost to the title company, etc. The only actual "fee" is the document recording fee. The other costs are included in the \$40,000 for the interest as well. Carol noted in past acquisitions, there was a reported TOPS balance, and that wasn't included. Britt said we had spent everything in the Open Space category last year, and this is coming from the 2022 unbudgeted funds. That isn't to say there was no money left, but City Budget is still calculating the revenue. Finally, Carol reiterated a trailhead and parking on the property is needed to provide public access. Britt said when staff begins the master planning process, this can be discussed further.

Board member Steve Harris said \$3,400,000 is the estimated fund balance, per the memo. Britt confirmed that is what was left unbudgeted per the instructions of the Board. This would leave about \$600,000 to spend out of the 2022 projected revenues, and the recalibrated numbers from Finance.

Board member Dr. Daniel Bowan asked if this is the last phase of acquisition for this area. Britt confirmed that it is. Daniel then asked what the master planning timeline is for this property. Britt said she would like to line up this property with the Pikeview/Blodgett planning process, but there are always factors that could change that. Daniel expressed the desire to move this master plan process move forward, as it presents less challenges than Pikeview and Blodgett.

Susan Davies, Executive Director for TOSC, reiterated her excitement and support of this acquisition, and is looking forward to the planning process. She said her organization was thrilled to help move this forward, and thanked staff for getting to this point.

Motion: To recommend a supplemental appropriation in the amount of \$2,819,000 for the phase II acquisition of approximately 85 acres of property known as the Fishers Canyon property from The Conservation Fund which includes the cost of the appraised value, interest calculated on the holding period, real estate transaction costs and a professional services fee with revenues from the TOPS Open Space Category.

1st – Steve Harris, 2nd – Carol Beckman, Approved, Unanimously.

Ceremonial Items

City Employee of the Year Award (Presented by Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Director, and Mayor John Suthers)

Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Director, and Mayor John Suthers joined the Board to present the City Employee of the Year Award. Every year, each Department sends to the Mayor their Department Employee of the Year. From there, the Mayor has the very difficult decision of picking the overall City Employee of the Year. Sarah Braun, Program Coordinator for Therapeutic Recreation, was selected for 2021. The Mayor read the following statement about Sarah and her award-winning work:

“Sarah is a program coordinator with our Therapeutic Recreation Program which served over 5,500 participants in 2021 through both in-person and virtual programming. Sarah’s primary role is the Inclusion Coordinator, assisting individuals with disabilities to be included in general recreation programs, as well as overseeing programs for adults with developmental/intellectual disabilities and supervising the summer camp for teens with disabilities. Along with her program responsibilities during the past year, Sarah added the role of interim supervisor of the Hillside Community Center upon the Center’s director’s retirement. Filling in for almost a year, she managed a facility and its staff, while also maintaining a significant amount of her responsibilities within therapeutic recreation because she is that committed to her participants. Sarah also took on the role of educator in 2021, bringing greater awareness and knowledge to City employees by co-facilitating Ability Awareness & Inclusion trainings for several City of Colorado Springs workgroups including the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum staff and volunteers, Parks TOPS Rangers, and the Colorado Springs Community Centers. Beyond her work roles, Sarah also volunteers her time and talents to both the City-wide Awards Committee as well as the Parks Department’s Employee Recognition Committee.

Outside our community, Sarah makes an impact at the state level through her involvement with the Colorado Parks and Recreation Association as a Therapeutic Recreation Society of Colorado (TRSC) board member, President (elect, current, past) 2014-2017, and Secretary 2019-2020. In recognition of her accomplishments and commitment to the field, her peers selected Sarah as the Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist of the Year for 2021 by the Therapeutic Recreation Society of Colorado. A celebration honoring her for this award was attended by dozens of participants and their parents, further illustrating the impact she has on our community and the population she serves.

At the national level this year, she co-facilitated presentations for the National Inclusion Project’s virtual Let’s All Play Conference and authored a submission selected for the upcoming 2nd edition of the Human Kinetics Inclusion book (available April 2022) in which the City’s Therapeutic Recreation Program will be featured as a Spotlight on Inclusion community profile.

Beyond her work and dedication to the therapeutic recreation field, Sarah has been a volunteer member of the Brain Injury Professionals Network (BIPN) of the Pikes Peak Region since 2011. While part of the Network, she has served as a directory section volunteer for BIPN’s Pikes Peak Regional Brain Injury Directory since 2012 to promote therapeutic recreation and inclusion services along the Front Range.

As you can see, Sarah is tremendously committed and passionate about her work. The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department believes Sarah is a true testament to the caliber of employee the City of Colorado Springs is privileged to have and deserves to be recognized as employee of the year for her impact within our community and far beyond.”

Sarah thanked the Mayor and Karen for their recognition, stating she loves her job and the community she serves.

Presentations

There were no presentations on this agenda.

Staff Updates

TOPS Stewardship Season-End Update (Presented by Gillian Rossi, Park Ranger Supervisor, and Dan Allen, Trail Project Specialist)

Gillian Rossi, Park Ranger Supervisor, and Dan Allen, Trail Project Specialist, presented the Board with the TOPS Stewardship Season-End Update. This presentation included full-time staff; Resource Technicians; Education Technician; Trail Technicians; Outreach Technician; Biological Technicians; the On-Site Ranger for Corral Bluffs Open Space; the Free Incline Reservation System (FIRS); the Incline Promo from Apollo Ohno; interpretation and education; program statistics; 2021 BioBlitzes; law enforcement; volunteer projects; project summaries and highlights for various properties; a maintenance overview; staff trainings; Pikes Peak Outdoors Diversity, Inclusivity, and Equity Action Summit; the partnership with the Rocky Mountain Field Institute; contractor accomplishments; the wayfinding update; community recognition; the Leave No Trace Stewardship Initiative; and finally, an overview of Hot Spot Week.

[TOPS Stewardship PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Bike Speed Data Collection Update (Presented by Scott Abbott, Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space Supervisor)

Scott Abbott, Regional Parks, Trails, and Open Space Supervisor, presented the Board with the Bike Speed Data Collection report. The report details times, locations, and data collected during the noted time frame. Scott was joined by Wesley Hermann, Park Ranger, who helped collect the data and discussed observations with the Board.

[Bike Speed Data Collection Report](#)

Board member Dr. Daniel Bowan thanked Scott and Wes for their continued work as the e-bike discussion continues forward. Speed is just one of the many variables to consider on the topic. Daniel did hope that the conversation continues to evolve, though. Wes said speed has been one major area of concern internally, and felt that this could be measured objectively. Wes felt

confident that they will find other methods to evaluate other aspects about the conversation, including trail impacts among other issues. Daniel asked if there are other studies or controls to compare this to, to keep data consistent. Wes said there haven't been a lot of speed studies, but TOPS staff is researching pilot programs across the state. Durango just finished their study, and their findings will be released February 15th. Other departments across the state who have done studies, have similarly consistent data to ours.

Other Announcements

Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Director, announced that the Golden Lotus Foundation and staff had closed on the PEO Property, and the Department now owns the property. Staff is working with the Golden Lotus Foundation, and there will be an open house to share the vision.

Karen reminded the Board that there will be a joint City and County Park Board meeting, and Anna White, Staff Assistant, will provide further details. The date is March 16th, with the location to be determined.

Board Business

Steve Harris – Steve asked for an update on the Historic Stratton Park/PEO Chapter House, and if any agreements have been made. Britt Haley responded that staff is essentially treating the property and the Golden Lotus Foundation as a special event at the moment. We permit them as they want to host events and they have been very responsive and work well with the Department. As we move to the next stage of the process, staff will work with the City Attorney's Office on agreements. Steve asked if the Board has any purview on the agreement. Britt answered that the Board's work will be more so on the conceptual layout, but staff needs to address some maintenance issues before that as well.

Larry Bogue – Larry asked for an update on the TOPS Ballot initiative timeline moving forward. Karen Palus responded that constituents had recently met to brief why the initiative failed, and that information was shared with the Mayor. No true decisions moving forward have been made, as more polling and surveying needs to take place. The initiative won't move forward without favorable polling, and if there is an increase, it would likely only be the 0.05%.

Sarah Bryarly – Sarah asked if there is an update on the Coleman Park master plan. Britt Haley responded that there is an upcoming client kick-off meeting, and in the next few months there will be a formal update on the process.

Carol Beckman – Carol briefly covered what had been discussed at the TOPS Working Committee meeting, including a long discussion about Blodgett Peak following the recent fire in the area. She also mentioned there will be an open house hosted by the Golden Lotus Foundation at Historic Stratton Park on February 5th from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Carol's final

question was if Kurt had been able to follow up about the off-leash dog concern in Mountain Shadows Park that a citizen had stated during citizen comment in the previous meeting. Kurt responded that signs had been added to the park, and the Humane Society had been asked to do some patrolling in the park and issue tickets.

Dr. Daniel Bowan – Daniel asked for an update on the citizen comments made concerning Jimmy Camp Creek at the previous meeting. Britt Haley responded that she will be presenting to City Council in the next month or so about potential planning steps. Daniel asked if the Board could receive updates on this, which Britt said can be provided either in a memo or at the meetings.

Adjournment

Motion: Move to adjourn the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board meeting at 10:15 a.m.

1st – Carol Beckman, 2nd – Larry Bogue, Approved, Unanimously.