



**Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, March 10, 2022**

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

Members Absent: Sarah Bryarly

Alternates Present: Julia Sands de Melendez, Steve Lenzo

Staff Present: Karen Palus, Kurt Schroeder, Kim King, Britt Haley, Anna White, Melody Horbach, Gillian Rossi, Scott Abbott, Sandy Elliot, Skyler Rorabaugh, Steve Bodette

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

Citizen Discussion

Prospect Lake

Aaron Oelrich, citizen, spoke on behalf of a boating group in favor of motorized operations continuing at Prospect Lake. While he expressed some frustration of feeling that the boater group had been left out of any decision making, he said he believed the boater group and staff could collaborate together to come to a solution for the lake that makes all user groups happy. They requested that staff halt the ongoing Request for Proposal (RFP) process. He referred to the Charter from 1974, which encouraged motorized operations on the lake, and related that to the previous summers where boating has been encouraged to help mitigate blue-green algae. Aaron stated that the boater community has begun to research an aeration system that could be put in place that would not require a move to non-motorized operations, which would be \$250,000 to install. The City has allocated \$400,000 from American Recovery Plan Act funding for the proposed aeration system that staff had been evaluating. Aaron's final comment was that the lake was necessary for the continuation of the Adaptive Water Ski program that is run by Therapeutic Recreation.

Chris Hall, citizen, agreed with many of Aaron's statements about motorized operations on Prospect Lake. He believes there is a solution that works for all users, instead of isolating one group. He also requested that the current RFP process be halted to look for a design that won't exclude boaters.

Ryan Hunter, citizen, stated he was thrilled with the decision to allow boaters to use the lake for the upcoming summer, but is still concerned that non-motorized operations would be the only usage in following years. He asked why the current system of operations couldn't continue

as they are, and wants to move in a positive direction. He requested the RFP be revised to find a solution.

Larry Lamz, citizen, stated he is a longtime user of Prospect Lake, and has volunteered with the Adaptive Water Skiing program for many years. He said when there has been the issue of blue-green algae, boaters have been called upon to help mitigate the issue by aerating the water. Larry mentioned that the reason the health of the lake in regards to blue-green algae is in the conversation of installing the aeration system, is because the water level in the lake gets too low and the water warms up too much. He stated that if the water level stays higher, then the chances of blue-green algae being an issue would go away and the lake could be used under normal operations.

Kim King, Recreation and Administration Manager, took a moment to respond to the citizen comments. She said staff was going through the standard RFP process per our Procurement Office. The funding for the aeration system is coming from ARPA funds, and companies can bid with different project designs. However, because the funding is from federal dollars, there are certain requirements that have to be met. Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Director, added that staff came to a decision to allow one more summer of motorized operations while a plan is finalized that is the best option for the health of the lake. The 1974 resolution for the lake was to encourage more recreational use, which was not limited to motorized operations, but instead swimming and non-motorized operation. In 1975, both Pueblo and Chatfield Reservoirs opened up in nearby Pueblo and Denver, respectively, and offer plenty of space for motorized operations. Finally, Karen added that we had received a lot of comments on social media and through email in favor of non-motorized operations only at the lake. Kurt Schroeder, Park Maintenance and Operations Manager, addressed Mr. Lamz comment about the water level of the lake. While we have worked with Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) in the past to raise the water level, increasing prices of water make that very difficult to budget for. When we are able to afford water, we typically do it in off-season times, at which time the lake isn't being utilized as much. We also have to adhere to compliances for jurisdictional dams. Staff is continuing to work with these citizens to coordinate meetings as we move forward.

Westside Community Center

Richard Lins, citizen, provided comments via email which were forwarded to the Board. These comments read as follows: "I am respectfully requesting that at the next Parks and Recreation Advisory Board meeting a Board member make a motion and then a vote be held on a resolution requesting the Park and Recreation Department generate proposed budget reallocations that will fully and equitably fund the Westside Community Center. Further, that such proposed budget reallocations be reported back to the Board as soon as possible. On July 8th 2021 Board member Mr. Daniel Bowan made such a request, however there was not a formal vote by the Board on the request. When questioned about Mr. Bowan's request at a public town hall meeting held at the Westside Community Center representative Kim King

acknowledged that his request was not acted upon. Given that the current operator of the Westside Community Center will cease operations as of May 31, 2022 and because no other white knight such as Woodmen Valley Chapel is in the wings, it becomes imperative for the survival of the center that equitable funding be secured for at least the rest of this fiscal year.”

Charles Lucas, citizen, requested that the RFP be withdrawn. Charles also requested that the City continue to work toward a solution to fund the center.

Sallie Clark, citizen, has been a long-time resident of the west side, and has been involved in multiple organizations in Old Colorado City. She explained the importance of the Community Center to the neighbors and the value it holds. She stated that a robust, long-term planning process was necessary for the most success. Additionally, Sallie said it is important to look at the history of the Community Center as we move forward with the process.

Justin Trudeau, Vice President of the Organization of Westside Neighbors, felt that the community input portion of the process was missing. There are 9,000 residents near the Center, many who rely on the services provided. He stated that it is vital that the Community Center stays operational during the process of finding a new vendor.

Irene Lucas, citizen, echoed the comments before her, especially that the Center needs to remain operational while going through the process of finding a new vendor. She said the Center should be funded equally as the other community centers are, and that the community needs the support of the Center.

Larry Lamz, citizen, also agreed with previous statements. He said he used to help with a martial arts after-school program for children who needed a place to go between school and their parents getting home. He reiterated that the Center is a vital asset to the community.

Kim King took a moment to respond to the comments. Kim pulled a White Paper from 2009 when the City had an economic downturn and looked for other options for operations to keep the Center open. Kim is happy to provide this, as well. Basically, there was a potential of closing all of the community centers, and an RFP process was completed to do what was possible to keep them open. Woodmen Valley was selected at the time because it had the best option for the Westside, while another model operated Meadows Community Center, and Deerfield and Hillside were still operated by the City. Woodmen has remained a sustainable vendor. A similar model is the Colorado Springs Senior Center. Kim also reminded the Board that the centers are funded through general fund dollars only. While she appreciates all of the feedback, there is not a way to fully fund the Center based on current budgets. However, she said there is opportunity for further conversations. City Council also made a commitment for a workshop to be set up by the end of the month to address concerns. There is certainly a short-term planning process and a long-term process beyond that.

Board Chair David Siegel thanked all citizens who spoke about both Prospect Lake and the Westside Community Center, and assured them that the Board hears their concerns.

Cory Sutela, Executive Director for Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, said his organization was collaborating with the Organization of Westside Neighbors to do a clean-up of the Mesa Open Space. Parks Staff and CSU staff are helping with the effort as well. Cory is hoping this effort leads to an adoption of the space in the future. The clean-up will be on the upcoming Saturday, and details can be found on Medicine Wheel's website.

Susan Davies, Executive Director for the Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC), said she enjoyed listening to the citizen comments, as it is great for citizens to bring their concerns to the Board. She encouraged those who spoke to continue speaking at City Council. She did reiterate Kim's statement that the community centers are funded through the general fund, and Parks often needs more support through other funding sources, like TOPS. She encouraged everyone to vote for increases to these funds when they can, and to remain involved.

Approval of Minutes – January 13, 2022, meeting minutes with proposed changes.

Motion – To approve the January 13, 2022 minutes with proposed changes.

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

Partner Updates

Rocky Mountain Field Institute Annual Report (Presented by Carl Woody, Program Coordinator for the Rocky Mountain Field Institute)

Carl Woody, Program Coordinator for the Rocky Mountain Field Institute (RMFI), presented the Board with RMFI's Annual Report. This presentation included basic information about RMFI; pictures from various project sites; how they accomplish projects; 2021 City projects; 2021 project locations; 2021 work objectives; volunteerism in 2021; 2021 work statistics; detailed pictures of work completed in various City parks and open spaces; partnership programs; 2021 volunteer groups; and finally, 2022 work plans.

[Rocky Mountain Field Institute PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Ceremonial Items

Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Director, took the time to honor two long-time employees who would be retiring before the next meeting. First, she recognized Steve Bodette, Capital Project Coordinator, who had been with the City for 23 years, retiring March 25. She thanked Steve for all of his outstanding work with our Design and Development team. Her second recognition was for Gerry Strabala, Recreation Supervisor for the Sports Office, who is also retiring after 23 years on April 1. She commented that Gerry had worked tirelessly for many years to build the amazing sports program we offer. We will certainly miss both staff members, but wish them well on their retirement and next endeavors!

Presentations

There were no presentations on this agenda.

Staff Updates

Pikes Peak – America’s Mountain Annual Report Update (Presented by Sandy Elliot, Park Operations Administrator for Pikes Peak – America’s Mountain)

Sandy Elliot, Park Operations Administrator for Pikes Peak – America’s Mountain, presented the annual report update for the Board. This presentation included an operation overview; the 2021 review and 2022 look ahead; term special use permit; 2021 visitor statistics; new Manager, Skyler Rorabaugh; the organization chart; the 2022 budget; advertisement for the Mountain through partnerships; 2022 projects; what’s new for 2022; the 2021 review and 2022 look ahead for the North Slope Recreation Area; North Slope visitation; Crystal Reservoir Dam Construction; the 2021 review and 2022 look ahead for the South Slope Recreation Area; and finally, the South Slope visitation.

During the presentation, Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Director, took a moment to introduce the new Pikes Peak – America’s Mountain Manager, Skyler Rorabaugh. She gave a brief summary of Skyler’s background, expressing the Department’s excitement about him joining the team. Karen also took time to thank Sandy Elliot for all of her tremendous work serving as the interim Manager.

[Pikes Peak – America’s Mountain PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Design and Development Work Plan Update (Presented by Britt Haley, Design and Development Manager)

Britt Haley, Design and Development Manager, presented the Board with the Design and Development Work Plan update. This presentation included the team introduction; a map of where each team member’s current project locations are throughout the City; and finally, a summary.

[Design and Development PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space 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 Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space update. This presentation included the division staff; an update on maintenance technicians; highlights from various rangers and the parks they steward; project highlights from various locations; volunteer projects; partner coordination; contractor highlights; program highlights; program statistics for TOPS; maintenance overview; natural resources; noxious weed management; 2021 BioBlitzes; undesignted trail mapping;

ongoing opportunities; staff trainings; Leave No Trace Stewardship Initiative; and finally, community recognition.

[Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Other Announcements

Karen Palus reminded everyone of two upcoming events in the following week, the first being the City-County Parks Advisory Board Meeting, which is March 16 at 11 a.m. at the ENT Center for the Arts. She thanked Chair David Siegel for graciously hosting the meeting. The second event, The State of the Outdoors, is the following day, March 17, at 9:00 a.m. at the Penrose House. Karen stated she was looking forward to good conversation and collaboration.

Board Business

Carol Beckman – Carol briefly covered what had been discussed at the TOPS Working Committee meeting, which included the same RMFI update. She emphasized the importance of volunteer projects, which RMFI detailed. She said the City Auditorium update had been sent out. Next, she said Meadows Community Center is celebrating their 40th anniversary of opening, and there are many upcoming events throughout the year highlighting this. Finally, Carol asked about the progress on the sport courts at Boulder and Thorndale Parks. Britt Haley responded that there will be construction activity beginning soon.

Larry Bogue – Larry said citizens have contacted him about Ute Valley Park. Previously they would park near the HP lot, and hike in, but HP has now posted signs that this is no longer available. He wondered if there was a way we could talk to them to allow access. Karen said she could reach out to someone regarding these concerns. Some redevelopment is happening in the area. Larry's next comment was about Historic Stratton Park and the plans for a future Asian Heritage center, and if there is a possibility for a site visit. Britt said that could definitely be done.

David Siegel – David informed the Board that the LART Committee is reviewing requests. He also added that the Public Art Commission is working on funding staff.

Dr. Daniel Bowan – Daniel had made a previous request for the Foothills Trail in Garden of the Gods to keep a certain alignment during and after the construction going on at 30th Street outside of the Garden of the Gods. Matt Mayberry, Cultural Services Manager, and John Stark, Garden of the Gods Manager, explained the alignment through the plans they had receive, and said they would follow-up with Daniel. Daniel also expressed frustration on behalf of the citizens who came to speak, stating that he thinks it might be better for citizens to bypass the Parks Advisory Board and go straight to Council with concerns about administrative decisions. He felt the Board was not adequately updated and asked that these issues be brought in front of the Board so they can serve citizens better as a resource instead of going straight to Council.

David responded that some of the confusion is that there is both an advisory role and quasi-judicial role, and while the Board can't make decisions on all of these, they can help to advise City Council, as Board members.

Andrea Perry – Andrea touched on the point Daniel had made. She said the perspective of lake users who prefer non-motorized operations have been understated. The users that can't afford to boat, appreciate the area. She felt that neither extreme balances out the use of the lake, though she had noticed herself, that the use of the lake was much greater on non-motorized days. She didn't feel like the Board needs to micromanage the lake schedule, and that the decision to allow another summer of boating was very knee-jerk. She hoped there could be a future discussion with all users involved.

Karen Palus responded quickly that no decisions concerning the comments made today were made lightly, or without deep thought and strategy. This dialogue has been happening for a long time, especially including the conversation around the Westside Community Center. Karen suggested that "Procurement 101" would be a great training for both the Board and City Council, to truly understand the process. The process isn't transparent, but there is always an option to be included. Our staff does our best to not limit recreation for anyone, but we have to try to find a balance to provide the best service we can.

Adjournment

Motion: Move to adjourn the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board meeting at 11:52 a.m.

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