

**MINUTES
CITY OF FORT COLLINS
LAND CONSERVATION & STEWRDSHIP BOARD**

**Regular Meeting
Wednesday, July 13 , 2016
1745 Hoffman Mill Road
5:30 p.m.**

Council Liaison:
Gerry Horak 420-7398

For Reference:

Kent Leier, Chair	631-2361
Marcia Mallory-Patton, VC	222-0513
Trudy Haines, Communications	225-2760
Mark Sears, Staff Liaison	416-2096

Board Members Present: David Tweedale, Vicky McLane, Joseph Piesman, Kent Leier, Kelly Ohlson, Marcia Patton-Mallory,

Excused: Edward Reifsnnyder, Raymond Watts, Trudy Haines

NAD Staff: Mark Sears, John Stokes, Daylan Figgs, Justin Scharton, Zoe Shark, Jennifer Roberts, Matt Parker, Aran Meyer,

Public Attendees: Helen Taylor and Diane Marschke, Fort Collins Prairie Dog Relocation Group

Guests: Ginny Sawyer, City Manager's Office; Rachel Legacy, Utility Services; Rebecca Everette and Stephani Blochowiak, Planning, Development and Transportation

Call meeting to order: 5:30 pm

Public Comments: None

Marcia asked if anyone had any City Council decision updates on the Camping Ordinance. Ginny Sawyer, reported that City Council decided to "continue enforcement as is". Kent reported reading an article, pointing out that to date, the number of camping ordinance violations have more than doubled over the last year.

Kent asked the Board if anyone had any suggestions or comments to the June LCSB minutes. Vicky reported that she had indeed notified Mark that she would not be present at the June meeting; therefore she would like her absence to be excused versus unexcused. Michelle agreed

to make the change in the June minutes and then have Kent sign if there weren't any other changes. No other changes were made. Vicky was marked "excused" in the minutes and the minutes were given to Kent for signature.

Approval of Minutes:

David Tweedale made a motion to approve the June LCSB minutes, with the agreed changes.

Joe Piesman seconded the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved.

NA Updates and Announcements

Mark Sears, NAD Manager, reported closing on the seven acre Roselle property, south of the new Topminnow Natural Area on East Horsetooth Road.

NAD is very close to closing on the conservation easement on the 95 Bryner tree acre farm in the Wellington Community Separator. A Purchase and Sale agreement has been signed and the conservation easement is being reviewed.

NAD is partnering with the Larimer County on the Horsetooth Foothills land conservation project to conserve four properties in the foothills near Horsetooth Reservoir totaling 2,700 acres.

Night Sky

Ginny Sawyer, Policy and Project Manager, and Justin Scharton, Senior Environmental Planner gave an update regarding the proposed direction staff is taking towards improving the view of the night sky. She explained the basis for the City Night Sky Initiative is to maintain safety and security, develop and implement best practices in outdoor lighting, reduce light pollution and support human and ecological health. Three main focuses for the initiative are to research and evaluate new and next generation lighting, track and ensure that we are meeting existing goals and to become energy efficient and cost effective with regards to outdoor lighting. The main areas of focus are Land Use and Building codes, Natural Areas and overall citywide areas.

Ginny explained that the Initiative is still in its infant stages, but education and awareness is in place and they are continuing to work on timelines for implementation and the CNSI website for the general public.

Justin Scharton, Senior Environmental Planner, reported on a Night Sky Monitoring Program that began at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area a few years ago. The NAD has done some monitoring there over the last 5 years adding monitoring partners from Wyoming border to Broomfield. Justin mentioned SPNA and Red Mountain are especially appropriate for night sky monitoring due to where they are located and because the areas are so isolated from city lights. Justin has been working with the National Dark Sky Association to apply for night sky park certification for Soapstone Prairie Natural Area.

Ginny reported that the City Night Sky Initiative would go before City Council on July 26th.

Update of Wildlife Management Guidelines and Annual Prairie Dog Management Update

After introducing NAD staff, the FC Prairie Dog Relocation Coalition and recognizing others who were not in attendance, John recognized those who have been working on the Guideline update. **John Stokes, NAD Director**, gave board members an update on the Wildlife Management Guidelines, specific to prairie dogs. His presentation focused primarily on prairie dogs because it's the most contentious and clearly the most challenging part of the guidelines. John explained that NAD staff would be back to the board to discuss the whole plan in general but this meeting would focus on prairie dog management. He explained there wouldn't be a lot of changes to the current guidelines. There will be an Open House on July 28th, continued revisions, it will go to Council Work Session on August 30th, NAD will refine the guidelines through the fall and then the project should hopefully be complete by late fall. John gave a brief overview and history of the Wildlife Management Guidelines and then an overview of prairie dog management as it relates to our natural areas. The original guidelines only apply to city owned natural areas and not to private land. Wildlife is owned by the state and regulated by the state as well as the federal government. John explained how prairie dogs can be very important and beneficial to the wildlife. He explained that back in early 2000s there was a large expansion of prairie dog colonies on local natural areas. Prairie dogs caused a variety of issues, severe soil erosion, loss of valued plant and animal communities, and problems with neighbors. A more holistic approach to prairie dog management was the Wildlife Management Plan that was adopted in 2007 replacing the Prairie Dog Policy Plan.

Aran Meyer, Wildlife Biologist, presented an aerial photo showing where the prairie dog colonies are. Around 400 acres of natural areas currently contain prairie dogs. Considerations for managing prairie dog colonies are: diverse ecological values, management goals for each site, rare plant populations, and active restoration strongly influences colony management. Aran explained our management approach is science based considering many things like colony behavior, vegetation assessments, annual mapping, wildlife data and climatic patterns. He went on to describe the different types of lethal management that we have used in the past and the current process we are using. He also presented several natural areas that have been restored after prairie dogs colonies were removed.

Daylan Figgs, Environmental Planner, gave an update on prairie dogs at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area and the management challenges and proposals that we've included in the wildlife guidelines for changes this time around. Daylan explained how managing prairie dogs at SPNA requires a different management style than urban colonies and how we've identified what we call conservation areas or conservation zones where we want to manage the prairie dogs.

Daylan: It's a species, in a functional state, that we've identified early on as something we want to keep at Soapstone because of its importance in the short grass system. It's managed in a different scale and different purpose than on our urban sites. The goal is to have 4,000 acres of active prairie dog colonies within this complex, within Soapstone and Meadow Springs. That's about 10% of our suitable habitat. We have to also consider the ferrets and the amount of food they need as well. We want our densities to be 30 burrows per acre and we're there. Plague is the bane of existence in our management plan. If we did nothing we have to continue to monitor for plague. At the projected growth rate we should have 4,000 acres of prairie dogs again in the next few years. Dry years could play a role in that figure. Plague is less prevalent in drier years.

Daylan went on to explain how things like plague can play a very important role in the management of prairie dogs and how that situation is managed when it takes place. He described the resources it takes to manage the prairie dogs in those areas and explained the recommendations for the future.

Kelly: It might be a good idea to show a slide, in the presentation, that demonstrates the benefits of prairie dogs, especially if you're going to present this to City Council.

Land Use Code

Rebecca Everette, Sr. Environmental Planner, Community Development and Neighborhood Services. Rebecca works primarily on long range planning and development review. We're talking about prairie dog requirements for properties that are coming through the development review process. Rebecca explained the priorities of her department and listed them to protect and enhance natural habitat and ecosystems, mitigate for loss of sensitive natural resources, contain development to Growth Management Area, promote infill and redevelopment in targeted areas and maintain effective and fair system of fees and requirements that respect private property owners.

Rebecca explained the proposed changes to the current Land Use Codes. Those changes are:

- 1. Size Threshold:** Eliminate the 50-acre threshold for protection and/or mitigation, and instead require consideration of impacts to all prairie dog colonies during the development review process. This is consistent with the proposed updates to the Wildlife Management Guidelines.
- 2. Mitigation:** Continue to determine mitigation requirements on a case-by-case basis for development projects, but for prairie dog colonies of all sizes.
- 3. Fumigation (Lethal Control):** When lethal management is necessary on development sites, require the use of carbon monoxide. This method is considered more humane than other

fumigants (e.g., aluminium phosphide). This is consistent with the management practice utilized by the Natural Areas Department.

4. Reporting: Add a reporting provision to the code that requires consistent documentation of the timing and methods used for prairie dog relocation or eradication.

5. Species of Interest: Update the Land use Code definition for "Sensitive and Specially Valued Species to reflect a list of high priority species identified by the Natural Areas Department and informed by various sources, such as the State of Colorado's State Wildlife Action Plan (Colorado Parks & Wildlife). Allow for flexibility and/or mitigation of impacts to species of interest, rather than mandating protection in all cases. Federal and State threatened or endangered species will continue to have the same level of protections.

Rebecca is seeking feedback from both City Council and the Land Conservation and Stewardship Board on the potential Land Use Code Changes.

Board members had a wide range of questions, from euthanizing techniques and relocation decisions to the value of prairie dogs in urban areas. There was a strong consensus from the board members to eliminate the 50-acre threshold for protection and/or mitigation.

John invited everyone to attend the Prairie Dog Open House on July 28th or for folks to leave suggestions or comments on the website.

Representatives from the Fort Collins Prairie Dog Relocation Coalition suggested waiving a fee if the developer decides to move the prairie dogs and suggested working with the developers to encourage relocation.

Kelly asked if a presentation on Nature in the City could be placed on one of the upcoming meeting's agenda. John agreed to have Justin Scharton or Stephanie Kopplin give an update.

Joe reminded board members that City Council will discuss the Running Deer Natural Area sell issue on August 16th. He encouraged board members to attend.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Approved:

Marcia Patton-Mallory, Chair
Kent Leier

Aug 10, 2016 Date

Patton -
Marcia Mallory,
Vice
Chair

Mehelle Vottano, Secretary

