

MINUTES

CITY OF FORT COLLINS • BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS



Land Conservation & Stewardship Board

Regular Meeting

June 12, 2019

1. CALL TO ORDER:

5:30 p.m.

2. **ROLL CALL:** David Tweedale, Vicky McLane, Joseph Piesman, Andrea Elson, Kelly Ohlson, Alycia Crall, Raymond Watts, Mike Weber

Excused: Edward Reifsnyder

NAD Staff: Brian Meyer, Jennifer Roberts, Matt Sampson, Heidi Wagner

3. AGENDA REVIEW:

No changes to agenda

4. **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION:** Jean Knight, Bob Viscount, Tina Lamers, Kenny Bearden; Overland Mountain Bike Association (OMBA), Kent Leier; President of the OMBA & former LCSB member; Suzanne Bassinger, Engineer, COFC Park Planning & Development

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Kelly made a comment on the minutes. Not requesting a change to the minutes, he wanted to express his concerns on the issue of Heidi's comments during her presentation in May. Kelly doesn't feel it's true that *'everyone wants more access and opportunities in the natural areas'*. He feels more people are concerned about habitat and wildlife. He also questioned the comment, *'with the increase in demand for recreation the difficult task of maintaining conservation while servicing a growing need for recreation'*, and what she meant. Does she mean conservation or more negative impacts on our conservation? He thinks we're asking the wrong question. Kelly felt if he was head of the Department he would say *"because of the increase population, what are we going to prioritize to protect the habitat and wildlife"*. Kelly fears that "we" are losing our way and slowly becoming the Parks and Recreation Department. He suggested the citizens that want to continue to turn the natural areas into parks, do their own ballot measures. We need to keep on our core mission. He fears this new method is just a way to justify more recreation onto the land and into the habitat. He invited NAD staff to meet with him for coffee to explain to him the shift in NAD's focus.

Alycia Crall made a motion to approve the May LCSB meeting minutes

Raymond Watts seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved 8-0

6. COMMUNICATION & BOARD MATTERS

Kelly commented on something Vicky mentioned a few meetings ago. He wants to clarify his response about a comment Vicky made that he felt wasn't correct. The city

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has adopted a new policy, which he guesses applies to Boards and Commissions. If a Board member abstains on an action item, it doesn't count on the prevailing side, it just counts as a yes.

NEW BUSINESS

DISCUSSTION ITEM:

Bison Update

Jennifer Barfield, CSU

Vicky introduced Jennifer Barfield, CSU Professor

Jennifer was asked to provide an update on the bison that were placed at Soapstone Natural Area in 2015. Board members were interested in how many bison there currently are and where the project stands. Jen explained that in 2015, 9 adult cows and one calf were placed on SPNA. The initial goal of the project was to have 100 Yellowstone genetic bison on 2,700 acres of Soapstone. With 68 bison currently and 9 more coming next week, the goal is quickly becoming realistic. Jennifer explained that CSU has been part of a federal quarantine program for bison from Yellowstone or from within the federal research programs on Yellowstone bison. These aren't necessarily bison that have been taken out of Yellowstone Park, but maybe their parents were. The bison can still be seen from the Overlook at Soapstone but some of the bison will eventually move to other conservation herds to help manage the population and improve the genetics of other herds. Two will go into a breeding program at Oakland Zoo, which is in partnership with the Black Feet Nation. The Black Feet Nation has a bison initiative to bring bison back to their reservation from a cultural perspective, for the tribal members. This fulfills the mission for the herd, from the conservation perspective for getting the genetics out and building a conservation herd outside of Colorado. There will be a press release coming out soon that tells the story. One bull was sent to the Minnesota Zoo, and one was sent to the Pueblo of Pojoaque in New Mexico. All these efforts would be to expand the wildlife conservation of the bison. We continue to get requests for bison from organizations like the Department of Interior, the Crow Nation in Montana and the American Prairie Reserve in Montana (APR). The APR currently have 800 bison, creating the largest bison preserve in the nation.

Unfortunately, when the USDA's new administration came in, their priorities shifted, and the CSU bison project was not one of them. With dwindling funding, CSU is faced with challenges like staffing, monitoring and facilitating the bison as well as veterinarian services. Jennifer continues to seek out donations and fundraising opportunities to increase project revenues.

Jen invited Board members to follow the bison and herd on Facebook, Laramie Foothills Bison Conservation Herd.

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Poudre Trail Update

Suzanne Bassinger

Suzanne provided an update on the Colorado Front Range/Poudre River Trail Initiative, as well as a history of the Paved Trails Master Plan. The partnership goal between Larimer County, Windsor, Timnath and COFO is to close the Poudre River Trail gap by 2021. Suzanne explained the trail initiative as part of their 2013 Paved Trail Master Plan. There are currently 40 miles of paved recreational trails with 30 miles to go as identified within the Master Plan. The existing gaps to the Poudre River Trail in Fort Collins are west of Rigden Reservoir to the ELC and the connection to the existing Arapaho Bend paved trail, under I-25, at the river connecting to the existing trail behind Walmart in Timnath. In 2003 CPW identified, what they call the Front Range Trail Project, which is multiple trails. One of their priorities was the Poudre Trail, which they call part of the Front Range Trail. They identified that as a high priority trail to finish. Suzanne went on to explain the relationship with the partners, barriers for the trail integration, struggles and challenges at this time. She explained that once the underpass under I-25 is complete the goal is to quickly complete that gap. Some of those challenges include willing landowners and lack of funding from other partners. Partners will be applying for GOCO funds to assist in the project.

Board members were curious about the future I-25 underpass and whether CDOT had made any plans for wildlife crossing and habitat. Suzanne explained the CDOT crossing that she is aware of is a 12' wide surface on the south side of the river. There will be a flood wall on the edge, to elevate the crossing.

The Board offered support for the continued work on the project.

Foothills Management Plan

Jenny Roberts

Jenny Roberts, NAD Environmental Planner and Project Manager for the Foothills Management Plan provided an overview of the Foothills Management Plan and update on public comments. Jenny reported NAD received a large amount of public feedback on the Foothills Management Plan. Due to the high amount of feedback, a third party has been hired to analyze and summarize the data for review and should be available soon. Jenny reported that in the Fall of 2018, NAD laid out the project to update the current management plan, in the winter of 2018, the team began gathering data, meeting with various workgroups and setting goals and objectives. In the Spring of 2019, NAD hosted 2 open houses, provided an online feedback survey and hosted a special interest workgroup opportunity. Over 400 people attended the Open Houses and including the online form we had over 1,400 people engaging in feedback. In September 2019 there will be a draft plan available for public input and in the fall of 2019, we hope to administratively adopt the plan. In 2017 and 2018, NAD set out to perform a statistically significant visitor intercept survey. CSU was hired to perform a study to better understand visitor satisfaction and perceived crowding. The survey details are available online, but the restrooms, parking lots and trails were rated "good".

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Nearly all respondents rated their experience as “excellent”. In general visitors are not feeling crowded with a few exceptions at Maxwell Natural Area.

Goals for the foothill properties are to promote ecological integrity, provide responsible public access to connect people to nature and provide diverse experiences and engagement opportunities.

Jenny explained the Impact and Decision Framework that Heidi presented to the Board last month will be used as a tool to make recommendations in visitor use decisions. Several factors will play a role but specifically the unique geology, habitat and plant species found in the foothill properties.

Three topics of main concern for the foothills plan were identified. 1) The Maxwell trail to the top: to determine the best option to manage increased visitor use over time. The options for the trail to the top were; a separate use trail, which would fragment habitat but also separate uses; keep the current trail system the way it is, with regular maintenance; and lastly alternate user days between biker equestrian/pedestrian. The third option was dropped because it was not supported by the public. 2) A short loop trail was also considered and rose to the top of options. 3) Discontinue sledding at Pineridge Natural Area.

There are four potential trail connections that NAD will go back out to the public for input in the future. Jenny discussed the future trail connection opportunities and explained those opportunities would be dependent on ecological considerations as well.

Jenny finalized her presentation announcing a draft plan would be out to the public by September. She thought August might be a good time to come back to the Board for a presentation.

Challenges now and in the future are growing population, the Maxwell Natural Area trail system and finding ways to make those trail connections, consideration of conservation and land ownership, invasive plants, protecting rare plant and wildlife habitat as well as maintaining a conservation and stewardship ethic.

Discussion:

Board members were curious how the public is questioned about ideas for management plans and whether public outreach was done differently for the foothills plan than other plans. Mark explained that this is an update to the current Foothills Plan so there are different approaches used for preparing plans for sites which have never had a management plan.

Kelly was very upset that NAD had not come to the Board prior to today to present the Foothills Management Plan. He felt the presentation was a little late and felt the presentation was inappropriate and manipulative. He also felt manipulated by the presentation in the fact that a total number of estimated wildlife species was not given.

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Kelly also found the challenge would be locating community members outside organized groups to provide public feedback. He suggested seeking out those who don't use the properties in general. Heidi suggested taking a more community-wide approach to the survey. Mark explained that the Our Lands Our Future Study performed in 2013 and the Master Plan in 2014 provided the community-wide input and is used as a base line for future management plans.

Board members were concerned about listing actual projects in the management plans to be accomplished. They felt that specifically listing projects would hold NAD accountable to those and they were uncomfortable with that. Mark reminded the Board that each of those ideas would go through a very thorough ecological evaluation process and that the ideas are just for consideration. Kelly suggested making that very clear in the Plan.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

Joe announced an Open House on June 24th regarding the 2019 Utility and Capital Expansion Fee. Joe read the summary to the Board. There were two memos sent from Christine Macrina regarding Boards and Commission vacancies. Michelle will forward the emails to Board members.

Mike Weber provided an update on the Bicycle Advisory Committee. The Committee is discussing an improvement project near Vine and Lincoln Middle School and part of that is a connection through Puente Verde Natural Area. The other item Maxwell parking has been brought up. Users are using the shoulder of the road to park causing bikers to have to swing out further onto the county road. Several cyclists brought that up at a BAC meeting and wanted to know if there was a way to encourage parking where the road is wider.

Land Conservation

Mark Sears

Mark handed out a spreadsheet from the prior month's meeting that David Myer has worked on to convert monies spent since 1955 in land acquisitions, into today's dollars.

Kelly mentioned to the Board that there are many new City Council members and limited experience between all the council members. They know little or nothing about the Natural Areas Department. Kelly asked if NAD staff has a plan to connect to the members. Mark reported that John would be working on that when he gets back from vacation.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

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August 14, 2109

Joseph Piesman, Chair

Raymond Watts, Vice Chair

1. CALL TO ORDER

6:30 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL: David Tweedale, Edward Reifsnyder, Vicky McLane, *Joseph Piesman*, And Kelly Ohlson, Raymond Watts, Mike Weber

Excused: Alycia Crall

NAD Staff: Mark Sears, John Stokes, Dave Myers

3. AGENDA REVIEW:

4. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION:

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Raymond Watts made a motion to approve the July meeting minutes

Mike Weber seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved 8-0.

6. COMMUNICATION AND BOARD MATTERS:

7. NEW BUSINESS:

ACTION ITEM

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Instream W

John update Board on House Bill 1271, allowing the Colorado Water Conservation Board to augment stream support remain. The legislation died in committees in both the House and Senate. Strong Vicky suggesting several stakeholders and the bill may continue to be supported next year. would be a good board contact sponsors of the bill to increase support. John thought that when the bill is in final draft.