



**Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, November 9, 2023**

Members Present: Sarah Bryarly, Abby Simpson, Larry Bogue, Greg Thornton, Steve Harris, Steve Lenzo, Amandla Atilano-Roque, Julia Sands de Melendez, Andrea Perry

Alternates Present: Debbie Swanson, Kimberley Sherwood, Mike Sullivan

Staff Present: Britt Haley, Eric Becker, Kim King, Lonna Thelen, Anna White, Caroline Miller, Matt Mayberry, Connie Schmeisser

Called to Order: Board Chair Sarah Bryarly brought the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

Citizen Discussion

Cory Sutela, Executive Director for Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, stated that he would like to see e-bikes allowed in some parks while the process to change the language in the TOPS ordinance is ongoing. He suggested a change in signage clarifying what bikes are allowed. Mr. Sutela suggested using a property not bound by the ordinance, such as Palmer Park, to test run e-bike use in parks. He said his organization would be happy to work with both staff and the Guardians of Palmer Park to move towards this effort.

Bettina Kennedy, citizen, expressed concerns about the Blodgett Open Space master plan. Two of her main concerns were the potential paragliding elements, as well as the increased focus on mountain biking. Ms. Kennedy felt the plan needs more resident input, as it will negatively impact the area, with unwelcome traffic and congestion. Ms. Kennedy stated that she felt there were no solutions presented in the master plan that would address her concerns in a way she felt comfortable.

Steve Swan, citizen, expressed concern about the proposed Orchard Valley trailhead in the Blodgett Open Space master plan. His main concern was about a potential restroom being constructed at the trailhead, as he would be able to see it from his home and felt as though it would obscure his view, and a restroom is an unsightly element of this plan. Mr. Swan urged staff to remove this restroom from the plan, though he did state he was supportive of other elements in the proposed plan.

Kathy Perry, citizen, is a member of the Westside Community Center Working Committee. She informed the Board of the Center's increased hours, robust programming, and noted that the Committee has been officially meeting for a year. Ms. Perry stated that so much of the effort to bring the Center back to life under the Department was through the support of former City

Council member Stephannie Fortune. Without her support and visioning, Ms. Perry stated that the Center would not be where it is now. She thanked staff for their support, as well.

Ron Ramsey, citizen, reiterated Cory Sutela's comments about e-bikes. He stated that the conditions are right for us to allow e-bikes in parks.

Nic Ponsor, citizen, is the owner of Criterium Bike Shop. He echoed Mr. Sutela and Mr. Ramsey's comments on e-bikes. He stated that he would like the Department to lean on the biking community for support throughout the e-bike process.

Alyssa Secreto, Community Engagement Coordinator for Kids on Bikes, stated she appreciated the "Learn the Velodrome" community program hosted by the United States Olympic and Paralympic Training Center (USOPTC). She stated that the velodrome is an amazing resource and is hoping to see more community-focused programming there in 2024.

Carl Woody, Program Director for the Rocky Mountain Field Institute (RMFI), said that RMFI is taking applications for seasonal field staff. Additionally, Mr. Woody invited everyone to attend RMFI's end-of-season celebration, which will be on November 16th. He said additional details about the celebration can be found on RMFI's website.

Susan Davies, Executive Director for the Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC), stated that her organization had received a lot of comments about the Blodgett Open Space master plan process. Then, Ms. Davies asked if staff would provide an update later in the meeting about the Antlers Park dog park and the Urban Trail Rangers.

Approval of Minutes – October 12, 2023 meeting minutes.

Motion: To approve October 12, 2023 meeting minutes.

1st – Julia Sands de Melendez, 2nd – Greg Thornton, Approved, Unanimously, with Board members Sarah Bryarly and Andrea Perry abstaining.

Ceremonial Items – Time Certain 9:00 a.m.

Recognition of CPRA Award for Community Champion – Stephannie Finley-Fortune

Britt Haley, Director, informed the Board that at the Colorado Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) annual conference, former Council Member Stephannie Finley-Fortune was awarded the Award for Community Champion posthumously. Britt noted how Stephannie was a champion for the Department, supporting many initiatives like the operational transition of the Westside Community Center, and creation and implementation of the Urban Ranger team. Stephannie unfortunately passed away in June 2023 after battling leukemia. Her remarkable legacy lives on throughout the City of Colorado Springs, but also in this award. Stephannie's husband, Kent, was able to attend the conference and receive the award on her behalf.

[Link to Agenda Packet Here](#)

Recognition of CPRA Award for Best Renovated Park Design – Panorama Park

Britt Haley, Director, informed the Board that the Department also received CPRA’s award for Best Renovated Park Design for Panorama Park. Panorama Park is a 13.5-acre neighborhood park located in Southeast Colorado Springs. By partnering with resident leader groups like RISE|Southeast and national experts like the Trust for Public Land (TPL), the Department was able to work with partners and the community to renovate the existing park into a fantastic new park, not only for the neighboring community to enjoy, but all residents of Colorado Springs. The renovation project has been creating community impact since the early vision, and in August 2022, over 1,000 residents came together to celebrate the grand opening. Panorama is truly an exceptional example of the community working together with the Department and other partners to bring the vision of an accessible park to an underserved area of the community.

[Link to Agenda Packet Here](#)

Action Items

There were no action items on this agenda.

Presentation Items

Karman Line Land Use Plan (Presented by Caroline Miller, Program Administrator)

Caroline Miller, Program Administrator, presented the Board with the Karman Line Land Use Plan. Her presentation included quick facts and the vicinity map; land use review; the Park Land Dedication Ordinance; and finally, the phasing plan. Caroline then introduced Craig Dossey, President of Vertex Consulting Services, and Phil Stuepfert, Leader for Land Development for HR Green, who presented the land use plan. This presentation included the location and regional context; park facilities regional context; the Karman Line Land Use Plan; the Karman Line parks location map; the Karman Line parks land dedication calculations; neighborhood parks; the community park; and finally, photos from each of the potential park sites.

[Link to Agenda Packet Here](#)

Staff Updates

Cultural Services Update (Presented by Matt Mayberry, Cultural Services Manager)

Matt Mayberry, Cultural Services Manager, presented the Board with the Cultural Services update. This presentation included core services; the 2023 Cultural Services budget; operating

budget by program; donations, grants and earned revenue; 2021-2022 program participation; Garden of the Gods Park; the Garden of the Gods economic impact study; Rock Ledge Ranch; the Pioneer’s Museum; North Cheyenne Cañon; public art programs; and finally, archaeology programs.

[Link to Agenda Packet Here](#)

Velodrome Update (Presented by Kim King, Assistant Director)

Kim King, Assistant Director, provided a brief verbal update to the Board on the status of the Velodrome. In her verbal update, she informed the Board that staff from the USOPTC are out of the country currently but are planning to formally present in January. This presentation will cover their programming and usage over the last year. Kim noted that there were fifty days of community riding over the summer months, with over 1,200 riders. Additionally, there was a project for high school students to ride. They are working with a company that will help facilitate community programming in 2024, though the contract is not finalized. We anticipate that agreement will be signed by the end of the year, and thus they will have information about programming moving forward with this partnership at their presentation in January.

Budget Update (Presented by Britt Haley, Director)

Britt Haley, Director, provided a brief verbal update about the 2024 budget. Each department was asked to reduce and recalibrate their budgets by 3.45% due to anticipated flat revenue in the General Fund in 2024. The budget was delivered to City Council as proposed. Most of the discussion at the markup session were if the Police and Fire Departments should take no cuts, while other departments would readjust in line with this. This idea was struck down by Council, and all departments were cut evenly.

Staffing Update/New Staff Introductions

Eric Becker, Park Maintenance and Operations Manager, introduced two new employees as Park Ranger I’s on the Urban Ranger team: Duncan Skinner and Raymond Polak. Both Duncan and Raymond have been in their positions for a couple of weeks, serving on the new Urban Ranger team. There is still one Ranger I position vacant for the Urban Ranger team, and Eric is hoping to conduct interviews for that position in the coming weeks.

Other Updates

Lonna Thelen, Design and Development Manager/TOPS Program Manager, provided a brief update on the Antlers Park dog park project. The sitework has been advancing where possible. Trenching and electric conduit work is still being done since they have been approved. Permanent fencing and tree irrigation lines are being installed. A majority of the improvements will be completed in November. We will share details on a ribbon cutting as soon as we have them.

Board Business

Reappointment of a TOPS Working Committee Member (Presented by Lonna Thelen, Design and Development Manager/TOPS Program Manager.)

Lonna Thelen, Design and Development Manager and TOPS Program Manager, informed the Board that a member of the TOPS Working Committee was coming to end of his first term, and expressed interest in serving a second term. Hank Scarangella has diligently served on the TOPS Working Committee the last three years and is seeking approval from the Parks Advisory Board for a second term. The proposed term would begin September 6, 2023, lasting until September 2, 2026.

Motion – To approve the reappointment of Hank Scarangella to the TOPS Working Committee as presented.

1st – Steve Harris, 2nd – Abby Simpson, Approved, Unanimously.

Board Liaison Roles

Anna White, Staff Assistant, distributed a list of which Board member is a liaison to various committees throughout the City. The only vacancy was for the Historic Preservation Board. Board member Amandla Atilano-Roque said she would be interested in learning more. Anna said she would send her the information.

Other Board Business

Larry Bogue – Mr. Bogue provided a brief overview of the three presentations at the TOPS Working Committee meeting: the wayfinding update, Austin Bluffs Open Space update, and introduction to Fishers Canyon master plan. Additionally, at the TOPS Working Committee, David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect, clarified the phrase “adaptive management plan” which is referenced in the Blodgett Open Space master plan to mean that some changes may be made to the master plan after monitoring the space. It provides flexibility to the master plan. Mr. Bogue then asked for an update on Stratton Park and the partnership with the Golden Lotus Foundation. Staff said they would add this request to the agenda planner for a future meeting. Finally, Mr. Bogue stated that the Board had received quite a few letters from citizens with comments and concerns about the Blodgett Open Space master plan, and asked what the response is. Britt Haley, Director, responded that staff appreciates the comments, which are all given to the project manager. Anna White, Staff Assistant, has been letting citizens know their comments have been received. The project team is working on a way to respond back to citizens to answer how their comments or concerns are being addressed.

Abby Simpson – Ms. Simpson provided a brief overview of the TOPS Working Committee meeting, where the Blodgett Master Plan update was also presented. She stated that one main

concern to address is parking. Additionally, Ms. Simpson covered the Urban Trails Update that was presented at the TOPS Working Committee meeting.

Julia Sands de Melendez – Ms. Sands de Melendez said that she was appointed to the LART Committee at the most recent City Council meeting. However, she stated there was no LART meeting that afternoon. Next, Ms. Sands de Melendez asked if there is going to be a Parks Advisory Board workshop to discuss the Department’s strategic plan. Lonna Thelen, Design and Development Manager/TOPS Program Manager, responded that staff is working to put together a workshop sometime between mid-January to mid-February, and will have a few dates to select from at the next meeting.

Greg Thornton – Mr. Thornton asked about the status of the aeration project at Prospect Lake. Kim King, Assistant Director, responded that staff is working with Regional Building on the structure that will house the aeration pump. Once the structure is approved, a Request For Proposal for construction can go out. We anticipate having the aeration project installed before the summer. Next, Mr. Thornton asked about construction of a rectangular concrete area in Memorial Park, and asked what it is. Eric Becker, Park Maintenance and Operations Manager, responded that it is for a new cricket pitch. Finally, Mr. Thornton asked about the status of the City Auditorium. Kim King responded that a solutions team has been put in place by Mayor Yemi to strategize how to move forward. The solutions team is comprised of subject matter experts, staff, citizens, and community members. The solutions team will meet for four to six weeks to come up with a strategy. The first meeting was earlier in the week, and meetings will run through December, with a recommendation to move forward at the end of the process. Currently, the City Auditorium is locked and not being used by any outside organizations. While we have received requests for events at the Auditorium, we are still working on a solution moving forward.

Sarah Bryarly – Ms. Bryarly asked if the Board would receive results from the recreation community survey. Kim King responded that staff is still working through the responses and data collected. Kim did note that not as much of the community was reached in the initial survey, so staff is looking at distributing a second survey that would not compromise the results of the first survey. Once that is complete, staff will bring results forward. Next, Ms. Bryarly asked staff to consider completion of the Skyline Trail in the next budget. Britt responded that staff would do what they can. Ms. Bryarly then asked how the sales of the annual calendar are going. Britt responded that it has been pretty active, and staff is working on providing some discount codes for Board and Committee members to purchase additional calendars. So far, we have raised about \$2,500 in proceeds, all coming back to TOPS. Finally, Ms. Bryarly asked if trees damaged by contractor work for Pikes Peak Rural Transportation projects are reported to the Department or Forestry. Eric Becker responded that often the damage is reported through the GoCOS app, and the Department works with Forestry on replacement of damaged trees, though we can’t always catch the damage in the act to work through insurance.

Adjournment

Motion: Move to adjourn the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board meeting at 10:24 a.m.

1st – Steve Harris, 2nd – Larry Bogue, Approved, Unanimously.