



**TOPS Working Committee Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 4, 2023**

Members Present: Bob Falcone, Ingrid Richter, Bob Shafer, Paula Krantz, Wendy Howe, Panariso, Jeff Davis

Members Absent: Hank Scarangella, Chelsea Gondeck

Parks Board Liaisons Present: Abby Simpson, Greg Thornton

Parks Board Liaisons Absent: Larry Bogue

Staff Present: Britt Haley, Lonna Thelen, Kim King, Eric Becker, Anna White, David Deitemeyer, Emily Duncan

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TOPS Working Committee Chair Bob Falcone brought the meeting to order at 7:31 a.m.

Agenda Preview

Committee Chair Bob Falcone announced the agenda for the meeting.

Announcements

Lonna Thelen, Design and Development Manager/TOPS Program Manager, announced that the Committee will need to vote on the Chair and Vice Chair positions for the year.

- Committee member Blaze Panariso nominated Bob Falcone, with Committee member Wendy Howe seconding the nomination. Committee Chair Bob Falcone accepted the nomination.
- **Motion: To elect Bob Falcone as Chair of the TOPS Working Committee.**
1st – Blaze Panariso, 2nd – Wendy Howe, Approved, Unanimously.
- Committee member Blaze Panariso nominated Wendy Howe, with Committee Chair Bob Falcone seconding the nomination. Committee member Wendy Howe accepted the nomination.
- **Motion: To elect Wendy Howe as Vice Chair of the TOPS Working Committee.**
1st – Blaze Panariso, 2nd – Bob Falcone, Approved, Unanimously.

Following the election of Chair and Vice Chair, Lonna Thelen made the following announcements:

- Committee member Chelsea Gondeck was approved to move from an alternate member to a regular member at the September 14th Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board meeting. Chelsea is absent for today's meeting but is looking forward to future meetings and serving as a regular member.
- With Chelsea Gondeck moving into a regular position on the Committee, and the resignation of Committee alternate Ellen Senf, staff will be looking to fill the two

alternate positions. Staff will work with City Council staff to open the application portal and will provide more information on how to apply as soon as it is available.

- The grant award for Fishers Canyon has been received and is now in the project account.
- In partnership with City Forestry, the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department received a grant award of \$9,078,450 from the Urban and Community Forestry Division of the United States Forest Service as part of the Inflation Reduction Act. This grant will allow City Forestry to hire two new staff foresters, contractually prune, remove, and treat over 12,000 trees and plant 787 more trees over a five-year commitment. The focus of this grant will be in the Southeast area of the City, which has an urban canopy in urgent need of attention.
- Staff is working with the City Attorney's Office on the e-bike policy. Guidance from the Attorney's office is that the TOPS ordinance would require a change to allow e-bikes. Lonna will be working with stakeholders and the TOPS Working Committee as we move forward on this topic. Currently, there is not a timeline for this change, but staff is working with the City Attorney's Office to arrive at a consensus on language.
- There were no changes to the TOPS budget moving forward to City Council.

Anna White, Staff Assistant, announced that the annual Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services calendar reveal will take place on October 17th at Patty Jewett Golf Course, beginning at 4:30 p.m. Calendars will be for sale this year, with all proceeds benefiting the TOPS program.

Committee Chair Bob Falcone commented that he had attended a City Council meeting the week before the Mayor sent forth the proposed budget. Bob said he had urged City Council to make budget cuts evenly across all departments, instead of cutting more from any one department. The budget has come out since Bob made his comments, and it does appear cuts have been made evenly. In previous years when budgets have been cut, it seemed like TOPS had to shoulder many of the projects and positions that would normally not be funded by TOPS to work through the cuts, and Bob did not want to see this happen again if it could be prevented. Britt Haley, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Director, thanked Bob for his support of the Department, and his comments at City Council. Britt informed the Committee that all departments were asked to find 3.43% of cuts and recalibrate their needs. Britt's number one priority is to take care of the employees first. Britt used Grey Hawk Park as an example of the recalibration, stating that the project will now occur over two phases in a two year period. The City is hoping that the budget will be able to rebound in 2025.

Councilmember Michelle Talarico commented that staff had done a great job to pivot, recalibrate, and make smart decisions in the best interest of the Department and employees. Additionally, Councilmember Talarico said she would do everything she could to support the Department as Council works through the budget.

Approval of Minutes – September 6, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Motion: To approve the minutes of the September 6, 2023 TOPS Working Committee meeting.

1st – Blaze Panariso, 2nd – Paula Krantz, Approved, Unanimously.

Citizen Discussion

Susan Davies, Executive Director for the Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC), stated that the LART Committee had designated some money to her organization to continue working on the Ring the Peak Trail project a few years ago. TOSC contracted the Rocky Mountain Field Institute (RMFI) for work on the Pancake Rocks segment of the trail. Ms. Davies announced that there will be a hike, open to the public, next Friday around 9 a.m. with RMFI to showcase the work completed. Next, Ms. Davies announced that TOSC is having their member celebration next Tuesday at 6 p.m., in the Harvey House at the Catalyst Campus and invited everyone to attend.

Cory Sutela, Executive Director for Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, thanked staff for working with his organization on repairs to the top of the Chutes Trail.

Presentations

Blodgett Open Space Master and Management Plan (Presented by David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect)

David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect, presented the Committee with the Blodgett Open Space Master and Management Plan update. This presentation included presentation goals; where we are at in the process; project givens; highlights of project givens; site inventory and assessment; existing conditions; elevation; slope; aspect; vegetation; bighorn sheep habitat; habitat fragmentation; key habitat areas; initial public engagement findings; what has been hosted so far; public engagement – to date; virtual preference board results; ArcGIS Survey123 results; general survey results; the August 22, 2023 community work session; alternative approaches; BOS stats for consideration; public preferences; Alternative Concepts I and II; Alternative Concept I; Alternative Concept II; trailhead options; USDA USFS Pikes Peak Ranger District Blodgett Peak access; summary of community input from the August 22, 2023 community work session; public engagement overview; and finally, next steps.

[Link to Agenda Packet Here](#)

Colorado Springs Urban Trail Project Update (Presented by Emily Duncan, Trails Development Coordinator)

Emily Duncan, Trails Development Coordinator, presented the Committee with the Colorado Springs urban trail project update. This presentation included the park system master plan; Legacy Loop: Rock Island Trail; Legacy Loop: Pikes Peak Greenway; the Sand Creek Trail and

Rock Island Trail intersection; the Ute Valley Regional Trail; recently completed projects; and finally, 2024 urban trail projects.

[Link to Agenda Packet Here](#)

Citizen Discussion

Susan Davies, Executive Director for TOSC, asked for an update on the Urban Trail Rangers. Eric Becker, Park Maintenance and Operations Manager, informed Ms. Davies and the Committee that the background checks are complete for the two Rangers, who will begin next Monday. These positions are supported by the General Fund and will be monitoring sections of the Greenway Trail, and Mesa Road south to the Bijou Bridge.

Motion to Adjourn: Motion to adjourn the TOPS Working Committee meeting at 9:32 a.m.

1st – Blaze Panariso, 2nd – Paula Krantz, Approved, Unanimously.