



**TOPS Working Committee Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 4, 2021**

Members Present: Blaze Panariso, Bob Falcone, Bob Shafer, Nancy Hobbs, Stephanie Surch, Hank Scarangella, Paula Krantz, Ingrid Richter

Members Absent: Wendy Thomas

Parks Board Liaisons Present: Greg Thorton, Carol Beckman

Staff Present: Britt Haley, Kurt Schroeder, Karen Palus, Anna White, Scott Abbott, Emily Duncan, King King, Gillian Rossi, Melody Horbach

Staff Board Absent: Kim King

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TOPS Working Committee Chair Bob Falcone brought the meeting to order at 7:36 a.m.

Agenda Preview

Committee Chair Bob Falcone announced the agenda for the meeting.

Announcements

Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager, announced there will be no site tour this month. There was a request from TOPS Working Committee on an update for the Manitou Incline Reservation system and funding. Gillian Rossi, Park Ranger Supervisor, is currently out of town and will be discussing updates regarding the Leave No Trace program next month.

Kurt Schroeder, Park Operations and Maintenance Manager, announced that the Manitou Incline reservations continue to come in with a high NCNS (no call no shows) rate of roughly 30% a day. There have been adjustments made to have more open slots during the morning, roughly 65 reservations per period, and drops to about 35 reservations in the afternoon to accommodate traffic. From the reservations received about 50% are from those who live in Colorado Springs, 25% outside of Colorado Springs, and 25% out of state respectively. Committee member Stephanie Surch asked if there has been a discussion on whether Manitou Springs residents don't have to use the reservations. Kurt Schroeder mentioned that would defeat the purpose of the reservations to try to reduce risks of COVID along with other benefits of the reservation system. Carol Beckman, Parks Board Liaison, asked if there are NCNS if that vacant slot can only be moved into the next advisory in which Kurt responded that the slot will be available all day.

Emily Duncan, Trail Development Coordinator, announced there is a counter at Barr Trail but not at the 1,800 steps bail out area causing inconclusive data on who utilizes the northern return trail versus Barr return trail at this current time. There is a counter that distinguishes uphill traffic and downhill traffic on the Barr Trail. Committee member Ingrid Richter inquired about the total amount of reservations per day to which Kurt responded with 1,125 reservations a day.

Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager, announced Committee Member Michael Merrifield has resigned on the TOPS Working Committee Board, and the vacant position has been offered to TOPS Working Committee alternate Wendy Thomas to be appointed to the full position officially next week at the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Advisory Board meeting.

Approval of Minutes – July 7, 2021

Motion: To approve the minutes of the July 7, 2021 TOPS Working Committee meeting.
1st Ingrid Richter, 2nd – Blaze Panariso, Approved, Unanimously.

Citizen Discussion

Cory Sutela, Executive Director of Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, stated his team is currently working on a bicycle pump track at Cresta Open Space and are receiving great traction with their fundraiser. Moreover, he stated Medicine Wheel is strongly in favor of construction on an e-bike pilot program. The staff is currently working on consultants to bring some measurable metrics for an e-bike pilot and wanted to thank the staff. Finally, Medicine Wheel is currently working on a project to hopefully add a new trail that will run adjacent to Landlock at Red Rock Canyon.

Susan Davies, Executive Director of Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC), stated residents of Manitou Springs unanimously oppose the Incline reservation system. Some residents are concerned that they do not have access to computers to reserve the incline. They are aware there is general funding to support the project but are in fear of when it runs out. Furthermore, she stated on behalf of the staff they hope to find a better system than the current reservation system. Committee Chair Bob Falcone inquired if the reservation system will be indefinite and Kurt Schroeder responded that is a difficult question to answer. As there is a current partnership for the reservation system, the focus is the impact it has on the community so it will be operating as needed.

Committee member Stephanie Surch asked what exactly the plan with the growth of the city for the next ten to twenty years. Britt Haley stated that the Parks System Master Plan creates a strategy that is updated with public input. Recommendations are given comprehensively to hopefully minimize potential issues that may arise in the next ten to twenty years.

Action Items

TOPS Ballot Language Update (Presented by Karen Palus, Director of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services and Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager)

Karen Palus, Director of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services, along with Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager, presented the TOPS Working Committee with an update on the TOPS Ballot Update. This presentation included an overview of qualitative data on open spaces acquired including parks and trails constructed; percentage of revenue changed; a Proposed Ballot Question on the November ballot; a 1997 TOPS Ordinance Purpose Repeated in the Proposed Ballot Question; Public Meetings-Stakeholder Input; Presidents Park Sustainability Commission; an image of the Palmer Mesa-Trail-under construction; Potential Trail Projects; an image of the Pikeview Buffer Open Space; Potential Open Space Projects; an image of Nancy Lewis Park; Potential Park Projects; and the next steps on the Action Item which will move to Parks Board on August 5, 2021, to City Council on August 10, 2021, where they vote to submit the proposed question to the ballot. Lastly, there was a draft of the proposed ballot attached at the end of the presentation.

[Link to PowerPoint](#)

Committee Vice Chair Nancy Hobbs mentioned it would be very interesting to know at what price Stratton Open Space was purchased for and thanked Karen Palus, Director of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services, for a thorough presentation.

Committee member Stephanie Surch mentioned she has a general concern that there is no earmark specifically on acquisition. She mentioned making the language on the proposed ballot an open-ended question is a double-edged sword, where there may be a situation that arises in which there are not enough funds available to obtain an open space. Furthermore, she reiterated her concern comes from funds being used on maintenance in areas needed that will in turn cut into the funds available for acquisition.

Committee Chair Bob Falcone agreed with Stephanie's statement and stated concrete definitions to make the language clearer may be beneficial. The flexibility in the language to reaffirm the primary purpose is to acquire land would be beneficial. Moreover, he mentioned the TOPS Working Committee wants the language to be flexible.

Parks Board Liaison Greg Thorton stated there could be land that is acquired and not touched for a while, but it is a long-term investment like buying stocks, and to keep in mind by looking ten-twenty years down the road. Committee member Stephanie Surch agreed we do need to think in the future, but qualitatively we also need to continue to maintain what TOPS has already built.

Bill Koerner, citizen, stated he agrees with committee member Blaze Panariso's comment on now is the best time to acquire land as it will not be any cheaper in the future. Furthermore, he commented when the open space land is gone, it will be gone indefinitely so it would be best to buy land as soon as possible to accommodate the increased volume of Colorado Springs. Bill

also mentioned he wanted to clarify that not all funds will be used on maintenance. Committee Chair Bob Falcone commented to clarify distinguishing that the funds can be used on maintenance versus would be used on maintenance.

Cory Sutela, Executive Director of Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, suggested modifying the proposed ballot to focus on open space and not combine maintenance and open space to allocate a specific amount solely for open space. Furthermore, he felt proposals have been brought to TOPS in the past and was told they were unable to move forward with it as there were not enough funds. Committee member Blaze Panariso refuted he has never remembered a time where the board said they want to move forward but there were not enough funds for the duration he has been on the board. There have been times where open space has been requested much higher than the appraisal, and we have to keep in mind to not overspend if we do not have to in order to see the bigger picture and to do what's best for everyone.

Committee member Paula Krantz stated everyone is so concerned about maintenance, but the more property we acquire the higher need for maintenance. We cannot depend on volunteers and friend groups forever. Committee member Nancy Hobbs added an open space doesn't mean it's in a pristine land where nothing must be removed. Most of the time, weeds, buildings, and other obstacles need to be removed for the open space so we should keep an open mind on what an open space is.

Linda Hodges, citizen, stated what bothers her is maintenance is paid by citizens therefore, she would like to see the ballot be postponed. She believes this ballot will be sending a bad message to the citizens as they must pay the potential increase. Once a funding source has been found, she believes an increase would make sense.

Jim Lockhart, citizen, added the significance of having an earmark for acquisition is vital to the community. The more specific the increased tax money will be used, the higher chance it will be passed in November

Susan Davies, Executive Director of TOSC, stated she is delighted about the increase. She agreed flexibility is important because we don't know what we will need twenty years from now and wants to see this ballot get passed with a visual of how much the average person would have to pay: roughly \$1.17 more per household per month.

Jennifer Peterson, Executive Director of the Rocky Mountain Field Institute (RMFI), mentioned it would behoove simplifying the language on the ballot for citizens to understand fully.

Motion: To provide a recommendation to the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory in favor of the proposed ballot language as prepared by the Office of the City Attorney.

1st – Nancy Hobbs, 2nd Paula Krantz, Approved, Unanimously.

Citizen Discussion

There was no further citizen discussion at this time.

Motion to adjourn

1st – Bob Falcone, 2nd –, Approved, Unanimously.