



**Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 14, 2021**

Members Present: Ron Ilgen, Carol Beckman, Dr. Daniel Bowan, Abby Simpson, Larry Bogue, David Siegel, Jason Rupinski, Sarah Bryarly, Greg Thornton

Alternates Present: Andrea Perry, Lisa Weiland

Staff Present: Karen Palus, Kurt Schroeder, Kim King, Britt Haley, Anna White, Connie Schmeisser, Scott Abbott, Gillian Rossi

Called to Order: Board Chair Ron Ilgen brought the meeting to order at 7:31 a.m.

Citizen Discussion

Susan Davies, Executive Director for the Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC), informed the Board that El Paso County Parks and Leisure is celebrating their 50th anniversary this year, kicking it off with the “50k for 50 Years” hiking campaign. She said the U.S. Forest Service is also evaluating th shooting regulations in their parks. Information concerning this topic can be found on TOSC’s website. Finally, Susan said she was looking forward to hearing updates on the TOPS Ballot Initiative.

Cory Sutela, Executive Director for Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, thanked Parks Advisory Board members for their work and guidance in 2020, saying it had been a good year. Their Indy Give donation campaign was successful. He thanked those who were able to join Medicine Wheel for their farewell celebration for their long-time Board member, Mike Rigney. Cory said trail work is continuing between his organization and Park staff. He said Medicine Wheel is continuing to fundraise for proposed trails in Austin Bluffs Open Space. He also added that his organization has many ideas around how to spread information about the TOPS Ballot Initiative.

Approval of Minutes – November 12, 2020 and December 10, 2020 minutes

Motion – To approve the November 12, 2020 minutes with proposed changes.

1st – Carol Beckman, 2nd – Greg Thornton, Approved, Unanimously.

Motion: To approve the December 10, 2020 minutes.

1st – David Siegel, 2nd – Abby Simpson, Approved, Unanimously.

Presentation Items

Reagan Ranch Master Plan Amendment (Presented by Connie Schmeisser, Landscape Architect II, and Jason Alwine, Deputy Director of Landscape Architecture at Matrix Design Group)

Connie Schmeisser, Landscape Architect II, and Jason Alwine, Deputy Director of Landscape Architecture for Matrix Design Group, presented the Board with a 273-acre redevelopment project for the Reagan Ranch Master Plan. This presentation included a vicinity map; the Master Plan and PLDO obligations; and finally, proposed trail locations.

[Link to PowerPoint presentation](#)

Trails, Open Space, and Parks (TOPS) Program Initiative Update (Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Director, and Conor Hall, Conservation Finance Director for the Intermountain West with the Trust for Public Land)

Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Director, refreshed the Board about previous conversations centering on the proposed TOPS ballot initiative. Karen informed the Board that after polling results came back and were discussed with City Council President and the Mayor, leadership decided it would be better to first address the TABOR policies that limit ballot information for a tax increase to a thirty word limit. The overall hope would be to vote to amend this policy to allow for more words on tax-increasing ballot initiatives to better explain the purpose behind the tax. This initiative would now potentially be on the April 2021 ballot, which would move the TOPS ballot initiatives potentially to the November 2021 Election. Karen then introduced Conor Hall, Conservation Finance Director for the Intermountain West with the Trust for Public Land (TPL), to review the polling results for the Board. The presentation included the methodology of the polling; current voter thoughts about the direction Colorado Springs is heading in; familiarity with the TOPS program; the ballot proposal of increasing the TOPS tax written for two amounts within the thirty word TABOR limit; graphics showing poor voter response to both proposals, given constraints on ballot language; main reasons identified by voters to vote 'yes' for this ballot measure; main reasons identified to vote 'no' for this measure; nearly two-thirds of citizens would be willing to pay more in taxes in order to protect and maintain natural areas; the question of a TOPS tax extension; the response from undecided or 'no' voters for an extension; ranked importance of popular items funded by TOPS; prioritization of goals; anti-tax sentiments; a change in support after more explanation is offered; the bottom line; and finally, the path moving forward. Susan Davies, Executive Director for the Trails and Open Space Coalition, said that while results were not what her organization had hoped to see, she understood the concerns of the public. She said she feels hopeful for the November election, especially if the TABOR word limit is changed.

Britt Haley, Design and Development Manager, reviewed the recommendations that the TOPS Working Committee had submitted in a memo. This included a recommendation of increasing the TOPS tax to 0.25%, extending the tax for 20 more years, and finally, reviewing the flexibility of the percentages.

There was consensus from the Board to make a recommendation to City Council to support the TOPS Working Committee memo.

Regional Parks, Trails, and Open Space Update (Presented by Scott Abbott, Regional Parks Supervisor)

Scott Abbott, Regional Parks Supervisor, presented the Board with the Regional Parks, Trails, and Open Space Update. This presentation included a list of all the regional parks, trails, and open space properties; division break down; a listing of the trails and parks of each district along with major projects in each district in 2020; major projects completed by the Natural Resource Management division; noxious weed management; major challenges in 2020; volunteerism and volunteer partners in 2020; work done with the Rocky Mountain Field Institute; and finally, a list of major projects completed throughout various other regional parks properties and trails around the City.

[Link to PowerPoint Presentation](#)

TOPS Stewardship Season-End Update (Presented by Gillian Rossi, TOPS Ranger Supervisor)

Gillian Rossi presented the Board with the 2020 TOPS Stewardship season-end update. This presentation included information about the discoveries at Corral Bluffs; an overview of full-time staff; an overview of winter seasonal staff; work done by the Education Technician; work completed by the Resource Technicians; details about the locate assistance to help Park Facilities; an overview of the summer seasonal staff; accomplishments by the trail crew; information about the biological technicians; the COVID-19 response; the Free Incline Reservation System (FIRS); the partnership with HealthyParks.co; work done with law enforcement; interpretation and education; lost programming due to COVID-19; virtual programming; the monthly *Gazette* column; volunteerism; park maintenance; cultural resource monitoring; fire response to the Incline Fire; new trails; resource stewardship contractors; accomplishments with the Rocky Mountain Field Institute; and finally, an update about the ongoing Leave No Trace stewardship initiative.

[Link to PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Staff Updates

Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Director, gave the following Covid-19 update:

- The county has moved back to Level Orange.
- The Department continues to provide indoor activities at a reduced capacity.
- The Pioneer's Museum has reopened at a reduced capacity.
- Free soccer registration for Pre-K to Second Grade kids has begun through the partnership with Comcast and Children's Hospital.

Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Director, said that PLDO is moving forward with the recommendations from the Board to City Council. On January 26, the recommendations will also be taken to the Budget Committee. Board member Dr. Daniel Bowan asked if there was a feel for the vote on PLDO, if they would use the original recommendation or the amended one from the Board. Karen said it will depend on the outcome of the work session.

Tilah Larson, Senior Grants Analyst, informed the Board that the 2021 Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services calendar had been printed and is available for pick-up at our Administration building. She thanked Timberline Landscape for their continued partnership on the calendar.

Matt Mayberry, Cultural Services Manager, informed the Board about the beginning of the Sesquicentennial celebrations in 2021, which kicked off with the two New Year's Eve fireworks displays on Pikes Peak – America's Mountain. He said staff feels great moving into 2021, and Sesquicentennial programs are filling out. Matt will continue to update the Board on Sesquicentennial events as we continue forward in 2021.

Board Business

Recreation Plan Board Representatives

Kim King, Recreation and Administration Manager, asked for one or two Board volunteers to be representatives on a committee helping to update the recreation programming plan. Board members Dr. Daniel Bowan and Abby Simpson volunteered. Kim let them know she would be in touch with details.

Sarah Bryarly – Sarah let the Board know that the Incline Friends are looking for more members to grow their group.

David Siegel – David informed the Board that he was going to the LART meeting later in the afternoon, but said there was no big issues or news to report with LART.

Adjournment

Motion: Move to adjourn the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board meeting at 11:22 a.m.

1st – David Siegel, 2nd – Greg Thornton, Approved, Unanimously