



**TOPS Working Committee Meeting  
Meeting Minutes – FINAL  
Wednesday, November 7, 2018**

**Members Present:** Jason Alwine, Lily Weissgold, Lee Milner, Bob Falcone, Blaze Panariso, Jim Klever

**Alternate Present:** Paula Krantz

**Members Absent:** Joe Lavorini, Nancy Hobbs, Jeff Mohrmann

**Parks Board Liaisons Present:** Carol Beckman, Mina Liebert, Jason Rupinski

**Parks Board Liaisons Absent:** N/A

**Staff Present:** Britt Haley, Kurt Schroeder, Kim King, Christi Mehew, Scott Abbott, John Stark

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Jason Alwine brought the meeting to order at 7:32 a.m.

**Agenda Preview** Committee Chair Jason Alwine announced the agenda for the meeting.

**Announcements**

**Britt Haley**, TOPS Program Manager

- The department has closed on the acquisitions of the Bishop property at Corral Bluffs and the Blodgett Open Space parcels.
- Last Tuesday, October 30<sup>th</sup> Blaze Panariso and Joe Lavorini went on a site tour to the Kettle Creek area. Blaze Panariso stated the property is beautiful with creek views and there are possibilities for trails. He suggested other members see the property. Britt Haley said the next step will be to have the TOPS Working Committee tour to the area. This property consists of 154 acres and is located very close to the Black Forest area by Shoup Road and Powers Boulevard. This area is on the Park System Master Plan as an Open Space candidate.
- A Volunteer Reception is being held on December 4<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. at the Pioneer’s Museum. This event is being hosted by City Council in honor of all the Boards and Commissions volunteers. Thank you to all the Committee members for your efforts and commitment to the TOPS program. They will be introducing the high school students who have been selected to be a part of the Youth Ambassador Program. This is an 18 month program in which high school students will be liaisons to the TOPS Working Committee.

**Approval of Minutes** – October 3, 2018

**Motion:** To approve the minutes of the October 3, 2018 TOPS Working Committee meeting.

1<sup>st</sup> – Lily Weissgold, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Blaze Panariso, Approved, Unanimous

## Citizen Discussion

Linda Hodges, Aiken Audubon Society Chair

- Stated the Aiken Audubon Society is concerned about the Big Johnson Reservoir. This is a large body of water for migrating birds and it is dry and full of grass. She inquired when will it be filled with water. Kurt Schroeder, Operations and Maintenance Manager, said he has not heard anything about this project. Scott Abbott, Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space Manager, stated he would call the Fountain Ditch Water Company to get an update on the project. Britt Haley stated that one of her goals this year was to become more familiar with Bluestem Open Space and John Stark, Park Ranger Supervisor, took her on a site visit. She noticed the lack of water and would also like to know more about this project.
- She thanked the department for closing the rogue trails in Stratton Open Space. She inquired if a less expensive option could be used to close trails so this money could be used to build a parking lot. Scott Abbott stated they have tried many ways to close rogue trails. There are always a couple of people who ignore the closures and will not be deterred by naturalized closures. The department is working on this extensively.
- She asked if there are any efforts to repair some of the trails that are eroded in Stratton Open Space just south of the parking lot. Scott Abbott responded he would like for the department to look into this matter and can put this on their work plan list. They are looking into expanding the Ridgeway parking lot and possibly this work can be done at the same time. David Deitemeyer stated they are looking to expand the lot by adding 15 to 20 more spaces, a trailhead and kiosk.

Bill Koerner, citizen, thanked Britt Haley for all her work and efforts in acquiring properties in the Corral Bluffs area.

Susan Davies, Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC) Executive Director

- Stated that Denver passed the “Yes for Denver Parks” initiative by 60 percent which is a .25% sales tax that will go towards Parks in Denver.
- She is excited about the Kettle Creek property application. This is an area important to consider as opportunities do not come up often in this vicinity. This will help gain support for the TOPS program from this community.
- The Sand Creek trail project has been completed and a celebration will be held on December 1<sup>st</sup>. This project allows for more trail connections.
- The Full Moon Hike is on November 23<sup>rd</sup> from 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. TOSC, Garden of the Gods and the Garden of the Gods Foundation are sponsoring this event.
- The online response to the Waldo Canyon project has been great with 990 submissions. TOSC, Rocky Mountain Field Institute, the US Forest Service and the City will be holding a planning meeting on January 16<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. at the Westside Community Center.

## Action Items

**Red Rock Canyon Open Space Master Plan Amendment** (Presented by Scott Abbott, Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space Manager and John Stark, TOPS Park Ranger Supervisor)

[Link to PowerPoint presentation](#)

Red Rock Canyon has gone through two master plan processes since its inception. Heavy rains and the subsequent flooding in 2013 and 2015 required action to close the location for the proposed trail due to severe erosion and rogue trail proliferation. Prior to the floods Park staff had installed a culvert at the intersection of Lion Trail and Red Rock Rim Trail. Many attempts at fortifying this intersection had failed so the installation of a culvert took place. After the installation, increased intensity of rainfall in 2013 caused severe damage to the rogue trail running east to west downhill into Red Rock Canyon. Use of this area continued through 2014 and 2015. The floods of 2015 increased damage further and led to the decision among city staff to plan a closure of the entire area in September 2016. The area has been physically closed since that time.

Requests from members of Friends of Red Rock Canyon (FoRRC) began in approximately November 2017 regarding construction of the trail per the master plan. City staff began researching the rehabilitation of the eroded area and feasibility of constructing the trail as requested.

City Staff recommends removing this trail connection from the Master Plan due to unsustainable soils, erosive slopes and wildlife habitat.

TOPS Working Committee member Jim Klever asked what is the position of the Friends of Red Rock Canyon (FoRRC). FoRRC representative Shanti Toll stated they will be making a presentation next.

TOPS Working Committee member Bob Falcone stated there is a significant population of deer in this area and questions if they should be disturbed with a trail.

**Request for Reclamation and Trail at the North End of the Landfill in Red Rock Canyon**  
(Presented by Shanti Toll, Friends of Red Rock Canyon, FoRRC)

[Link to PowerPoint presentation](#)

Shanti Toll distributed a handout to the Committee.

Shanti Toll stated:

- He approached the Parks Department regarding a new way of looking at this issue and wanted to discuss options prior to having this trail be considered for closure.
- There have not been significant conversations with the FoRRC on how to design a trail to address staff concerns. The FoRRC were told to only work with Scott Abbott. David Deitemeyer, Landscape Architect, was not available to talk about possible trail designs and they could not get anyone from the Parks Department to walk the site with them.
- Scott Abbott's concerns are based on his review and perceived data of the area and the FoRRC have had experts evaluate the area. TOPS Working Committee member Lily

Weissgold asked if he could elaborate on who these experts are? Shanti Toll replied the experts are trail designers that are used by TOPS and others.

- The “old infrastructure (cement bunker) and monitoring wells” are dangerous and they need to be addressed.
- Scott Abbott made the assumption that the proposed master plan trail consists of highly erosive soil and others have found alternate ways of dealing with this concern.
- The idea that its adjacent to sensitive wildlife habitat is incorrect. According to the City map it is not sensitive, it is undisturbed habitat.
- Stated that it is sad that park staff has been unwilling to listen to citizens and therefore do not know what the FoRRC are proposing and listen to a different point of view. The FoRRC can still work together with staff to create a wonderful trail.
- Suggested a study be done and the FoRRC would like to be a part of this study.
- Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates have looked at this area as well as Mike Scott who has done a lot of trail design.
- This is the central part of Red Rock Canyon and it needs help. This trail has the potential of being the best trail for those that are elderly or need assistance.

The Secretary of FoRRC, Glenn Pressman stated his first concern is the process of amending the master plan that was created in 2013 . The master plan was a detailed public process and experts were hired to come in and design the master plan. He was on the committee then and they selected Tapis & Associates as the consultants who had the expertise and helped design the plan. Even though the Parks Department had known expertise they thought an outside consultant would be helpful. He has concerns if the master plan changes without a public process and an outside consultant to provide an independent opinion.

TOPS Working Committee member Lee Milner asked Kurt Schroeder to comment on this situation. Kurt Schroeder, Operations and Maintenance Manager, said he has seen what has occurred with the flooding and erosion and does not think it's a good place to put a trail. He stated it could probably be engineered to make it a sustainable trail; however, with all these challenges and the fact that the master plan identified the area as undisturbed habitat why should the department construct it when a trail already exists just south of the area and provides a connection.

TOPS Committee Chair Jason Alwine asked what is the process to amend the master plan and is a public process required. Britt Haley replied this is a minor amendment to the master plan and not a full rewrite to the plan. A public process entails presenting to the TOPS Working Committee and receiving public comment. A recommendation is given to the Parks Board and a presentation and public comment is received again and changes are allowed during the process. Parks Board would then vote on the item. The only change is to not pursue this particular trail as a formal trail in the Red Rock Canyon master plan. Staff is in full agreement that regard to the erosive nature in the area that rehabilitation is needed due to the huge rains in 2013 and 2015. As land managers its not uncommon to have the need to address issues if the surface of the land is affected and make recommendations to the Committee and that is what the department is doing today. The department has significant regulatory

obligations from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Parks Department needs to continue monitoring and to stay in compliance with landfill regulations.

TOPS Working Committee member Bob Falcone asked Scott Abbott if there is any possibility to construct a trail that circles around the mesa without going into the landfill. Scott Abbott replied that he didn't think that would meet the needs of the FoRRC and the master plan asks for a connector trail.

TOPS Working Committee member Lily Weissgold asked how far away is the south connector trail to the proposed trail. Scott Abbott stated they did a basic alignment and generally if they put a sustainable connection it would be 1500 feet. The loop around is 2500 feet and takes 5 minutes to hike. As a connection piece there is not much difference in time.

TOPS Working Committee member Jim Klever stated he didn't have any problem taking this trail off the master plan because his own Friends Group at Blodgett Open Space spent eight days fixing a trail that should not have been there because it would not come off the master plan. He is really concerned about the handout that Shanti Toll had written and distributed to the Committee and if this characterization of the Parks Department is accurate. Not communicating with the FoRRC is not okay. These groups care about the areas and they should be spoken to and heard. If there is not communication he will not support the issue at hand.

Britt Haley stated she wanted to respond to Jim Klever's comments. She stated there have been many emails back and forth with Shanti Toll for many months and she read the latest one on October 10<sup>th</sup> to the Committee.

"Hi Britt, it is my understanding that FoRRC should work with you (for TOPS planning) and Scott (for on the ground projects). I understand that the FoRRC proposal for the north end of the landfill will be on the agenda for the November 7th meeting of the TOPS Working Committee. I have had good conversations with Scott and have an understanding of his concern and plans, which he probably will present to the TOPS Working Committee. FoRRC have been working on some creative and healing plans for rehabilitating the bottom end of the dump and providing the multi-use trail connector between Gypsum and Red Rock Canyons, which is in the Red Rock Canyon Master Plan".

Britt Haley stated the department has had many conversations back and forth about this and came to an understanding that staff could not move forward without discussing the master plan itself and the connection. She walked this area with staff and really appreciated Red Rock Canyon; however, from a land management context the department is here today on this recommendation because they cannot find a common ground in regards to a connector trail. This does not diminish any of the other things they have worked together on with the FoRRC. Scott has been listening, working and communicating with the FoRRC.

Shanti Toll stated he has known Scott Abbott for a while; however, the conversations were Scott telling him what he was going to do and at no point did he ask to come visit the property

with him. He agrees with Scott that people need to keep away from the area that is unsafe. He felt no one was willing to hear their ideas and was hoping to discuss options and not have to defend their point of view.

Bill Koerner, citizen, suggested that a group go out and look at the site and come back and have a discussion.

TOPS Working Committee Chair Jason Alwine said he liked Bill Koerner's idea to visit the site and discuss this in the next meeting. If today the Committee agrees to remove this trail and the FoRRC in the future present options that are viable and sustainable can a new alignment be added to the master plan. Britt Haley stated yes.

Committee Chair Jason Alwine stated that the FoRRC's PowerPoint presentation did not address the trails and how their two proposed trail options will be built and if there is an accessible route.

TOPS Working Committee member Lee Milner stated this is not a trail that's been built and used. He moves to table this action item to allow for further discussion.

TOPS Working Committee member Bob Falcone said he was not satisfied that all the options have been discussed. He agreed with Jim Klever that there is a dedicated friends group for this area and whether it's a perceived or a real difference in opinion this needs to be resolved and they should not move on this item until more work is done. He 2<sup>nd</sup> Lee Milner's motion to table this item until more work is done.

TOPS Working Committee member Lily Weissgold disagreed with Bob Falcone and Lee Milner. She stated this is precisely why there is Park Staff and presentations are given to the Committee to give an accurate depiction of what is happening on the ground. She believes that Scott Abbott and Kurt Schroeder put there best foot forward and did their due diligence and this is their recommendation for specific reasons and those being the erosion and the unstainability of the trail. She made a motin to move ahead with this trail being removed from the master plan. Blaze Panariso 2<sup>nd</sup> this motion.

TOPS Working Committee member Blaze Panariso said he is new and still learning the process. He is a mountain biker and would be the first to say the community needs more trails and steeper trails; however, he has seen extensive erosion and the amount to repair it and from a stewardship standpoint to construct a 1500 foot trail is not necessary. The cost to build and maintain a trail like this will be excessive compared to miles of sustainable trails in other areas. If the FoRRC want to commission and pay for someone to do a study and come up with a great option that is sustainable and does not cost a fortune he is open for discussion at this time. He will need something more compelling than a blue line on a map that is a trail through undisturbed wildlife habitat. This is where animals live and it should be avoided no matter what and a connector trail already exists south of the area.

Susan Davies, Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC) Executive Director, stated she is a

champion of the TOPS program and the FoRRC. She is concerned about the process as in the past there have been times that friends groups have been left out of the process. These are people that are out in this area every weekend and they need to be appreciated. There should have been a time that staff looked at their options and alternatives and compromise should always be foremost. She suggested a sub-committee that is not partial to go out and visit the site and trail area.

Scott Abbott stated he needs to respond to the characterization of non-communication which is not true. There have been phone calls with Shanti Toll and he has responded to the FoRRC. He has received hand drawn ideas from the Friends group of where the trail should lie. He will not accept the fact that what he is hearing is that there is not a partnership. He wants to reiterate this is not a non-communication relationship.

Mike Scott, citizen, stated he is a local hiker and thanked the City for their work. He recommended not moving too fast and from a master plan perspective this is a significant change and not a minor amendment. This trail does not need to be taken out of the master plan.

TOPS Working Committee member Bob Falcone stated he did not mean to imply that Park staff hasn't done their due diligence as that is not the intent. He would just like to see what the FoRRC have proposed and wants to look at it in more detail.

TOPS Working Committee Chair Jason Alwine stated he has hiked the area and it's steep, eroded and is in a bad spot for a connection. Park staff works countless hours to do what is best for the Open Space; however, he would like to give the FoRRC an opportunity to present options and details.

TOPS Working Committee Chair Jason Alwine stated the motion is to table the action to remove this trail from the master plan. This will give the FoRRC the opportunity to come back with an alternative.

TOPS Working Committee member Blaze Panariso asked Shanti Toll if this was something the FoRRC are willing to do and come back later with plans and detailed alternatives. Shanti Toll said yes and how do I do this? Blaze Panariso said staff has put a lot of time in bringing this presentation to the Committee and have a stance. The FoRRC are coming forward and saying staff is wrong. By tabling this action, the Committee is giving the FoRRC an opportunity to change all of their minds. In his opinion, this is the FoRRC responsibility to bring experts in, take soil samples, get trail designers and do what is needed to present their case to the Committee. Shanti Toll inquired if he and Scott Abbott should do a walk-through of the site. Blaze Panariso replied absolutely. Blaze Panariso said he likes Susan Davies idea of a sub-committee to put eyes on the site as well. Shanti Toll said he was comfortable with the next step and doing what Susan Davies suggested which is to take people from this group, some staff and some FoRRC to look at the site and have a discussion.

New Motion: To table the action to remove this trail from the master plan.

1st – Lee Milner, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Jim Klever, Approved, 5 to 1

Yays – Lee Milner, Jim Klever, Jason Alwine, Blaze Panariso, Bob Falcone

Nays – Lily Weissgold

### **Presentations**

**Corral Bluffs BioBlitz** (Presented by Sharon Milito, Scientist)

[Link to PowerPoint presentation](#)

Britt Haley presented to Sharon Milito a gift for all her incredible work on the Corral Bluffs Bioblitz.

Susan Davies, Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC) Executive Director , thanked Sharon Milito for her joy and jubiliance while conducting the Bioblitz. She said there is a need for these events and people want to see Corral Bluffs; however, it needs to be managed access. She hopes more people can visit the area in a controlled way.

Bill Koerner, citizen, requested that this area be publicized and to spread the word and offer the community to come see Corral Bluffs.

Britt Haley said she has thought about doing two Bioblitz's next year. One in a more developed area such as Red Rock Canyon and the other possibly the Bishop property at Corral Bluffs. She is open to suggestions.

**White Acres Alternatives** (Presented by Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager)

- This presentation is deferred to a future meeting.

### **Citizen Discussion**

No citizens spoke at this time.

### **Adjournment**

Motion: To adjourn the TOPS Working Committee meeting at 9:42a.m.

1<sup>st</sup> – Lily Weissgold, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Bob Falcone, Approved, Unanimous