



**TOPS Working Committee Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 5, 2024**

Members Present: Bob Falcone, Paula Krantz, Wendy Howe, Jeff Davis, Bob Shafer, Chelsea Gondeck, Hank Scarangella, Blaze Panariso, Emily Danti

Alternates Present: Randy Courduff, David Bundrick

Parks Board Liaisons Present: Larry Bogue, Abby Simpson

Parks Board Liaisons Absent: Greg Thornton

Staff Present: Britt Haley, Lonna Thelen, Eric Becker, Anna Bingman, Sandy Elliott, Scott Abbott, David Deitemeyer

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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, made the following announcements:

- There will not be a site visit this month.
- Lonna reminded the Committee that the July meeting had been moved from July 3rd to July 10th due to the holiday.

Approval of Minutes – May 1, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Motion: To approve the minutes of the May 1, 2024 TOPS Working Committee meeting.

1st – Blaze Panariso, 2nd – Jeff Davis, Approved, Unanimously.

Citizen Discussion

Cory Sutela, Executive Director for Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, stated that his organization is still very supportive of the Blodgett Open Space Master and Management Plan, which they feel provides a great job of balancing recreation and conservation. Mr. Sutela said he plans to attend the City Council special meeting on June 10th to speak in favor of the plan.

Action Items

2025 Capital Improvement Project Recommendations (Presented by Lonna Thelen, Design and Development Manager/TOPS Program Manager, and Sandy Elliot, Tourism and Finance Manager)

Lonna Thelen, Design and Development Manager/TOPS Program Manager, and Sandy Elliot, Tourism and Finance Manager, presented the Committee with the 2025 Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Recommendations. This presentation included informing the budget process; assumptions; the TOPS proposed 2025 CIP Budget; the TOPS Ordinance; 2023 End-of-Year revenue report; TOPS Fund future revenue for 2024 through 2024; TOPS Fund summary Q1 2024 estimated fund balance; preliminary 2025 revenue; TOPS Administration; TOPS Maintenance; TOPS Trails Category; University Park Trail; Urban Trail System wayfinding design package; Garden of the Gods trail wayfinding; Chamberlain Trail; Blodgett Open Space implementation; North Douglas Trail; high priority trails; TOPS Parks Category; playground rehabilitation; Grey Hawk Park implementation; TOPS Parks proposed 2025 budget; TOPS Open Space; and finally, stewardship funding history.

[Link to Agenda Packet Here](#)

Committee Chair Bob Falcone asked how high priority trails are decided, and the decision of which may be completed first. Lonna Thelen responded that she and her team are finalizing the list of high priority trail now by looking at opportunities on each corridor and potential ways to partner on projects. Lonna believes the final decisions will be made in the next few months. Additionally, staff is coordinating with the Stormwater Enterprise on opportunities. Next, Mr. Falcone asked of the railroad section of the Legacy Loop is what is left to complete the entire loop. Lonna replied yes, and that she has been in contact with the property owners of that section.

Committee member Bob Shafer asked if the Rock Island Trail will be completed on the east side of Powers Boulevard. Lonna Thelen answered that there will be connections made on both the east and west side of Powers, with three bridges that will connect the trail. Funding is available to finish a large portion.

Committee member Paula Krantz noted a section of the Cottonwood Creek Trail to the east, and that it dead ends at Powers Boulevard. Ms. Krantz asked if there is any plan to purchase this area or do trail improvements. Emily Duncan, Trails Development Coordinator, responded that this section of the trail is maintained by a metro district. A connection there will continue to exist, with a goal to align the trail further east. Emily is continuing to pursue opportunities for easements and partnerships.

Committee member Blaze Panariso asked if parking lot development had been removed from the Trails category. Lonna Thelen answered yes, it has been removed. Mr. Panariso later

commented that while he understood the need for a master plan and planning process, he suggested the plan be made adaptive so it can last longer. Mr. Panariso said that a dollar spent on administrative needs is a dollar that could be spent elsewhere, so making the plan as long-lasting and adaptive as possible from creation so we don't have to repeat the process every ten or so years. Committee Chair Bob Falcone commented that many of the goals in the current master plan had been met over the ten year period since its creation. Britt understood Mr. Panariso's concerns but reminded him that the overall master plan involves a lot of community input, which staff then uses the master plan to drive other strategic planning opportunities for the Department, such as park development and improvements.

Committee member Jeff Davis said he would like to see the actual funding requirements to complete each project fully. Mr. Davis felt it would be helpful for the Committee to understand where this budget year of funding fits in the overall bigger picture. Mr. Davis asked if it was possible to see a wish list for projects if there was unlimited funding to understand priorities of the Department and gauge project requests. Britt Haley, Director, suggested a budget workshop for the Committee to better understand this process and how decisions are informed.

Committee member Emily Danti asked what informed the decision to remove parking lots from the Trails category. Lonna Thelen responded that she would like to continue to have discussions with staff at this time before committing to adding parking lots to the workload.

Committee Vice Chair Wendy Howe asked if staff could draft a wish list for each section of the budget so the Committee could understand the overall desires of the Department. Britt Haley responded that staff use the Jacob Park Infrastructure Study to define where high priority needs are, and if there is money to address those needs. Additionally, staff looks at the Park System Master Plan, which also lists priorities. Britt noted that playgrounds and sport courts are one of the most highly requested need, but there are needs throughout the system.

Citizen Comments

Susan Davies, Executive Director for the Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC), stated that her organization and the Committee had heard the need to expand funding ordinances, and when Committee proposed this, it failed. With costs going up, Ms. Davies said that the program is going backwards rather than advancing. Ms. Davies felt it imperative to spread the message that projects cannot be completed without adequate funding. Lastly, she encouraged the Committee and staff to continue holding their ground and moving forward on discussions around funding.

Cory Sutela, Executive Director for Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, said he appreciated the robust discussion around funding, and echoed Ms. Davies encouragement to continue seeking other funding opportunities.

Carol Beckman, citizen, said she would like to see the urban wayfinding package look similar to the open space package. David Deitemeyer, Senior Program Administrator, explained the similarities and differences of the two packages. While there will be a difference, the branding and color will look similar.

Motion: To recommend to the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board this 2025 TOPS CIP budget as presented.

1st – Bob Shafer, 2nd – Wendy Howe, Approved, Unanimously.

Presentations

E-Bike Update (Presented by Lonna Thelen, Design and Development Manager/TOPS Program Manager)

Lonna Thelen, Design and Development Manager/TOPS Program Manager, provided a verbal e-bike update. After the e-bike task force completed five meetings, they decided upon four key actions for next steps: create clear, user-friendly definitions; design a robust stakeholder engagement process; come up with successful implementation ideas; and decide steps for a policy change. Staff are working on a community engagement plan and identifying stakeholders. A survey will be live from June 14th to August 4th, with staff promoting the survey via social media but also on-site at open spaces and trailheads. Results of the survey will be compiled in August, with presentations to the Committee and the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board in the fall. Once survey results are compiled, Britt Haley, Director, will then discuss with City Leadership on the direction moving forward, which could potentially be a ballot measure to change language in the TOPS Ordinance. If this were the case, staff would be considering the April 2025 election as this timeline.

Citizen Discussion

Susan Davies, Executive Director for TOSC, commented that there are many ways to bring more money into the Department, and asked both staff and the Committee to consider the following options:

- Park Impact Fees
- Property Transfer Fees
- Providing feedback on the Mayor's Strategic Plan
- Providing public comment on the Outdoors Pikes Peak Initiative

Motion to Adjourn: Motion to adjourn the TOPS Working Committee meeting at 8:55 a.m.

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