



Date: March 28, 2024
Time: 5:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Location: Horsetooth Area Information Center: 4200 W. County Rd. 38 E. Fort Collins, CO 80526 Mountain Lion Room & Zoom Webinar.

OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

MEMBERS		STAFF		GUESTS
David Marvin	I	Daylan Figgs	I	
Gale Bernhardt	I	Meegan Flenniken	I	
Tom Shoemaker	I	Zac Wiebe	I	
Linda Stanley	I	Jenn Almstead	I	
Gary Miller	V	Justin Core	I	
Peter Kelly	V	*Jody Shaddock-McNally	I	
Ward Nelson	I	Andrea Weber (minutes)	I	
Mike Carter	V	Lesli Ellis	V	
Ellis Carpenter	I	Sarah Watson	I	

V = virtual attendee

I = in-person attendee

A = absent

*commissioner

Call to Order – 5:02 pm

Public Comment

Agenda Review

Board By Laws Update moved from “Action Item” to “Discussion Items” section.

Review and Approval of Last Minutes

Tom moved to approve the minutes from last meeting, Ellis seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Information and Announcements

Natural Resources events for this month: <https://larimer.org/naturalresources>.

To sign up for Open Lands Advisory Board updates, go to <https://apps.larimer.org/subscriptions.cfm>, enter your email, click “Subscribe,” and check the “Open Lands Advisory Board” box.

January 2024 Open Space Sales Tax Distribution Letter

- Daylan noted the tax revenue is lower than it was in 2023. Revenue streams are changing and costs increasing, thus DNR will be redesigning its financial model to adjust. Sarah noted the sales tax is 10% lower. Sales tax numbers are slightly above those pre-Covid but continue to trend downwards.

Blue Mountain Property (formerly Heaven’s Door Ranch) GOCO Centennial Grant Award - Daylan

- Meegan said DNR applied for and received a \$1.5M reimbursement grant for the acquisition of the Blue Mountain property and GOCO awarded DNR with a Centennial grant. Jenn noted the Centennial grant is for “once in a lifetime” projects that have positive impacts on the community.

Board Member Award

- Dave announced Linda Stanley received the Kelly Olsen Conservation Award from the City of Fort Collins.

Update and Reports

Board of County Commissioner Update

- Attended DNR’s All Staff Meeting. She commented on good staff collaboration and presentations.
- The Climate Smart and Future Ready program hosted its action plan kickoff celebration.
- Keep it Colorado conservation easement tax credit legislation is still in the works.
- The BOCC is advocating for House Bill 24-1379. The bill proposed is a robust version to include protection of wetland areas.

Discussion Items

FY2023 Annual Financial Summary – Sarah Watson

- 2023 Department Revenues:
 - Total: \$23,138,072
 - Breakdown: **Sales Tax** (51%), **Service Based** (28%), **Misc** (7%) **Conservation Trust/Lottery** (5%), **Intergovernmental** (4%), **Property Tax and Specific Ownership Taxes** (4%), **General Fund** (1%)
- 2022 Department Revenues (for comparison):
 - Total: \$24,919,557
 - Breakdown: **Sales Tax** (52%), **Service Based** (30%), **Misc** (6%), **Conservation Trust/Lottery** (4%), **Intergovernmental** (11%), **Property Tax and Specific Ownership Taxes** (4%), **General Fund** (1%)
 - *Funding breakdown from 2022 compared to 2023 is similar, as the business model is the same.
- 2023 Operating Expenses - Budget to Actual:
 - Open Space budget was 4% over budget.
 - DNR had an agreement with LC Engineering around acquisitions, which was budgeted for but not being paid over the last 5 years. DNR paid the past due bill in one lump sum.
 - BOR Reservoir budget was 13% under budget.
 - Land Stewardship budget was 4% under budget.
- Open Spaces 5-Year Revenue and Expense Trends:
 - Help Preserve Open Sales tax revenue in 2023 was slightly lower than 2022.
 - Service based fees were relatively similar from 2021-2023.
 - Operating expenses slightly higher than in 2022.
 - Project/Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) expenses were lower than 2022. *CIP expenses in 2022 were high due to the acquisition of the Blue Mountain.
- BOR Reservoirs 5-Year Revenue and Expense Trends:
 - Service based fees were roughly \$500,000 lower in 2023 than in 2022.
 - Operating expenses were slightly higher than in 2022.
 - Project/CIP expenses were lower than in 2022. *CIP expenses in 2021 were high due to the building of Sky View Campground.
 - Active rain events in 2023, specifically over weekends, may have contributed to permits sold being down 5% in revenue, with 16,000 fewer dailies sold, and a decrease in camping by 50,000 overall.
- Land Stewardship 5-Year Revenue and Expense Trends:

- Property & Specific Ownership Tax Revenue was slightly higher than 2022.
- Operating expenses have increased gradually since 2020.
- Project/CIP increased drastically in 2023. *Increase due to \$2.2 million spent to build the new Land Stewardship facility.
- Capital Improvement Projects for 2023
 - Using various sources, over \$3 million was spent in capital expenditures and projects in 2023.
- Feedback/Questions:
 - Ellis inquired if staff compare operating costs and visitation. Staff noted there is no current data on systemwide visitation to compare it with operating costs.
 - DNR does collect site specific visitation data for Devil's Backbone. These surveys require a large investment in time collecting and analyzing the data.
 - Daylan said the department estimates about 2.5 people per car.
 - DNR is investigating the implementation of a license plate reader system, which will simplify the system, collect visitor data, and create an enhanced visitor experience.
 - Board members expressed curiosity if LC residents paying taxes could potentially be subsidizing the cost for non-residents use of LCDNR properties. Daylan noted the BOCC approved charging an additional fee (\$5 increase) for non-residents. This is on hold for further investigation until a new system is installed.
 - Sarah said the current permit system is inefficient, outdated and limits DNR's ability to precisely quantify visitation.
 - Each permit is handled an average of 13 times by staff under the current process from ordering to revenue reconciliation.
 - Visitation metrics cannot be collected for annual permit holders.
 - Wait times at gatehouses during high volume visitation windows can create safety issues on public roads and leads to customer dissatisfaction.
 - Visual enforcement limits ranger staff from being able to maximize time in public outreach and education efforts.
 - Potential increase in revenue capture.
 - Dave asked about funding for new data collection. Daylan said DNR purchased cell phone data, which provided good results for tracking visitors on the trails and the time of their visit. It did not allow for specification of recreation type.

Our Lands Our Future (OLOF) Survey Update – Jenn Almstead & Zac Wiebe

- Meegan said the 2023 OLOF survey was the third iteration of a county-wide survey used to better understand residents' perceptions on open space, trails and public land access. The previous survey was done in 2012.
- These surveys are done in collaboration with partner agencies that receive a portion of the Help Preserve Open Space sales tax.
- The data collected will inform master planning efforts with regards to residents' desires around land conservation, recreation, and future funding. The 2023 survey used the same questions from 2012 and included new key questions around issues and access barriers.
- Methods
 - Jenn said RRC, a third party consultant, was hired to conduct the survey. They were the consultants on the 2012 survey, and thus were familiar with DNR concepts and natural resources.
 - The survey was mailed to 7,936 Larimer County residents via random sampling with oversampling in smaller communities.
 - Total sample size (=13.4% response rate)
 - Statistically valid survey (<3% margin of error)
 - Respondents closely reflected the U.S. Census demographics of Larimer County
- Visitation

- Familiarity with Open Spaces and Trails (OS & T)
 - 2023: **68%** familiar or very familiar, 2012: **46%** familiar or very familiar
- Visitation to OS & T in a 12-month period (Top two locations)
 - 2023: City of Fort Collins **81%**, City of Loveland **50%**, 2012: City of Fort Collins **80%**, City of Loveland **48%**
- Frequency of Visits
 - 2023: Average **37.2** times a year, 2012: Average **20.1** times a year
- Site Specific Issues
 - Top 3 Concerns: Crowding, Dog Waste, Parking *Averages indicate minor to moderate problem.
 - Reasons For Not Visiting:
 - Lack of Time - 2023: **42%**, 2012: **30%**
 - Crowding - 2023: **33%**, 2012: **17%**
 - Not Enough Parking - 2023: **32%**, 2012: **3%**
 - Unaware of OS & T - 2023: **19%**, 2012: **34%**
 - Safety Concerns - 2023: **11%**, 2012: **2%**
- Satisfaction
 - Activities & Household Frequency (Top three activities): hiking/walking/running on natural trails (top activity choice), biking paved trails (second top activity choice), hiking/walking/running on paved trails (third top activity choice).
 - Importance and Satisfaction: In all cases, satisfaction is higher than importance for all activities (average of 3.5 or higher for satisfaction and importance), except for hiking/walking/running on natural trails. This indicates residents would like more and improved trails.
 - Top Activities (residents would like to see more of in the future): hiking/walking/running on natural trails, biking on paved trails, recreation with dogs, tent camping.
- Future Conservation and Funding
 - Public Funding (what residents would spend funds on – top 3 responses)
 - To protect lakes, rivers, streams (top choice), outdoor recreation opportunities (2nd choice), protecting wildlife habitat (3rd choice).
 - Sales Tax
 - Likelihood residents would renew sales tax and user fees at the current level – **81%** would renew the sales tax, **70%** would renew user fees.
 - Likelihood residents would increase sales taxes and user fees - **54%** in favor of increasing sales tax, **40%** in favor to increase user fees.
 - Land Acquisition (importance of where future dollars are spent – top 3 choices)
 - **86%** said maintenance of existing lands with public access, **81%** said ecologically sensitive lands, **78%** said lands within Larimer County cities and towns.
 - Land Acquisition – Single Most Important Priority (top selections): **29%** said ecologically sensitive lands, and **17%** said maintenance of existing lands.
 - Conservation vs. Recreation - 2023: **41%** of respondents wanted an equal balance between conservation and recreation, 2012: **45%** of respondents wanted an equal balance between conservation and recreation.
- Long Term Planning
 - Wildfire – **3.5 average** (moderate to major problem/concern)
 - Running out of land - **3.3 average** (moderate to major problem/concern)
 - Drought **3.2 average** (moderate to major problem/concern)
- Questions/Feedback:
 - Board members shared concerns with 55% of respondents viewing crowding as a moderate to major problem. DNR staff noted this is a county-wide survey including all municipalities. They added, everyone has a different definition of crowding. DNR will likely further investigate potential “crowding” at DNR properties with site specific surveys.
 - Gary inquired about the open link survey results. Jenn noted the statistically valid survey yielded ~1,000 responses and the open link (not statistically valid survey) yielded ~2,500 responses.

Responses from both surveys were consistent with one another. The open link results can be found in the appendix of the final report.

Board By-Laws Update

- Daylan noted Larimer County updated its policy for boards and commissions, prompting an update for DNR's advisory board bylaws.
- A few key updates to better align with the new county policy include clarification around the resignation process and appointments, attendance, terms, and a new code of conduct.
- The county is engaged in a youth member program. Residents 18 years or older sit on the board as a voting member for a 1-year term.
- Board members presented the idea of requiring board members to sign a waiver, stating they reviewed the Code of Ethics and understand conflict of interest. Daylan noted conflict of interest and the code of conduct are items the board will review yearly during a regularly scheduled meeting.

Action Items

Other Business

Next Meeting Scheduled - April 25th, 2024 at Horsetooth Area Information Center: 4200 W. County Rd. 38 E. Fort Collins, CO 80526 Mountain Lion Room & Zoom Webinar.

Executive Session

Pursuant to C.R.S. (24-6-402(4)(a)) for discussion pertaining to the purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer or sale of any real, personal or other property interest.

Adjournment – 7:43 pm

Per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Larimer County will provide a reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with a disability who need assistance. Services can be arranged with at least seven (7) business days' notice. Please email us at weberan@co.larimer.co.us, or call (970) 498-7719 or Relay Colorado 711. "Walk-in" requests for auxiliary aids and services will be honored to the extent possible but may be unavailable if advance notice is not provided.