



Date: March 27, 2025
Time: 5:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Location: Larimer County Horsetooth Area Information Center 4200 W. County Road 38E Fort Collins, CO 80526 - Mountain Lion Room & Zoom Webinar

OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

MEMBERS		STAFF		GUESTS
Wes Knoll	A	Daylan Figgs	I	
Gale Bernhardt	I	Meegan Flenniken	I	
Tom Shoemaker	I	Zac Wiebe	I	
Linda Stanley	V	Justin Core	I	
Debbie Hayhow	I	Alex Swartz	I	
Gary Miller	I	*Jody Shaddock-McNally	I	
Jim Wurz	I	Andrea Weber (minutes)	I	
Ward Nelson	I			
Mike Carter	V			
Ellis Carpenter	I			

V = virtual attendee

I = in-person attendee

A = absent

*commissioner

Call to Order – 5:00 pm

Agenda Review

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 2025 Tax Distribution Letter

Updates and Reports

Board of County Commissioner Update

- The 2026 - 2027 budget discussions are underway, with approximately \$6 million in budget cuts expected for next year.
- The Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) board recently met and conducted a site tour with LC staff. The collaboration with GOCO remains strong, and the County continues to receive significant funding support.
- Despite uncertain times, the County is confident in its staff, core values, and guiding mission.

Poudre Trail Easement Update

- Justin reported that the County has received the final trail easement needed to complete GAP 2, the final segment of the Poudre River Trail for which LC is responsible.
- The middle segment of this trail was acquired in 2019. After realignment to accommodate drainage issues and the needs of the property owner's development plans, the easement has now been signed.
- The item is moving forward to the Board of County Commissioners for final approval.
- Trail construction is scheduled to begin in the summer. Irrigation canal work is set for fall, with bridge placement planned for the winter.
- Meegan noted that three different grants are involved in the project. Deadline extensions were obtained to ensure project completion and alignment with grant timelines.

Discussion Items

Jointly held Open Lands Advisory Board and Parks Advisory Board Meetings

- Daylan introduced a 2-hour joint meeting format with separate action items and separate executive session, planned to begin in June as a pilot program.
- Commissioner Shadduck-McNally highlighted staff capacity challenges and overlaps in presentations.
- Daylan explained that both Parks and Open Lands advisory boards would continue to exist independently but meet at the same time and location.
- Executive sessions and board-specific action items will remain separate.
- The goal is to improve efficiency, as management of parks and open spaces are not independent of one another, and reduce staff support demands, saving approximately 40 staff hours per month. The joint structure will not alter the mission or funding focus of either board.
- Several members expressed support or openness to the idea of joint meetings. Positive feedback included appreciation for efforts to streamline board functions, support for strategic alignment and collaboration between boards while maintaining distinct missions, and interest in learning from each other to improve efficiency. Suggestions included improving the delivery of updates and allowing more time for inter-board collaboration. There was also support for using staggered agendas within joint meetings to preserve an action-driven focus.
- Concerns were raised about differences in board missions, particularly related to the HPOS ballot language, and the lack of relevance of some topics to all members. Some members questioned the synergy of combined discussions and emphasized the already limited time for board member discussion. Others expressed frustration that the joint meeting idea felt like a mandate rather than a proposal for discussion.
- Cautious perspectives emphasized the need to evaluate the effectiveness of joint meetings over time. Suggestions included piloting the joint format for 3–6 months and reviewing outcomes, as well as reviewing a proposed agenda beforehand to better understand the structure and flow.
- There was a shared interest in being respectful of staff time throughout any transition.
- Board members requested this topic be revisited at the April OLAB meeting.

Review of Help Preserve Open Spaces Sales Tax Revenues – Daylan

- Total sales tax plus interest from 2019-2024:

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
\$8,741,756.38	\$9,001,393.57	\$10,824,148.04	\$12,110,544.85	\$11,765,538.91	\$11,943,626.34

- The revenue figures provided reflect only Larimer County's share of the Help Preserve Open Space (HPOS) sales tax; the remaining share is allocated to other municipalities. While the HPOS fund remains healthy, growth is slowing, with current trends falling below DNR's projected 3-4% increase.
- Budget adjustments are underway to reflect slower growth, including unfilled staff positions and cost streamlining. Further scaling back is anticipated for 2026 due to potential recessionary conditions and statewide economic slowdown.
- Strategic front-loading of acquisition funds in recent years enabled significant land purchases; the department is now transitioning toward a 35% acquisition – 65% long-term management funding model.

- The department expects a 20% cut to its \$1 million annual state lottery trust allocation and anticipates revenue losses tied to campground and recreation area closures for large capital improvement projects.

Boxelder Creek Restoration– Zac Wiebe, Planning & Resource Manager

- Zac shared that about one mile of Boxelder Creek in Red Mountain Open Space (non-public access) will be restored, reconnecting the historical stream channel and enhancing the riparian and wetland habitat. This project supports agricultural land restoration and improved habitat while aligning with the department's restoration policy.
- A consultant has been hired, with conceptual planning underway and initial designs expected this summer. Two existing dams, one check dam (1980s), and one concrete structure will remain and define the project boundaries. The original channel is largely intact and will support restoration work.
- The team is evaluating options for water rights in coordination with the Colorado Water Trust, with a focus on potential instream flow rights. A water conservation plan is a necessary first step to determine available water and guide future decisions. An application for this plan was filed and approved the week of March 17th, 2025.
- Meegan noted that if donating the water rights to the Colorado Water Conservation Board is pursued, it would return to OLAB as an action item for approval and would represent a great partnership opportunity.

Road removal and restoration and use of Open Space funds – Meegan

- Meegan noted 35% of the HPOS sales tax is designated for land conservation and habitat restoration. A policy adopted several years ago defines habitat restoration as the wholesale restoration of a site from non-native to native habitat or significant ecological improvement. It does not mean weed control, capital infrastructure re-seeding, etc.
- These funds may be used for planning, design, and implementation of habitat restoration projects. Once initial restoration is complete, on-going adaptive management is funded out of the 65% of the HPOS tax for long-term management.
- The proposed project at Canyon Edge Open Space involves removing a former asphalt road and restoring the area to native habitat, with a focus on enhancing wetland conditions.
- Restoration funds would be used for this effort, with a total project cost estimated at \$300,000.
- Board members reached a consensus that the project aligns with the restoration funding policy and supports meaningful ecological improvement while reducing human impact in sensitive areas.

Action Items

Other Business

Next Meeting Scheduled Thursday, April 24th, 2025 - Larimer County Horsetooth Area Information Center 4200 W. County Road 38E 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 – 6:55 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.