

LARIMER COUNTY | ENVIRONMENTAL AND SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD

P.O. Box 1190, Fort Collins, Colorado 80522-1190, 970.498.5738, Larimer.org

The role of the Advisory Board is to advise the Board of County Commissioners and appropriate departments on environmental and science-related issues that affect Larimer County.

MINUTES

Date: March 8th, 2022

Time: 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Location: Rm. 333 Lake Estes, 200 W. Oak Street, Fort Collins, CO and Virtual by Zoom

Contact: Shelley Bayard de Volo, sbayard@larimer.org or 970.498.5738

MEMBERS		STAFF		GUESTS
Rodger Ames	X	John Kefalas*	X	
Daniel Beveridge	X	Shelley Bayard de Volo [¥]	X	
John Bleem	X			
Jim Gerek - Chair	X			
Ted Hendrickx	X			
David Lehman	X			
Allyson Little	X			
Kirk Longstein– Vice-Chair				
Kaitlin Rainsberger	X			
George Rinker	X			
Travis Rounsaville	X			
Shelby Sommer	X			
Catriona Smith	X			
Katrina Winborn-Miller	X			
Chris Wood	X			

X = present; * = Commissioner Liaison; † = Speaker; ¥ = ESAB Liaison; ° = Facilities;

§ = Environmental and Sustainability Program; ¶ = Fleet

Call to Order: 6:00 p.m.

1. **Amendments or additions to the agenda** – Added the roundtable item: Seat opening for membership on the ESAB
2. **Introduction of members, staff, and guests** – The members introduced themselves
3. **Public Comment** – No public comment.
4. **Discussion Items**
 - Environmental Stewardship Awards – Jim noted that a few nominations have already been submitted for the 2022 award cycle. The nomination period is open until March 27th. The Board will need to select and approve a sub-committee tonight to review the applications prior





to the next ESAB meeting. Jim explained the process for the work that the sub-committee will do, and Ally also provided some of her experience from previous years. Jim asked for a volunteer to chair this year's sub-committee and Chris noted that he would do so. Travis, Ally, Cat, and Daniel all volunteered to serve. Jim asked for a motion to approve the subcommittee, and David motioned, with Katrina seconding. The motion passed by acclamation. Jim noted that the sub-committee will have time on the April 12th agenda to present the nominations and their recommendations for approval by the full board.

- Review of Wildfire Related Legislation – Daniel reported on two bills, SB21-258 and SB21-240 at the request of Commissioner Kefalas. Senate Bill 258 (Wildfire Risk Mitigation) is focused on distributing funds for projects that reduce wildfire risk by mitigating the potential threats. Commissioner Kefalas noted that he was interested to learn how the funding from this bill could apply to Larimer County. What are the opportunities to secure some of those funds? Has the County already secured funds? Daniel noted that there is a significant amount of dollars that the County could receive. The program his colleague administers is the Forest Restoration & Wildfire Risk Mitigation Grant Program (FRWRM) with Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS). The history is that there were two separate grant programs, one with the CSFS and one with the Colorado Department of Natural Resources (CDNR). The two coalesced into a single grant program around 2014, administered by the CSFS. The program was historically funded through oil and gas severance taxes, which are volatile. The program is now funded from the general fund at \$8 million per year, which provides the statewide program stability and effectiveness. Right now, they are funding capacity building projects for purchases of equipment and staffing. One value of having state funding is it can be used for a match on other federal grant programs, where the match cannot come from other federal agencies. The \$8 million annual budget approved by the State legislature is an indication of their understanding of the need for fuels reduction and mitigation in our forests. The grant is a revolving fund that the County can capitalize on at any time. Other related federal grants are also administered through the CSFS, so the County would coordinate/apply through them.

The Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Plan (COSWAP) is another program supported through SB21-258. Larimer County was identified as having several strategic areas where project implementation would fit within the grant program's objectives. The COSWAP program received \$17.5 million in onetime funds, a portion of which is allocated to workforce development, including department of correction crews and conservation corps programs. The rest of the funds will be allocated to seven counties mostly on the Front Range, to implement landscape-scale projects. Funds are available in the range of \$750K to up to \$1 million per project for strategic landscape-scale wildfire risk reduction projects. Each strategic area (including Larimer County) can apply for up to 2 awards. That is a significant amount of money to implement a landscape scale project, where \$300,000 has been the typical amount and that has just not been enough to implement projects that generate real risk reduction unless done in a deliberate and coordinated fashion.

Major challenges in implementing these kinds of projects are that there are typically not enough contractors to do the work when significant amounts of funding are available in a region simultaneously. As well, dealing with the biomass that would come out of these projects is an issue. Daniel noted that bio-char production might be one solution. Shelley asked about using the biomass for erosion control products like hydromulch? Daniel noted that Tim Reader, with the CSFS Economic development program, is really the one to answer those questions. There should be incentives to attract investors and businesses that would use the



biomass as a raw material in the production of other products. Daniel then noted that the federal Investment in Infrastructure and Jobs Act is also bringing billions of dollars to Colorado, and some of those dollars will be distributed through the established State programs. There will be a focus on preventing carbon emissions because of the fuels reduction work, so there needs to be an understanding of the carbon emission footprint of bio-char production to know if that pathway makes sense.

Travis asked about whether there were proportional limits on what could be used on federal vs state lands or private lands. Daniel noted that the two programs he discussed are for projects on private lands, where one funds project areas adjacent to federal lands, and the other is for project areas where there is significant community risk. The COSWAP funding can be used on federal lands, but there are not typically good channels by which that can be arranged. There is also the good neighbor authority, where the USFS contracts with the CSFS to do fuels treatments on federal lands. Travis noted the challenge of implementing projects where there are multi-jurisdictional ownerships over a landscape and if all parties do not coordinate to implement fuels reduction projects, then it's just not priority.

SB21-240 directs \$30 million to the Colorado Water Conservation Board's (CWCB) construction fund for watershed protection programs. The dollars will go toward projects that protect watersheds against the impacts of wildfires and be appropriated through the existing watershed restoration grant program to fund a statewide watershed analysis to investigate the susceptibility of life, safety, infrastructure, and water supplies to wildfire impacts. It's not clear how these funds would benefit Larimer County, except by protecting drinking water.

Commissioner Kefalas noted the numerous 2022 wildfire related bills that are currently under consideration in the Colorado State legislature. Daniel also noted the Federal and State wildfire legislative update webinar last Friday, where many of the bills were discussed. Commissioner Shadduck-McNally was appointed to the State Forest Health Council, and she could be a good resource for the Board on this topic. Shelley noted that she asked Stephen Decatur, Larimer County OEM, whether he could provide a future update on Larimer County's participation in the COSWAP program.

5. **Approval of Minutes** – Shelby moved to approve the February minutes, and Chris seconded. The motion passed by acclamation, with John B. and Travis abstaining due to absence at the February meeting.
6. **Updates and Round Table**
 - **Commissioner's Update** – Jim provided some background on the Solid Waste Infrastructure Master Plan (SWIMP) process and explained how the ESAB was involved throughout the process. He also explained how after the SWIMP was adopted, its management moved into the Solid Waste Policy Council which is now working to implement the SWIMP. Commissioner Kefalas then noted that he would share a 3-page summary that was recently shared with Senator Hickenlooper's office regarding their plan. They are looking at whether funds from the Infrastructure Improvement and Job Act (IIJA) could be used for implementing parts of the SWIMP. Commissioner Kefalas explained some of the details of the current landfill, the new landfill, and the timing for the development of services at the old landfill site, which would include replacing the existing recycling center with a larger materials recovery facility (recyclables), and later a separate diversion of construction and demolition materials (2023), yard waste composting (2023), and food waste composting (2025). There are discussions of developing a bio-char production facility, that would be run by a private company. That facility would process wood waste products and dimensional lumber. He explained how the new



landfill will function, using compacted solid waste cells. At the old landfill site, there are discussions of PVREA potentially installing a solar array once the site is capped and reclaimed. The commissioner commented that the new Solid Waste director, Duane Penny, has brought forth some new ideas based on his experience. The commissioner noted ongoing discussion of a facility to generate biogas from cellulose material that can be converted to energy at the new landfill site. They are still exploring how to best implement that process, but a private company is involved. Overall revisions to the SWIMP are being considered that would increase the landfill diversion rate from 40% to about 80%. Shelby noted that there might be funding opportunities through the Colorado Office of Energy's Office of Just Transitions.

The commissioner reported regarding air quality monitoring, Tom Gonzales, County Public Health Director, coordinated implementation of two monitoring stations provided by the CDPHE. The costs of the monitors are less than they had expected. They will be placed in east and southeast portions of the County to help determine how many pollutants are coming from east of the County and from the highway. The air quality team will be presenting results to the Board of Health and then returning to the BoCC.

Chris followed up with a question regarding the transition of Gallegos to Republic and if that is impacting how much waste goes to Larimer County's landfill? Commissioner Kefalas noted that is a complicating factor in the negotiations right now. The national CEO for Republic has been working positively with the County. They recognize that hauling solid waste long distances (e.g, Tower Road Landfill) would have numerous impacts. Also, the City of Fort Collins has a community survey out right now on transitioning to a single hauler model or setting up waste districts in an effort to reduce emissions and impacts to streets.

- Update on Air Quality Monitoring – Rodger updated the ESAB on the progress made by the City/County team. He noted that they have been hosting community meetings to get feedback on their proposed \$500K grant application. They have been coordinating with the CSU Center for Atmospheric Science and CSU Center for Environmental Justice. The grant would focus on air toxics, and not wildfire smoke or ozone, which have different monitoring strategies. CSU will engage in their own study on wildfire smoke effects, and there might be future funding for ozone monitoring. Larimer Alliance has been a vocal community participant at the meetings as well as others. The focus of the grant application is to ensure all parts of the county are involved, especially disproportionately impacted communities. Dan Joseph from Weld County has also participated in the meetings. Weld County has appropriated \$250,000 annually to run three of their own monitors. Weld County has contracted with Ramboll, who is doing the monitoring and collecting the data, and provides meteorological data on Weld County's online dashboard. Ozone and precursor data are not currently publicly available.

One thing the project team is looking for are letters of support from community groups. The ESAB is not really a community group, so it's not clear whether they could take on that task. By focusing their monitoring on near-source air toxics, the effort for monitoring ozone precursors shifts back to the State and municipalities. The grant will be submitted later this month, and they hope to hear some time in May whether they will receive the funding.

Jim followed up with Commissioner Kefalas and the Board to ask whether the ESAB should provide a support letter? Because the BoCC has already approved the grant submission process, it really does not make sense for the ESAB to inform the BoCC that they also approve.



- There was discussion of the timing and whether there was a realistic opportunity to get a letter through the approval process and then submitted with the grant. Commissioner Kefalas noted that the BoCC obviously approves of the process since they have approved the staff time to work on it, but they have not produced their own letter of support. There was more discussion on who the letters of support should be from (grassroots community groups, and especially disproportionately impacts communities). Because of limits imposed by the approval process, the consensus was that there was not a benefit for the ESAB to try to provide a letter of support at this time.
- Climate Smart Larimer County (CSLC) – Shelby asked if advisory board members had participated in the second survey that is part of Phase II. She reported that there was a total of 74 participants in the Phase II workshops. But the feeling was that the outreach was not quite targeted to the groups they wanted. So, Heidi is doing more outreach to garner more engagement from community groups that are not yet represented. There was supposed to be a CSLC task force meeting next week, but they have postponed that to shift focus on continuing to get feedback from the community. The next task force meeting will be April 6th. In May they have a joint meeting with County staff (internal task force) where they will prioritize feedback and start to develop some initial recommendations. They will then meet again in June for a final time, and review and make final recommendations. Things are progressing a little slower than anticipated, but they are trying to get feedback from all county communities and not just the population centers. Shelby encouraged members to take the survey if they have not already done so.
 - ESAB Team Building Opportunities – Jim brought up the subject of looking at ways that the members could do some group activities to get out in the field for an afternoon. There was discussion of doing an Earth Day event, but weather can be iffy in late April. There will be events at the County Open Spaces. The County also has an Adopt-a-Road program – the team could do a onetime trash pickup. There are events through the local watershed coalitions. Shelley noted a trail maintenance event hosted by the DNR at Blue Sky Trail April 23rd, and she inquired with Shayle Sabo, OEM, about whether Shayle could include the ESAB in any announcements of volunteer opportunities. Daniel noted there are opportunities to volunteer at the CSFS nursery near CSU – they always have the need for people to weed and work in the greenhouses. Rodger asked about whether the work would be indoors, which would work well for April if it is cold. Kaitlin liked the idea, and Daniel said he would be happy to arrange it. Commissioner Kefalas said he would also like to join the fun. Plans will be pulled together prior to the April ESAB meeting.
 - Open Seat on the ESAB – Jim noted the Commissioner's office is currently taking applications for a single seat on the ESAB. David is term limited, so he will be leaving in June. Jim asked the members to get the word out to their networks. The application period goes through April 21st.
 - Roundtable – Shelby forwarded a question from Kirk, who was not in attendance. The question was whether there has been some movement on the County EV roadmap? Jim noted that according to the minutes from last month, Commissioner Kefalas was going to touch base with the BoCC and Fleet and Facilities Managers. Commissioner Kefalas noted that he had not followed-up yet and asked Shelley to help him on that. John noted that Linda Hoffmann is retiring April 6th, and that the BoCC will be recruiting County Manager applicants. Lorenda Volker will be stepping in as the Interim County Manager. Commissioner Kefalas noted that the County Equity and Inclusion Advisory Board was selected with 9 new members. They have their first meeting in mid-March. Daniel noted that he is nearly done with the State Wildfire Mitigation and Protection Plan, that will have guidance for communities to update their plans, including Larimer County. Cat noted that it is probably time for her to provide an update on



PFAS, and she also noted that there might be funding in the IJA for plugging oil and gas wells. Commissioner Kefalas noted there will be rules for oil and gas companies to provide decommissioning assurance.

7. **Issue Index** – Was updated with tonight’s discussion
8. **Agenda Topics for Next Meeting** – Next regular meeting will be April 12th, 2022. Discussion items are TBD.
9. **Adjourn** – Daniel motioned, and Travis seconded. The meeting ended 8:25 PM.