1800 South County Road 31, Loveland, Colorado 80537, (970) 619-4570, Larimer.org

Date: May 19, 2022
Time: 5:00 PM – 6:30 PM
Location: Larimer County Courthouse, 200 W. Oak St., Fort Collins, CO, 4th Floor, Arrowhead Room & Zoom Webinar

LAND STEWARDSHIP ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

MEMBERS		STAFF		GUESTS
Robert Kraft		Casey Cisneros	I	
Josh Wenz	I	Daylan Figgs	I	
Kraig Peel		Meegan Flenniken	I	
Ronald Harris (5:40pm)	V	Jody Shadduck-McNally*	I	
Tasha Carr	I	Jordan Williams (minutes)	I	
		Jonathon Plybon	I	
		Sarah Watson	V	
		Lori Smith	V	

V = virtual attendee I = in-person attendee *commissioner

Call to Order – 5:15pm

Public Comment

None

Agenda Review

Review and Approval of Last Minutes

February 2022 minutes will be approved at the next meeting due to quorum requirements.

Information and Announcements

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

To sign up for Land Stewardship Advisory Board updates, go to https://apps.larimer.org/subscriptions.cfm, enter your email, click "Subscribe," and check the "Land Stewardship Advisory Board" box

Fort Collins Natural Areas Department is soliciting feedback on specific property plans: Poudre River, Soapstone, and Kestrel Fields

Open Space Sales Tax Distribution Update: December 2021, January 2022, February 2022

- Daylan commented that Open Space Tax revenue has been doing well and DNR is meeting its budget expectations.

Quarterly Board Report – Q4 2021 and Q1 2022

- Casey mentioned that the Weeds enterprise crew has been working with other districts in the area to help thin forests on private land. Casey's team also completed restoration work at Hermit Park where two cabins had been removed and the road was restored at Homestead Meadows.

- Daylan discussed the financial summary at the end of the report where it shows that Weed District revenues and expenses are up, and he said that they are working on additional contracts to bring in more revenue. Other DNR highlights include finishing the Horsetooth Mountain Open Space Management Plan, upgrading technology for windshield ticketing, and some staffing changes in the department.

2021 Larimer County Department of Natural Resources Annual Report

- Daylan noted that the new web-based annual report format gives DNR more freedom to elaborate on stories and highlights while being more cost effective. Highlights included over 1 million visitors at Horsetooth Reservoir; a large increase in Aquatic Nuisance Species boat inspections; conserving over 50,000 acres of land; and $1.5 million in grants, donations, and partnerships.
- Tasha asked for more information on the bird monitoring partnership with the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies. Meegan said it is part of a bigger initiative with US Fish and Wildlife, which allows DNR to identify common interests and applicable open spaces for monitoring. Red Mountain and Devil's Backbone Open Spaces are on the list of priority areas. Daylan added that the Bird Conservancy is looking to find answers behind the declining numbers of birds at their winter and summer grounds by geotagging.
- Commissioner Shadduck-McNally commented that she likes the layout and content of DNR's online annual report. She also enjoyed the ribbon cutting event for Sky View Campground where she appreciated the reusable water bottles.

Updates/Discussion Items

County Commissioner Updates

- Commissioner Shadduck McNally talked about the Ranch master plan and how the Weed District offices will be moving out there. The Commissioner has been appointed by Governor Polis to serve on the Forest Health Council, and they were able to allocate more money for fire mitigation and recovery effort. The Commissioners are getting closer to hiring a new County Manager, with six applicants going through the final review process. Budget planning for 2023 has started, and Commissioner Shadduck McNally noted that $10.2 million in funding from the American Rescue Plan Act is going towards partnerships with the Cities of Loveland and Fort Collins to support rural broadband.
- Casey noted that the Weed District has a partnership with the Forest Service and another 5-year agreement is coming up.

Larimer County Climate Smart Plan Update – Heidi Pruess

- Since Heidi was unable to attend the meeting, Meegan mentioned some highlights regarding the County's Climate Smart Plan: During the initial planning phases, there has been lots of community outreach centered on the website, virtual feedback sessions, and the ability for the public to provide direct comments. Certain themes are emerging around housing, economy, how we move, nature, and community well-being. Staff has been looking at partnerships with related city planning efforts and how other counties in Colorado have structured their initiatives. As part of the next phase, individual County departments are also looking at internal actions they can take to supplement the public initiatives.
- Casey was involved from the beginning of the Climate Smart Plan and added that they have completed two phases, with phase three set to identify measurable goals for the future. Regarding how this plan intersects with DNR, staff will be sure to include land conservation efforts and the ability for native landscapes to sequester carbon. Casey also has plans for outreach with private landowners to talk about regenerative farming processes and grazing practices on land that DNR leases, while continue to restore natural habitats whenever possible.
- Joshua asked about certain acreage goals for restoration as part of next steps within the plan. Casey mentioned that the Open Space sales tax marks some money for restoration each year.
- Tasha highlighted the low response rate from rural areas and added that she would like to see more responses from rural communities since they will be impacted with these programs. Heidi did mention previously that more feedback will be requested from rural areas going forward, and Commissioner

Shadduck McNally added that Heidi has been looking to secure invites from agricultural groups to do additional public presentations.

- Tasha had questions about how all the programs in the County's plan will be assessed for their effectiveness in the broader context of climate change. She would the like the County to define their metrics for success, look at the costs and benefits of these individual efforts, and identify the potential for unintended consequences especially in terms of marginalized communities while not stifling action. Daylan noted the return-on-investment for climate-friendly initiatives such as reducing vehicle miles travelled by gasoline powered cars.

2021 Year End Financial Review – Sarah Watson

- Department Revenue: $23,250,750 in 2021, $3 million more than 2022 with the largest categories being the Open Space Sales Tax and User Fees.
- 2021 Open Spaces Revenues: $14,194,638 total, with 76% coming from the Sales Tax
    - Open Space Expenses 5-year look: Operating expenses have been very level, with capital/project expenses varying more greatly.
- 2021 Reservoir Parks and Lottery Revenues: $7,494,09 total with 62% coming from User Fees
    - Reservoir Park Expenses 5-year look: Operating expenses increased with more visitation in 2020/21.
- Land Stewardship 5-year Revenue and Expense Trends: Increase in revenues in 2020 and 2021 (up to almost $1.6 million total) along with a smaller increase in expenses.
- 2021 Operating Expenses Budget to Actual Comparison: Reservoir Parks Fund is under budget by 2%; Open Space Fund under budget by 27%.
    - Land Stewardship was 5% under budget
- Capital Improvement Projects for 2022 include $10 million in Land Acquisitions, $1.5 million in replacements of buildings/structures, $4 million in New Capital Improvements, and $655,000 in Capital Renewal.
- Extension of Open Space Sales Tax 2019 – 2043: Total revenue projected $370M
    - 2019-2021 revenues are at $29M
- Questions and Comments
    - Joshua asked about Open Spaces revenue coming in under budget by a large margin, and Daylan noted that most of those savings were from staffing expenses, including a Visitor Services Manager position that was not filled. Any savings in DNR's budget go into department specific cash reserves and then those funds are reallocated. Casey added that Land Stewardship team also saved Open Space dollars when they were unable to hire some seasonal positions.

Capital Projects Update – Jon Plybon, Capital Project Manager

- Daylan highlighted the Help Preserve Open Space (HPOS) sales tax allocation targets: 12.7% Capital Improvements on Open Spaces; 48.9% Management of Open Spaces; 35% Land Acquisition/Habitat restoration; 3.1% capital improvements at Reservoir Parks. Daylan noted that it is possible to buy more land than DNR can manage given both the costs of long-term management and new/replacement of capital infrastructure.
    - Joshua asked about whether the County can buy land then sell it later. Daylan said there are some examples, like the Little Thompson Farm, where DNR bought the land then could sell it later with the Board of County Commissioner's approval. Tasha noted it's important to balance affordability with the preservation of open space. Daylan explained that DNR's goals for land conservation are based on its current level of service with a growing County population. Meegan added that priority areas for the County are different than the municipalities, and sellers are calling the County to ask about ways to preserve or sell their land.
- Jon reviewed the Capital Project goals such as increasing the pace of project completion, improving scheduling, improving cost estimating/budgeting, addressing asset maintenance/replacement, considering staff capacity, and denoting grant contingent projects

  - The Capital Projects Program is department wide and across numerous funding sources, including parks, open spaces, and land stewardship. Trade-offs can be made in budgeting between capital projects and operating expenses.
  - Jon wants to improve cost estimating and efficiencies by understanding market forces, utilizing real-time cost estimating, dialing in budgets early in the project life cycle, and limiting emergency scenarios and costs.
- Updates to the Capital Projects Program for the next 6-year cycle include an emphasis on capital replacement over new capital given aging infrastructure, prioritizing time-critical projects, updated cost estimates, the addition of an asset management plan & asphalt maintenance plan, and new ARPA-funded projects.
  - The 6-year plan (2022-2027) includes $52 million total: The Acquisitions Fund = $21.7M, capital replacement = $5M, new capital infrastructure = $21.5M (which is focused on relatively few, but high-cost projects including the Poudre River Trail, Chimney Hollow Open Space, the new Land Stewardship building and the paving of reservoir park roads and parking lots per the Federal Lands Access Program—FLAP), and Habitat Restoration = $1.2M
    - Only $50,000 or greater projects show up in the Capital Projects budget.
  - Inclusion of multi-year asset maintenance projects: ADA improvements $100k (over ten years), Asphalt Maintenance $351k (over 5 years), Asset Maintenance $500k (over 5 years - 70% Park Fees, 30% HPOS sales tax), Horsetooth Boat Dock Replacement $147k (over 5 years), Hermit Park OS Cabin $130k (over 5 years)
    - Joshua asked about issues when there is gap between initial cost estimates and when the project starts construction. Jon said that since projects can be on-hold for several years, DNR will update those cost estimates as needed.
- 2022 CIP projects:
  - Horsetooth Mountain Open Space Mgmt. Plan Implementation: $450k (HPOS)
  - Poudre River Trail: $2.4M (HPOS, GOCO/CPW/CDOT grants)
  - Red Mountain OS Fencing, Demo & Restoration: $135k (HPOS)
  - HT Reservoir ANS Decon Station: $94k (Park fees)
  - Red Mountain OS Stream Restoration $104k (HPOS)
  - Historic Structures Project: $50k (HPOS, Partnership)
  - Hermit Park OS Maintenance Shop: $540k (HPOS)
- 2023 CIP Projects:
  - Land Stewardship Building: $2M (Park Fees, HPOS, Mill Levy, Weed Enterprise)
  - Eagle's Nest & Devil's Backbone OS Habitat Restoration: $213k (HPOS, RESTORE Grant)
  - River Bluffs Open Space Wetland Restoration: $223k (HPOS)
  - Administration Office Connectivity: $426k (Parks fees, HPOS, Partnership)
    - Daylan explained how the County is improving connectivity at the Admin Office by working with Northern Water as they connect fiber up to Chimney Hollow.
  - Our Lands, Our Future Study: $50k (HPOS, Partnership)
    - This statistically valid survey will help inform DNR management decisions based on public feedback. (The previous study is from 2013.)
  - Hermit Park OS Wastewater and Well Upgrades: $560k (ARPA Grant)
  - HT Reservoir Inlet Bay Marina Restroom Upgrade: $150k (ARPA Grant)
  - Carter Lake East Side Day Use Improvements: $610k (ARPA Grant)
  - Carter Lake Wastewater Treatment at Eagle Campground: $660k (ARPA Grant)
    - Commissioner Shadduck-McNally explained how ARPA funds must be dedicated to specific projects by 2024 and spent in total by 2026, but they will not require any additional DNR funding.
- 2024 CIP projects:
  - HT Reservoir Rotary Parking Lot Rebuild: $367k (Lottery)
  - HT Reservoir Inlet Bay to South Bay Trail: $87k (Lottery)
  - Carter Lake Parking/Road Improvements: $5.9M (Lottery, Park fees, FLAP)
  - HT Reservoir Parking/Road Improvements: $5.1M (Lottery, Park fees, FLAP)

        - $8 million from FLAP in total will be utilized over several years.
- 2025 CIP projects:
    - HTMOS Soderberg Parking Lot: $174k (HPOS)
    - Red Mountain Boxelder Creek Restoration: $500k (HPOS)
- 2026 CIP projects:
    - Chimney Hollow OS Construction: $4.2M (HPOS)
    - Reservoir Parks Environmental Impact Statement: $120k (Park Fees)
    - DNR Master Plan: $120k (HPOS)
- 2027 CIP projects:
    - Historic Structures Project: $60k (HPOS)
    - Devil's Backbone OS Grazing Infrastructure: $75k (HPOS)
    - Jon noted there are also future projects identified for future years that can be brought forward if additional funding sources are identified prior.
- Capital Expenses and Funding
    - $27.7M in expenses, with $16M from DNR and $11.7M from grants in hand.
        - Based on current secured grants/partnerships, for every dollar DNR will spend per the CIP, the Count is receiving 75 cents in grants/partnerships. Daylan said that the match percentage will go up as additional funding sources are identified for projects such as Chimney Hollow, habitat restoration, etc.
- Questions/Comments
    - Tasha asked about making the fencing project wildlife friendly, and Meegan said staff is cataloging all the old fencing that can be removed and they will upgrade any new fences.
    - Joshua asked about DNR's grant competitiveness, and staff replied that the grants can be nationwide or local, but DNR projects tend to fare well. Regarding grant management costs for DNR, the Finance and Accounting staff generally manages the funds and Jenn Almstead is the primary grant writer for DNR. With the ARPA funding, DNR Staff looked at existing projects that that met the criteria and pulled them forward while also considering overall staff bandwidth.

New Facility Design and Budget – Casey Cisneros

- Daylan noted that a new Weeds building is a necessity since the Vine Street location is getting sold. The Ranch option is the most cost-effective and it brings the Land Stewardship team together while aligning well with other County departments such as Road & Bridge and Fleet. DNR will consider selling east the Mulberry office property when staff gets moved out.

Action Items
Noxious Weed Management Plan – Recommendation on 2022 Updates

- (Tabled until the next meeting)

Other Business

Next Meeting Scheduled
August 18, 2022 at Larimer County Courthouse, 200 W. Oak St., Fort Collins, CO, 2nd Floor, Lake Loveland 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 – 6:54pm
