



Date: May 18, 2023
Time: 5:00 PM – 6:30 PM
Location: Larimer County Courthouse, 200 W. Oak St., Fort Collins, CO, 2nd Floor, Lake Loveland Room & Zoom Webinar

LAND STEWARDSHIP ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

MEMBERS		STAFF		GUESTS
Patrick Bickley	V	Casey Cisneros	I	
Josh Wenz	I	Daylan Figgs	I	
Ryan Blake	I	Meegan Flenniken	I	
Ronald Harris	I	Jody Shadduck-McNally*	I	
Jesse Dillon	V	Andrea Weber (minutes)	I	
Michael Hayes	I	Sarah Watson	I	
Janae Malpas	V	George Bond	I	

V = virtual attendee

I = in-person attendee

A = absent

*commissioner

Call to Order – 5:06 pm

Public Comment

Brenda Engles noted she has applied to be on the board. She asked what DNR uses acquisition funds for. Daylan said DNR uses these funds to purchase open space properties or conservation easements.

Agenda Review

Moved Action Item – Recommendation for Weed District Extension – to after the Commissioners update.

Review and Approval of Last Minutes

Ron moved to approve the minutes from last meeting, Michael seconded, motion passed unanimously.

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.

December 2022 Open Space Tax Distribution Letter

January 2023 Open Space Tax Distribution Letter

February 2023 Open Space Tax Distribution Letter

- Daylan reported the sales tax revenue is doing well and performing generally as predicted.

Updates/Discussion Items

Commissioners Update

- Commissioner Shadduck-McNally said she was involved in an Estes Park Planning Advisory Meeting May 18th.
- Larimer County is on flood watch but have not noted any major impacts.
- She explained she has a strong interest and investment in the LSAB priorities as she herself is a property owner.
- Described Larimer County employees as innovative and leading the way with policies and activities that have an impact. She refers to this as the “Larimer Way”.
- The county is wrapping up the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan and the process to build the next has begun. The Commissioners are looking to the boards and commissions for input and feedback.
- Engaged with state legislature regarding property tax bills, including HH Senate Bill 303. There are multiple bills which could significantly impact LC.
- Commissioner Shadduck-McNally noted LC hired a second budget analyst to help create more target points and metrics. She encouraged board and staff members to use the [LC Budget Explorer](#). LC employs around 2,000 people and uses staff acknowledgement tools such as giving Nectar points to encourage and show appreciation.

[2022 Annual Report](#)

- Mike commented on the leadership of DNR and BOCC staff in building the annual report. He noted the report is spectacular and does a good job showing how DNR is doing. He appreciates the transparency of LC with finances and thinks they are shared in a thoughtful way with the community. Larimer County has very sought after recreational areas and is doing a great job taking care of them for visitors now and for future generations.
- Board members all agreed and gave kudos to LC staff.
- Daylan thanked the board for their kind words. He agreed the county has good leadership and amazing staff that are creative and innovative.

[2022 Q4 Board Report](#)

- Daylan noted the quarterly board reports can be found online. They provide frequent updates for the boards, highlighting the work DNR is doing each quarter.

[2023 Q1 Board Report](#)

- Ron asked about changes in planning from 2022 to 2023. He continued, inquiring about anticipated impacts due to the flooding, specifically in the burn areas.
- Daylan responded, there are some new restoration projects, a dam removal at Red Mountain Open Space, and River Bluffs is entering into Phase 2 of restoration. He noted some possible impacts from the flooding might involve Road and Bridge projects. The burn areas could take decades to settle.

New Land Stewardship Building Update

- Casey reported the new LS building is on schedule and on budget. It is part of a collaboration with the Ranch as an extension onto their maintenance building. The construction has been complete, but the space is being used by the Ranch maintenance crew while their new space is being revamped and expanded. The LS crew will move into the building in December 2023 or January 2024. Daylan noted DNR board members will be invited out to see it after the LS staff have transitioned in.
- Casey said DNR is looking to hire a real estate agent to sell the Mulberry condo unit that some LS staff currently work out of. The proceeds will be put towards the new building.
- Currently, the 8 full-time LS employees are spread out across 4 locations. The new building will be able to house all in one location.

- Ron asked if the herbicide sales will move to the Ranch. Casey confirmed and expressed it will be a good location for it.
- Josh inquired about real estate discounts on fees when DNR goes to sell the property. Casey explained DNR will send out a Request for Quotation for an agent.
 - Meegan added, the process goes through LC Purchasing and they direct the thresholds around what percentage the real estate agent will get. The process is transparent and fair to the agent.
- Josh asked if DNR was competing with others for the Forest Service Weed Management Grant. Casey said no. The grant will be for 5 years, and funding is anticipated to be added to the agreement each year.
- Ron asked, if things shut down federally June 1st, will the county be impacted. Commissioner Shadduck-McNally said not for the county as far as she is aware. Casey noted it could potentially halt contracting.

2022 Annual Financial Summary Report – Sarah Watson

- Sarah introduced the report as a high level summary of the department's activity for 2022.
- Review of Departmental 2022 Revenues
 - Total: \$25,583,568
 - General Fund: 1%
 - Conservation Trust/Lottery: 4%
 - Sales Tax: 47%
 - Intergovernmental Revenue: 10%
 - Miscellaneous Revenue: 6%
 - Property Tax and Specific Ownership Taxes: 3%
 - User Fees Revenue: 29%
 - The breakout of revenue sources is consistent year after year, with large contributions from sales tax and user fees.
- 2022 Operational Expenses Budget to Actual Comparison
 - Open Spaces 18% under budget
 - Reservoir Parks 10% under budget
 - Land Stewardship 4% under budget
- Open Space 5-year Operational Revenue and Expense Trends
 - Increase from 2018 – 2022 in Service based/user fee revenue.
 - Increase from 2018 – 2022 in Sales tax revenue.
 - Revenue was largest in 2018 and has varied over the years.
 - Operating expenses have remained steady over time.
 - Project and/or capital expenses peaked in 2018, 2020 and 2022 (Heaven's Door Ranch acquisition).
 - Spikes in 2020 are attributed to Covid which led to an increase in visitation.
- Reservoir Parks 5-year Operational Revenue and Expense Trends
 - Service based/user fee revenue steadily increased from 2018 to 2022.
 - Other revenues were consistent over time, with a large increase in 2021.
 - Operating expenses increased slightly but steadily from 2018 to 2022.
 - Project and/or capital expenses remained level and spiked in 2021 (Skyview Campground), coming back down in 2022.
 - Spikes in 2020 are attributed to Covid which led to an increase in visitation.
- Land Stewardship 5-year Operational Revenue and Expense Trends
 - Property and specific ownership tax revenue steadily increased from 2018 to 2022.
 - Other revenue varied through the years but remained constant from 2021 to 2022.
 - Operating expenses gradually increased from 2018 to 2022.
 - Base revenue is the Property Tax, weed services and herbicide sales.
- 2023 Capital Improvement Budget Summary by Category

- Using various funding sources and covering multiple projects, the following is budgeted for 2023:
 - Land Acquisitions - \$5,157,637
 - Replacement of buildings/structures/grounds - \$1,984,583
 - New Capital Improvements (Buildings/Structures/Grounds) - \$5,498,046
 - New Capital Improvements (Restoration) - \$490,558
 - Capital Renewal - \$937,879
- Questions/Feedback:
 - Josh asked what factors drove savings.
 - Staff noted 2022 was a difficult year hiring for seasonal staff, savings came in the way of not having seasonal staff wages. Josh followed up, asking if 2023 has been better. Casey responded, in 2022 seasonal staffing was at 30%, this year it is at 50% of the desired target.
 - Daylan said money “leftover” is reappropriated. Josh asked if these could be moved into the CIP. Daylan noted the BOCC would need to approve the movement out of one budget and into another. However, the money can be moved into cash reserves and requested to be pushed forward into the next year. Sarah added, the Treasurer’s Office invests the departments funds.
 - Josh asked, from a mission’s perspective, did the department fall behind on weed goals due to the shortage in seasonal staff. He continued, asking how the rain might impact invasives. Casey said there were some open space areas DNR fell behind on. The rain will likely give both natives and invasives a good head start.
 - Ron asked how DNR accounts for current and anticipated inflation. Sarah said during the budget process, staff will look at current and anticipated rates and factor them in. Casey said for the Weed Enterprise, they will increase up to the local CPI to account for inflation.
 - Daylan noted DNR will adjust the growth in the department to adapt to any changes and holds 6 months of operating funds in the bank for “just-in-case” situations. Some of these funds are used for land acquisitions or capital projects down the road.
 - Commissioner Shadduck-McNally said there are current ballot measures that would cap property tax and greatly impact LC reserves.
 - Daylan said the CIP holds dollars set aside for new things or replacements. Projects \$50,000 or less are built into the operating budget and others over the threshold are put into the CIP.
 - Meegan noted the \$5.1 million includes the new LS building (\$2.2 million).
 - Daylan said DNR is working on the 2024 budget. The department will bring the budget proposal to the boards and submit to the BOCC around the 1st of August.

Action Items

Recommendation for 10-year Extension of the Larimer County Weed District

- Casey said the Larimer County Weed District was established in 1967 to assist citizens with the management of Canada thistle, leafy spurge, and other invasive plants. In 1985, a mill levy was established to fund the Weed District. Today, the levy is 0.143 mills on the assessed value of private land.
- The Weed District encompasses the eastern, more populated areas of Larimer County. Today, the Larimer County Weed District provides vital services for landowners to address noxious weed concerns; site visits, cost-share program (25% up to \$1,000), herbicide sales (broken down into smaller useful quantities), presentations, and printed materials.
- Land use has changed a lot since the 1960s. However, there remains much benefit provided today by the Weed District. An example is conducting site visits with landowners. This has become more and more important due to the subdivision of land that has occurred over the last 30 years. More individual parcels mean more landowners to assist and provide land management tools and concepts to.
- Every 5 years the Weed District enterprise is revisited by the county. This requires reauthorization by the Board of County Commissioners via a recommendation from the Land Stewardship Advisory Board.

- Ron asked if there were plans to increase the mill levy, and if so, when that would happen.
 - Casey said the levy will not be changed. However, if property taxes increase, the assessed value increases, and the property owner pays more.
 - Ron followed up, asking if the levy amount was set for that amount forever. Commissioner Shadduck-McNally replied, it is Tabor and would need to be raised to the voters to increase the levy.
- Mike asked if redesigning or extending the borders was something that needed to go to the voters.
 - Casey confirmed. When the district was initially created, everything to the west was mostly forested, today the eastern ranges require more attention.
 - Daylan followed up, DNR has discussed adding a second weed district versus extending the current one, as the landscape has changed a lot since the 60's.
 - Meegan said DNR would like to work more at the top of watersheds, but it would require more staff and funding so its restricted just to the enterprise at this time.
- Janae asked if there was any discussion or consideration for reducing future reliance on herbicide use for concerns around water and pollinator health.
 - Casey said herbicides are used judiciously and the department is very environmentally conscientious. Water quality is considered, and staff are professionally trained, certified, and licensed to apply them on private and public lands. Meegan added, DNR uses many different adaptive management tools and techniques.
 - Ron inquired about water testing after herbicide application.
 - Casey said DNR holds a permit with the National Pollution Discharge and follow regulations it puts in place. The department also complies with the Storm Water Management Plan around construction projects and follows guidelines around the CO Pesticide Applicators Act.
- Casey said DNR is looking for the board to recommend to the BOCC for the extension of the Weed District for an additional 10 years.
- Ron asked for a motion from the board for the recommendation to the BOCC to extend the Weed District for an additional 10 years.
 - Ron made a motion, Mike seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
- George Bond notarized the document and board Chair Ron signed.

Other Business

- Jody thanked board members for attending the meetings and shared her gratitude for the opinions and expertise they bring.
- Meegan provided an update on the LC Pollinator Policy Statement. Ryan Blake is the LSAB representative and has attended the first meeting. It will be presented to the BOCC in June.
- Daylan noted there has been state legislature around pesticides that passed which puts tighter restrictions on limited-use pesticides. Casey continued; certain pesticides can now only be purchased from a licensed pesticide dealer.

Next Meeting Scheduled

August 17, 2023 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 – 6:22 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.