



**TOPS Working Committee Meeting
Virtual Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 3, 2021**

Members Present: Bob Falcone, Blaze Panariso, Nancy Hobbs, Ingrid Richter, Bob Shafer, Paula Krantz, Hank Scarangella, Michael Merrifield, Stephanie Surch

Alternates Present: Wendy Thomas, Jeff Davis

Parks Board Liaisons Present: Carol Beckman, Greg Thornton, Jason Rupinski

Staff Present: Britt Haley, Kurt Schroeder, Karen Palus, Kim King, Anna White, David Deitemeyer, Emily Duncan, Scott Abbott, Gillian Rossi

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TOPS Working Committee Chair Bob Falcone brought the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

Agenda Preview

Committee Chair Bob Falcone announced the agenda for the meeting.

Announcements

Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager, made the following announcements:

- The December Sales and Use Tax Report was released and TOPS ended up being above the 2019 numbers by 0.046%. This number being higher than anticipated helped Britt move forward her supplemental appropriation request for the Pikeview Buffer Phase II acquisition.
- The State Trails Committee has recommended the Daniels Pass grant for approval. This was a \$250,000 grant request that we applied for to complete the Daniels Pass Trail . Britt thanked the State Trails Committee for their support in this effort.

Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Director, announced that there would be a ribbon cutting for the improved baseball fields at Cottonwood Creek Park on Saturday, March 13th at 11 a.m.

Committee alternate member, Wendy Thomas, thanked Britt for taking her out to view the Pikeview Quarry Buffer properties.

Committee member Ingrid Richter informed the Committee that the Downtown Partnership had endorsed Issue 1A on the April Ballot.

Kurt Schroeder, Park Maintenance and Operations Manager, introduced John Weaver as the

new Park Construction Supervisor.

Committee Vice Chair Nancy Hobbs asked for an update on the Rock Island Trail project. Emily Duncan, Trails Development Coordinator, responded she was waiting for an update on the storm water work, but would reach out for some information and let Nancy know what she hears back. Wayfinding will be implemented into that trail system in the next few weeks as well. Nancy offered to join her if she needed any help with the wayfinding.

Approval of Minutes – February 3, 2021

Motion: To approve the minutes of the February 3, 2021 TOPS Working Committee meeting with proposed changes.

1st – Michael Merrifield, 2nd – Nancy Hobbs, Approved, Unanimously

Citizen Discussion

Cory Sutela, Executive Director for Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, thanked the Committee for their volunteerism. He said there is an ongoing regional effort for the Fishers Peak State Park in Trinidad, and his organization will be helping with the master planning process for that park. He added that Trinidad State Junior College has a new Associate of Applied Science degree in Trail Building, in partnership with the State Trails Committee. At the State level, there is a revision happening to the manual of designing trails with wildlife in mind. Medicine Wheel has been able to make suggestions to this manual.

Jeff Norton, citizen, raised concerns about the Parkland Dedication Ordinance in connection to the property at 2424 Garden of the Gods Road. He asked if the developer was offering up the 55-acre open space in lieu of creating designated park space. Britt Haley responded that there is no offset, and the developer is required to fulfill their obligations of parkland dedication, which they will be doing by paying a fee in lieu. Separate from parkland dedication, we are looking to purchase the area. These options are purposeful, not just to offset the other. Jeff was happy to hear Britt's update. He also informed the Committee that this area is a habitat for big horn sheep, and asked if there were plans to develop trailheads or leave the area natural. Britt said it is hard to tell at this point, but Colorado Parks and Wildlife is a key partner we work with and will be evaluating the area. If there is an opportunity to make a trail connection while protecting the wildlife, that is the goal.

Bill Koerner, citizen, is the State Trails Committee representative from District 5. He said he is very pleased to see the grant approval for the Daniels Pass trails awarded to the Department. He said he would like to discuss the Sweetwater Trail section with staff to report in the upcoming State Trails meeting. Britt said she would get Bill in touch with David Deitemeyer.

Susan Davies, Executive Director for the Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC), commented that she was happy to hear the Downtown Partnership had endorsed issue 1A. There are multiple agencies endorsing this issue, which is very helpful. A committee has been formed to educate the public about this issue. Susan encouraged the Committee to continue educating

the public. Susan added that City Council President Richard Skorman is leading the movement to create a commission to take the potential TOPS ballot initiatives forward with the help of people from multiple agencies and departments. The April ballot will impact this process, but she is excited to see this move forward.

Presentation Items

El Paso County Parks System Fifty Years Celebration (Presented by Todd Marts, Recreation and Cultural Services Manager for El Paso County Parks and Leisure)

Todd Marts, Recreation and Cultural Services Manager for El Paso County Parks and Leisure, informed the Committee about the events and activities in celebration of the El Paso County Parks Fifty Years celebration. There is a “50k for 50 Years” hiking activity going on that citizens can follow online. There are also “50 Things to do,” which encourages people to spread out and visit different parks for different opportunities. In addition, there is a video that will be released to celebrate the diversity of El Paso County Parks and Trails. Along with a commemorative book, El Paso County Parks and Leisure will be having proclamations read and celebrations across different boards throughout the County.

Blodgett Open Space/Pikeview Buffer Property Master Planning Discussion (Presented by Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager, and David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect)

Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager, and David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect, led the discussion regarding the Blodgett Open Space/Pikeview Buffer Property Master Plan process. Britt stated there was interest on how and when to start the master planning process. Due to the uncertainty of budget reductions due to COVID-19, a request to fund a master planning process was not submitted. Britt asked the Committee to consider that there will be State Division of Reclamation, Mining, and Safety port of the reclamation efforts happening on the property to the west, as well as 23-acres of our western property being a part of the reclamation as well. Currently, there is not a clear picture of the timeline of when the process could begin. Britt has also been hesitant regarding the process due to the current restrictions on public gatherings. While it is possible to get citizen input electronically, she would prefer to also have in-person gatherings and presentations. The Committee could move forward with a supplemental appropriation, or consider putting this request into the 2022 budget.

Committee member Hank Scarangella said the absence of a master plan is not ideal, and some parts of this area are already in use, so he suggested an interim plan to address some of the issues happening currently. Committee member Stephanie Surch agreed with Hank’s idea of having an interim plan or preliminary master plan. She added a set plan would help with neighborhood engagement moving forward into a formal master planning process. Britt responded that if the committee is interested in having a full-on master plan, and an interim master plan for the current time, this is something that could be worked on. Interim plans in the past have worked well. We can evaluate the area with our rangers and natural resource technicians to develop protection plans, as we move forward.

Britt said she could bring forward a presentation to discuss this further next month.

Red Rock Canyon Trail Work Update (Presented by David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect)

David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect, presented the Committee with the Red Rock Canyon Open Space Trail Improvements update. This presentation included the Red Rock Canyon Master Plan; road conversion to single-track; the Lion Trail and photos of the Lion Trail; the “Road Section” of the Lion Trail; the Greenlee trail and photos of the Greenlee Trail; the Meadows Trail and Ridge Trail completed in 2020; and finally, the Waterfall Trail, Parallel Trail, and Palmer Trail planned for 2021.

[Link to PowerPoint Presentation here](#)

Action Item

Pikeview Buffer Phase II Acquisition Supplemental Appropriation (Presented by Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager)

Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager, presented the Committee with the Phase II Acquisition of the Pikeview Quarry Buffer Property. This presentation included a photo of the property; the Pikeview Frontage Phase I; the Pikeview Frontage Phase II; the Donation Property; and finally, a timeline and cost breakdown of the acquisition.

[Link to PowerPoint Presentation here](#)

There were no comments from the Committee or citizens at this time.

Motion: To recommend a supplemental appropriation to complete Phase II of the Pikeview Quarry Buffer Property open space acquisition in the amount of \$2,797,113.00 to include the purchase price, interest payment, and associated transaction costs from the TOPS Open Space Category.

1st – Ingrid Richter, 2nd – Paula Krantz, Approved, Unanimously

Citizen Discussion

There was no further citizen discussion at this time.

Motion to adjourn

1st – Michael Merrifield, 2nd – Paula Krantz, Approved, Unanimously