



Open Space and Trails Advisory Committee

*Minutes
February 25, 2010*

Meeting Summary

The committee received an overview of the Healthy Learning Paths non-profit organization and the partnership with the Broomfield Trail Adventure, from Dr. Chris Marchioni. Staff provided a presentation on Russian olive management and the proposed controlled burn at the Hoopes Property. The committee reviewed the Draft Coexistence with Wildlife Policy and recommended that the Policy be reviewed by City Council. Staff presented the findings of the 2009 prairie dog population survey. The committee also reviewed proposed locations for solar panels and made recommendations on the 2010 draft goals.

Roll Call

Present:

Pascale Fried

Judy Enderle

Rob Bodine

Patrick Tennyson

Walt Spader

Absent:

Kevin Jacobs

Annette Cislo

Dan Wilkie

Others in attendance:

Kevin Standbridge, Assistant City and County Manager

Kristan Pritz, Director of Open Space and Trails

Pete Dunlaevy, Open Space and Trails Planner

Gary Schnoor, Park Operations Supervisor

Nathan Kelbe, Senior Parks Technician and Weed Coordinator

Dr. Chris Marchioni, Healthy Learning Paths

Agenda Minutes

1. Call to Order OSTAC Meeting
2. Introduction of Interested Citizens:
Gary Berlin, interested in Coexistence with Wildlife Policy

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Jaan Raamot, general interest in meeting

3. Public Comment on Issues not on the Evenings Agenda by Interested Citizens:

None.

4. Overview of the Healthy Learning Paths 501c(3) non-profit organization and the partnership between Healthy Learning Paths and the City and County of Broomfield on the Broomfield Trail Adventure

Kristan introduced Dr. Chris Marchioni to the committee. Dr. Marchioni provided an overview of her background and the development of the Healthy Learning Paths non-profit organization. The primary goal of the program is to combat childhood health problems and obesity by creating healthy and effective learning programs for youth. Dr. Marchioni also described the current state of health in children nationally and the basic need to reverse a variety of harmful trends by providing education and other wellness opportunities to children.

Dr. Marchioni also described the partnership with the Broomfield Trail Adventure and discussed why the shared goals of these two events lend themselves to an effective partnership. The two events have a lot of overlapping themes and activities that make the partnership a logical fit for combining resources and interests. Dr. Marchioni reviewed the key features of the Children's Wellness Day, including the art and essay contests, classroom programs, and themes

Dr. Marchione also mentioned the Frank Shorter Race for Kid's Health 5k that will be organized by the Broomfield Rotary on April 11th. The race will be a fundraiser for Healthy Learning Paths.

>Rob-thank you, this is great to see and I was not aware of all of this; it is great to get the parents involved this way as well and then that interest trickles down to their children;

>Pascale-is there involvement with the girl scouts and boy scouts – this would be a great connection to make; churches as well would be a great way to reach families;

>Dr. Marchioni-we have reached out to both the scouts and local churches and we have some scouts participating in the event.

5. Presentation of Russian Olive Management and Proposed Controlled Burn at the Hoopes Property located

Nathan Kelbe provided background on Russian olives and the effects that they can have on the surrounding ecosystem. Nathan described the basic need for the management of Russian olives and the efforts that have been

made in Broomfield in past years including budget, resources, and the techniques of management. Nathan also described the potential for the rebound of native vegetation when Russian olives are properly managed and the longer term benefits of this management. Nathan listed all of the local sites where Russian olive management projects have been completed and reviewed the proposed sites for management in 2010.

>Judy-are there some areas where trees are left in place instead of chipping and removal?

>Nathan-we have done this in some areas, but we prefer to remove them because of the chance of remaining seeds taking hold; removal gives the native vegetation the opportunity to reclaim the area;

>Judy-are you working with Adams County on the Big Dry Creek area that borders Broomfield?

>Nathan-we could contact them and coordinate; at this time we are both working on our respective sides of the boundary;

>Pascale-are there Russian olives on the Metzger property?

>Nathan-yes, there are Russian olives in the Big Dry Creek corridor and along the access driveway to the farmstead;

>Gary-we have discussed removal of the Russian olives with Westminster before and we will consider joint management and developing a cooperative plan;

>Kristan-we could look at some kind of a phasing plan for this work with Westminster; it will likely be a multi-year project as the Big Dry Creek area and the access drive have numerous Russian olives;

>Rob-would suggest doing a lot of tree planting along with the removal and let people know that it is happening so there are not surprises;

>Pascale-would suggest a longer period of public notice signage when Russian olive removal is conducted as some people are only in the open space once a week and they may be concerned about what is happening if they miss the posted signage;

Nathan also described the plans for a controlled burn on the Hoopes Property to help manage the weeds. This project is being coordinated with the North Metro Fire Department. The proposed burn area will be about 15 acres along the west side of Lowell Blvd. and is currently slated to take place sometime in March, depending on weather and site conditions. Gary Schnoor described the occurrence of several accidental burns on open space areas and the result that very healthy, native vegetation has rebounded in those areas. Fire is another option for a management tool for noxious weeds.

>Pascale-why is the spring preferred for this as opposed to the fall?

>Nathan-there is a little more moisture in the spring and less wind, so that is a preference for fire control; we do not want the vegetation to be too dry or have the fire burn too hot during this burn; the grasses are also growing up quickly during the spring and covering up the burn site;

>Kevin-the fire district is doing studies on this as well and will be tracking the success of controlled burns.

6. Review and Request for OSTAC Recommendation to forward to City Council on the DRAFT Coexistence with Wildlife Policy

Kristan informed the committee that a recommendation is being sought to move the policy on to the City Council agenda for consideration.

Kristan provided comments that were submitted by Annette Cislo and reviewed the memo Annette submitted:

-page 11 typo; fixed

-page 13 – 3.6 second paragraph – change to CCOB; fixed

-Website postings – suggested a link from Police site to Open Space site and posting information for more than 48 hours. It is standard Police Department protocol to keep web site information up for 48 hours. However, the information could stay on the Open Space for longer than 48 hours. The Open Space staff will keep the information up longer on the Broomfield Open Space web site so that citizens will have more time to review the posting.

-page 18, #3, regarding warning signage – suggested that perhaps a different sign should be used from the Colorado Division of Wildlife sign which is more informational to warn residents about a recent coyote attack.

>Pascale-would prefer to have volunteers delivering this message verbally; a sign that states that an attack took place might scare people off for a long time and create unnecessary fear;

>Patrick agrees with Pascale and would prefer to educate people;

>Judy-would also prefer to have efforts focused on education instead;

>Rob-agrees

-page 19- suggested that the text be changed from “encourage” DOW to respond to schools after an incident be changed to “shall” (respond).

>Kristan- suggested that the Broomfield Open Space staff will respond to these situations and coordinate with the CDOW to allow for their participation in the meeting if at all possible.

This was the end of discussion on comments provided by Annette Cislo.

>Pascale-the new paragraph added on page 21 regarding fines for feeding wildlife – concerned about having dollar amounts in the policy, as this is a long term policy and could have future updates; the detail of the dollar amounts may not be necessary;

>Judy-it also seems important to indicate that this is a state issue not just a local issue, there is a state law;

>Pascale- the amount of the fine may not be a deterrent for some people; it may be better to state that it is against the law;

>Walt-would like to see this come out of the document; the fine may change in the future and it is more important to state the law not the specifics of the total fines and/or surcharges;

- >Kevin-we will look into collapsing this down so it is not so specific;
- >Patrick-could we make it clear that the feeding laws apply to all wildlife, like waterfowl as well; this statement should be added to the beginning of Chapter 5 too;
- >Gary Berlin-don't want the regulations to be so tight that they would apply to songbirds or yard birdfeeders as that is not illegal; would also like to see the specific fines removed; he also added that the Police Department can write tickets for state statute violations if they decide to;
- >Kristan-regarding the local Police – they do not typically write tickets for state wildlife issues although Mr. Berlin is correct that the Broomfield Police could do so;
- >Walt-should we have a provision that requires a wildlife study for development of a trail or a similar type of project in reference to the last page of the Policy that recommends Broomfield Code changes; the public sector should meet the same requirements as the private sector when projects are developed;
- >Kristan-this environmental report is not a specific code requirement at this time but this is something that Broomfield does complete when we do our own open space and trails projects and the developers also have been willing to provide this information; staff is able to ask for this information now under the general PUD and site plan section of the Broomfield Municipal Code but it would be preferable to have a specific submittal requirement.
- >Pascale-this section about design issues related to wildlife came about as more of a park concern than open space,—such as a playground near a gulch that might be used by coyotes and other animals, the intent was to provide some design advice to avoid wildlife conflicts when projects are being site planned;
- >Walt-we have a lot of areas where we hold private developers to a higher standard than we hold ourselves to; the Coexistence Policy looks fine but the way the requirements were worded made it sound like they would apply primarily to private developers and I would prefer a general statement that applies to all development public or private;
- >Kristan-we will adjust the wording here so that the guidelines clearly state that the environmental review would apply to both private and public development; that is in line with the intent of this recommendation;

- >Patrick-on page 32 – could we change the term “insects” to “arthropods”, as ticks are not insects.
- >Kristan-yes, we will change that;
OSTAC members agreed that the Coexistence Policy should proceed to City Council for review before a community open house is scheduled.

7. Review of Proposed Solar Panels at the Outlook Open Space and Willow Run Open Space

>Judy-does not feel comfortable with putting the solar panels on open space, as we already have some uses of open space that I would not approve of; would like to see the open space replaced elsewhere if it is used this way;

>Pascale-this is a tough issue as it is green vs. green, but I believe that the benefits outweigh the negative impacts; also, because the panels will be up against an existing building instead of out in the middle of the open space I can live with it;

>Patrick-similar to Pascale, I am okay with this use;

>Rob-also okay with this use; is there an educational piece to this? – would like to see a sign or display about this so citizens know some background about the project;

>Kevin-yes, we have not done this yet, but we will look into it.

OSTAC felt that these comments also applied to the Willow Run site. The Outlook site is .05 acres and the Willow Run site is .33 acres in size. A majority of the OSTAC members were supportive of the solar panel proposals moving forward.

8. Discussion of OSTAC Recommendations for 2010 Goals

Kristan asked the committee to consider 2010 goals they would like to see.

Kristan also announced that Pascale Fried will not be re-applying as an OSTAC member. This will be her last meeting and her contributions are greatly appreciated.

>Judy would like to continue doing field trips and site visits as a committee in 2010. She would like to see more study of potential open space acquisition in the northeast area of the community.

>Pascale-after the sustainability initiative goes through, she would like to see this committee address those points in the Sustainability Plan that would affect open space and trails or provide opportunities.

Kevin noted that the public open house on the Sustainability Plan will be on March 15th at the Lakeshore meeting room. Judy said that the plan has many ideas that will get the community discussing sustainability issues.

9. Presentation on 2009 Prairie Dog Survey and an update on the Conoco Phillips Prairie Dogs:

Conoco Phillips:

Pete informed the members that Conoco Phillips will be removing the prairie dogs on their site by bringing the animals to a wildlife recovery program. Conoco Phillips has submitted a wildlife recovery permit to staff for review.

Kevin asked Pete if relocation was discussed with Conoco Phillips staff.

Pete-Yes, Conoco Phillips was informed that there may be an opportunity to bring the dogs that are on Conoco Phillips property in Broomfield to Great Western this summer if the Colorado Division of Wildlife approves

the site for relocation after the plague event. The site, if deemed useable in early June by CDOW, could be used this summer for relocations. (Please note—after the February 25th OSTAC meeting, staff was informed that Conoco Phillips is still considering trying to find a relocation site for all of the prairie dogs on its property. Conoco Phillips is working with citizens who are providing assistance in finding a relocation site)

Prairie Dog Population Survey:

Pete explained that the survey was completed by Walsh Environmental with the same survey methods as used in past surveys. He reviewed a PPT presentation that highlighted findings.

Pascale asked how Walsh handled Great Western in respect to the acres and the numbers of animals given the plague. Pete responded that Walsh counted only the acres where prairie dogs are currently living and the number of existing prairie dogs so this decreased population and acreage numbers for Great Western. An asterisk is placed by the Great Western site on the summary chart to indicate that although the acres and population decreased—the habitat available for prairie dogs has not decreased. Overall in 2009, for both public and private sites there was a 2% gain in the population and 13% decrease in total habitat. This results in a higher density in general per acre.

>Walt-noted that the habitat at Great Western was not lost but just not in use now.

>Pete-yes that is correct;

>Patrick-is there any information on how the plague originated at Great Western:

>Pete-this event occurred primarily to the south of the Great Western site; Westminster was greatly impacted by the plague on its open space to the south; it is possible that the event moved from the south to the north but we do not know this for sure;

>Judy- There is a current study working on the premise that the plague is always in the colony and can be sustained at a low level and then builds up over the years finally causing an outbreak;

>Pete-the way we test is to go to the site with Health and Human Services staff and capture the fleas to send them in for testing to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment; we have also heard that the plague may exist in the soil without causing an outbreak from a colleague at a recent Front Range Working Group meeting—this group is made up of open space managers along the Front Range that discuss prairie dog related issues;

>Judy-with such a large percent of prairie dogs in one area the drop is dramatic when a plague event occurs; maybe we want more areas or more diverse habitat;

>Pete-one of the few benefits of having a fragmented area for prairie dogs is that something like plague cannot move through all the colonies;

however the larger sites are more sustainable than the smaller ones overall;

>Rob-how does the plague impact predators?

>Pete-the site now has more vegetation but we're uncertain exactly how that impacts the other species; perhaps the additional vegetation provides better cover for the predator species but there are also less prairie dogs for them to hunt;

>Pascale-are you anticipating private sector relocations on Great Western

>Pete-yes, most likely;

>Judy-asked about private sector sites with prairie dogs;

>Pete-responded that the private sector showed a significant growth in population (39%) with a much smaller increase in acreage (3%), indicating slightly higher densities of population within these private sector colonies. This information and the charts are available on the Open Space web site.

10. Approve Minutes of the January 28, 2010 OSTAC Meeting

Pascale motions for approval; Judy seconds; minutes approved

11. Updates:

- Rocky Flats Weed Symposium – March 5th
- Broomfield Open Space Foundation Event – Metzger Farm Cleanup, March 6th.
- No March OSTAC Meeting

12. Other as Desired by OSTAC

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.



Minutes Prepared by Pete Dunlaevy

Approved by OSTAC on April 22, 2010.