

**Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, November 18, 2021**

**Members Present**: Carol Beckman, Dr. Daniel Bowan, Larry Bogue, Sarah Bryarly, Andrea Perry, Steve Harris, Abby Simpson

**Members Absent**: David Siegel, Greg Thornton

**Alternates Present:** Julia Sands de Melendez, Chris Aaby

**Alternates Absent:** Steve Lenzo

**Staff Present**: Karen Palus, Kurt Schroeder, Kim King, Britt Haley, Anna White, Melody Horbach, Connie Schmeisser, David Deitemeyer, Cody Bear-Sutton, Gillian Rossi

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Called to Order**: Board Vice Chair Carol Beckman brought the meeting to order at 7:34 a.m. Carol Beckman announced that ceremonial items would take place before citizen discussion due to time constraints for those receiving recognition.

**Ceremonial Items
Friends of Garden of the Gods (FOGG) 30th Anniversary**

Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Director, presented the Friends of Garden of the Gods with a plaque for their 30th Anniversary, and thanked members of their Board for the many years of excellent partnership and support.

**Individual Department Awards**

Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Director, also informed the Board of the various awards received by both individuals in the Department, as well as facilities. The following awards were mentioned:

* Pikes Peak Summit Visitor Center – Led by Sandy Elliot
* Aramark – PPAM was named their Client Partner of the Year, and awarded for their Excellence in Sustainability
* Top 3 Finalist for Governor’s Tourism Award for Outstanding Sustainability Initiatives
* Multiple engineering and architecture awards
* History Colorado 2021 State Archaeologist Award – Anna Cordova
* Anna was recognized along with Charles Bello, FEMA and Michael Prouty and colleagues at Alpine Archaeology for the Palmer Trash Discovery/Camp Creek Garden of the Gods
* Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist of the Year – Sarah Braun
* The Therapeutic Recreation Society of Colorado awards a "CTRS of the Year" to professionals that provide a significant positive impact on the Colorado TR Community.
* Sarah’s contributions to the Colorado Springs TR program along with her involvement in TRSC, CPRA, presentations, intern supervision, and volunteerism were all considered in her submission. This also includes her own passion, commitment and “can do” attitude that many of her peers/participants/staff note!
* Tourism Award Nominees
* Gillian Rossi, TOPS Program
* Kate Severson, Pikes Peak – America’s Mountain
* Garden of the Gods Visitor and Nature Center

**Other Announcements**

Eric Becker, Special Improvement Maintenance District Administrator, introduced Alex Crochet as the new City Horticulturist. Alex brings a wealth of knowledge to the position, and we are excited for him to join the team.

Board alternate member Chris Aaby announced that he had accepted a new position with Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) as the Southern Front Range Regional Program Officer. He said he would be resigning from the Board to avoid any conflicts of interest and expressed gratitude for his time as an alternate. He also stated his support for the Historic Stratton Park action item. Karen Palus thanked him for his great service to the Board, as well as the community during his time as the Executive Director of the Catamount Institute for Learning.

**Citizen Discussion**

Cory Sutela, Executive Director for Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, presented two awards to two different staff members: Wesley Herman, Park Ranger, was presented the Land Manager Partner of the Year, and David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect, was presented the Trail Visionary Award. Cory also said he had checked out the new trails on Daniel’s Pass and was very impressed.

Susan Davies, Executive Director for the Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC), thanked everyone who voted and encouraged others to vote for 2C. Next, she said her organization had heard great feedback on Daniel’s Pass, as well as some of the new trails in Austin Bluffs Open Space. Finally, she said her organization is working with the Fountain Creek Watershed on a scenic film fest. She invited the Board, citizens, and staff to join her on December 2nd at Storybook Brewing. Proceeds from the festival will be shared among the partner organizations.

**Approval of Minutes** – **October 14, 2021, meeting minutes with proposed changes.**

**Motion – To approve the October 14, 2021 minutes with proposed changes.**

1st – Steve Harris, 2nd – Larry Bogue, Approved, Unanimously, with Board member Abby Simpson abstaining.

**Action Items**

**Victory Ridge Site Plan** (Presented by Connie Schmeisser, Landscape Architect II, and Tim Nelson, Consultant with Galloway and Company Architecture)

Connie Schmeisser, Landscape Architect II, and Tim Nelson, Consultant with Galloway and Company Architecture, presented the Board with the Victory Ridge Site Plan. This presentation included the context of the site; the design process, including concept 1 and concept 2; the Master Plan; furnishings and lighting; a zoom-in of the playground; and finally, one last overview of the Master Plan.

Link to PowerPoint Presentation Here

Board Vice Chair Carol Beckman commented that the revisions done to the master plan based off suggestions from the Board in the previous meeting looked great. She thanked them for looking at the various options. Carol’s next questions were related to the Park Land Dedication Ordinance (PLDO) requirements. The total PLDO for this park is 13.3 acres, so Carol wondered if this is satisfied from the development directly near the park or other developments. Connie responded that the park is surrounded completely by four different residential projects, both current and future. Carol asked if this park fulfills the 6.98 acres, with the other 6.3294 being fulfilled with fees. She wondered what different funds that PLDO fees would go to, given the new PLDO structure. Connie responded that per the ordinance, the fees will be collected and distributed into both the neighborhood park and community park “buckets.” There is not enough space to use the other six acres, and this would meet the service requirements. Carol thought that since this park meets the neighborhood park qualifications, all the other money should go to the community park fund. Connie said she could look into that as an option. Carol’s next question was the status of the detention pond, and if there are already stormwater structures in it. Connie’s understanding is that the future development that has not happened is high density, and the water must drain away from that development. To accommodate that water, they cannot design the pond until there is an application. This application will then go through the Stormwater Enterprise. Connie said no PLDO credit will be given until they are sure that the facility will have stormwater functions. Carol had some qualms about what seems like double credit, park PLDO credit for a storm water structure. Connie said that staff tries to work well in conjunction with Stormwater and developers and feels confident that this will serve public and private use. However, they will have to decide whether it meets those requirements later.

Board member Dr. Daniel Bowan had two questions. His first was why there was a choice to have a portalet structure versus an actual restroom. Kurt Schroeder, Maintenance and Operations Manager, said that portalets are quite a bit easier and cheaper to maintain. Because this park is also so close to the neighborhood it serves, there was a thought that citizens could also return to their homes if they needed to use a restroom. Portalets can also be added to serve different programs. Daniel then said that the park is being built by the developer, then maintained by the metropolitan district, but asked if the park is still owned by the City. Connie said the metro district will own and maintain the park, and used Cordera and Wolf Ranch as comparable examples.

**Motion: To approve the Victory Ridge Filing 9 Neighborhood Park Master Plan.**1st – Abby Simpson, 2nd – Steve Harris, Approved, Unanimously.

**Historic Stratton Park Acquisition** (Presented by Britt Haley, Design and Development Manager/TOPS Program Manager, and Florian De Castro, Spokesperson for the Golden Lotus Foundation)

Britt Haley, Design and Development Manager/TOPS Program Manager, presented the Board with the Historic Stratton Park Acquisition. This presentation included a picture of Stratton Park; a map showing the parcel; Stratton Park history; multiple pictures of the property; the transaction overview; 2021 Park Land Dedication Funding available; and finally, the proposed timeline.

Link to PowerPoint Presentation Here

Florian De Castro, spokesperson for the Golden Lotus Foundation (GLF), presented the Board with the Asian Heritage Center Concept. This presentation included the mission, vision, and goal of the GLF; reasons why they would like to see an Asian Heritage Center on the property; the vision for the Center; thoughts for the outside portion of the Center; photos of Asian gardens and structures; Asian Sculptures by local artists; the vision for a Chinese Tea House; and finally, a picture of the pond on the property. Florian also presented a video which has a walk through of the current state of the site.

Link to PowerPoint Presentation Here

Board member Steve Harris asked who owns the water rights to the pond. Britt responded that the pond was legally created, and if the City were to purchase the property, they would work with the Division of Water Resources and Colorado Springs Utilities to augment the pond if necessary. Steve’s next question was that of City Council’s reaction to this purchase and if there were any concerns. Britt responded that City Council had no major concerns with using PLDO funds to purchase this property. A couple of Council members had asked if the space is large enough, which Britt responded that there are a few gardens on similar acreage in cities like Seattle and Portland that have been successful. The final concern was how this working relationship with a partner would work. Britt had explained the working partnership, but there were no other concerns about the property or the funding source. Steve then asked if there is any interim agreement. Britt responded that if the acquisition is successful, there will be an interim operations agreement ahead of closing on the property. Following this, there would be an agreement for a period of time and milestones of achievement that would need to happen.

Board member Dr. Daniel Bowan commented that he would have liked to have seen an operational plan and agreement ahead of making this decision. If there is an operational agreement before closing, Daniel would like to see that. Then he asked what this capital development and operation agreement looks like. Britt responded that we are only asking for the acquisition piece to move forward, for $2,300,000. The City would own and control the property and the funds would be from PLDO. Knowing there is a partnership with a 501c(3) entity, that can inform the decision. This process is a little different than usual since we already have the partnership and the property, versus finding the partnership after the property is acquired. We look to these partnerships not only for operational use, but for fundraising. This site is conducive to this type of use, and as our City celebrates diversity, this site would contribute to that effort. Staff is currently working with the GLF to determine whether they will begin operations immediately, or if they would like a period of time that the City could own and maintain the facilities, and they would come in once they are prepared with a site plan and activities. If this acquisition is not successful, the site will no longer be available, and could potentially see other development use. Britt felt that this is a special opportunity, and it is important to act now. Daniel said he appreciated the mission and philosophy of the idea but wondered if there was a way to support the acquisition and then proceed separately with an operator. Britt said that the motion could be modified to recommend acquiring the property with the appropriate funds, recognizing the partnership but not approving the operational plan. Daniel stated that Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) and Memorandums of Agreement (MOA) happen outside of the actual master planning process and are instead administrative decisions with no public conversation. Thus, the Board would then have no purview over decisions. Daniel asked if the site would have to operate under the proposed plan. Britt said in the title review, nothing indicates any deed restrictions related to the historic property. In reviewing the contract between GLF and the PEO Chapter House, there are also no restrictions. However, we must recognize that the PEO Chapter House was for the Asian Heritage Center. If this acquisition is successful, the GLF has hired an excellent landscape architect who is putting together a concept plan. Britt said she didn’t want confusion and clarified that staff would pursue the plan that the GLF has put forward. Work with the public will come after the acquisition. Daniel said he understood honoring the plan but wanted to focus solely on the acquisition without any partner organization. Britt clarified that only the GLF has a contract on this property, not the City. Without their partnership, the City has no right to this property. If we pursue this opportunity, we could be added to the contract as a buyer. This would essentially be an Assignment of Contract. This would mean there is a contractual arrangement between the PEO Chapter House and the GLF, through which the City would be added as an assignment of contract if this acquisition is successful. The City would have contractual responsibilities, and be on the deed, thus being the owner. Daniel asked if the GLF doesn’t meet the stipulations, if they would have any claim to the property. Britt responded no; the City would be the sole owner. Essentially, the GLF will manage all of the facilities and indoor elements, and the Department would be responsible for all of the outdoor elements. In reviewing the motion, Daniel asked if there can still be a motion without the partnership mentioned. Britt said that the partnership has to be recognized, though the wording could be struck from the motion. Board member Abby Simpson asked if the wording is changed, if it jeopardizes the partnership. Britt said she recognized that a modified motion would acknowledge that not all the partnership details are known, but the land acquisition could not be done without their partnership.

Board member Andrea Perry agreed with Dr. Bowan that additional information would be helpful, to understand the maintenance and capital improvements. She said she supported the mission, as well.

Board Vice Chair Carol Beckman asked why there is a time crunch to pass this through to City Council before the end of the year. Britt responded that once a contract is signed, certain deadlines must be met. There are other parties interested, so we want to keep the process moving forward. Carol went back to the mention that the GLF will maintain the indoor facilities while the Department will maintain the outdoor area and asked how the botanical gardens would be maintained. Britt responded that normal maintenance would be done by our staff. Florian responded that the capital improvements would be done by the GLF, which would also include regular maintenance. However, all the details of this haven’t been ironed out yet, and the GLF may be able to help with more of that maintenance. Britt would anticipate that, in the interim stage, we will try to solidify these details based on the status of the new growth and elements. Carol’s next question was if all of the buildings are in the floodplain, that could be an issue. Britt responded that this can be a challenge, but we have dealt with that on other properties. Carol mentioned that the California couple had decided not to purchase the property due to problems with infrastructure and use restrictions with the property. Britt said she couldn’t represent their view, but the property is zoned residential, PEO operated a retirement home under a use variance, and that variance does not transfer to a new owner, so that could be the restriction they encountered.  Britt added that the City would rezone to PK land. The use variance is the only restriction Britt has located, though she is continuing to research, and the variance will terminate upon sale. Board member Dr. Daniel Bowan mentioned that in the history of the property, the plans had to be submitted to the Myron Stratton Home. Britt said her research found that none of this was captured in the documents, and this was an agreement between the Myron Stratton House and the PEO Chapter House at the time of agreement. Carol had some similar questions to Daniel’s about the operational plan. She said they’re essentially deciding the use of this property without a master planning process. Britt responded yes, but none of the operations are relevant if the property is not acquired. The master plan has a specific focus, but no master planning has been done. Board member Steve Harris asked if the motion acknowledges the spirit of partnership, if whatever has been developed between now and the next Board meeting can be discussed as a briefing. Britt said she liked the idea; however, the City Attorney’s Office may not be comfortable putting forth a draft document, but she would look into it. Carol then asked if there is an agreement in writing with the GLF. Britt responded that there is an agreement in spirit, but not in writing yet. Carol asked if the seller is putting any restrictions on the property, since they didn’t approve the City’s offer. Britt responded that the PEO Chapter House is aware that the City is the partner. However, the realtor’s working for the GLF have made it possible for the City to be added to the contract. Britt did not believe any restrictions were placed on the property. Next, Carol asked what the GLF’s capital fundraising campaign plan is, given some of their tax filings in the last ten years. Florian responded that once the initial plan with the landscape architect is made, they will begin their fundraising campaign. The planning cycle for the landscape architect is about six months to a year, which would include presenting the plan to the Board, and the plan will be pitched to organizations both locally and nationally. Britt added that the Department has worked with Cynthia Aki, the Founder of GFL, and she has been successful in fundraising in the past. Carol asked if there are any deadlines in the contract. Britt said the vision she had was about three to five years, though sometimes private organizations work more quickly. Carol’s final question was of the PLDO balance. Britt said she could get her those numbers.

Jim Bensberg, citizen, stated that he was a native of the area and grew up playing on the property. He said once the neighbors of the property were alerted to the transfer, they wanted to see the return maximized on the asset. He said he and other neighbors were very happy with the vision of GLF, and their desire to protect and preserve the property. Karen Palus thanked him for all of his support.

Cynthia Aki, Founder of the GLF, stated that she was very excited for this opportunity and hopes it is successful.

Susan Davies, Executive Director for TOSC, mentioned that while the process is different, the outcome is sure to be an excellent addition to the Parks System.

Cory Sutela, Executive Director for Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, asked if the area is public currently and asked if there would be opportunities for programming at the location. Britt responded that the area is not open to the public. She added that the property has some potential special event opportunities.

**Motion: To recommend acquisition of the approximately 8.48-acre Stratton Park site in partnership with the Golden Lotus Foundation and to recommend a supplemental appropriation from the Park Land Dedication Fees fund balance collected prior to 2021 in the amount of $2,305,000 to fund the property purchase and the associated real estate transaction costs.**
1st – Steve Harris, 2nd – Abby Simpson, Approved, 6 to 1.

**Cemetery Parcel** (Presented by Kim King, Recreation and Administration Manager)

Kim King, Recreation and Administration Manager, presented the Board with the Disposal of Surplus Land Owned by the Cemetery Enterprise. This presentation included the parcel location; views of the parcel; and finally, the proposed motion.

Link to PowerPoint Presentation Here

There were no Board or citizen comments on this item.

**Motion: To recommend the disposal of surplus City-owned property to Paula J. LeBaron, as the successful bidder, with the Cemetery Enterprise receiving the proceeds from the sale.**1st – Abby Simpson, 2nd – Larry Bogue, Approved, Unanimously.

**Presentations**

**Percheron Master Plan Major Amendment (Formerly BLR North)** (Presented by Connie Schmeisser, Landscape Architect II, and Andrea Barlow, Principal at NES Landscape Architects)

Connie Schmeisser, Landscape Architect II, and Andrea Barlow, Principal at NES Landscape Architects, presented the Board with the Percheron Master Plan Major Amendment (Formerly BLR North). This presentation included the project request; the site location; the previously approved master plan; approved master plan public parks; the proposed Percheron Master Plan; proposed Percheron Master Plan public parks; the Park Land Dedication; the catchment area of neighborhood parks; and finally, the parks and trails and phases of completion.

Link to PowerPoint Presentation Here

**Staff Updates**

**30th Street Update** (Presented by Robin Allen, Civil Engineer III)

Robin Allen, Civil Engineer III, presented the Board with the 30th Street Update. This presentation included the project team; project purpose; construction elements; the typical roadway section; retaining walls; the Gateway Roundabout; construction elements in Fall 2021; the 18-24 month schedule; and finally, where to find construction updates.

Link to PowerPoint Presentation Here

Board member Dr. Daniel Bowan commented that it would be nice to connect the Foothills Trail directly to Gateway, instead of having to use the underpass. This connection currently exists, which is a multi-use concrete trail instead of just for pedestrians. For example, Daniel said he rides his bike on this trail, as it is easier access and keeps him from having to bike on 30th Street. He requested that this connected could remain after construction is complete, which would also help with the flow of traffic on the trail. This would eliminate conflicts of different users entering from other areas of the park and the Visitor’s Center.

**Natural Resources Update** (Presented by Cody Bear-Sutton, Natural Resources Technician)

Cody Bear-Sutton, Natural Resources Technician, presented the Board with the Natural Resources Update. This presentation included the Natural Resource crew; wildlife monitoring; avian monitoring update; species richness; species richness by point; species abundance; tracking disturbance; prairie dog monitoring; noxious weed management; pictures and maps of noxious weed management; and finally, natural resource monitoring.

Link to PowerPoint Presentation Here

**BioBlitz Update** (Presented by Gillian Rossi, Park Ranger Supervisor)

Gillian Rossi, Park Ranger Supervisor, presented the Board with the 2021 BioBlitz Update. This presentation included information about what a BioBlitz is; the history of BioBlitzes; the 2021 BioBliztes, at Both Corral Bluffs and Stratton Open Space; BioBlitz promotion; Stratton Open Space BioBlitz partners; and BioBlitzes moving forward.

Link to PowerPoint Presentation Here

**Election Update** (Presented by Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Director)

Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Director, updated the Board on the election results. While issues 1A and 2C failed, 2D was successful. This measure approved the City to retain and spend $20 million in revenue to create a city and regional wildfire mitigation and prevention program. While the results were disappointing, Karen thanked Susan Davies for all her hard work. The Mayor has intentions to bring TOPS back up for the November 2022 election, potentially at an increase of 0.05% instead of 0.1% pending polling. Karen added that the Trust for Public Land has already offered to help again. Susan Davies expressed excitement to have some of the tough conversations to understand why the measure didn’t pass, and best strategies moving forward.

**Board Business**

Steve Harris – Steve said he was glad to see that the vandals from John Venezia Community Park were caught and asked if Kurt had any information about the vandals. He mentioned there was also video footage. Kurt responded that the footage was provided by a citizen who frequently walks through the park in the evening. There was at least one arrest, and at least one juvenile involved. However, that was all Kurt could share at the moment.

Carol Beckman – Carol briefly covered what had been discussed at the TOPS Working Committee meeting. She also mentioned that the second public meeting for the City Auditorium had taken place, though there was not a lot of new information.

Dr. Daniel Bowan **–** Daniel asked if COVID-19 guidelines for any city facilities had changed. Anna White, Staff Assistant, said the only Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services facilities requiring masks were the community centers, and that they had been requiring them in alignment with the guidance given to the school districts. Kurt Schroeder added that all City employees were required to submit an attestation form confirming vaccination status, which requires employees who are either unvaccinated or do not want to disclose vaccination status, to wear a mask when around others.

**Adjournment**

**Motion: Move to adjourn the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board meeting at 12:34 p.m.**

1st – Steve Harris, 2nd – Abby Simpson, Approved, Unanimously.