Minutes of April 2012 PRAB meeting

Attending board members: Watson, Twarogowski, Sharp, Copeland, Singer, Sandos, Green, Hollis, April, Ewing, Coleman, Robinson, Picasso, Navarro, Smink, Allen.

5:35 Call to Order

March minutes approved

First speaker was Jenny Fiefield of Camp Gladiator. She stated that the organization is new to Colorado, and they’d like permission to use our parks for their activities. They have a good relationship with Dallas Parks and Recreation, and would like a similar relationship with DPR. They’d like to offer services in Wash Park, Cheesman, and City Park, but current permitting requires a $250 fee.

Robinson asked how many times a day they’d be using the parks, and Jenny responded that it would be once or twice per day per park. Robinson asked if the organization uses equipment, and the answer was yes, equipment including light dumbbells and yoga mats.

April asks whether the organization is profit or non-profit; Jenny responded that they are for profit.

Green asks the price of joining Camp Gladiator; Jenny reports that new campers pay a fee of $160, and thereafter fees can range from $65-$95 per week. Jenny concluded her public statement.

Lauri Dannemiller then gave the Manager’s Report. Civic Center Park may be recognized for National Historic Landmark Designation. Ken Salazar will ultimately make the decision.

Colorado Parks and Rec (CPRA) will be hosting a Legislative Day and will host a tree planting activity on April 17, 2012. Eight hundred volunteers are expected to meet at Starbucks, with over 3200 man hours of work to be completed.

DPR is readying for their final meeting with Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), who will hopefully fund their application for the South Platte River project.

Dannemiller reported that discussions regarding the 2013 budget and Capital Improvement Plan recommendations will be coming soon.

Navarro arrives.

Dannemiller reported that DPR made an error in assuming that Council President Chris Nevitt’s office would be posting the information about tonight’s public hearing, when in fact DPR was supposed to do this. As a result, the requirements for public notification were not met, and this month’s meeting would not include a vote on neither the rules and regulations updates nor the Ruby Hill Park alcohol policy. The public notification has been posted and the official vote will take place at the May DPRAB meeting.

Council President Chris Nevitt gave a brief background on the alcohol policies concerning Fleming Mansion (Platt Park) and Ruby Hill. He noted that Ruby Hill is already a site that allows festival permitting, but unlike other festival parks, Ruby Hill does not currently allow the sale of alcohol. Nevitt
content that nobody is permitting at Ruby Hill because of this restriction. A local promoter, Swallow Hill, contends that they need to be able to sell beer or wine in order to have a successful event.

Similar problems occur at Fleming Mansion; even the Park People, who have office space within the mansion, aren’t permitting the event space because of the alcohol restrictions.

Council President Nevitt reported that at a recent neighborhood meeting at Godsman Elementary, he was left with a positive feeling from neighbors about these changes. He asks that DPRAB vote to activate these facilities.

DPRAB President Watson asked whether Nevitt would stay for the duration of public comments, and Nevitt responded that he would do so. Watson then reiterated that public comments would follow, but a vote would not be made tonight.

Dave Felice, At-Large Delegate of the Park Hill Community, was the first speaker. He entered his name and email address for the record. He stated his strong opposition to allowing the change in the alcohol policy. Felice submitted is letter of opposition for the record, as well as supporting research documents that he referred to in his speech and his letter.

Ray Ehrenstein was the next speaker and introduced himself as an INC delegate. He spoke in favor of the proposed alcohol policy rule change.

Maggie Price, the third speaker on the list, gave up her opportunity to speak.

Chris Gibson, VP of the Godsman Neighborhood Association, spoke in favor of the alcohol policy change.

Bonita Lahey declined to speak.

Katie Fisher introduced herself as one of the chairs of the Parks & Rec Committee of the INC. She stated that the committee is opposed to changes in the alcohol policy.

That wrapped up public speakers signed up to speak, and President Watson started board discussion. Nevitt added that representatives from the Greenway Foundation and Swallow Hill were on hand to answer questions.

Ewing asked if there were designated zones for alcohol sales in place at Ruby Hill. Nevitt responded that while those don’t currently exist, it’s reasonable to limit the sales to a certain area, but that he does not know where that area would be.

Ewing asked how alcohol is kept from being taken out of the designated area. Dannemiller responded that these designations and distinctions are made by the liquor licensing authority. Fred Weiss confirmed that there is often a fenced area for alcohol consumption at other festival parks. Dannemiller suggested that the geography of the park will likely determine best placement.
Robinson directed his question to the Katie Fisher, the INC representative. He asked whether the INC is for repealing the current alcohol policy. Fisher replied that that hasn’t been discussed by the group, but that they’d like to see a designated festival park, and they’d likely support alcohol sales at that park.

April asks whether a park needs a festival permit to allow the sales of alcohol, and Dannemiller confirmed that they are not allowed to sell alcohol without a festival permit.

Carol Singer asked what their vision of activation is for Ruby Hill Park.

Nevitt responded that the lack of people and general underutilization in Ruby Hill is a significant problem, and attracts undesirable activities. When lots of people are there, good things are happening; that’s activation.

Sharp asked how many festival permits are issued in a given year. Stu Bader, DPR permitting, answered that there are about ten large festivals (like the Dragon Boat festival) and 50-60 smaller events like races, etc. If we allowed alcohol at Ruby Hill and Fleming Mansion, that number may go up by 20 or 30 events.

Copeland stated that he supports this change in alcohol policy, but is concerned that it is a minor change and that the park needs an improved feeling of safety and security year-round.

Pachner stated that one of the public speakers alluded to a lack of public outreach in this process and Pachner wanted clarification on the public outreach efforts.

Dannemiller reported that not only has this issue come before DPRAB twice in February and March, the INC was also notified and neighborhood meetings were held.

Watson asked Chris Gibson what his thoughts were as an individual, not as the representative of the neighborhood association. Gibson responded that he’s personally in favor of the proposed change.

Watson asked whether Chris would reach out to the other nearby neighborhood associations for a letter stating their support or lack thereof.

Watson then closed the public hearing on the Ruby Hill alcohol policy and opened up discussion on the changes to the Rules and Regulations.

Bob Finch, DPR, gave a brief background on the “R&R” update, which is the first of its kind since 1993. Some changes, such as fine schedules, would be referred to City Council. He reported that the DPR plans a strong public education/awareness effort, and that rangers will have a lot of discretion on how strictly to enforce the new rules during the education period. Finch reported one typo on page 3 in reference to leash limits on trails.

Watson asked for board discussion, but there were no questions. Watson then restated that there would be no vote tonight, only public comments. The vote will take place at the May 2012 DPRAB meeting.
Maggie Thompson, an advocate for Bike Denver, stated that they are very supportive of the new rules and they believe that the changes will improve safety.

Cindy Johnston of FANS of Wash Park complimented DPR for their efforts, and offered FANS’ help in getting the word out regarding the new rules.

Katie Fisher of the INC stated that they agree with Cindy, that the efforts have been fabulous and they would also like to help with outreach/education.

Watson declared that this Love Fest (public hearing) was officially over. Slug fest (board discussion) is now open.

April asked about the amount of fines, and how do the new fines compare to other fines levied by the City? Finch replied that they tried to keep it consistent by comparing fines to Animal Control, etc. Large fines would likely not be levied for first infractions.

Dannemiller stated that because there’s an appeal process, the $100 fine covers DPR’s additional administrative costs, including cost of issuing citations, collecting money, etc.

April asked whether concealed firearms are allowed in the parks. Finch responded that weapons are prohibited, but he doesn’t know whether that will hold up under a court challenge.

Ewing stated that she appreciates all of the hard work that has gone into this revision.

Green asked if the rules regarding “zippy” leashes were new, and expressed concern about education the public on that concept. Finch replied that the law would only be on trails, and the rangers would ask people to “lock” their leashes.

Picaso asked who is responsible if someone climbs (say, Red Rocks) and gets hurt. Finch replied that DPR works with Jeffco and South Metro on such issues; for the mountain parks, DPR is just the landowner, not the jurisdiction.

Watson asked what the Albus Brooks amendment regarding public camping would have on rules and regulations. Finch replied that DPR has had a regulation against camping in the parks since the 1920s. Dannemiller stated that this amendment is currently in City Council committee and has not been formally introduced. Brooks’ amendment refers to the camping in the right-of-way, not parks.

Finch thanked members of the board for their support and assistance during the updating process.

Watson stated that he was very pleased with the public outreach and education efforts thus far, and then closed the public hearing for rules and regulations.

Allen stated that he and Dody Erickson have been attending meetings together, some including updated parking surrounding South High School. A new parking lot was paid for by DPS on land owned by DPR.

Carol Singer stated that on Saturday, April 14th a celebration of the newly renovated Wash Park Boathouse will occur.
Pachner stated that he was very excited about the Historic Landmark designation for Civic Center Park, and believes it’s a great honor for Civic Center.

Robinson asked about a man who’d been injured while riding his bike along a trail. Dannemiller responded that this man’s bike had been stopped short by a fisherman’s wayward line, and that there was no malicious intent.

Watson adjourned the meeting.