Minutes of August 2012 PRAB Meeting

Attending: Green, Hollis, Twarogowski, Watson, Pryor, April, McCoin, Allen, Robinson, Coleman, Sharp

Lauri: Regarding the budget, we are working out details with the budget office, but it is something that we have to thank council members for. It will help us meet parks standards, making up for staff reduced. Hopefully, gradually make that investment over time. We were encouraged to see language in the mill levy.

Fencing around Broadway terrace has been removed at Civic Center Park. A policy I’m implementing is that we’ll close the grass area on Broadway terrace on Mondays and Tuesdays. As it degrades with use, it costs us more money to replace it on an annual basis. Public outreach will begin next week. There will be increased seating around the perimeter.

Application for admission based event: a portion of Civic Center Park ticketed for seating and vending during the cycling event. No more than 20% will be used for admissions based events. It will be issued Monday the 13th.

Watson: Questions from members?

Keith: Thanks for the update, thanks to council for advocating for parks. We can’t keep parks looking awesome without dollars. On the rules and regs, were those changes generally accepted by council?

Lauri: They suggested we add language that reworded something in the leash law. Something regarding a dog being on leash vs. being “under control”.

Keith: On Civic Center, there were quite a few people enjoying Broadway Terrace. Chicago and New York use this concept. We got a great writeup in Historic Denver News.

Watson: What’s the communications plan for the park closure?

Lauri: We issued a press release, but got radio silence. Permanent signage is there, that says closed for restoration on Mondays and Tuesdays. We’re putting it on our webpage and Facebook page. We’re also handing out information to the people who are out there. It’s not going to be punitive, it’ll be educational.

Watson: I know people are excited about the pro-cycling tour; will there be bleachers in the park. I know the Board will like to see the plan.

Lauri: I have a map.

Watson: I’d love to see more information.
Watson: I’d like to go back to the approval of July minutes. Do we have a motion to accept the minutes?

Moved, seconded, with two abstentions. Minutes have been approved.

We have a quick switch in the agenda: Dody cried and asked to be moved up.

Dody: Tonight we’re going to do a brief presentation on the RAPP plan. It’s a departmental plan looking at programs and services, cost recovery part of our funding. Chris Rapinsky is from Greenplay, and she’ll go into more detail on the project.

I’m Chris Rapinsky, I’m with a firm called Greenplay, we’re in Lafayette. So as we’re working on this plan, you have in front of you an article that I wrote about cost recovery in the public setting. And a piece about cost recovery per se. When we talk about cost recovery, there’s no mandate that you must recover all costs for a service. This project looks at all services offered, how it can be dealt with appropriately. First, this builds on previous work. It is focused on identifying core services. How services are delivered, and by whom. We’ll be looking at what’s been successful in other communities similar to the City and County of Denver.

We’re going to look at developing a budgeting tool, and looking through a service assessment process. A couple of those pieces, staff is working on now. They began in June, and it has been an intensive process. It helps paint the picture, break it down and see how it can be done differently.

We look at recommendations for leveraging resources. We’re looking for improved partnership opportunities. We’ll suggest changes in regulations, policies, ordinances. We have a working group that met last week for the first time. What’s working with what’s out there, we need to put the effort and the research into what is out there. The project schedule is we’re doing staff work now, stakeholder developer. Want to share a few things as far as the performance issues, and everyone is having to do more with less, and there’s a growing integration of services. Get away from sports, sports, sports. How do people access the system? If we make a decision, what impact is that going to have? There’s also an increased demand for activities that we didn’t have to deal with before, like lacrosse and geocaching. Deferred maintenance is an issue. They thought a review of policies would be very helpful and be able to recover costs and revenue. Those are just a few of the things that we’d like to look forward to.

Dody has taken volunteers for this a real diverse representation. Jay?

Keith: one of the things we were dealing with was the increase in fees, are you going to be looking at that type of analyses? Those are all key questions. How well do the
services that you have? How does the fee charging balance with the numbers? If you
don’t have the dollars to continue, sometimes you have to drop the service.

Jay: How do you measure your impact? How do you analyze?

We try to identify. We’re looking at the data for the story. The recommendations are
who would you want to we won’t know how you have the data.

Watson: We look forward to hearing more.

Lauri: Having the RAPP project is to be able to have some alternative model funding.
But we don’t know how much to provide for the services. We’ve invited HRNA that
specializes in parks and parks planning to envision how Confluence Park can be
redeveloped so that we can determine what kind of funding models and structural
models are out there. We know that general fund is there to support current
projects, but to continue to evolve, we’ve how can we look at different funding
models along the South Platte? We were able to meet with them yesterday to try to
brainstorm, how can we look at our parks a little differently in terms of our assets.

Mark Bernstein, one of our planners, started with the redesign of Shoemaker Plaza,
but now delving deeper into economic and use aspects of the park.

Dana Fuchs and Candace gave a presentation on Confluence Park ideas.

Represents $100 million of private and non for profit development.

Watson: Board questions?

April: When you were going through three ranges?

Dana: I think this is more of a function of finishing the slides on the way over.

Pryor: I am very familiar with your parks, this was a fantastic presentation. There
are lots of concepts that Denverites can’t get their heads around yet. I think a lot of
citizens expect our policy makers to push harder. A question on the zoning, and how
do you see zoning how do you envision transitioning that?

We’ve only been here 30 hours, we can’t say anything about the charter or zoning at
this time. We have special rules for this park, that park...

Lauri: When we talk about charter vs. zoning. Zoning is a policy issue, decided by
council, not a charter issue. The charter luckily didn’t inhibit the city in that regard.

Hollis: When we went through the zoning to form-based, was there anything done
within that for parks?
Lauri: It is my understanding that there is only one zoning for parks. It doesn’t preclude is from being able to have that conversation with council.

Hollis: So it could be delineated.

Pryor: I loved the transformation of the aquarium park lot, the other parking lots, it’s obscene what we do there.

With the funding mechanisms, something we lack is creating a community improvement district that taxes the residents. Right now it is on the backs of businesses, and the residents get the benefit. It’s a missing piece in our toolbox and I like the suggestion of branding.

April: I’m a bit biased, I live in Highlands. I like to see something built, and I appreciate your energy being here for 30 hours at high altitude. What is the most significant obstacle we’ll face?

Candace: When we started the triangle of funding, governance, defining what you want to be and staying on message over a process that will take years. Divorce the conversation from emotion, where is the money going to come from, or supplemental revenue source.

The new signature park is Brooklyn Bridge Park, funded by onsite real estate development.

Conor: Do you guys feel that because Confluence Park is such a small piece of real estate, that focusing on something so small, you’re missing the big picture. Should the bounds of the master plan be enlarged?

Dana: go big. Think very big. Confluence is the clasp in the pearl necklace. It is the part of the heart that makes everything function within it. This is where everyone wants to live on the water, but the plan for the park itself will be very important.

Watson: Quick question for Lauri: the enlarging of the merging of parks and other adjacent amenities. What are some of the restrictions in reality? What is the plausibility of parks that are adjacent to each other become one? It doesn’t seem like there would be major obstacles. From my perspective, I’m not sure of prohibitions on Commons that have to do with the development. Another thing I’ve been thinking about: a structure within a park has to be for “park purpose”. REI might meet that definition, but the idea of a city council office in the Molkery didn’t fly.

Pryor: There’s the south, the north, what do you have in the middle? The confluence. It can fit in with the overall branding.

Watson: We’re very excited. Any final bits that you want to share with us?
Dana: I think we’ve kept you long enough.

Darrell: We have one other item on the agenda. Communications group update

Lauri: We’re losing our new communications director. We’re going to postpone until next month. We’ll use Dody as well. Hopefully we’ll get that kicked off in September.

Watson: Is there an official relationship between Parks and HR&A? I’m asking because I’m actually hoping.

We got a grant of 3.4 million dollars to solve the problem between REI and Shoemaker Plaza. Right now their involvement is limited to this two day exercise, we’re limited by funding.

Watson: Thank you for bringing them in.

Pryor: For the rest of the board, we’ve had two Confluence Park master plan meetings already. I’ve been to both discussions, and this adds another layer. Next meeting is August 21st 6 to 8 pm.

Pryor: Cyclovia! We’re closing 23rd from Colorado Blvd. to Quebec. This Sunday 10 - 4. It’s fun, the second annual event.

Watson: Thank you. Meeting adjourned.