

Meeting Minutes- FINAL
DENVER PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

June 10, 2020 – 5:30- 7:30 pm

Virtual Meeting: Via Webex

Board Members In attendance:

Fran Coleman, Lee Rains Thomas, Frank Rowe, Meredith Levy, Lynn Mason, David Richter, Lisa Calderon, Molly McKinley, Tashmesia Mitchell (Tash), Marla Rodriguez, Florence Navarro, Trena Marsal, Leslie Twarogowski (arrived late)

Absent: Noel Copeland, Jack Paterson, Samantha Villatoro, Pam Jiner

From Parks and Rec staff- Scott, Veronika, Happy, Jesus, John, Yolanda, Fred

CALL TO ORDER

David calls to order at 5:30.

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Fran- Make sure to capitalize proper nouns, check spelling and grammar throughout document.

Motion to approve notes from March meeting- Fran made a motion, Marla seconded.
Unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

General Public Comment

- Katie Fisher – No more to say
- Courtney DeWinter – Canada geese protection Colorado

\$108,000 dollars allocated to wildlife services in budget

Killing of geese approved by authorities on 4/9/2020

Geese seem to be disappearing from some observations in parks

End of this month- geese culling will begin

Humane euthanasia- misrepresentation- died by human hands

Killed by breaking neck or decapitation- humans hold down the geese

Board- were you aware of this? Does this sound humane?

- Carole Woodall – Geese

Transparency and accountability- ask to start to consider- how does discussion take place with the public?

Does the dialogue contain a discussion or just listening and then deciding if that question should be addressed? Attended sub-committee meeting (Resiliency and Sustainability)- the format did not seem to have the ability to clarify a question. Seems that there is no real public engagement taking place.

- Pfeifer Brown – Geese

Has tried to implore the heart. Wants to work with us all but feels that comments are falling on deaf ears. Still here and would very much like a different outcome- we want to come up with solutions and wants to help.

- Laura Vance – Geese

Strongly opposes the killing of geese. Seems that we have not explored all the possibilities for dealing with geese.

PRAB COMMITTEE REPORTS

Sustainability and Resiliency committee report (Fran)

Meets last Friday of every month at 1:00

Fran- worked to include people as an attendee in the meeting

Working gathering the questions from last meeting

Learn as much as possible from staff on how they were reacting to questions raised

Vicki/ Scott provided written response- will be posted on the website

Some of the comments were new and will take time to dig into, will work to find answers to questions that come up.

Future topics include: pesticides, water quality and increased recycling

Scott- Q and A and other documents have been posted on wildlife page and PRAB website

Covid and protests have adjusted timelines.

Q- Molly- should make info available about joining the meetings online

Planning and Design Committee report- (Meredith)

Met on May 18, 2020

Planning and Design meeting with Happy Haynes and Scott Gilmore:

The goal of the meeting was to learn more about DPR's relationship with Park Hill Golf Course parcel. In summary:

- DPR does not have any role in zoning- this falls under Community Planning and Development
- Parcel of this size needs to go through a "large development review process" (DPR one of many agencies involved, but not lead), triggered by property owner, not the city
- Discussion about relationship with property owners, Westside Development: Happy had conversation with them when they first acquired land, current expectations of maintenance of land, large park is park of their plan
- Drainage in NE corner- about 25 acres maintained by DPR- only offers passive use, not recreation because of flooding risk and will maintain as open space
- Summary of Acquisition Plan: Kathleen LeVeque is leading team for acquisition strategy, will be driven by principles of equity and need; all budgets are frozen and not pursuing any acquisition at this point until understanding of budget outlook; there are only been one purchase this year, some small purchases in que; goal to develop acquisitions within 3-4 years
- Parks Legacy Fund- projecting downward due to tax revenue numbers
- Recently hired real estate professional dedicated to work of DPR to establish portfolio
- Scott reported 200 acres of land acquired that have not yet been

developed (LT requested map of this land)

-HH "we will not use entire acquisition fund for one parcel"

-Discussion of Community Benefits Agreement- 3 party agreement without 3rd party

-Park Hill Golf Course parcel does have a requirement to have 10% open space, Scott expects 60-80 acres

-If DPR acquires, responsibility of maintaining it- very costly

-Mention of Park Hill Golf Course on future ballot?

Lynne- Clarify about who makes decisions about Park Hill acquisition.

Florence- When was the long-term acquisition strategy going to be in place?

Meredith will follow up.

Budget and Finance committee report- (Frank/ Trena/ Leslie)

Frank- Have not met since last PRAB meeting. No new business after the white paper.

Q- Fran- a question was brought up at Sustainability and Resiliency committee about making changes on recommendations to the executive director- Too late to make changes, correct?

David- yes

Outreach committee report (Lisa/ Tash)

Lisa- explains the first part of the report is about PRAB recommendations for functioning and the second part is about equity.

Lisa and Tash, along with other stakeholders are meeting and gathering community input.

One has been district 9 PRAB advisory committee. Individuals from across the city have joined this committee.

From this group:

~Wants to create a more respectful dialogue with community and Parks Department

~Came up at the city council meeting since DOTI wants to start a similar group

~Stakeholders would like to have PRAB step up and be more influential with budget and operations of Parks and Rec

~ Shared vision of bringing people together- likes arts and venues. PRAB and Parks and Rec should be more proactive than reactive

~Act more of an umbrella for bringing together neighborhood stakeholders and individuals

~Increase community outreach and engagement. PRAB meetings feel more like presentations. Would like to see more of a dialogue.

~Multi-structured to illicit more community involvement- Facebook event for example

~Would like to see more robust volunteer systems- communicate and work with staff

~Reduce fragmentation- want to know what is happening all over the city

Equity

Tash- Covid has nudged us to be more available for the community in different ways.

The Game Plan calls out equity- this is a great opportunity for the PRAB to dive into equity work.

Could we create a Black Lives Matter statement?

Although it feels that we as a group have not done enough work to make a bold statement.

Suggests working with consultant to dig into the Game Plan and work on how we operate as a board. Think about how we can work with a consultant to dig into equity. This is maybe the most important issue we are facing as a board.

David- Interrupts to say the committee report is over time

Contentious back and forth between members. Lisa and David and Tash and David.

Tash and Lisa-

Tash- Asks board to consider that 4 or 5 members of color have left this board- why is that?
Feels shut down with this conversation. Not being allowed to speak.

Lisa and Tash leave meeting in protest.

Florence- We have to have this conversation. Right now it is more relevant than ever. Critical in every aspect. Game plan connections.

David- Will need to take time for this.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

There are times when we need to stay focused and other times when we need to focus on critical timely issues that supersede business.

With respect- this conversation about equity likely supersedes anything I would have to say.

Briefly describe what is in the written response of PRAB recommendations:

Covid issues certainly impact the ability to expand programming and will have impact the 2021 budget as well. Likely instead of adding and expanding, we would likely be reducing and subtracting services and potentially even staff. Role of PRAB will be really important as we move through this process.

Equity will be at the heart of our decision making. Example- service reductions- consider how to minimize impacts in areas that are underserved. Will work to do this any time adjustments need to be made.

Some steps we could take, during crisis:

Have added Port-o-lets and hand washing stations at parks around the city and likely those will stay in place. Will seek the advice of the PRAB regarding proposed solutions.

Working to employ staff in different roles during the crisis.

Golf as an enterprise- since it has reopened we are moving towards recovery of that operation. Golf needs to generate all the revenue to operate the course and facilities. Cannot open them up to the public for outdoor space.

Park Hill- We cannot spend all our acquisition dollars on one project. "We" refers to the entire department, final decision makers are the Mayor and City Council.

Access, equity- are a few reasons why we wouldn't be interested. Department could advocate and support the community in acquiring the land. Park Hill is a park desert and we could potentially use some of the dollars. There may be other ways to secure land without buying it. We continue to be engaged and advocate for substantial open space at the Park Hill golf course site. The community is very much involved and will lead this process.

Continue to build and strengthen relationship with DPS. Share facilities.
Learning landscapes involving city, community partners.
Would like to help increase natural areas, nature play in schools.

Car free parks- Has so far been an emergency response due to the Covid declaration. We will have to discuss this after things have gotten more back to normal. Will be studying this and working to study this more.
Would like to engage with PRAB as this broader issue involving accessibility.

David- how does DOTI and P/R work together on something like this?

Happy- will work with the department to engage with community. DOTI will lead, but it will be a joint process with parks and rec, planning, safety, DOTI. Closure of streets is a multi-faceted impacts, complex issues.

Lynne- seeks to clarify what these are responses to.

Lee- explains that we made these recommendations to the executive director and these are the written responses, as was requested at the last PRAB meeting.

Molly- Can you verify that the streets that are currently closed are going to remain that way through the summer?

Happy- yes, with some minor changes for accessibility. By and large these will remain in place likely for the next several months. Will continue to engage with community.

Response from Viki to the PRAB from last month's meeting are posted online.

TV broadcast is unlikely, but agrees with principle to provide greater access and transparency through using technology.

Equity is very much a priority. In budget process, there is a formal equity lens that every agency has to be included as part of the budget.

Restoration of historic structures- In the works.

Strategic plan scope of work is in draft form and begin this summer and hopes to have a PRAB member on the committee as the process begins. Likely the planning committee.

Re-opening conversation

Moving from emergency operations to long term recovery planning. More time and involvement with community and partners. Driven by the city and state health department. Using data to determine when things are safe, when it is appropriate to recover some activities. Basketball, tennis and some other activities, like group sports are beginning to be allowed. Risk assessments are used.

Will share a timeline that includes rough reopening steps. Follow recommendations from city recovery team.

David- how do we make sure we are using things like Facebook?

Leslie- they already have it posted on Facebook

Meredith- regarding communications- would be valuable to have some updated signage in parks.

Happy- can be more stringent than the state but not less. Working on updating signs now.

Indoor rec and pools are challenging to open.

Response is what we think we can manage. Using risk assessment to make determinations.

Rec employees were originally paid through leave. Some are on furlough now for the next few months. Some staff is redeployed. Also, didn't hire some summer staff.

OTHER ITEMS

Board Announcements

Marla- Scheduling a conversation about equity and diversity.

Lynne- offline conversations are not working. It is not okay to say "let's take that offline". Follow up and transparency are not happening.

Trena- we need to be timely with this.

Molly- time needed- maybe a special meeting.

Lee- need to have a facilitator.

Florence- we need to frame the conversation before we can have it

Fran- Lisa and Tash- sounded like more than the outreach committee. Lots of info presented.

Molly- seems that we have already gone over agenda and understand why they were feeling so unheard.

Lynne- we need time to talk and actually participate in meetings

Fran- time to clarify. It was a lot to take in.

Marla- special meeting, info prior to that and have a full discussion of coming up with a statement.

Trena- Superintendent of DPS has made a statement to support the Black Lives Matter movement.

Leslie- sounds like equity issues about how we conduct meetings and how parks and rec supports this movement of Black Lives Matter. How are rangers engaged?

Civic center park, liberty park?

Happy- rangers are not assigned to protest areas. Helping with sound access. Port-o lets around areas, more clean up operations. We have also had significant support of the parks.

Immediate support for the PRAB to delve into our statement on Black Lives Matter ASAP. Having a facilitator is sounds necessary. Probably the most important topic we could have. Meeting is recorded and it might be valuable to have the facilitator can review the meeting. Started with a committee report that was given in the context of this situation. Need to develop a way forward. Use facilitator to determine what conversation needs to happen when.

Leslie- Ranger interactions/ DPD with people of color. Arrests of people of color. Can we address that in the next meeting? This is very important.

Molly- Minneapolis severing ties with police department, what do those interactions look like?

Happy can gather info, but it is not available right now.

Fran will forward wildlife info.

Marla- will do a doodle poll to figure out the best time for a meeting.

Jesus- any type of open records laws

Happy suggests- that we don't have a specific timeline. This is a statutory board and would need to be an executive session. Will ask city attorney if we can meet without the public. Check on the retreat.

Leslie- idea- not talking about issues, more about ourselves and how we operate.
DPD within our Denver parks and a statement of Black Lives Matter.

David, Florence, Marla- scheduling meetings
Conduct of advisory board meetings. Black Lives Matter and parks, both equity issues.

Happy- lean on facilitator to determine conversation.

ADJOURNMENT