

Meeting Minutes
DENVER PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
September 22, 2021 – 5:30- 7:30 pm
Virtual Meeting: Via Zoom Webinar

PRAB Meeting Norms

Be respectful and presume positive intentions.
Seek first to understand and then to be understood.
Stay focused on topics at hand.
Allow space for all to have a voice.
Listen without judgement.
Live our values of equity and inclusion.

Board Members In attendance:

Audrey Carrillo, Fran Coleman, Lee Rains Thomas, Frank Rowe, Meredith Levy, Lynne Mason, Amy Razzaque, Andre McGregor, Angela Garcia, Molly McKinley, Pam Jiner, Jack Paterson, Marlene De La Rosa, Marla Rodriguez, Florence Navarro, Deana Perlmutter

Absent: Chandi Aldena, Trena Marsal, Ramsey Harris

CALL TO ORDER

Marla calls meeting to order at 5:33, waits for quorum to begin
Thanks for the flexibility for the date change.
Lee takes roll call after public comment.

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Approve August Minutes.
Frank makes a motion to approve minutes, Florence seconds.
Unanimously approved. Lee abstains, was not present at August meeting.
Corrections were made (Arthur)

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Christie Green- Evergreen, Dedisse park, mountain parks, People and elks,
Vicki Vargas Madrid- signage elk interpretive sign at the lake (action from Vicki)
Provide education to people (get info from Arthur) Evergreen Audubon...
Path is narrow and it is a dangerous situation. At least 10 stake holder groups with Evergreen.
Path improvement plan, Jefferson county and partners could think this through and make sure
wildlife and people are safe. (committee?) evergreen parks and rec, Jeffco, Denver parks and
rec. Comments below:

I wanted to share some observations I have had while working at Evergreen Lake with the Wildlife Watch program. This program is a collaboration between Evergreen Audubon, which also operates the Evergreen Nature Center, Denver Parks and Recreation, and Wild Aware (this is the nonprofit that I founded in 2019).

While working with the Wildlife Watch program which involves volunteering at Evergreen Lake, I became more aware of issues between lake visitors and wildlife.

After some research, I discovered the stakeholders that have decision-making power in and around Evergreen Lake are many*. These organizations affect park land, recreation, water rights, and adjacent roads. There is some communication between agencies, but never a meeting between them all to share plans and talk about effects on each interest.

This may translate into a mishmash of improvements and changes to the lake and path that affect the other stakeholders but are not roundly communicated.

An example of this would be the walking path improvement along the eastern side of the lake. This path abuts the section where elk calving takes place in June and where we at Wildlife Watch work to try to reduce the numbers of elk-human conflicts which are dangerous. The plans for the path were presented by EPRD and Jefferson County but were not shared with all of the stakeholders.

This construction was planned through JEFFTAAG, CDOT, EPRD with no input about the health and safety of the wildlife movement through the area and during calving season.

Elk regularly move through downtown Evergreen and all roads through Evergreen. Many elk cows have discovered small islands on which they give birth. For a couple of weeks every June, the cows swim across a narrow channel to feed and then return to the islands to nurse their calves. This event gives great joy to lake visitors, even when the cows become protective and make traveling along a small section of path dangerous to humans and especially dogs.

My suggestion is to create a coalition or at least facilitate a regular meeting with all of the stakeholders present, or as many as can participate.

As DPR actually owns DeDisse Park, the land under the hooves of the elk and the hiking shoes of the lake visitors, my suggestion is that DPR take the lead on organizing this coalition so that the needs of the entire community and wildlife are considered before plans are made affecting surrounding roads and paths, and the lake and golf course.

If I may add, Vicki Vargas-Madrid, the wildlife specialist for DPR, has been incredibly supportive of Wildlife Watch and has worked with the golf course to place more visible warning signs during calving and the rut season about the dangers of getting too close to wildlife. Additionally, she has placed signs along the lake path near the location of the calving island during the June weeks that the female elk show aggression.

At one point, there was a discussion about closing a small section of the path during calving. I think this idea could be supported by the community if there would be an alternative means for people to complete the 1.3 mile loop around the lake, such as creating a section that goes widely around the elk mamas but connects the trail. This would require discussion with Jefferson County which owns the road alongside the northern section of Evergreen Lake and associated path and could be a conversation facilitated by holding meetings between multiple stakeholders.

That was a long answer to a short question. Thank you for inviting me to speak and for reading through my proposal. It is refreshing to work with people who care about the wild places and people and animals that frequent them!

If I can clarify my position or answer questions, please feel free to reach out to me at info@wildawarecolorado or text/call 303-324-8156.

All the best,

Christie Greene
Wild Aware
www.wildaware.org

*Stakeholders for Evergreen Lake and surrounding land:

- DPR and associated wildlife concerns, human safety and park management/maintenance
- Wild Aware as representing the community of Evergreen as well as tourists
- Evergreen Parks and Rec
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- Evergreen Metro District

- Evergreen Chamber of Commerce
- Evergreen Lake House operators and patrons
- Golfers
- Restaurant operators and patrons
- Recreationists including fishing, boating, and wildlife viewing
- CDOT
- Jefferson County zoning, Road and Bridges, and law enforcement
- Wildlife and wildlife tourism
- Evergreen Audubon/Evergreen Nature Center

Lynn has discussed with Christie and has seen the issue. CDOT issue as well. May not have been such a busy area when it was planned.

Fran- Scott and Vicki have been working on this.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Scott Gilmore-

Executive Director Report – PRAB Sept 22, 2021

- **Recreation Center Operations:** All 30 Recreation Centers have been open since the beginning of September, but not at full operating hours. Due to continued hiring challenges and staffing uncertainty around compliance with the City's vaccination mandate, we are delaying full operations from Oct 4th to November 1st with better assurance of our staffing capabilities after the mandate deadline.
- **Outdoor Adventure and Alternative Sports Master Plan:** The master plan builds upon the vision in Denver's Game for a Healthy City to create a strategic framework that diversifies current recreation opportunities by providing new ways to engage with and recreate in the outdoors so Denverites can live long, healthy and happy lives. This master plan will provide new and innovative ways to access the outdoors and opportunities to recreation with a focus on providing access in low equity areas. The plan will provide DPR with recommendations to enhance outdoor adventure over the next twenty years in urban parks and mountain parks. Three types of outdoor adventure are being explored: Land, Snow, and Water. A technical advisory committee is meeting up to 6 times to continue to inform the plan. The list of stakeholders on the technical advisory committee are attached. The final plan development stage will be February through April 2022. Three open houses and public meetings will take place. **The first virtual public meeting will be held September 30 @ 5:30pm**, and a public online survey will launch at this meeting (which we will also share with you all once available). Please attend and spread the word! The [flyer can be found here](#), and is in English and Spanish. The invitation via email can be found at <https://conta.cc/3BwiNsL> and you can share events on social media: [Facebook Event](#) | [Nextdoor Event](#) | [Website Event](#)

<https://www.denvergov.org/Government/Agencies-Departments-Offices/Parks-Recreation/Planning-Development/Park-Facility-Projects/Outdoor-Adventures-and-Alternative-Sports-Master-Plan>

- **Civic Center Park** and the surrounding areas that include MacIntosh Park (15th Ave. and Cleveland Street) and Pioneer Monument (corner of Broadway and Colfax) will be temporarily closed beginning on Wednesday, September 15 for serious public and environmental health risks due to unsafe conditions associated with rodent infestation, human waste, trash accumulation and illegal drug activity that is creating a negative and dangerous environment in our public spaces. These areas will be access restricted for purposes of cleaning, restoration and abatement. Restoration will include rodent mitigation, graffiti removal, tree trimming, irrigation repair, aeration, seed, and fertilization as well as installation of additional lighting upgrades. The closure is temporary, and the park will re-open when restoration and abatement and clean-up measures have been completed and the park is safe for everyone to use. Park Rangers continue nighttime curfew operations, and DPR is producing a scope of work and plan to ensure 20-hours-day/7-days-a-week coverage in the park with an additional 8 Park Rangers and 11 maintenance and operations personnel. Organizers of scheduled events in Civic Center Park have been contacted for rescheduling or relocation to other park properties.
- **Renaming Parks Facilities:** We have discussed with the PRAB Operations & Maintenance, Budget & Finance Committee our recommendation to proceed with the park naming process at this time **only** for the parks facilities identified by the citywide Naming Commission and to have a moratorium on any new park naming proposals except for the previous proposals that were already in the pipeline. DPR is working with Derek Okubo and Councilwomen Kniech and Ortega to define a process to advance the work done by the Naming Commission to evaluate the names of city-owned facilities. It is recommended that a contractor be hired to manage the process and facilitate the community conversations that will educate residents on the commission's findings; facilitate a discussion on whether the community agrees with recommendations and wants to move forward with a renaming process; develop a committee comprised of various community stakeholders; and work with the committee to manage the renaming process (solicit names, community input on names and selection of final name). This would then dovetail into the process defined in the DPR Naming Policy (petition, PRAB public hearing/vote, Council public hearing/vote), which would be managed by the committee.
- **Skyline Park:** The Skyline Park team completed public engagement over the summer, hosting the third and final public workshop in June. The design team is currently finalizing the concept plan for all three blocks of Skyline Park, which will be shared with the public in the next few weeks. The team is also currently wrapping up the conceptual level construction cost estimate and negotiating the final design contract to start construction documentation of Phase 1 (Block 2).
- **Civic Center Next 100:** In June, the Civic Center Next 100 team hosted a highly successful Public Workshop #2, where DPR received over 1,300 unique points of feedback including in-person engagement in Civic Center Park. Next Thursday September 23rd, the project team will be hosting the third and final public workshop and will share the preferred concept designs for Bannock Street, Greek Theater and Central Promenade as well as next steps on the Central Gathering Feature. The final concept plan will be completed following the engagement later

this fall. Following concept design, all four projects will split into their own final design and implementation timelines.

- **Opening of 29th & Fairfax Park:** Denver's newest park at 29th Avenue & Fairfax Street is now open! This area of the Park Hill neighborhood has been considered a "park desert" where residents have more than a 10-minute walk or roll to a quality park facility. That's why, in 2015, when a plot of land became available to purchase at a very affordable price, DPR jumped on it even though funds were not immediately available to develop it into a park. By leveraging 2018 voter-approved Park Legacy funds along with other funding sources including a donation from HM Capital and Ben Maxwell, the design and construction were accelerated, and now the community has a new park to come together.



Discussion:

Molly- Wonders about process of connecting unhoused folks with resources through the Civic center closure? Some concerns about how this was handled and where these folks went.

Scott- ongoing issue. Safety issue, trash, unsanitary, shooting in the park. People could not walk through park safely. CDPHE, public works, etc. city agencies. Closed through public health order. Safety and environmental concerns. Remediation. Gave 7 day notice to people staying in parks. Tried to connect with services. Place Showers For All in park 2 days per week. Potentially look for a job. About 50 showers a day, 25 loads of laundry. They contacted DPR about safety issues.

Budget Presentation

Sheila Urban

*presentation included with approved Sept 2021 minutes.

https://www.denvergov.org/files/assets/public/finance/documents/budget/2022-mayors-budget-book_v2.pdf

Safe outdoor (HOST is running this)

Converting some part time positions to full time with benefits.

ARPA- American Rescue Plan Act- shifting away and back to DPR.

All centers will have 2 full time rec coordinators

Discussion:

Fran- Excited to see the trash program being funded. Would like to add the cost of resources (staffing, etc.)

For Scott- regarding Civic Center- are there restrooms in the park?

Scott- in the McNichols building on the outside of the building. Unfortunately, it became a place to do drugs. Worked with Denver day works and had individuals monitoring the restrooms. 2 individuals have begun as regular employees. Modeling the same at Sonny Lawson park. Will try to staff restrooms where issues are likely to come up.

Molly- can you explain the role of new park rangers, etc. Concerned about unhoused being policed out.

Scott- Understands the park ranger importance and has seen the program grow over 20 years. Working to not have police enforcing park regulations. Park rangers are much softer and give tickets that are civil in nature. Work to get compliance. Begin collecting resources for unhoused people. Rangers are saving lives in Civic Center. Narcan administered about 12 times per month. Rangers are working to keep public safe. Changing from on call to full time. Closed governors park playground in addition. Found 30 needles in a 2 day period.

Molly- larger social issue, would like to understand how we are working with other departments to try to solve these complex issues.

Headwaters protectors- worked with them on Sunday and helped get supplies for un housed.

Marla- how we can brainstorm and support solutions, lets send to committee.

Florence- Ranger program has come a long way. It has grown so much.

OTHER ITEMS

Youth Ambassador- not able to attend today as planned.

Bond Project Summary- Craig Coronato

*presentation included with approved Sept 2021 minutes

Rise supplements current elevate bond, capital improvements, etc.

Hopeful that the Rise bond will take Pressure off the budget to be able to fund other projects.

Discussion-

Lee- restroom issues- year round?

Scott- It is still a priority as we put in any new restroom facilities in parks to have them open year round. Recognizes the importance of the issue.

Marla- we are to understand this as a part of the larger funding for parks and rec.

Scott- general fund bond money, legacy dollars and possibly Rise dollars. Wants to use these funds and complete parks.

Fran- 5280- what is that trail?

Craig- a trail, but is more of a system that is signed and amenities around the city. Much is sponsored as downtown Denver partnerships. Coors field to sunken gardens. A project that has been in the works for 5 years. Will be developed in segments.

<https://www.downtowndenver.com/initiatives-and-planning/the-5280/>

<https://www.rmpbs.org/blogs/news/5280-trail-denver/>

Pam- exciting to see improvements at the Montello central park. Nice to have new improvements, extensions, new trees. Will be wonderful. Need more things for people to do outside of their homes. What specifically is happening with restrooms? Very appreciative of all the focus.

Scott- Montbello central park- regional park for the area. Possibly add a restroom in the park, more accessible. This area needs this.

Meredith- when would planning and design begin?

Craig- planning and design may begin if bond passes early 2022. National western is broken out separately. Likely 2023-24 to have designs ready and funds planned for.

Molly- why the western center projects would get funded first?

Craig- unsure, but it is a separate item on the ballot.

PRAB COMMITTEE REPORTS

Executive Committee: Retreat follow-up / Committee discussion

Marla- progress with retreat items.

- Committee chair meeting tomorrow- hope to move forward
- Still working on entire organization and how committees should look and build consistency.
- Vaccine verification- easy to do. Arthur can do the verification. Thanks to those who have already taken care of this.
- Topic tracker to keep track of items and everyone to know what issues are being addressed. Can track topics better and will be available for public to see. Still working out the logistics of how it will work.
- Community chat- we hope it will gain some momentum and want to have others join the conversation as well. Working on more opportunities to engage with the public through various efforts. Google form, tracker.
- Nominating committee- proposal to have elections in November since the next meeting is so soon. Meredith, Andre, Frank- will be on the nominating comm. Florence will serve as advisor to comm.

Committees- wonder if we should have elections in committees as well?

Nominating committee should perhaps track and think through together

Planning, Design, Funding, Accessibility (Meredith)

Met 8/25, regroup, prioritize, reviewed mission

Transportation challenges, learn about mountain parks action plan see what goals will be. Want to understand interdepartmental development and more info about partnerships with other agencies. Playground play structures. Some responses and challenges have already been provided.

No upcoming surveys, but there are a lot of public meeting.

Civic center 9/23

Outdoor adventure meeting 9/30

Operations, Maintenance, Budget (Frank)

Met 8/30. Seems that they were able to follow many of the recommendations made in the white paper.

Topic tracker, as well as the input form for the community.

Naming policy- Happy presented extensively to the committee the current naming issues, and current policy.

Current name changes would go through existing policy. Everything new is on hold until the mayor's commission.

Recreation (Marlene)

Met 8/25

Huge recovery phase, from pandemic and from being closed. Every center will have 2 rec coordinators. Staffing is the biggest challenge.

Next priority is to increase hours of operation. Rec staff stayed busy during down time.

9/30 outdoor adventure plan meeting. Welcome back to rec in October, but got pushed to November

Laura- Will be introducing rec center supervisors to each RPAB member.

Resiliency and Sustainability (Fran)

Learning more about game plan. Tried to begin early at 12:30. Will begin at 12:30 with community input and end at 2. Asking for a real time update.

Park Hill Golf Course Update

Andre- majority of meeting was public comment. As a result, now feels a little rushed. Last meeting is next month. Conversation that conservation easement not being discussed. Supermarket- what will it look like. Consider what this will be like in 20 years.

301, 302 ballot initiatives. 301- supporting open space and prohibiting development on land. 302- development group supported- tries to define the conservation easement.

Fran- decided to be neutral on 301 and opposed to 302. This feels rushed and perhaps both groups should not be on the ballot. The study, why do people think it was controversial? Was there a study?

Andre- more about various opinions and what different people. The community may not have been considered. Will check and find out if a study occurred?

OTHER ITEMS

Board Announcements

Fran- Paco Sanchez park in a Russian language magazine

Florence- elections in November- Email Frank, Andre and Meredith if you're interested.

ADJOURNMENT