

Meeting Minutes  
**DENVER PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**  
**February 8, 2023 – 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:**

Fran Coleman, Frank Rowe, Marlene De la Rosa, Amy Razzaque, Meredith Levy, Brooke Badon, Chandi Aldena, Jill Mullen, Lee Rains Thomas, Jessica Zender, Jill Coffman, Jack Paterson, Trena Marshall, Florence Navarro, Deana Perlmutter, Kate Fritz

**CALL TO ORDER**

Meeting called to Order @ 5:37pm

Land Acknowledgement and Board Norms read by Chandi. As we become aware of more ways to embody this we will provide updates and info.

Welcome to Jill Mullen representing Councilwoman Sandoval and residents of District 1.

**CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**

Approve January Minutes

**Comments:** Lee moves to approve as written, Meredith second, all passes

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

General Public Comment

No one signed up.

**PRESENTATIONS:**

**Acquisitions Update**

Kathy LaVeque and Luke McKay for Gordon Robertson.

Presentation is attached—**Exhibit A and B.**

**Highlights:** Arkins Promenade opened summer '22,

Plan completed 2021, 6 focus areas (Equity, Closing 10 minute walk/roll gap, Mountain Parks, DPR Facilities, Resilience, Downtown)

Urban and mountain parks both grown 473 acres (urban) 448 (mountain--Axton)

**Recently completed/Active** N. Grant, 42<sup>nd</sup> and Picadilly, Second Creek, DEN Open Space (RECENT) 4400 Pearl. High Point, Outlook GVR maintenance (Active)

## **Focus Areas:**

### **Equity and 10 minute Walk or Roll**

Prioritized 3 areas (Alameda Federal, Goldsmith, Globeville South of I-70).

### **Downtown, High-Density and Growth plan**

Think Downtown could move toward more residential because of changes in world and work patterns, working here because of development and rising real estate values.

### **Resilience, Habitat Restoration and Waterways**

Looking for ways to add parkland while also multiple benefits can be achieved.

### **Facilities**

Priority is future Northeast maintenance facility. Need RISE Bond project proximity of existing parks and trails is priority.

### **Mountain Parks:**

Improve Access and build connectivity.

### **How PRAB can help**

Share with councilmembers, RNOs and other interested parties

Contact city if you know of people wanting to donate land.

Share successes.

### **Questions:**

**Fran:** Requested more information on Sanderson Gulch and Army Corps activities.

**Kate:** Axton access and delays. City is working to resolve issues, no real timeline.

**Lee:** Wants to find a meaningful park in Valverde area

**Meredith:** Has info been shared with city council and at what level? They have communicated on high level to City Council. Not detailed granular. Handout to PRAB will have much of what was provided to City, suggests working with DPR communications to get information out.

**Chandi:** Regarding size of parks, there is no specific size other than what fits the area and criteria.

**Amy:** PRAB budget recs, are there adequate funding sources? Want to be sure that there is funding but also that we are not keeping too much money in the bank that could be used otherwise

## **PRAB COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Planning, Design, Funding, Accessibility**

**Meredith:** not much to report. The acquisition update was presented @ last meeting. Florence: spent most of time on equity index and whether there were changes. Want to look at setting goals for 2023.

### **Operations, Maintenance, Budget**

**Frank:** Budget season. Its not just the committee, they need input and recs for inclusion. Main function of PRAB is to provide recs for budget. We need to provide input from what what we are hearing from community. Working now on 2024 budget. Get input by next week. Looking to get recs into March budget.

Gordon and Colton went to last meeting. Focused on CIP budget. Slide deck from that was in email from Frank. CIP is a 5 year plan. Way to keep long term projects is to keep on the list and keep those in front.

### **Sustainability & Resiliency**

**Jack Paterson:** Met 1/20. Low membership. Looking to get someone to speak on Turf policy—likely this presentation will be directly to entire PRAB. Also trying to get wildlife issues briefing. Likely no culling of geese this year. Reviewed and agreed to focus on key bins that the committee should review. DPR now has that and is reviewing. Will likely be provided at March meeting.

### **Executive Committee**

**Chandi:** March 11 Retreat. If there is anything to add to agenda please let us know. Meeting facilitator tomorrow. Please get info by 17<sup>th</sup>. Lisa Carlson is facilitator. In person, Carla Madison.

Meredith—need to understand whether districts and people will be the same after election. But keep in mind it takes time to do new appointments.

Add process for transition to agenda for retreat

### **Recreation**

**Marlene:** Rudi and Central Park rec centers now open and not being used by migrants. November sales were up and 2<sup>nd</sup> highest since ever. Need help with summer camps and other summer activities—getting word out. Want to continue talking about mental health issues at Rec Centers.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

- **USA Today Story on DPR Rangers** – The February 6<sup>th</sup> edition of USA Today featured a front-page story on Denver's Park Rangers and how they are compassionately addressing issues of homelessness in Denver Parks. The digital version included 27 additional photos and text. We are very proud of the innovative approach that our Ranger team has employed to serve the community.
- **Recreation Centers reopening** – Three recreation centers were utilized to support the migrant shelter crisis for the past 2- 3 months – Central Park, Rude, and 20<sup>th</sup> Street. Rude has been decommissioned as a shelter and has already reopened for recreational programming and Central Park has also been closed as a shelter and will reopen for recreation next week. Because 20<sup>th</sup> Street has been the central intake facility for migrants arriving to our city, it will continue to operate for a few more weeks, but is slated to reopen around April 1st. We are working with the Budget Office on a supplemental request to cover repair for the damages incurred. We do not have final numbers yet on the estimated cost.
- **Barnum East Temporary Closure** – Because of serious health and safety issues that have escalated over the past several weeks at Barnum, East similar to some of the concerns that were recently addressed at Barnum Park, we are temporarily closing the park to allow for cleanup, restoration, and repair. These facilities are primarily permitted sports fields along with the parking lots and restroom facilities which have sustained serious damages due to unauthorized and illegal activities at the park. Any programs (which are few currently because it is off season) will be temporarily moved to other nearby facilities as needed until the park is reopened.

- **DEN Open Space Expands** – In December, DPR reached agreement with Denver International Airport to expand the First Creek at DEN Open space from 198 acres to 580 acres, by far the largest contiguous track of open space managed by DPR in the city of Denver.
- **Ruby Hill Railyard Opens for the Season** – After the recent cold weather, we were able to open the Railyard for skiing and snowboarding on February 4, 2023. Free rental equipment will be provided on two days per week and weather permitting, the hill will be open until the 1<sup>st</sup> of March.
- **Park Hill Golf Course** – On January 23, 2023, the City Council approved the zoning, development agreement and language to refer to the April ballot relating to the conservation easement. Following the results of that April 4<sup>th</sup> election, we will be prepared to proceed with planning and design of the proposed parks facilities if the ballot measure is approved.
- **Mental Health Issues for DPR Employees** – The question has been raised about how employees that were engaged in the intensive efforts to provide shelter for migrants during the recent crisis have been supported from a mental health perspective. In addition to the slides below that outline our practices generally to support the safety and mental health needs of our employees, the City and DPR provided both additional compensation as well as additional leave to assist them in managing the pressures of those assignments.

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## Employee Support

- On-Site Crisis Counselors through our Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Agreement to utilize DPD Trauma Counselors in the event of a significant event
- All employees have access to counseling through the City EAP
  - Confidential
  - 24/7
  - 6 face-to-face no cost counseling sessions per year
  - Options for continued support

## Employee Training and Preparedness

- Standard Response Protocol
- Active Shooter training
- Verbal De-escalation training
- All Centers perform walk-throughs (drills)
- Two-way radios used for communication
  
- All Centers have Emergency Response Plans that cover fire, evacuation, weather, active shooter, natural disaster, bomb threats and various other hazards. Employee training and review at least annually



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Marlene: was at presentation from Caring for Denver. Very complimentary of staff to working with Parks Staff.

### OTHER ITEMS

**Chandi:** Upcoming public meetings. Also check PRAB calendar and FB page. Good to keep in mind.

Wants to be sure we can all meet individually with Chandi before the retreat

### ADJOURNMENT:

**Motion:** Marlene, Second Florence. 7:11pm

Ruby Hill Info:

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Ruby Hill Rail Yard Now Open for 2023 Season

*Denver Parks & Recreation and Winter Park Resort Team Up to Provide Free Skiing and Snowboarding at Urban Terrain Park*

**DENVER**, Feb. 3, 2023 - The Ruby Hill Rail Yard will officially open for the season on Saturday, February 4, 2023. Featuring rails, snow features and boxes of varying configurations and skill levels, the rail yard is available to both snowboarders and skiers and is absolutely free. A second and new configuration of features will be installed mid-season. Weather permitting, the rail yard will be open into March.

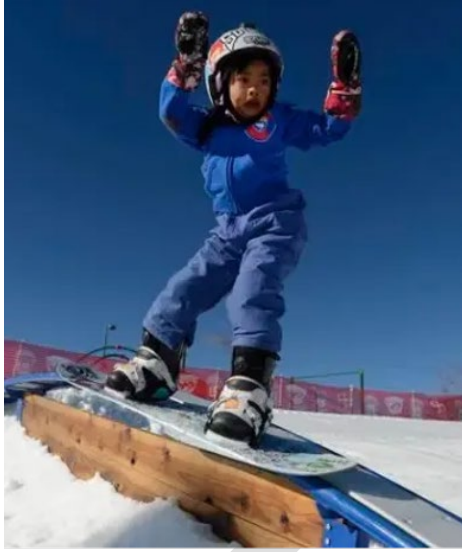
Recent cold weather and snow has allowed for snowmaking and building of the rail yard. Winter Park Resort provided snow guns, staff and technical assistance in snowmaking efforts to build the rail yard with volunteers and employees of Denver Parks and Recreation (DPR). The rail yard features bring the excitement and energy of skiing and snowboarding to Ruby Hill Park.

Beginning February 9, DPR will be providing FREE rental equipment, including snowboards, boots and helmets, on Thursdays from 4 p.m. – 9 p.m. and on Saturdays from 11 a.m.- 6 p.m. Free community events will take place at the rail yard beginning with the Burton Mystery Tour on February 11, 2023, and the CoreNation Rail Jam on February 25, 2023. Events will include free rail demos by regional professional riders. Additional events and program information for the season will be announced soon—visit [denvergov.org/OutdoorRec](https://denvergov.org/OutdoorRec) to find more details as they are finalized.

The Ruby Hill Rail Yard was created in 2007 as a joint effort between DPR and Winter Park Resort to offer a winter sport experience in an urban setting. Winter Park provides the technical experience of rail park design and DPR provides the location and management. More than 25 volunteers work tirelessly each season to help make the rail yard possible.

Ruby Hill Park is located off South Platte River Drive and West Florida Avenue. The rail yard is open every day during regular park hours from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. and is lighted every day from dusk until 9 p.m. Ruby Hill Rail Yard is free to the public.





DIA Open Space Press Release:

## **Denver International Airport Expands Land Overseen by Denver Parks and Recreation**

*Prairie Grasslands to Benefit from Juncture*

**DENVER** – Feb. 6, 2023 – At 53 square miles, Denver International Airport (DEN) is the largest airport in the U.S. by land size, and the second largest airport in the world. Within that space are hundreds of



acres of native prairie grasslands, including some of the most intact remnant parcels of historic prairie land that exist in Denver today.

Denver Parks and Recreation (DPR) previously oversaw, managed, and maintained 198 acres of DEN's prairie grasslands. An expanded Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which began Jan. 14, increased the area managed by DPR to approximately 580 acres located in the Peña Scenic Buffer, along Second Creek, north of Peña Boulevard at Tower Road, and at the property line between DEN and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge. This acreage is the largest open space in the City and County of Denver – approximately twice the size of City Park, the largest park in Denver. This area includes First Creek and Second Creek, two waterways home to diverse habitats that support a wide range of wildlife species including nesting bald eagles.

DPR's management of additional acreage will benefit the airport and surrounding communities in a variety of ways, including carbon sequestration, soil health, erosion control, noxious weed control and treatment, prairie grassland restoration, and maintenance of DEN's multi-use trail system. Grassland restoration could eventually include the use of DEN compost to assist reseeding.

"One of the guiding principles of Vision 100, our strategic plan, is to become the greenest airport in the world," said DEN CEO Phil Washington. "By utilizing Denver Parks and Recreation's knowledge and understanding of prairie grasslands, our airport is better equipped to sustainably enhance the nature and wildlife that exists on DEN property."

"The vision for managing this natural resource would not be possible without the support of our partners at Denver International Airport," said Happy Haynes, executive director of Denver Parks & Recreation. "Combining the natural resource management of Denver Parks & Recreation with airport land allows for the management of the currently largest open space in our city and protects its natural resources, including vegetation and wildlife."

Through this partnership, DEN will pursue grant funding to connect a regional multimodal trail system to the airport. The partnership will enhance equity initiatives that increase access to the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge through Montbello and the Far Northeast – neighborhoods that are primarily made up of communities of color. Bison, nesting eagles, burrowing owls and black footed ferrets are among the wildlife within the Refuge. DEN and DPR are also exploring ways the partnership can create an opportunity to restart conversations with the Refuge to expand the bison habitat east onto DEN land.

"Open space is so important for our wellbeing to recharge, exercise and experience the environmental benefits," said Stacie Gilmore, City Councilwoman District 11. "The significant expansion of the DEN at First Creek Open Space by approximately 380 acres, creates connections to our trail system and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge for communities that have been historically forgotten or excluded from the natural world."