

Minutes PRAB January 12, 2012

Board Members Attending: Sharp, Green, Twarogowski, [Charlie Brown/Carol], Pryor, April, Ewing, Coleman, Watson, Burton, Pachner, Robinson, Picaso, Navarro, Allen.

Board Members Absent: Copeland, Sandos, Hollis, Smink

5:30 Call to order

5:40 Update from Lauri Dannemiller, Manager of Parks and Recreation. Lauri reports that the rec center fees were increased in January, and the transition has gone fairly well. The department is working with partner organizations, such as the Denver Squids, to ensure the facilities continue to be affordable. There have been updates to the webpage for the new fee schedule and rec center programs. The department is seeking a new Communications Director (a position currently held by Angela Casias) and approximately 169 of over 200 candidates have been determined to meet the minimum requirements for the position. Scott Gilmore and Erin Brown will be doing a walking tour of all the rec centers and will post updates on the website. Lauri reports that since she accepted the Manager position, she has attended over 181 meetings and it has been a great learning experience.

April had a question regarding the policy of maintenance along the Platte. Lauri said that all hard surfaces are plowed. If we see that some have not been plowed, call the department (or, better, 311) to let them know. Over 200 miles of trails in the system require plowing. Scott Gilmore said that he'd speak to the operations supervisor about plowing. Keith Pryor noted that the north section of the Platte and Cherry Creek look good and he appreciates that the paths haven't been salted.

Pryor's question: does the city receive grants to offset the cost of low-income children to use rec centers. Lauri answered no, that as a directive of city council, this comes out of the Parks budget. Keith wants to know if that is a basic service, how do we protect it in times of budget constraints? Lauri responded that she considers three things: 1. The fee structure, 2. Revenue enhancement/generation and 3. Resource allocation.

5:48 Navarro arrives

Pyramid structure/overlay priorities of fees. Picaso complimented the department on their efforts around the city, and asked if a Spanish translator is needed for upcoming meetings.

6:05 Minutes approved, with Sandos' abstention

Gordon Robertson, Director of Park Planning and Construction gave an update on the River Vision Implementation Plan. Gordon had previously presented the update to stakeholders and other interested parties, and Lauri said that the meeting was fantastic. Redevelopment opportunities were discussed, and one attendee talked about Milwaukee's river area that has experienced a significant economic turnaround because of the city's investment. Gordon expanded on the need for better river recreation access. GOCO is considering several projects, including Grant Frontier to Overland River Access (\$3.5 million project), Platte River Trail 2.0 (a \$9.8 million dollar project), Habitat/Vanderbilt Urban Kids Camp

and the River North (RiNo) project (a project whose cost might be partially offset by nearby developers). Applications are due March 16.

Gordon thinks that their preferred project is the Vanderbilt Urban Kids Camp project, which was requested years ago by the Boy Scouts. This is near the old Denver Animal Shelter (on Jason St.). The former Animal Shelter building will be transitioned to a Denver Parks Maintenance facility. The on ramp to Santa Fe will likely be removed. Pryor asked if the city has discussed the next bond issue, and Gordon replied that he didn't know when the next bond would be.

Navarro asked when land acquisitions would take place in RiNo. Gordon replied that this might happen soon.

Darrell said that he appreciated recent good press for the department, regarding forward-thinking plans to have an urban fishing recreation area. Gordon said they'd received legacy grants from GOCO to do some of the work. Twarogowski asked if the city of Denver would pay for fishing-related costs, and Scott replied that much of this cost would be borne by the state and possibly the City of Englewood. Arapahoe County has a dedicated revenue source for open space, which allows the City of Englewood to have significant improvements along the river. Jay April asks about safety of fish and remembered the "no swimming" signs posted around the river. Scott replied that the Public Works department watches water quality. Ewing suggested that the Audubon society should be involved in river restoration projects.

Open discussion followed, regarding nonnative plant removal and the fact that people utilizing the river is what often identifies pollutants. Burton asked if there is a long-term plan to connect all of the river segments? Gordon replied that yes, the big-picture project is to see all of these systems connected.

Bob Finch, Director of Natural Resources Ranger Program passed out flyers describing changes to the current department policies. A working group has been established to discuss possible changes and their repercussions. Many of the documents will be posted on the website only due to their large size. The group wants to address inconsistencies, such as prohibitions against sledding.

Darrell Watson questioned the dates/timelines regarding public meetings, both with the board and the community. Darrell might want to change the date of the public hearing, and asked with communities should be reached out to.

Scott Gilmore, Manager of Parks, gave an update on the Wash Park Trail. The new changes to the trail will be implemented, and the old trail that crosses in front of the fire station will be kept intact. The final trail alignment should be in place by May 19th, 2012.

Navarro asked about tree roots, and Scott replied that scars have formed over the roots that have been damaged. Scott reported that after the meeting about fifteen people walked up to him and thanked him for listening to the neighbors' concerns. Ewing echoed these compliments. Scott said that not all of the neighbors' concerns cannot be met, specifically, the safety (or lack thereof) of running in the park after dark. Ewing asked if the Dumpster on the park's corner (in front of the fire station) will be removed.

Scott replied that they're considering fencing to decrease the Dumpster's visibility but that they're limited by trash truck access. Ewing inquired about nesting hawk or herons, and Scott replied that they should not be disturbed by the new trail changes. Lauri suggested that the firemen might start hanging out behind the fire station to improve safety, and suggested that a new hangout "pad" might be built.

Anne Green inquired again about the Dumpster. Scott gave the same reply as he did to Ewing. Carol, Charlie Brown's aide, reported that the neighbors seem very happy with the changes, though there are some neighbors who are still upset that they weren't notified when the process began two years ago.

Pryor said that he liked the treatment along the south side and opined as to how long large dumpsters will continue to have a presence in the parks. Jay April stated that he's been encouraged by the outreach effort and he hopes that the department has learned how to better interact with citizens. He asked how much of the costs will be paid for by the anonymous donor's gift, and Lauri said that she didn't know the answer to that question, but would follow up.

Scott discussed how his big concern regarding equity is whether disadvantaged neighborhoods would be pushed out of the city limits if all parks are significantly improved. Jay asked whether they have a report on the number of crime incidents that have taken place in Washington Park. Carol said that the police department doesn't provide statistics in that way. Jay asked how crime progress/improvements will be measured if there are no beginning numbers. Lauri agreed that it is very important to track those incidents. Jay started an open discussion on the aesthetics of lighting the jogging path. Scott said that lights will be on the ground, not standing light poles.

Carol agreed that equity is important, but that the Wash Park Master Plan had no funds for improvements. Lauri said that there are not a lot of defensible criteria to look at capital investments and projects. Equity is a criterion of every decision they make. Darrell said that he wants PRAB committees to begin meeting next month.

JT reports that the partnership between Parks and DPS is going well and they are having quarterly meetings with Dody Erickson. This is important because the taxpayers think that these two entities are related, and they need to collaborate accordingly.

Navarro reported that she saw equity taking place at Ashland rec center, which received new weight room equipment. She reported that the new equipments is "awesome."

7:23 Meeting adjourned.