

Meeting Minutes- DRAFT

DENVER PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

August 12, 2020 – 5:30- 7:30 pm

Virtual Meeting: Via Webex

Board Members In attendance:

Fran Coleman, Florence Navarro, Marla Rodriguez, Molly McKinley, Amy Razzaque, Leslie Twarogowski, Meredith Levy, Frank Rowe, Lisa Calderon, Tashmesia Mitchell (Tash), Trena Marsal, Noel Copeland, Lynne Mason, Jack Paterson, Pam Jiner

Absent: Samantha Villatoro, Lee Rains Thomas

Denver Parks and Recreation Staff: Happy Haynes, Arthur Gilkinson, Jesus Orrantia, Fred Weiss, Jason Coffey, Yolanda Quesada, Eliza Hunholz, Scott Gilmore, John Martinez

CALL TO ORDER

Marla calls to order at 5:30.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ellen Kessler, Geese

Founding member of Canada Geese Protection- read a letter from a resident from Paris, France. Stated Denver's image is tarnished. Request to stop culling and to work with experts on goose management. Stated that Scott Gilmore has not responded to First Gentleman Marlon Reis.

Carole Woodall, Geese

Canada Geese Protection Colorado has started protest readings of letters written to Scott Gilmore. Adding to the voices and discussion about DPR's hushed culling efforts. Please consider local, national, and international voices. Request to curtail culling in 2021. The protest readings ask you to respond with compassion. Read letter to Scott protesting culling.

Jacqueline St. Joan, Geese

From District 1, former D8 resident, retired lawyer, retired judge and DU law professor, and spearheaded Stapleton renaming. Recalled experience watching geese early in the morning and culling at Garland Park. Discussed the language of geese and the difficulty to explain the culling to her grandchildren. Request that humans can adjust to inconveniences of that we can use volunteers to clean up goose poop.

Courtney DeWinter, Geese

Requesting for goose meat to be tested for safety. Asked- Are they testing for all the chemicals? Feeding urban geese meat is a public health threat. Described pesticides in Denver parks. Harmful effects include birth defects, cancer, convulsions, DNA damage, etc. Will email to 2019 Denver pesticide report to PRAB.

Kelly Leviker, Geese

Member of Canada Geese Protection Colorado. Read a letter from Jane Goodall. Urges DPR to stop lethal methods and requests non-lethal methods- egg oiling, cleaning up poop, planting different grasses.

Mary Francis Nevans, Geese

District 9 resident, thanked Scott Gilmore for the conversation with First Gentleman Marlon Reis. Disagrees with 2020 communication policy regarding goose management. States that website lacks financial analysis and sufficient data. Says Scott Gilmore's concern for his staff is an excuse for not sharing location and more details. Public outreach requirements not met.

Katie Fisher, Communications

From INC (Denver Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation)- please be aware that WebEx format does not work for most people. The average citizen is having trouble accessing WebEx- requests that we explore other platforms.

Pfeifer Brown, Geese

Denver resident, read letter from Canada Geese Protection Colorado and Jill Robinson to Scott Gilmore. Letter stated that DPR ignores the community appeal and request for non lethal methods. Jill Robinson is the founder of Animals Asia Foundation, a Hong Kong-based charity that seeks to end cruelty to animals in Asia. Asks that we each take a stance on what's happening with the geese. "You are OK with it, or not OK with it". Requests that PRAB share our voices on our opinion.

Lisa Levinson, Geese

Read a letter from In Defense of Animals, an animal protection organization that was signed by 6000 people. Reports significant representation from Colorado. The letter urges DPR to cancel the killing contract with USDA and to identify long term solutions. Will send letter.

Debbie Main, Geese

[could not log on, sent email to PRAB]

July 2020 Minutes Approval

Approval- Fran Coleman, Frank Rowe- 2nd

All in favor: Amy Razzaque, Meredith Levy, Fran Coleman, Florence Navarro, Frank Rowe, Marla Rodriguez, Molly McKinley, Lisa Calderon, Noel Copeland

Abstain: Leslie Twaragowski, Tash Mitchell

*Lynne Mason was not online at that point.

Lisa Calderon:

Requesting to get a detailed agenda ahead of monthly PRAB meeting; Suggests having public engagement in each of the committees, so it can be standardized.

Discussing what is next with our equity work

Updates about naming work- and dedications

Committee Reports:

1. Sustainability and Resiliency Sub-committee, presented by Fran Coleman

Met on 7/31/20 with 16 attendees

Our committee invited Deputy Director of Denver Parks and Rec Deputy Executive Director Scott Gilmore and First Gentleman Marlon Reis to discuss Geese Management with the Denver Parks Department and to form a partnership that will include parks personnel and geese protection

advocates. Scott also provided an updated report on Geese Management, and is attached which states that sustainability of geese populations has been reached and culling is not anticipated in 2021. We invited Director of Parks Doug Woods who had Adam Smith and Damian Wetzel address the following: Unfortunately for us, but congratulations to Doug, he plans to retire. He will be missed. Adam reported that the number of parks by acreage that need to be addressed has been difficult. He explained that the decline in tax revenue due to COVID-19 has made it particularly challenging to meet all needs. Pesticides that are being used are those that are on hand, because of less shipping available no new products have been ordered. Drinking Fountains will continue to be unavailable because Denver Parks does not have the available personnel to clean after each use as recommended by the CDC. The same applies to bathrooms which are closed. Signs were suggested that could be posted to encourage park users to bring their own.

The definition of potable water is that it has been treated where non-potable water has not been treated. Presently the parks are using four types of water.

While we had recycling in terms of how we can expand it in our parks on the agenda we did not get into an in-depth discussion and will have it in our next sub-committee meeting on August 28th .

We will continue to rely on the list that our Sustainability and Resiliency committee compiled on January 31st to focus on the following topics as we set our subsequent agendas:

Resilience, Sustainability and Environmental topics and aspects of matters before PRAB and DPR:

Geese and wildlife management.

Water and recycled water.

Green infrastructure.

Pesticides.

Emerald Ash Borer and tree canopy.

Recycling in parks DPR operations (Doug Woods to talk to the committee).

Perennials, gardens, and monarch butterflies.

Energy, air pollution and greenhouse gas reduction.

COVID-19 as relates to DPR parks and centers.

Lisa Calderon: want to acknowledge the people doing the work- First Gentleman Marlon Reis and Canada Geese Protection Colorado. People still desire a dialogue versus a presentation. Feels like the process is still confusing. Suggesting an Ad-hoc committee to get resolution around this issue. Board should weigh in too. We should have a board discussion about this.

Molly McKinley: What is the action we could take?

Fran Coleman: I believe a committee has been established as a result of the agreement between Marlon Reis and Scott Gilmore. It will go beyond the sustainability and resiliency committee. Recommended to engage public comment through call in platform. Last Friday of every month at 1pm.

Lisa Calderon: Community Engagement- as a community, how to make it the most accessible to engage.

Scott Gilmore: takes pride in engaging in the community, this is a challenging and difficult issue- has talked to everyone who has called, emailed, messaged me. Putting all materials on DPR website. Have committed to creating a plan to get the community more involved with the management of geese in Denver. Deterrents, issue is so challenging- the info that was given during public comment was incorrect. Ex: egg oiling is a lethal control method, despite people calling it a non-lethal method. Everything we have implemented is sanctioned by our state wildlife agency. Document will be sent to the Governor and to the team.

Tash Mitchell: Challenge shines a light on a process for public engagement and board process. What are ways we can represent our constituency? Highlights need for discussion on inclusion, equity, etc.

Florence: This is an ongoing question for PRAB- how to get public input? We are truly acting as the eyes and ears of our community. Focus on the Game Plan- are we implementing the things that we have stated in Game Plan?

2. Planning and Design Sub-committee Recap, presented by Meredith Levy

Met on 7/22/20

The team met with Brad Eckert, Project Manager and Planner from Denver Mountain Parks. Overall, he reports that things are pretty slow now- besides residents (Denver and beyond) using/visiting the mountain parks, all special programs, ropes course, etc are on hold. There are serious concerns about budget cuts and lack of revenue (especially from Red Rocks Amphitheater) and how that will impact maintenance projects and programs. We discussed expectations for PRAB relationship with Denver Mountain Parks' team, and Brad requests that PRAB can be the eyes and ears for Mountain Parks- sharing information and providing feedback to Brad and team. Transportation is an ongoing issue. One idea shared from Brad was about the RTD W line to the Jefferson County complex- parking lot holds 100s of vehicles and weekends it's empty- could we have a shuttle?

We agreed to meet with Brad/Mountain Parks quarterly during scheduled monthly meeting to share any updates and if things come up in between, they know to reach out to our PRAB team. Also, Denver Mountain Parks Foundation is a wonderful partner and started out as a spokesperson for Mountain Parks with Bart Berger. Kate Fritz took over, and now foundation focuses more on fundraising for capital projects, introduction to Historicorps, etc. A lot of outdoor rec staff are on furlough. Last year, mountain parks programs served over 11,000 students- a huge increase from the year before.

3. Outreach/Action Sub-Committee, presented by Lisa Calderon and Tash Mitchell

Had a great recent meeting with District 9 residents- super informative and healthy debate about geese and managing wildlife in Denver parks.

Lisa advised the board of an upcoming resolution about having the public vote on conservation easement for upcoming November election. Deadline to file is 8/31/20. First reading to Denver City Council on 8/24/20.

Meeting included robust discussion about having more perennial and propagator gardens- would like to get park maintenance and volunteers working cooperatively.

Parkways maintenance- parkways to be continually protected. The west side doesn't have as many protections.

Continued discussion:

Meredith L- suggestion about sharing about community engagement from all Districts

Lisa C- asked about renaming status and community engagement

Happy Haynes- response about naming. 1. Issues of renaming any facilities of individuals with a questionable past or affiliation- we will be following the DPR naming policy, but there is a citywide committee that is looking at all of this- all of our facilities will be submitted for vetting and review to Denver City, and then back to PRAB, DPR, and public hearing. 2. As it relates to the issue of revisiting other aspects of the renaming policy- this will be directed to Policy committee lead by Leslie T.

4. Finance and Policy Sub-Committee presented by Leslie Twaragowski

1. We are looking at making permanent the alcohol pilot program we started 16 months ago. Will make alcohol policy permanent. (Bob Finch will present)- maybe September
2. Need another public hearing about wheeled devices. Need a path forward that some people can travel at a quick pace. A better delineation about wheeled devices vs. regular pedestrians.
3. Fred Weiss has decided to retire. Has served the parks department for 26 years.

Happy Haynes- Executive Director Report

1. Geese: Thoroughly discussed this evening- a. You are in possession of a preliminary report on this year's plan and the activities under that plan about geese management posted on the DPR website. The final report is due to DPR October 1. With this year's activities we believe we have reached our goal in terms of managing the population. Believe culling will no longer be needed. Hopefully will engage community more post-Covid.
2. COVID Recovery and Reopening
 - a. Slow deliberately
 - b. Erring on the side of caution on programs, facilities
 - c. Highlights- great success with summer sports camps for youth. Lower enrollment, but significant number of youth
 - d. Meals program out of 18 centers
 - e. Outdoor athletics- softball, tennis courts open (no league or tournament play) for public at large- limited permits
 - f. Outdoor pools- because of health concerns, closed for all of 2020
 - g. Continuing to work on plans for indoor facilities. Yet to be determined. Target date: 3-5 centers for limited activities- cardio and weights. Done by reservation basis to limit number- starting in late October. Subject to change.
 - h. Many of the furloughed staff are returning back into their centers with deep cleaning and planning for opening- for greater precautions and more social distancing
3. Budget- preparing budget to go to Mayor and City Council
 - i. Reductions we have been asked to think about with diminished revenues are significant. There will be impacts in services. Focus in terms of strategy has been avoiding layoffs if at all possible and minimizing service impacts, equity in terms of what impacts might have in the community
 - ii. Spent the last 3 years with additions to help bring some of our neighborhood centers in our highest need communities- adding hours to rec centers, equipment, etc, using data to guide those decisions.
 - iii. Reductions also concern our legacy fund (special park tax)- will be proposed reductions in CIPs- will be recommending projects to be deferred to future budget. Don't expect to lose any projects, rather delayed. Hope to increase community process.
4. Grateful to Fred Weiss and acknowledging retirement. Grateful to his leadership, passion, and institutional knowledge.

Fred Weiss:

Thankful for 26 years with DPR- has seen a lot of changes. Department has incredibly passionate people and the best department to work for in the city.

Happy Haynes answered additional questions:

-Indoors pools will not be open- Within the few weeks or so, will have info about which centers reopening.

-Childcare- went well, used several centers to provide childcare for essential workers and first responders. Maintained that until recently. Repurposing for some centers for recreation.

-Part of recovery planning- working with DPR and Library partners around providing facilities to support kids in neighborhoods where they do not have access to technology during remote DPS learning. Despite districts efforts to get Wifi and chromebooks- still not readily available- will provide opportunities for kids to be in our centers for remote learning.

-Don't have details yet- but continuing the meal program. Primarily driven from an equity perspective. Trying to support families who are in the greatest need.

Florence N:

1. Fred Weiss- thank you, and truly appreciate you
2. Thank you to Rocky Mountain Lake Park clean up volunteers

Fran C:

Thank you to Fred Weiss

Board Announcements:

Update on Equity Statement- started and plan to update with our facilitator.

Will share an email thread. It's preliminary work.

Fran: good idea to go with the email chain to loop everyone in that way since comments are not firm.

Lisa Calderon:

Plaque and bench dedication for Isabella Thallas- 4:30pm on August 21- 17th and Park Ave.

Meeting adjourned at 7:34