

Meeting Minutes- DRAFT
DENVER PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
November 16, 2020 – 5:30- 7:30 pm
Virtual Meeting: Via Zoom

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, Lee Rains Thomas

Absent: Samantha Villatoro, Pam Jiner

CALL TO ORDER

Marla calls meeting to order at 5:33

Lee takes roll call

Marla- full agenda, public hearing, thanks public for sharing

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Approve October Minutes

Fran makes a motion to approve minutes, Leslie seconds
Unanimously approved

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Below are General Public Comment speakers in order of sign up.

1. Ellen Kessler- Working with VVM on coyote decoys. Seems to be going well. However, is concerned that many decoys are being stolen. Has worked at Harvey and Garfield Parks. Not sure what we can do, even with signage. Hopes to figure out a way to make this program work. Shout out to Fran Coleman- participating in moving decoys. Challenge for others to do this. Contact Vicki or Scott for more info. Game across Hawk Quest about releasing trained raptors to scare geese away. Might need more volunteers would be needed. First Gentleman Reis is more than happy to recruit more volunteers.
2. Ean Tafoya- Resident of Dist 2- supportive of change in La Raza park. Wants to work on safety of water and waterways, water access, public restroom access, potentially camp safety. Opportunity to call on partners to think about resiliency of climate change and housing crisis. People have been coming and this issue keeps coming up. Would like to think of solutions to safely house our neighbors. (Assign to S & R committee)
3. Michelle Christiance- Headwaters protectors- need for access to clean water and free public restrooms are a need that should be provided by the city. Safe camp site ideas- would like to share more. Initiation to be a volunteer at Headwaters. Actively getting people trash service and access to clean water. Every Sunday at Benedict Park at 10 am.
4. Kenyon Moon- Wildlife management. Wild bird rehab is going through many changes. Began sale of birdseed and feeders. Thank you for maintaining parkways to travel from

one place to another. Thanks to the board for making the changes necessary to adjust how we handle wildlife.

PRAB COMMITTEE REPORTS

Lee shared word cloud from the equity session with PRAB on 11/10.

Reminder to take survey and sign up for 1 on 1 meeting with Marla.

Will use time at December meeting to review data collected and formulate plans for 2021.



Outreach Committee- Lisa

No formal meeting.

Updates: Attended budget committee, urged a more robust process, advocates for PRAB doing more than a white paper, but advocating for certain priorities. Ex- Councilperson Kniech to advocate for restrooms to stay open.

Renaming- would like the board to take a more active role. Ex- renaming spaces that historically were neighborhoods of color (Rhino for example).

Would like to see more connection from PRAB to committees.

Update about golf course- have not received a formal answer as far as PRAB members having a seat at that table.

Councilperson DeBaca- Advocates that neighborhood groups would be able to choose their own representatives and not be appointed.

Echoing- urge to have parks and rec take a more active approach for the housing crisis. Parks and Rec could be a leader. All agencies should be part. SOS (safe outdoor spaces)

Operations- Leslie

Intersection has come up with outreach committee- the amount of time surveys are out.

Like for strategic acquisition plan, sometimes small, sometimes bigger. Sometimes such a

short amount of time, not enough time for true outreach. Would like to set a policy for how long surveys should be open. Frank has more to share later.

Planning – Meredith

Has meeting on 11/17.

Surveys open- unable to attend Cool Park or Congress Park- open and available to watch.

Get in touch with Meredithprab@gmail.com for more info on surveys

Sunken gardens master plan

Strategic acquisition survey – through 11/30

Sanderson gulch survey

Gathering feedback from the community

Sustainability and Resiliency- Fran

Pesticides report- alarming what possible effects could occur.

Were able to take time to learn about DPR's use of pesticides and learn from outside experts: from Public- Courtney Dewinter

Sandra Macdonald- Another report to share what the EPA regulations exist

Feeling more educated about how things are being done.

Florence- was very informative to have multiple perspectives. To bring awareness of how we use pesticides in DPR. Safety was first and foremost when any pesticides are used in DPR.

Marla- committees are a work in progress and we are still finding out how we can all understand more. Has made a list of some topics that we need to discuss together. Will follow up with committee chairs to take the lead.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director's Report PRAB November 16, 2020

1. Budget Update

The 2021 budget was passed by City Council on November 9th. The Mayor agreed to one change in the budget prior to the vote to provide full funding for existing restrooms in parks and to fully fund the annual contract for portable restrooms to meet needs in other parks throughout the city.

2. COVID Update

The gradual reopening of recreation centers for indoor fitness has been postponed due to rising COVID positivity rates at least through the end of the year and possibly longer. We continue to operate 18 meal sites, four Learning Labs to support DPS students for remote learning and have also identified four sites to provide for temporary shelter during the winter.

3. Wheeled Devices and Alcohol Policies

The Alcohol policy that PRAB recommended adopting in the October meeting after the public hearing will be signed this week and published before becoming effective on January 1, 2021. Regarding the Wheeled Devices policy, we are conducting further research on some issues that were raised during the public hearing to determine whether further changes may be needed. We will keep PRAB posted on any significant changes that may be proposed.

Response to questions/issues:

1. Public restrooms, access to water – The Planning division is working on a restroom masterplan update and look forward to working with the PRAB committee on these issues.
2. Housing – the City’s leader on housing issues is HOST. DPR works collaboratively with that agency on areas where we might be able to play a role – temporary emergency shelters in recreation centers, for example, or access to facilities for showers. As it relates to camping or residential uses in parks, the Charter and ordinances are quite clear – they are not a “park purpose” and are not allowed in designated parks. Legal department can elaborate if needed.
3. Survey time frames – There are many factors to consider including project timelines, survey scope, survey targets, digital access, etc. We will have staff from Planning and Community Outreach follow up with Operations and Outreach Committees on when and how surveys are conducted.
4. Non-designated open space – The Designation Committee has been briefed in the past and has worked with the information about the different types of open spaces on which DPR may play a role. Their analysis of this data is what has led to several rounds of designation in the past three years or so. It is time to do another briefing to help newer PRAB members understand these open space characteristics and provide input into the designation process. Land that is owned by DPR is treated the same way as a designated park and a policy could certainly be developed to formalize that practice. Land that is not owned by DPR is governed by the agreements that are in place between DPR and the entity that owns the land. These vary in scope and complexity.
5. Park Hill Golf Course Stakeholder process – As I mentioned before, an open application process is underway that seeks diverse representation and prioritizes nearby residents and businesses. There are no pre-designated positions on the group. I also indicated that I favor and will advocate for a PRAB member to be a part of the Stakeholder group. However, this is not a unilateral decision, but a collaborative one with Community Planning and Development.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Councilwoman Sandoval- thank you for your service. Have a brief report to share the context and process. Naomi Grunditz- council aide.

*Power point included

1912- became a no name park- plans for pool, playground, picnic structure

1931- Columbus – Northside playground renaming sponsored by councilperson

Rededication to La Raza park in the 1970’s.

1981- Traumatic event

Powerful term in the Chicano community-

Fran- correction on the screen Cesar Chavez and Corky Gonzales (Slide 3)

Park Renaming: Columbus Park to La Raza Park.

Public comments:

1. Richard Sabell
Against. Until tonight, there is a disparity between Italian American and Latino American. No legitimate reason to change the name. Would like to suggest another name that honors Italian contributions.
2. Cameron Blevins
Dist. 1- lives near park. Professor on US history. Changing name, removing statues does not mean we are not erasing history. Not history, but what type of community do we want to have today? What do we value?
3. Charles M Prignano
Against. Retired air force officer. Thanks board. 150 cities and landmarks bear his name. Asking if we intended to rename all of these? Would like to have suggest a compromise- La Raza Columbiana.
4. Tim Hernandez
For. Grew up on the northside, used the park for years. Need to understand that we begin to die when no one remembers our name. La Raza recognizes the importance of the name. This is for Chicanos. La Raza is for all people.
5. Thomas Medlin
Resident. Has noticed the sad state of the park- vandalism, etc. Attempt to rename park seems to be the latest fad. Would ask for respect to this park and keep it nice.
6. Arturo M Rodriguez
For. Retired Chicano studies professor. Organizer of original La Raza Park renaming in 1970. Park sits on native land, must look at this from the experience of native people. Will always be La Raza Park.
7. Rudy Gonzales
For. Executive director of Servicios de la raza. Wants to give credit to many who came before. La Raza is a humanitarian term- the people. Preserves culture and history in that area. Culture preservation in a gentrifying neighborhood.
8. Luis Vasquez
Not present
9. Nita Jo Gonzales
For. Need to value the truth. Honor the history. National uprising makes this a most important decision.
10. Rep. Serena Gonzales-Gutierrez (House District 4)
For. Memories of using the park for generations. 1971- community renamed this park La Raza. For the first time this year, we celebrated Mother Cabrini Day.
11. Lorenzo Ramirez
For. Painted a mural at the park in the late 70's. Memories of working there. The park is a community park and needs to be named La Raza.

12. Sonrisa Lucero

For. Should be areas where we celebrate history and the culture of the neighborhoods where they are. Wants a name that respects the people that are in the community. Has always been La Raza park and continues to be a cultural center.

13. Rene Millard-Chacon

For. Spirit of the sun. Sacred space. Wants to make sure we can give this park the name it deserves. Moral imperative to make this change. Transform the spaces and places that we need to.

14. Sky Roosevelt- Morris

For. White mountain apache nation. 4 winds American Indian council. Vital to change the name. Imperative that our youth sees that things can change and La Raza park is a good example. Indigenous people first- La Raza. Opportunity to change the narrative.

Sandoval- we are naming this park what the community already calls this. Several parks in the north are un-named. To honor this community, this is La Raza Park. 46th and Pecos has an un-named park.

Florence- Has the paperwork been processed and turned in?

Happy- Yes, all requirements have been met.

Amy- Wants to make sure that people leave with a sense of healing? Specifically marginalized communities.

Sandoval- We are all living through intergenerational trauma and we are somewhat living through it again. In normal times, I would like to go to the park. Will explore options for creating spaces for healing by the time it reaches city council.

Happy- with no further questions- Formally close hearing to rename Columbus Park.

Florence- grew up in North Denver. Wants to thank all the speakers who joined us tonight. This park brings back memories about the name of this park. Generations have called this La Raza Park.

PRAB members dialogue and share in favor of renaming.

Noel- Glad to know the important role that this park has had on so many lives. Remarkable that this small park has embodied the culture of this community. This is not a new idea, decades old. We are just affirming the name that has been used for years.

Lynne- Grew up on the northside, 3rd generation Italian American. Want to take the time to honor everyone's story. Specifically, to honor all those who came before us. The land that we are on.

Fran- 100% support the renaming. The landmarks around the city with Hispanic names have all been hard fought.

Lisa- Raised on Northside as well. This park has always been La Raza park. Recognition of our humanity and history. Recognize the moment we are in with the intersection with BLM movement. Parks access is an equalizer, we need to change this name.

Leslie- Reviews that CW Sandoval has met all the requirements. Want to think about the in person events that need to happen in general for renaming. Wants to be considerate as we name a park after a person, we need to think about what kind of influence that person has had on the community. Thanks Councilperson Sandoval for bringing this up.

Frank- Supports the renaming and wants to thank everyone for thoughtful comments.

Trena- can relate to the struggle and can hear the passion and pain. When we think of naming, I think of honor.

Molly- echo what has been said. The name La Raza is a moving concept and space.

Amy- Gratitude for all speakers. The need for greater unity across the community.

Tash- Echo appreciation. Good sign that we can have such a respectful dialogue. Will be voting in favor.

Marla- gratitude for the process and would like to find a way to honor the contributions of all communities. Not a change, just a formality for what has already been.

Lee- shares support for name change.

Fran makes motion to call to vote. Then Leslie seconds.

Unanimous approval of name change.

OTHER ITEMS

Park Designations – Round 12

*Power point included (from Scott Gillmore)

Scott- This board is one of the only boards that was established with the city.

City Park Golf Course land, realized that almost 50 acres was not designated. Transferred to city in late 1956, was an oversight that it was not designated. Working on designating it now.

Un-named park

Martinez Park addition-

1st creek park- new park

1st creek village open space- can take trail from here

Cherry creek open space, through Mile High Flood Control district

Meredith- where to get more info about Cherry Creek open space?

Scott- will put in contact with Cincere

Noel- this puts the protection of non-transferability. Has the department considered how to protect open spaces, even if they can't be designated? Agreements in place?

Scott- in some cases- Corp of engineers is an example. Hard to dictate how land is used when private ownership.

Noel- But how about a policy? Larger picture about safeguards that would ensure those open spaces endure.

Scott- Little by little, we have to acquire more land. (Platte Farm open space)

Leslie- echo a concern- what we are not designating in future years. Should we build into those agreements a safeguard for the public. Public wants to know that the private owned not designated park will be protected.

Happy- will use the acquisition plan and strategy. Example- open space at DIA, public rights of way- technically part of DOTI, but overseen by DPR.

Lisa- echo Noel and Leslie's concern. Guardrails are of concern- don't know what they are and what the process is. Lack community involvement. Nice to hear about how much land was designated, there is still much to be done. Public/Private partnerships are not clear- a benefit to the city, but at what cost? Park Hill golf course, while not public land, it was not preserved. Need more clarity about the formal guardrails in place.

Marla- seems that we need to understand more what the guardrails are to protect non designated, open spaces protected.

Fran- Asks Lisa to share points in written form.

Lisa- Objects to how that was brought up.

Marla- A lot of information is presented and we need to stick to the topic.

Board Announcements

Fran- S and R committee has been changed to 11/20 at 1:00.

Next meeting on 12/9 for PRAB will take place.

Next steps: One on one conversations, survey.

Tash shares- Westwood and Cole- GOCO partners re-affirmed.

ADJOURNMENT