

**MINUTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE PARKS AND OPEN SPACE ADVISORY
COMMITTEE, January 26, 2006**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Barbara Hawke in the Hearing Room of the Board of Commissioners, Third Floor, Boulder County Courthouse, Boulder, Colorado.

POSAC Members in Attendance:

Present: Barbara Hawke, Sean McCoy, Mary McQuiston, Chris Meyer, Melanie Muckle, Dave Robertson and Eric Vogelsberg

Excused: Jim McKee, Ira New Breast, Christine Quinlan and David Batts

Barbara Hawke chaired the meeting in Christine Quinlan's absence.

Staff in Attendance:

Ron Stewart, Therese Glowacki, Brent Wheeler, Rich Koopmann, Ellen Flannelly, Melissa Arnold, Allison Taylor and Jean Gatza with the City of Boulder Planning Department.

Minutes of December 15, 2005 Meeting:

Dave Robertson moved to approve the December 15, 2005 minutes as written and *Sean McCoy* seconded the motion. ***Motion carried unanimously.***

Items not on the Agenda:

- *Ruby Bowman*, 1512 Left Hand Drive, Longmont, CO, spoke about protecting the Black-Tailed Prairie Dog and riparian habitat along Left Hand Creek, and noted that the prairie dog is a keystone species; however, their population is declining due to eradication programs and habitat loss. She is concerned about potential eradication of the Peck Open Space prairie dogs. As an American Indian, she encouraged the preservation and protection of the Black-Tailed Prairie Dog by either letting them stay on the Peck Open Space or by relocating them. *See her handout.*
 - *Barbara Hawke* commented that the committee reviews grassland and wildlife management plans periodically, and if she is interested in having a staff contact in the wildlife management area, it could be arranged.
- *Dick Schillawski*, 1160 N. 119th Street, Lafayette, CO, expressed concern about enforcement of noxious weeds on private lands in the County, and spoke with Gram Billingsley, the Land Use Director for Boulder County, on the issue. Last year, there were about 150 noxious weed enforcements against private landowners, and it is anticipated that number may increase up to 50% this year. He said that the County has exempted itself from state law noxious weed eradication standards that other landowners are required to follow, and requested an explanation as to why this should be acceptable on Open Space.
 - *Barbara Hawke* requested that Staff address these concerns in the weed management update. *Ron Stewart* said 4 full-time staff and 8 seasonal employees address weeds, and the Department does not consider itself exempt from any laws. Although the County has not eradicated every weed and the precipitation from this past year may have exasperated growth, the Department takes the issue seriously and provides constant funding and staffing to address it.

Property Transaction: Gordon Mining Claims

Staff Presenter: Ellen Flannelly

See staff memo in packet for detail. This 58-acre property consists of a group of mining claims between Jamestown and Left Hand Canyon, and is immediately adjacent to the Cline Open Space Property and Forest Service land. The site is a legal building lot, and although it lacks legal access, physical access is possible. The property has expansive views, meadows and steeply forested land, and is within the Walker Mountain Environmental Conservation Area in the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan. The County is proposing to pay \$175,000, which includes mineral but not water rights. A Phase I Environmental Assessment will address the mining history. By removing this land from private ownership, this acquisition will eliminate possible access issues through the Cline Property and the Blue Jay Mine.

Discussion/Questions by POSAC Members

When asked whether the Forest Service (FS) is interested in a future trade of this property, *Ron Stewart* responded that the FS was originally interested in the Cline Property, but people in Jamestown were concerned about 4-wheel drives in the area. The Gordon Mining Claims may not be of interest to the FS, but when the Commissioners approved the Cline Property, they indicated that a trade would not be possible without further public hearings. Regarding possible road closures, *Ron Stewart* said that the Cline Property road is closed and other closures are possible pending legal access to privately owned parcels in the area.

Public Comment - None

Motion

Melanie Muckle moved to accept Staff's recommendation and *Sean McCoy* seconded the motion. ***Motion carried unanimously.***

Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan Trails Element Update

Staff Presenter: Jean Gatzka, City of Boulder Planning Department

See staff memo in packet for details. As a part of the 2005 major update to the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan, the Trails Map is being changed. All changes must occur within several planning processes, be adopted accordingly, and go through respective advisory boards. POSAC's role is to offer questions and comments.

Discussion/Question by POSAC Members

Jean Gatzka clarified that a Proposed Trail Conceptual Alignment refers to unresolved trail locations or issues to be addressed in further processes, but a Proposed Trail is more definite. *Eric Vogelsberg* commented that the method for changing the Trails Map has evolved over the years so that now changes can only be made following a full review process. Although this eliminates controversy, it also removes public input and the visionary aspect of the document, all of which makes it harder to create a new trail. He further commented that the Marshall Mesa Southern Grasslands Trail Study Project was completed last year by Open Space and Mountain Parks. It identified 5 new trails, a highway crossing and new trailhead, all of which are missing

from the map. Also, the approval of a trail connection for equestrian purposes near the Greenbelt Plateau Trailhead is missing from the text. Regarding the Proposed Trail Removed along the Diagonal, *Jean Gatza* said that the Boulder County Regional Trails Committee decided that a trail paralleling the busy highway was not desirable. *Brent Wheeler*, Boulder County Operations Manager, added that people felt money would be better spent on improvements along the Diagonal where there was already a shoulder for fast commuters, and a separate off-trail route through the Niwot/Gunbarrel area would be established for recreationalists. He said the County is embarking on a Niwot Trail Master Plan, which will look at trails connecting from that area to the City of Boulder. *Barbara Hawke* appreciated the modifications to the trail map process, such that the only trails shown were those that had been through another trail planning process; however, she noted the City could better communicate with interest groups, encouraging them to attend planning processes for certain trails. She agreed with Eric's comment that it is important to maintain a big picture vision. She would also like to see agricultural lands acknowledged as important resources. *Brent Wheeler* clarified that the differences between a Trail Study Area and a Proposed Trail Conceptual Alignment are that the later consists of broad corridors whereby nothing is certain except the points of connection, and it refers to an agreed regional connection between the City and County. A Trail Study Area is an area at which the City is looking but it is not necessarily regional. *Eric Vogelsberg* added that as a part of the Visitor Master Plan, Open Space and Mountain Parks identified 11 Trail Study Areas for potential trail systems, and there is an ongoing process to determine what trails may be implemented. These studies are commitments from the City, each with particular a time frame over a 3-4 year period. *Jean Gatza* provided her contact information for Members: email GatzaJ@ci.boulder.co.us # 303-441-4907.

Resources Management Division 2005 Project Summaries

Staff Presenter: Therese Glowacki

See staff memo in packet for details. Resources Management Division highlights from 2005 were presented within the following categories: Education and Outreach (formerly Interpretation); Fairgrounds; Forestry; Plant Ecology; Resource Protection (law enforcement); Weeds; and Wildlife.

Discussion/Question by POSAC Members

In response to budgetary questions, *Therese Glowacki* said the division's budget without staff time is \$198,000, with additional funding from the CIP. *Ron Stewart* added that the Department spends \$4 million on staff salaries, \$1 million on operating costs and \$4 million on acquisitions. The County's general fund supplies \$9 million, sales tax dollars prior to 2004 supplied about \$1 million in salaries and operating costs, and the new sales tax will supply \$500,000. He offered POSAC his summary comparing this year's funding with that of years past. *Melanie Muckle* encouraged the County to utilize more natural prairie dog barriers. *Therese Glowacki* said the idea came from a Larimer County project and results may be observed in 5 or 6 years. When asked about the County's progress with education in the classroom, she mentioned that Tiffany Fourment started with Education and Outreach in September and will help reach the Division's goal to improve the educational aspect of program. *Barbara Hawke* encouraged more cooperative efforts, as seen between neighbors and the County with the prairie dog barrier, and

she suggested the County assemble a cadre of volunteers to help monitor and survey wildlife, like the City of Boulder has done. *Therese Glowacki* responded that although there is always room for improvement, the Division does have a cadre of raptor nest monitoring volunteers and is working with BCNA on their new ecosystem monitoring project.

Addressing Resource Management plans for 2006, *Chris Meyer* mentioned that he would like to hear a summary of the elk monitoring results at Caribou Ranch thus far. *Therese Glowacki* said Dave Hoerath might be able to address that during the Heil Valley Ranch Elk Study Results presentation schedule for July. *Barbara Hawke* mentioned that she would be interested in the results from the broad natural resource survey by Colorado Natural Heritage Program. *Ron Stewart* responded that the GOCO grant for this project did not come through, but the County plans to apply for a reduced grant to fund the study over a 2-year period. *Barbara Hawke* said she would like to see some of the updates presented on a site basis vs. a content basis, such as how visitors are responding to the balance between recreation and wildlife on a particular property. *Chris Meyer* offered that this may require multiple staff members and be too time consuming. *Eric Vogelsberg* requested a POSAC retreat because he finds them to be an educational experience, to which other Members agreed. *Chris Meyer* suggested May or June. *Dave Robertson* asked Rich Koopmann whether the Wall Street Assay office agenda item could be broadened to briefly include other historic projects. He would also like to see the prairie restoration topic broadened to address effective and ineffective methods, perhaps in the form of a presentation rather than a fieldtrip. *Eric Vogelsberg* asked whether a management plan resulted from the public process experiment in the southeastern grasslands this past year. *Ron Stewart* responded that was the intention, but progress now depends on when the Department hires a new Planner I.

POSAC Subcommittee Discussion

Barbara Hawke spoke with Christine Quinlan, who could not be at the meeting, about the purpose and role of subcommittees. They agreed that subcommittees would be most successful if their main goal is to improve and inform POSAC's process. In some cases, POSAC may surface issues that Staff has not brought to them for consideration, but it is important they keep focused on the goal.

Ron Stewart noted that Members must maintain a dialogue in open meetings to resolve their differences, such as when the wildlife subcommittee material caused disagreement among Members this past month. One of the questions that arose from that discussion was whether subcommittees are designed to set policy or to be informative. If they are considering the former, there needs to be strong a consideration for the public process. It took the County a year of public process to deal with one aspect of the Grassland Management Plan, and for POSAC to try and create policy without this process is a prescription for failure. Setting policy would have a significant impact on staff resources and planned projects, as there is already a full agenda in the Department and not enough staff to tend to it. Furthermore, POSAC's role as an independent review board and advisory committee would be affected. Presently, the public can approach POSAC with their concerns because Staff developed the policy, not POSAC. Staff encourages POSAC to be more collaborative, but warns against setting policy.

Dave Robertson strongly believes the role of subcommittees should be to provide background to POSAC where they have little knowledge. For example, the water subcommittee goal is not to set policy, but to provide tools to the rest of POSAC to make their processes more effective. He read his memo regarding the wildlife subcommittee's paper to highlight his point. He provided a handout of the work that he and David Batts did for the water subcommittee, which outlines water law, County ownership, valuation, portability, issues, and a bibliography. In their research, they discovered a ditch map directory, which is one example of some of the tools that may be useful to Members.

Chris Meyer echoed Dave's comments, adding that subcommittees should be used sparingly. From a public standpoint, POSAC could add to the Staff's information gathering when addressing an issue, which would not involve policy formation or the development of management plans. He suggested implementing time limits to keep Staff involvement at a minimum.

Sean McCoy expressed concern about the necessity of subcommittees. Members can ask for Staff input if they have a major concern, but it may be difficult to establish open meetings to address it themselves. He offered a **liaison concept**, where Members touch base with the communities they are serving; otherwise, it may be difficult to justify spending County money on subcommittees.

Barbara Hawke asked for a **show of hands in support of pursuing subcommittees with the narrow scope of informing POSAC decision making: 5 out of 7 voted yes**. She then asked for a **show of hands for those who feel subcommittees should play a role in policy development: 0 voted yes**.

Sean McCoy questioned the purpose of subcommittees if they are not going to focus on policy. *Barbara Hawke* reiterated that the majority of Members feel it is worth pursuing education and information gathering to assist in the POSAC review process. **Chris Meyer proposed the concept of a pilot subcommittee**, where Dave Robertson and David Batts continue to work with the topic of water. When they present their materials, Staff can assess whether their level of time involvement was acceptable. *Sean McCoy* found this proposal suitable.

Eric Vogelsberg assured Members that he and Jim McKee did not invest much time in the wildlife subcommittee work thus far, and has no problem dismissing it. He intended the paper to help POSAC define the role of subcommittees, and suggested they make 'recommendations' as an idea. He never intended this to mean policy creation; however, if subcommittees are just going to write a white paper, they need to ask whether this is beneficial, especially if it uses Staff time. There are two approaches to consider for subcommittees: (1) the white paper, educational approach, or (2) the investigation and recommendation approach. Which will be more beneficial?

Barbara Hawke proposed to they begin with a water subcommittee, expanding the mission beyond education by helping to highlight upcoming issues, and providing decision making criteria and background information for weighing future decisions. *Chris Meyer* said subcommittees were originally suggested because POSAC tends to deal with single properties,

making it difficult to engage in broader discussions. Subcommittees can devise a list of taking points to be discussed in a public forum. *Dave Robertson* commented that subcommittees would help inform Members on topics where they sometimes ‘wing it.’ These subcommittees should help POSAC become more efficient with minimal Staff contact. *Sean McCoy* is in favor of the liaison concept, where subcommittee members sit informally on other boards in which they are interested. They can report back to POSAC without the need for expert staff. Based on what the water subcommittee already prepared, *Melanie Muckle* favored the idea of a pilot program, which is not demanding on Staff time. She is not opposed to the liaison concept, but is unsure whether sending a liaison to the water board would provide the same results.

***Barbara Hawke* summarized the discussion, stating that the Members support a subcommittee process using water as a test case. In a couple of months, the subcommittee will provide an updated mission and report, and Members can discuss how things are working as well as readdress Sean’s proposal at that time. This is tentatively scheduled before the March POSAC meeting at 5:30.**

Director’s Update

Parks and Open Space is holding its open house on February 21, 2006 at 3:00 and will present a series of awards at 4:00 recognizing individuals for their involvement in land stewardship, volunteering and historic preservation. BOCC approved the CIP as well as the Heil-Hall Management Plan, with the exception of the meadow trail that POSAC proposed. Planner I Patrick Malone left to be a planner for the National Park Service. POS received a \$214,000 grant for Phase II of the Cardinal Mill Site from the State Historic Fund, allowing restoration of the site, but public access will not be available until Phase III.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.