



**TOPS Working Committee Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 3, 2022**

Members Present: Bob Falcone, Nancy Hobbs, Bob Shafer, Hank Scarangella, Paula Krantz, Ingrid Richter

Members Absent: Blaze Panariso, Jeff Davis, Wendy Thomas

Parks Board Liaisons Present: Greg Thornton, Abby Simpson

Staff Present: Britt Haley, Eric Becker, Anna White, Melody Horbach, Scott Abbott, Emily Duncan, Sara Arfmann, David Deitemeyer, Stephanie Adams, Cassie Melvin, Gillian Rossi, Stephanie Surch, Kim King

.....
TOPS Working Committee Chair Bob Falcone brought the meeting to order at 7:37 AM.

Agenda Preview

Committee Chair Bob Falcone announced the agenda for the meeting.

Announcements

Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager/Acting Director of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services, provided the following announcements:

- There will be no site tour this month.
- Emily Duncan, Trails and Development Coordinator will provide an update on Legacy Loop during the next TOPS Working Committee meeting.
- Jeff Davis, the alternate on the TOPS Working Committee, has unanimously been approved by Parks Board on July 14 to officially become a TOPS Working Committee member. He had a family obligation that prevented him from attending August's meeting but will be attending the next TOPS Working Committee meeting.
- Parks Board has approved the Capital Improvement Project Proposal with the caveat there is effort made to find other ways to support future trails funding with regard to the match of the Public Works grant. This will be added into the considerations when presenting to City Council and the Mayor.
- The August TOPS Working Committee meeting will be Vice Chair Nancy Hobbs' last meeting due to being term limited. She is able to hold over until the vacancy is filled.

Scott Abbott, Regional Parks, Trails, and Open Space Manager, provided the following announcements:

- South Blodgett Open Space parking lot is closed for the day due to an opportunity for improvements. It is suffering greatly due to the recent heavy rainfall.
- There has been a higher number of equipment breakdowns recently impacting mowing operations and our ability to keep up with increased vegetation growth due to recent rainfall.

Gillian Rossi, Senior Park Ranger, provided the following announcement:

- Blodgett Open Space Bio Blitz is scheduled for August 6, 2022, from 9 am to 2 pm at the North parking lot for those who would like to attend.

Approval of Minutes

July 6, 2022

Motion: To approve the minutes of the July 6, 2022, TOPS Working Committee meeting with modifications requested.

1st – Nancy Hobbs, 2nd – Bob Schafer, Approved Unanimously

Citizen Discussion

Cory Sutela, Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates Executive Director, discussed the Cresta Open Space Bike Park Grand Opening on August 2, 2022. There was a large presence of staff, elected officials and Board members at the ribbon cutting. Cory Sutela thanked the staff on behalf of Medicine Wheel for their hard work and effort and is looking forward to more events in the future.

Susan Davies, Trails, and Open Space Coalition Executive Director, provided an update on the Black Forest Lease. As discussed at the last meeting, there will be a dramatic increase in cost to lease this property. It is about 75 acres open to hiking, trails, and more; local residents are donating as much as they can. Additionally, TOSC is having a big event on August 6, 2022, called the Starlight Spectacular Event at the Garden of the Gods. Regarding the event, Committee Member Paula Krantz added they are seeking volunteers specifically to be course marshals.

Vice Chair Nancy Hobbs inquired if there is an update on the Rock Island Trail. She noticed there was someone in their vehicle to check on the leakage in the stormwater project area. Emily Duncan, Trail and Development Coordinator responded it looks as if the project will be completed between the second and third week of August. There will still be improvements made after that, but it will not affect the trail.

Action Items

Supplemental Appropriation – Blodgett & Pikeview Buffer Open Space Planning (Presented by David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect)

David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect, presented the Supplemental Appropriation – Blodgett & Pikeview Buffer Open Space Planning, to the TOPS Working Committee. This presentation included: Blodgett Open Space; Open Space Acquisition Summary; Pikeview Frontage; Blodgett Open Space; Scope of work and project budget; Tentative Timeline (Approval Process); Recommendation; and lastly a slide for any questions from the Committee.

Vice Chair Nancy Hobbs inquired about the total amount spent on Blodgett Open Space including acquisition, signage, and maintenance to date. David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect, responded there is more than \$6 million in acquisition for the three properties. The wayfinding signage was around \$50,000. There was an interim masterplan during the 2018 property acquisition that allowed the use of the property in its current state with the addition of the trail head at South Blodgett Open Space. This was around an additional \$50,000 for the property. There was an investment when the original portion of the property was purchased, totaling closer to \$7.5 to \$8 million. Scott Abbott, Regional Parks Trails, and Open Space Manager, added maintenance cost is hard to determine because there is not just one or two people assigned to the property.

Vice Chair Nancy Hobbs requested an update on the bike park process at the Pike View Quarry. David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect, announced they are looking at an opportunity for a future bike park in a similar fashion of Austin Bluffs Open Space with UCCS. However, there is still a big question on if this will and when it would happen. Committee Chair Bob Falcone asked if another masterplan would be required if TOPS acquired the property itself. David Deitemeyer added he believes it would require a public process. Whether it would be a master plan, it would require a lot of detail to understand what sort of amenities should be offered at a facility such as this.

Committee Chair Bob Falcone requested a status update on the acquisition of the Pike View Quarry. David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect, stated there is a holding pattern at this time until the quarry can be reclaimed. The owners have initiated the reclamation project through the legal and planning process many years ago. There is roughly 25% of dirt that needs to be removed from the property. They are currently on track with a tentative completion date of September 2023. At that time, the master plan will be reviewed by the State, the Division of Reclamation Mining and Safety, and the Parks department will review the reclamation to essentially sign off and release the owners from their obligation. A positive is that Mayor Suthers made a comment at the ribbon cutting of Cresta Open Space Bike Park about the bike park at Pikeview, so it is on his radar, and he is excited about it. There is a lot of hope in this project.

Cory Sutela, Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates Executive Director, stated Medicine Wheel is wildly supportive of this initiative. Looking down the road, they believe this is going to be a world class park. There is ongoing issue of illegal trails, and Blodgett Open Space is no exception. Medicine Wheel believes building this bike park will alleviate that pressure of illegal trails on Blodgett Open Space.

Susan Davies, Trails and Open Space Coalition Executive Director, stated this project could be a wonderful opportunity for the community to understand the process involved for these kinds of projects. To have some difficult discussions could be a learning opportunity as to why it is so important to have these processes and why it is not okay to just build trails wherever they feel like it. She thanked the staff for presenting to the committee in such a timely manner.

Committee member Ingrid Richter added it is very important the public get involved and show dedication to the acquisitions TOPS have made in the past.

Motion: A motion to approve the supplemental appropriation in the amount of \$275,000 for master and management planning and implementation at the consolidated Blodgett/Pikeview Buffer Open Space.

1st – Nancy Hobbs, 2nd – Ingrid Richter, Approved Unanimously

[Link to PowerPoint](#)

There was a recognition ceremony for Vice Chair Nancy Hobbs for her work and dedication while on the TOPS Working Committee for several years. During her time on the TOPS Working Committee, she has gained knowledge of trails through the trails running association and has published books on how to be good users on the trails. This is huge these days, especially the last few years, where it seemed like the community was rediscovering the trails system and enjoying open spaces and parks because that is what was available as a community during the pandemic. Nancy Hobbs was on the working committee for over 1,000 acres of acquisition.

Citizen Discussion

Cory Sutela, Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates Executive Director, thanked Parks Staff for all of their hard work.

Chris Davis, an employee of City Council Staff, pitched the survey that was sent out to all board members on July 25th and ends on August 19th. The survey's purpose is to ensure all of the voices are being heard for positive feedback and any possible improvements.

Committee member Bob Shafer elaborated on the issue of rogue trails, and his experience with this at Austin Bluffs Open Space. He inquired if there is any pushback from closing the rogue trails by citizens. David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect, replied recommendations are in process through the master plan. There has been closure of certain trails to improve property. Austin Bluffs Open Space has not seen as much illegal trails compared to Blodgett Open Space. Positive comments have been received by citizens. However, there have been issues with compliance at Pulpit Rock with roughly 20 trail closures. Committee member Bob Shafer inquired if Blodgett Open Space will be harder to decrease the number of rogue trails, to which David Deitemeyer believes it will be.

Vice Chair Nancy Hobbs requested a status update on the Fisher's Canyon Master Plan. Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager/Acting Director of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services, stated the Fisher's Canyon Master Plan is part of the Capital Improvement Project Budget Request for 2023. This master plan was unanimously approved by TOPS and the Parks Board for the budget process and is currently in the budget submittal stage. David Deitemeyer is working in the background with the Colorado Springs Fire Department and Forestry Division. There is still plenty to do before the budget process is brought forth to City Council, and hopefully approved.

Micah Rice, citizen, wanted to thank the Parks and Rec staff along with the TOPS Working Committee. On behalf of the Pikes Peak Apex, he announced their event from September 22 – 25. This event is to highlight the trail system in the Pikes Peak region. It will start in Palmer Park and finish at America the Beautiful Park including going up into Cheyenne Mountain. Vice Chair Nancy Hobbs added citizens utilizing TOPS properties for events have been discussed but is unsure if there are any updates. Scott Abbott, Regional Parks, Trails, and Open Space Manager, confirmed there is no update as of yet and it all depends on the active use of the property versus the passive use of the property. Micah Rice added they are looking at potentially racing down Gold Camp Road while it is open, or go through Stratton Open Space, which he is aware they cannot use. They are trying to figure out how to work around this and want to be a partner to work through it.

Vice Chair Bob Falcone stated the TOPS ordinance makes it challenging and there are multiple parcels involved as well. It is a complicated process but knows Britt Haley and the City Attorneys are working on it. He thinks they are going to try to hash it out one piece at a time and believes if there is a way to legally accommodate it, it will happen.

Motion to adjourn

1st - Bob Shafer –, 2nd – Ingrid Richter, Approved, Unanimously at 08:33 A.M.