



TOPS Working Committee Meeting
Virtual Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 7, 2021

Members Present: Bob Falcone, Blaze Panariso, Nancy Hobbs, Ingrid Richter, Bob Shafer, Paula Krantz, Hank Scarangella, Michael Merrifield, Stephanie Surch

Alternates Present: Wendy Thomas, Jeff Davis

Parks Board Liaisons Present: Carol Beckman, Greg Thornton, Jason Rupinski

Staff Present: Britt Haley, Kurt Schroeder, Karen Palus, Kim King, Anna White, David Deitemeyer, Emily Duncan, Scott Abbott

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TOPS Working Committee Chair Bob Falcone brought the meeting to order at 7:32 a.m.

Agenda Preview

Committee Chair Bob Falcone announced the agenda for the meeting.

Announcements

Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager, made the following announcements:

- The results were in from the April 2021 elections, and issue 1A was passed, which removed the thirty word limit on ballot language for tax increases required by TABOR. This is extremely helpful for future ballot items. She thanked Susan Davies, Executive Director for the Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC), for all of her efforts in this initiative. Britt also thanked Working Committee members for their part in helping to educate the public on this ballot issue.
- Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services leadership helped to celebrate the retirement of Tim Wolken, El Paso County Parks Director. Britt thanked Tim for all of his work with the Department.
- There will be no April site visit for TOPS. However, there will be one in May.
- City Council President Richard Skorman and City Council President Pro Tem Tom Strand have put together a twenty-eight member commission to discuss the potential ballot question for the November Ballot, as well as sustainable parks funding. There is a consultant helping to facilitate these meetings. Britt will help the commission build on the recommendations already made as the meetings continue and will report back to TOPS. Committee Chair Bob Falcone and Committee member Hank Scarangella are representing TOPS on this Commission.
- Britt had hoped to continue the master planning discussion for the Pikeview Buffer Property/Blodgett Open Space area; however she wanted to hold off due to staffing

capacity. The Ranger maintaining those areas had recently been hired by Teller County. Scott Abbott, Regional Parks Supervisor, added that his staff was shifting around to cover this vacancy.

Committee Chair Bob Falcone commented that he had tuned in to the retirement ceremony for Tim Wolken, and that it was a very nice ceremony.

Emily Duncan, Trails Development Coordinator, gave an update on the Rustic Hills Open Space improvements on the Rock Island Trail. She said David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect, had installed the wayfinding signage the day prior to the meeting. A timber post was installed that will help to adjust the gate on Pronghorn Lane to allow access that was previously not an access point. Emily had a walkthrough with the City's Stormwater division to address the erosion issues and make improvements. Committee Vice Chair Nancy Hobbs said she had talked to the contractor who was out there as well. She did say the workers out there were commenting on delays. She added that while the new trails look great, she asked if there was a rule to pick up pet excrement in open spaces and how that applies to horses. Scott Abbott responded that anyone with an animal under their control is required to clean-up after the animal, by law. While this signage is posted in all TOPS areas, there is a compliance issue with equine animals. Committee member Michael Merrifield asked what degree of damage a horse can do in parks and open spaces, as he sees a lot of it in Red Rock Canyon Open Space. Scott responded that he would look into this and get back to Michael.

Kim King, Recreation and Administration Manager, stated that April is Volunteer Appreciation Month and thanked the Committee for their volunteer support of the Department. She said while volunteerism does look different in 2021, we could not accomplish everything the Department does without their efforts.

Approval of Minutes – March 3, 2021

Motion: To approve the minutes of the March 3, 2021 TOPS Working Committee meeting.
1st – Bob Shafer, 2nd – Blaze Panariso, Approved, Unanimously

Citizen Discussion

Susan Davies, Executive Director for the Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC), expressed her thanks to everyone for their support of Issue 1A, as well as her excitement of its passing. She also commented on the retirement ceremony for Tim Wolken, which she said displayed a great partnership between El Paso County Parks and the Department and commended that relationship.

Cory Sutela, Executive Director for Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, asked if equestrian based commercial uses typically followed the guidelines of picking up after the horses and was interested in continuing the discussion at a later time. He commented that the trail changes in Red Rock Canyon Open Space are supported by his organization, and the changes are making the trails better. His organization is working with Kids on Bikes and the Cheyenne Mountain

Cycling Club to put a beginner bike facility in the Cresta Open Space per the North Cheyenne Cañon Master Plan. They have created a crowdfunding platform to construct this. He mentioned that there is a trail identified in the Red Rock Canyon Master Plan near the landfill that is a blue multi-use trail, which Medicine Wheel has developed a preliminary proposal. Britt asked Cory to forward her the proposal and she would give an update.

Presentation Items

2020 Rocky Mountain Field Institute Year in Review (Presented by Alex Hladkyj, Program Manager for the Rocky Mountain Field Institute)

[View presentation](#)

Alex Hladkyj, Program Manager for the Rocky Mountain Field Institute (RMFI), presented the Committee with the 2020 Rocky Mountain Field Institute Year in Review. This presentation included general information about RMFI; pictures of project locations; how they accomplish work; the TOPS Stewardship Contract; key project locations; 2020 objectives; volunteerism in 2020; volunteers; the stewardship crew; 2020 work stats; pictures of various projects completed in 2020 over various locations; RMFI TOPS Stewardship from 2016 through 2020; 2016 through 2020 volunteer stats; 2016 through 2020 work stats; and finally, programming in 2021.

TOPS and the eBike Pilot Program (Presented by Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager, and Scott Abbott, Regional Parks Supervisor)

Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager, and Scott Abbott, Regional Parks Supervisor, gave clarification on the new eBike Policy as it pertains to TOPS properties. While the ordinance states there can be no motorized vehicles aside from maintenance vehicles on TOPS properties, the motor associated with an eBike does not fall under the same category as a vehicle. There was concern about the use of eBikes conflicting with the ordinance regardless of the categorization of the motor. The main concern of both the Committee and citizens was damage to the trails. However, it was stated that any bike, eBike or not, can inflict the same amount of damage on a trail depending on conditions. The eBike Pilot Program will go live Memorial Day weekend, and Scott will be continuing to sharpen up the policies for the pilot program before it is enacted.

Citizen Discussion

There was no further citizen discussion at this time.

Motion to adjourn

1st – Nancy Hobbs, 2nd – Paula Krantz, Approved, Unanimously