



TOPS Working Committee Meeting
Virtual Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 6, 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, Gillian Rossi, David Deitemeyer

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TOPS Working Committee Chair Bob Falcone brought the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m.

Agenda Preview

Committee Chair Bob Falcone announced the agenda for the meeting.

Announcements

Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager, informed the Committee that on December 18, the Department closed on the forty acre property at Corral Bluffs. The tenant moved out of the property, and Park Ranger Mike Bowman will be moving into one of the properties at Jimmy Camp Creek for extra security.

Karen Palus, Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Director, and Britt reminded the Committee of their discussions and decisions at the December 16 Special TOPS Working Committee meeting where they discussed the TOPS ballot initiatives. Karen informed the Committee that after polling results came back and were discussed with City Council President and the Mayor, leadership decided it would be better to first address the TABOR policies that limit ballot information for a tax increase to a thirty word limit. The overall hope would be to vote to amend this policy to allow for more words on tax-increasing ballot initiatives to better explain the purpose behind the tax. This initiative would now potentially be on the April 2021 ballot, which would move the TOPS ballot initiatives potentially to the November 2021 ballot. Karen then introduced Conor Hall, Conservation Finance Director for the Intermountain West with the Trust for Public Land (TPL), to review the polling results for the Committee. The presentation included the methodology of the polling; current voter thoughts about the direction Colorado Springs is heading in; familiarity with the TOPS program; the ballot proposal of increasing the TOPS tax written for two amounts within the thirty word TABOR limit; graphics showing poor voter response to both proposals, given constraints on ballot language; main

reasons identified by voters to vote 'yes' for this ballot measure; main reasons identified for vote 'no' for this measure; nearly two-thirds of citizens would be willing to pay more in taxes in order to protect and maintain natural areas; the question of a TOPS tax extension; the response from undecided or 'no' voters for an extension; ranked importance of popular items funded by TOPS; prioritization of goals; strong anti-tax sentiments; a change in support after more explanation is offered; the bottom line; and finally, the path moving forward. Susan Davies, Executive Director for the Trails and Open Space Coalition, said that while results were not what her organization had hoped to see, she understood the concerns of the public. She said she feels hopeful for the November election, especially if the TABOR word limit is changed. One main concern from the Committee was to still proceed with a TOPS extension in April to secure that before asking for an increase in November. Conor explained that it would be better to have all items on one ballot, especially while City Council and the Mayor are united to amend the TABOR laws and then move from that change. There was also a question about long-term park funding, and if a general support tax had been discussed previously. Conor said that it had been discussed in continuation language beyond TOPS. Discussion beyond this mostly centered on the best ways to educate the public about the work the Department is able to accomplish with TOPS funding. Britt responded that we have many tools we can use to educate the public, but can also look in other directions to spread information.

Committee Chair Bob Falcone announced that the Department's 2021 calendar is out, and encouraged the Committee to pick up a copy if they had a chance.

Approval of Minutes – December 2, 2020

Motion: To approve the minutes of the December 2, 2020 TOPS Working Committee meeting minutes.

1st – Nancy Hobbs, 2nd – Stephanie Surch, Approved, Unanimously

Citizen Discussion

Corey Sutela, Executive Director for Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, gave an update on Medicine Wheel's IndyGive campaign and thanked both staff and the Committee for their support. He also thanked everyone who came to Medicine Wheel Board member Mike Rigney's farewell celebration.

Presentation Items

Review of 2020 Accomplishments (Presented by Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager, and Gillian Rossi, Park Ranger Supervisor)

Both Britt Haley, TOPS Program Manager, and Gillian Rossi, Park Ranger supervisor, presented the committee with two presentations reviewing accomplishments.

Britt presented first, with the 2020 TOPS Program accomplishments. This presentation included highlights; a list of open space acquisitions; information about the Cheyenne Mountain State

Park expansion; an overview of the Jimmy Camp Creek Park and Corral Bluffs acquisitions; pictures of the Pikeview Quarry Buffer and Black Canyon Properties; information about the Corral Bluffs inholding; the TOPS biennial audit which took place in October 2020; and finally, a nod to the Department's new accredited status.

[Link to PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Gillian Rossi followed Britt with the 2020 TOPS Stewardship update. This presentation included information about the discoveries at Corral Bluffs; an overview of full-time staff; an overview of winter seasonal staff; work done by the Education Technician; work completed by the Resource Technicians; details about the Locate assistance to help Park Facilities; an overview of the summer seasonal staff; accomplishments by the trail crew; information about the biological technicians; the COVID-19 response; the Free Incline Reservation System (FIRS); the partnership with HealthyParks.co; work done with law enforcement; interpretation and education; lost programming due to COVID-19; virtual programming; the monthly *Gazette* column; volunteerism; park maintenance; cultural resource monitoring; fire response to the Incline Fire; new trails; resource stewardship contractors; accomplishments with the Rocky Mountain Field Institute; and finally, an update about the ongoing Leave No Trace stewardship initiative.

[Link to PowerPoint Presentation](#)

TOPS Wayfinding Implementation Update (Presented by David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect)

David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect, presented the Committee with the TOPS Wayfinding Implementation update. This presentation included visuals of the welcome sign being implemented in Bluestem Prairie Open Space; an example of kiosk design; the RFP process for fabrication and installation; wayfinding planning; Palmer Park wayfinding implementation; wayfinding lessons learned; and finally, the wayfinding project outlook.

[Link to PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Citizen Discussion

There was no additional citizen discussion at this time.

Motion to adjourn

1st – Bob Shafer, 2nd – Paula Krantz, Approved, Unanimously