



**TOPS Working Committee Meeting  
Meeting Minutes - FINAL  
Wednesday, September 4, 2019**

**Members Present:** Joe Lavorini, Lily Weissgold, Blaze Panariso, Nancy Hobbs, Bob Falcone, Lee Milner, Ingrid Richter, Bob Shafer

**Members Absent:** Paula Krantz

**Parks Board Liaisons Present:** Carol Beckman, Jason Rupinski

**Parks Board Liaisons Absent:** Greg Thornton

**Youth Ambassadors Present:** Emma Hybl, William White, Jack Keenan

**Staff Present:** Britt Haley, Kurt Schroeder, Kim King, Christi Mehew, Gillian Rossi, Scott Abbott, David Deitemeyer, Kirsten Reynolds, Cody Bear Sutton, Kristy Melton, Dan Allen, Melanie Bernal

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TOPS Working Committee Vice Chair Joe Lavorini brought the meeting to order at 7:32 a.m.

**Agenda Preview** Committee Vice Chair Joe Lavorini announced the agenda for the meeting.

**Announcements**

**Britt Haley**, Design & Development Manager/TOPS Program Manager

- The “Sales and Use Tax Revenue Report” is provided with the agenda. The Trails, Open Space and Parks Tax (TOPS) table shows the sales tax that is received month by month . There is a 3.90% increase over last year and the net revenue year-to-date is \$4,440,324.
- The TOPS Working Committee will go on a site tour on Wednesday, September 18<sup>th</sup> to the Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) properties between Corral Bluffs and Jimmy Camp Creek. Every committee member needs to see these properties in order to vote when they come before the committee as an action item.
- There will be another site tour to the Kettle Creek area. The newest members, Ingrid Richter and Bob Shafer, need to tour this property as well as any other members that haven’t been there.
- A Great Outdoors Colorado (GOGO) grant application has been submitted and accepted for two transactions; the CSU properties and the property on the northeast side of the City. She thanked Susan Davies, Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC) Executive Director, for her letter of support for the northeast property as well as the Trust for Public Land. Letters were also submitted by Sharon Milito and the Denver Museum of Nature and Science in support of the CSU properties. GOCO will visit the properties on October 2<sup>nd</sup> and the application review committee will make their recommendations on October 19<sup>th</sup>. Grant awards will be announced on December 10<sup>th</sup>.

David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect asked for two volunteers from the committee to go on a site tour to help evaluate a property near the Chamberlain Trail. Nancy Hobbs and Lily Weissgold volunteered.

### **Approval of Minutes** – August 7, 2019

**Motion:** To approve the minutes of the August 7, 2019 TOPS Working Committee meeting.  
1<sup>st</sup> – Lily Weissgold, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Bob Falcone, Approved, Unanimous

### **Citizen Discussion**

Susan Davies, Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC) Executive Director, stated she used Karen Palus' TABOR PowerPoint for a presentation to the TOSC Board. This is a \$7,000,000 initiative that is important because it supports trails. Please get the word out to citizens and encourage them to vote yes. TOSC will continue to offer TABOR information on their website up to the election.

Britt Haley thanked Susan for her work on the TABOR initiative.

TOPS Working Committee member Nancy Hobbs thanked David Deitemeyer and Emily Duncan for the stormwater discussion at the Rustic Hills neighborhood meeting. Attendees found it very informative and helpful.

### **Action Items**

**Cheyenne Mountain State Park – Rock Creek Canyon parcels** (Presented by Britt Haley, Design & Development Manager/TOPS Program Manager)

[Link to PowerPoint presentation](#)

The TOPS Working Committee has identified a 160.52 acre property and a 2.91 acre property, in Rock Creek Canyon, for acquisition as open space because they offer values that merit preservation. The properties are located west of Highway 115 at the terminus of Rock Creek Canyon Road adjacent to Cheyenne Mountain State Park (CMSP). Acquisition of the properties would provide additional acreage for CMSP, future trail access for the Cheyenne Mountain Heritage Trail, and further connect the park to the beautiful and rugged Rock Creek Canyon.

One of the goals achieved through the southern expansion is the opportunity to advance the future development of the Cheyenne Mountain Heritage Trail, which would provide a truly unique trail experience around the base of Cheyenne Mountain. The stream that runs through Rock Creek Canyon is also important for the park. Because there are no other perennial streams within CMSP, acquisition of properties with this unique riparian resource is also an important opportunity for CMSP.

The proposed acquisitions consist of three parcels. Two parcels at 1285 Rock Creek Canyon Road form the 160.52 acre property. One parcel is a .52 acre property which has a cabin, carriage house, well house, root cellar and three storage sheds. This property also provides access to the 160 acre parcel. The 160 acre property features rugged forested terrain, mountain

meadows, significant wildlife habitat, and scenic views. It is largely undeveloped although the northeast corner of the property does have a partially completed home and garage.

The third parcel at 1325 Rock Creek Canyon Road is a 2.91 acre property. This property is located along Rock Creek and features a home with a partially completed renovation, a three-sided barn and several small outbuildings. In 2016, the TOPS Program secured an easement through this property to properties which were later acquired in 2018. The easement is located on this property's drive way. The owner of 1325 Rock Creek Canyon Road questioned the use of the driveway as a thoroughfare but generally expressed a willingness to work with City parks staff. However, this property owner did have significant and ultimately litigious disagreements with the closest neighbors about the neighbors' use of the easement. When the owner of this property contacted the TOPS Program to understand if there is any interest in a purchase, TOPS staff concluded that this property, which was already a candidate for acquisition had additional value to more fully resolve the easement concerns as they pertained to City use.

As it has with prior acquisitions, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has agreed to manage, maintain and operate the properties as part of the state park. This management responsibility is consistent with other City owned property that comprise CMSP. Public access to the property would be provided through CMSP, via the existing trail system within the Park and as the Cheyenne Mountain Heritage Trail is designed and completed. Although the TOPS Program intends to use the buildings located on the .52 acre parcel in partnership with CPW, the partially renovated home and outbuildings on the 2.91 acre property have been evaluated and determined that they are not cost effective to complete for use. Consequently, an additional \$100,000 is requested in this acquisition to test, demolish and properly dispose of the buildings on the 2.91 acre property. The funds necessary for the demolition were estimated based on recent contracting that has been performed for the City of Colorado Springs.

The TOPS Working Committee has toured the properties. Appraisals were completed for the two properties that identified the market value for each. The City obtained a signed agreement to purchase the 160.52 acre property in August of 2019 for the appraised value of \$892,000 and a signed agreement to purchase the 2.91 acre property was obtained in July of 2019 for its appraised value of \$292,000. These agreements are contingent upon final approval by City Council and acceptance of the property based on the City's due diligence work. The acquisitions would be funded with revenues from the Open Space Category.

The acquisition of the 160.52 acre property and the 2.91 acre property will require funding of \$1,184,000 from the TOPS Open Space Category. An additional sum of \$100,000 is being sought for demolition of the structures at 1325 Rock Creek Canyon Road.

TOPS Working Committee member Nancy Hobbs asked how much of the Heritage Trail does the Parks Department own. Britt Haley stated she didn't have specifics; however, they still have a lot of work to do. They are working with the United States Forest Service and David Deitemeyer's project will add to the number of acres. David Deitemeyer showed on a map a 25 mile loop and stated 75% of the area is completed and showed the remaining area. The majority of it has been completed and is on existing City trail or United States Forest Service

trail.

TOPS Working Committee member Lily Weissgold inquired about the wildlife in the area. Britt Haley replied that she has spoken to Mitch Martin, the CSMP Manager. He has evaluated the area and there are a lot of dead trees that need to be chopped down. Mitch Martin will incorporate the properties into the IGA if they are acquired and then start a planning process for these new parcels. Public access currently is only for parks maintenance and operations. If these acquisitions are acquired there will be unrestricted public access once the work has been completed with the downed trees. In addition, seasonal rangers will use the cabin. This will assist Mitch Martin when competing with other entities to hire seasonal rangers.

TOPS Working Committee member Nancy Hobbs asked what kind of wildlife is in the area and how will the acquisition affect them. Britt Haley stated they will preserve the area and the water will help with wildlife. Bears, wild turkeys and raptor species have been reported. David Deitemeyer stated a mountain lion and elk have been seen.

TOPS Liaison Carol Beckman requested a copy of the CMSP maintenance and operations agreement with the City. Britt Haley replied yes.

TOPS Working Committee Vice Chair Joe Lavorini asked about the process of acquiring the properties and transferring them over to the state park to manage and who will pay for the trails to be built. Britt Haley replied that in the past CMSP has gone through a master planning process with parks department support and paid for the construction of trails. She showed on a map where trails and an access point are possible without impacting families that live in the area.

TOPS Working Committee member Bob Falcone expressed concern with CPW being non-committal in the past and what will the department do if they have no interest in doing anything with the property. Britt Haley said Mitch Martin has worked with Chris Lieber, David Deitemeyer and herself to identify properties that make sense for the park and fully supports the acquisition. She stated the department would have an amazing open space amenity available to the public with a trail system and the department would operate and maintain the area. This acquisition is very important from a TOPS perspective due to it's habitat value and what is yet to be discovered.

Motion: A motion to recommend acquisition of the 160.52 acre property at 1285 Rock Creek Canyon Road and the 2.91 acre property at 1325 Rock Creek Canyon Road as additions to Cheyenne Mountain State Park in the amount of \$1,284,000 to include the purchase prices, real estate transaction costs and building demolition costs from the TOPS Open Space Category.  
**1<sup>st</sup>** – Nancy Hobbs, **2<sup>nd</sup>** – Blaze Panariso, **Approved**, 8 to 0, **Unanimous**

TOPS Working Committee member Nancy Hobbs inquired if the department can get a grant to support wayfinding in this area since it's an old trail. David Deitemeyer replied this is possible because it dates back to 1912.

## **Presentations**

**TOPS Stewardship Season-End Update** (Presented by Scott Abbott, Regional Trails, Open Space and Parks Manager; Gillian Rossi, Park Ranger Supervisor; Kirsten Reynolds, Seasonal Ranger; Cody Bear Sutton, Natural Resource Specialist; Kristy Melton, Season Trail Technician; Dan Allen, Trail Specialist; Melanie Bernal, Seasonal Lead Trail Technician)

[Link to PowerPoint presentation](#)

Scott Abbott thanked the TOPS Working Committee and the Youth Ambassadors for their support.

## **Adjournment**

**Motion:** To adjourn the TOPS Working Committee meeting at 9:22 a.m.

1<sup>st</sup> – Bob Falcone, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Blaze Panariso, Approved, Unanimous