

City of Colorado Springs - Trails, Open Spaces, and Parks (TOPS) Working Committee Minutes

Location: 1401 Recreation Way, Colorado Springs, CO 80905

Date: May 7, 2025

Time: 7:30 A.M.

Meeting Attendance

- Members Present: Wendy Howe, Jeff Davis, Paula Krantz, Emily Danti, Randy Courduff, Bob Schafer, Chelsea Gondeck, Hank Scarangella, David Bundrick
- Alternates Present: Jordan Risley, David Bird
- Liaisons Present: Larry Bogue, Abby Simpson, Amandla Atilano-Roque
- Staff Present: Britt Haley, Lonna Thelen, Anna Bingman, David Deitemeyer

Called to Order

Committee Chair Wendy Howe brought the meeting to order at 7:30 A.M.

Announcements

Lonna Thelen, Design and Development Manager/TOPS Program Manager, made the following announcements:

- There will not be a site visit in May, but there will be in June.
- There will be a groundbreaking ceremony for Grey Hawk Park on May 23rd at 4 p.m.
- Projects at Black Canyon Quarry are beginning.
- The Department's CAPRA visit went well. We should know in early September if the Department will be reaccredited.
- The July TOPS Working Committee meeting falls on July 2nd, so the meeting will be moved to July 9th.

Approval of Minutes

Motion: To approve the April 2, 2025 TOPS Working Committee meeting minutes.

- 1st – Paula Krantz, 2nd - Randy Courduff
- Approved, unanimously.

Citizen Discussion

There was no citizen discussion at this time.

Action Items

Fishers Canyon Open Space Master and Management Plan (Presented by David Deitemeyer, Senior Program Administrator for TOPS)

David Deitemeyer, Senior Program Administrator for TOPS, presented the Committee with the Fishers Canyon Open Space Master and Management Plan. This presentation included the presentation agenda; plan overview; master plan map; management plan; priorities; additional comments; boundary map; examples of fencing; proposed fencing example; and finally, the recommendation.

Committee Questions and Comments

- Committee member David Bundrick commented that the plan seemed reasonable.
- Committee member Chelsea Gondeck thanked staff for their diligent work on this master plan.
- Committee member Bob Shafer echoed the comments before him.
- Committee Vice Chair Jeff Davis agreed with the prior comments. He noted that the priorities slide really highlights the adaptive management approach. Mr. Davis asked what primary methods of monitoring are, or if there are best practices. David Deitemeyer responded that there are many ways to collect feedback, including, but not limited to, staff monitoring of resources, intercept surveys at trailheads, and gathering feedback and concerns from direct neighbors. Feedback, concerns and comments can be collected using the GoCOS app or direct to staff.
- Committee member Emily Danti thanked staff for taking the additional time to work through community concerns.
- Committee member Randy Courduff asked if the current fencing on the boundary line was installed by the neighboring HOA. David Deitemeyer responded that the Broadmoor Resort Community Resort installed the current fencing. Mr. Courduff asked if any fencing installed by the Department would connect to the current fencing. David responded yes and referred to the boundary map slide to show fencing connections.

Citizen Comments

- Sandie Gilliam, citizen, expressed disappointment in the public process for the master plan. She stated the neighbors felt that staff chose not to listen to their concerns, and that staff did not want to meet with neighbors on compromises in the plan.

- Jim Lockhart, Conservation Chair of the Sierra Club of the Pikes Peak Region, stated that his main concerns were the Fishers Canyon Trail and McNeill Trail. He expressed concern that the impacts of the construction and use of these trails will be discussed with Colorado Parks and Wildlife only after the master plan is approved. He stated that the City often plans trails on land they do not own and said this was an example of that. He said he would appreciate if the master plan said no portions of these trails would be built until there is sufficient funding for maintenance and permits.
- Laurie Meacham, citizen, is a neighbor to the property and had concerns including evacuation capacity for additional vehicles, lack of fire hydrants in the area, and that the plan did not conform to the City Planning Department's rules on development. She added she would like to see an additional exit, and that these changes be made before the plan is approved.
- Carol Beckman, citizen, stated that she is in support of the plan. She encouraged staff to fence the property at the boundary line to avoid future instances of encroachment. She stated that the neighbors had many chances to be heard, listing off the various opportunities for feedback. Ms. Beckman pointed out that the master plan has many compromises and has been modified to accommodate neighborhood concerns. Finally, she reminded the Committee that everyone pays into the TOPS tax, not just neighbors, and therefore this property needs to be opened with this master plan.
- Cory Sutela, Executive Director for Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, stated that his organization was in support of recommending this master plan, with one modification. He asked if the master plan language could be changed to allow access for bikes to the top of the McNeill Trail, should the trail ever be systemized. He encouraged staff and the Committee to think of connections in a broader context.
- Glenn Carlson, Executive Director for the Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC), stated that TOSC is in support of the master plan. He said that this property is a special, diverse space to recreate , and should be open to the public to enjoy. He echoed Ms. Beckman's comments about the many ways to provide feedback, and said he agreed with Mr. Sutela's modification to the plan.

Additional Committee Discussion

- Committee member David Bundrick said he agreed with Mr. Sutela's modification to the plan and asked if it was possible to add this. David Deitemeyer answered that this has been added to the plan for the McNeill Trail, not for the Fishers Canyon Trail.
- Committee member Chelsea Gondeck thanked everyone for their feedback and stated that this seemed like the best use of this property. She asked neighbors to remember that this area had been considered for the development of seventy homes.

- Committee member Bob Shafer asked the Department to not let lacking resources delay moving forward with elements of this plan.
- Committee Vice Chair Jeff Davis echoed Mr. Shafer's comment. He said that the more that the Department can learn from adaptive management process and implement them into both existing and future master plans, the better for the system overall.
- Committee member Paula Krantz echoed the comments before her.
- Committee member Emily Danti asked how the Fire Department fights a structure fire versus a wildland fire. Ashley Whitworth, Program Administrator for the Colorado Springs Fire Department, explained the different methods and practices for fighting the two types of fire. She also provided further information about the 100 acres of mitigation work done in the area. Ms. Danti thanked Ashley for the mitigation work.
- Committee member Hank Scarangella echoed the previous comments and said this was a good master plan. He added that he appreciates the adaptive management approach.
- Committee Chair Wendy Howe stated that she agreed with the comments before her.

Motion: To recommend approval and adopt the Fishers Canyon Open Space Master and Management Plan as presented.

- 1st – Chelsea Gondeck, 2nd – Emily Danti. Because this item is quasi-judicial, it required a roll call vote.
- In Favor: David Bundrick, Chelsea Gondeck, Hank Scarangella, Bob Shafer, Wendy Howe, Jeff Davis, Paula Krantz, Emily Danti, Randy Courduff
- In Opposition: N/A

Presentations

There were no presentation items on this agenda.

Citizen Discussion

There was no other citizen discussion at this time.

Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the May 7, 2025 TOPS Working Committee meeting at 8:51 a.m.

- 1st – Bob Shafer, 2nd – Chelsea Gondeck
- Approved, unanimously.