



City of Colorado Springs

City Hall
107 N. Nevada Avenue
Colorado Springs, CO
80903

Meeting Minutes City Council

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Monday, June 10, 2024

1:00 PM

Council Chambers

Special Meeting for a Parks Board Appeal to City Council

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1. Call to Order and Roll Call

President Helms called the meeting to order at 1:10 PM.

Present: 7 - Councilmember Yolanda Avila, President Pro Tem Lynette Crow-Iverson, Councilmember Dave Donelson, President Randy Helms, Councilmember Nancy Henjum, Councilmember David Leinweber, and Councilmember Brian Risley

Excused: 2 - Councilmember Mike O'Malley, and Councilmember Michelle Talarico

2. New Business

2.A. [24-288](#) An appeal of the Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board decision to approve the Blodgett Open Space Master and Management Plan

Presenter:
Britt Haley, Director, Parks Recreation and Cultural Services

Department

Lonna Thelen, Program Manager, Trails, Open Space and Parks (TOPS) Program

David Deitemeyer, Senior Program Administrator, Trails, Open Space and Parks (TOPS) Program

Attachments: [01 Blodgett OpenSpace MasterPlan Council Presentation June10](#)

[02 Final BOS MMP](#)

[03 Final BOS MMP Appendicies](#)

[04 Final TOPS Minuters April 2024](#)

[05 Final ParksBoard Minutes April 2024](#)

[06 BOS Appeal Document](#)

[07 Comments PostParksBoardApproval 11Apr - 30 May](#)

Britt Haley, Director, Parks Recreation and Cultural Services Department, introduced the appeal of the Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board decision to approve the Blodgett Open Space Master and Management Plan.

Ben Bolinger, Assistant City Attorney, City Attorney's Office, polled City Council regarding any ex parte communications. Councilmember Henjum stated she received an email requesting that she recuse herself based on an email she responded to a constituent that they had raised very thoughtful consideration which may be discussed at the hearing. Mr. Bolinger stated that probably does not rise to the level of ex parte communication. All Councilmembers responded they have not had any ex parte communications and stated they are able to make fair and impartial decisions.

Ms. Haley provided a brief overview of the Blodgett Master and Management Plan, review criteria, approval process, and appellant claims.

Sarah Spiller, representing the appellant identified the appeal objectives, community concerns, flawed public input process, stakeholder imbalance, evidence of unbalanced input by stakeholder group, citizen led petition and former Park Advisory Board comments.

Bonnie Christenson, representing the appellant, went over the economic issues and cost risk impact.

Genevieve Gustavson, representing the appellant, provided an overview of

the wildlife such as bighorn sheep in Blodgett, preservation purchase intent, Blodgett Open Space wildlife habitat, Blodgett fire risk, original Blodgett Forest Management Plan, and stated eighty-three percent of wildfires are human caused.

Councilmember Henjum asked how the bighorn sheep reduce the risk of wildfires. Ms. Gustavson stated by the bighorn sheep grazing on the grass, Gambel Oak, and woody vegetation, it reduces the risk of wildfires.

Councilmember Donelson asked if there are residents in the area who pose a wildfire risk such as setting off fireworks. Ms. Gustavson confirmed there are.

Ms. Spiller provided an overview of the parking density.

Ms. Christenson explained why City Council should uphold the appeal.

David Deitemeyer, Senior Program Administrator, TOPS Program provided an overview of the agenda, Colorado Springs parks, Colorado Springs Park System Master Plan, review criteria, property overview, existing conditions, site assessment-key habitat areas, habitat fragmentation, bighorn sheep habitat. He identified the 2002 Master Plan, purpose of Master Plan, process timeline, public engagement process, and public engagement project team/partners.

Councilmember Henjum asked why there is a discrepancy in the year acquisition between what was in the Agenda packet to what is being presented today. Mr. Deitemeyer stated when the City received the property, the initial holdings were land donated through development back in the 1980's.

President Pro Tem Crow-Iverson asked if the non-motorized recreational use included not allowing e-bikes. Mr. Deitemeyer confirmed e-bikes are not allowed.

Councilmember Leinweber asked if there are restrictions to bikes in other open spaces. Mr. Deitemeyer stated only concerning e-bikes unless it is a hiking only trail where no bikes are authorized.

Councilmember Donelson asked if some trails which have some grade to

them become biking trails due to hikers becoming nervous especially with blind corners. Mr. Deitemeyer stated their intention with professionally designed/constructed trails and single use trails is to eliminate that conflict.

President Helms asked if all e-bikes would be prohibited in Blodgett if this Plan is approved by City Council. Mr. Deitemeyer confirmed they would.

Mr. Deitemeyer went over the Master and Management Plan overview, Master Plan map, perspective view, integrating an adaptive management approach, and components of the appeal claims.

President Helms asked if the paragliding areas would be in the southern part of the Blodgett Open Space. Mr. Deitemeyer confirmed they would.

Councilmember Donelson asked if paragliding was one of the top five community requests in the initial survey. Mr. Deitemeyer confirmed it was in the top three interests.

Councilmember Donelson asked when the survey was conducted. Mr. Deitemeyer stated it was conducted in April/May 2023.

Councilmember Donelson asked how many survey responses were received and how many responders requested paragliding. Mr. Deitemeyer stated in terms of quantities, they had 189 which supported single-use mountain biking, 187 which supported multi-use trails, 162 which supported paragliding, and 161 which supported advanced single-use hiking trails.

Councilmember Henjum asked if the grazing of the bighorn sheep is a mitigating factor for wildfire. Mr. Deitemeyer stated the proposed Master Plan will not push out the bighorn sheep and they are located in areas that have better visibility for their protection such as ridge tops and rocky areas.

Councilmember Leinweber commented that the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Department (CPW) stated that particular bighorn sheep herd was the strongest herd in Colorado. Mr. Deitemeyer stated CPW is in support of the Blodgett Master and Management Plan and did not see a negative impact to the bighorn sheep. He stated CPW is more concerned about the habitat that is off of the property on the Pike National Forest, primarily the lambing area on the ridge to the west on Blodgett Peak itself and if there

were to be any future planning efforts incorporated with the US Forest Service, as part of their National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, they would be heavily engaged and they have gone so far to recommend that there would be seasonal closures associated with any access to Blodgett Peak so as it stands today, the access that is happening now to Blodgett Peak is more impactful than the access that would happen within the City's Open Space which it is responsible for the management of.

Councilmember Leinweber asked if one of the CPW's concerns was the connection between the bighorn sheep and domestic goats. Mr. Deitemeyer confirmed they were concerned about the introduction of disease.

Councilmember Donelson asked why the TOPS Committee increased the number of parking stalls from forty-one to fifty-one stalls. Mr. Deitemeyer stated they originally had fifty-one stalls in January with the draft Plan which was scaled back to forty-one based on public input and through the process the TOPS Committee determined the removal of parking on Woodmen Road would create issues with only forty-one stalls.

President Helms asked how they will prevent parking on Woodmen Road. Mr. Deitemeyer stated the City would restripe and relocate the bike lane to the western edge of the curblin and add "no parking" signage.

Councilmember Leinweber asked how many parking spaces are currently on Woodmen Road. Mr. Deitemeyer stated there are legally twenty-three parking spaces and they are adding twenty parking spaces.

Mr. Deitemeyer identified the approval process and staff recommendation.

Citizens Matt Hunt, Bob Falcone, Chair, TOPS Working Committee, Sarah Bryarly, Chair, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board, Vincenzo Reyes, Keith Thompson, Bryan Mullin, Becky Leinweber, Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance, Carol Beckman, Susan Davies, Executive Director, Trails And Open Space Coalition, Martin Palmaz previous Director, United States Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association, Brad Friedman, Cory Sutela, Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, and Steve Swan spoke in favor of the proposed Master and Management Plan.

Citizen Elana Semertgis Bernstein requested a postponement of the proposed Master and Management Plan.

Citizens Claire Spiller, Pat Bendrick, John Mandico, Renee Bendrick, Kim Dealy ceded their time to Karri Waite, Amy Glick ceded their time to Janet Wagner, Kim Stephens, James Lockhart, Conservation Chair, Pikes Peak Group, Sierra Club, Harry Flanagan, Louse Klubert, Pat Gustavson, Pam Meier ceded her time to Sandy Sutter, Matthew Dealy, Connie Lowy, Amy Quicksall, and Julia Owens spoke in opposition of the proposed Master and Management Plan.

President Helms asked if Mr. Palmaz had been in contact with the Aviation Department at the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA). Mr. Palmaz confirmed they had and outlined the protocol which had been established.

Councilmember Henjum asked where other paragliding locations are located. Mr. Palmaz stated Section 16 and Mount Herman.

Councilmember Henjum asked if there would be rental paragliding on the site. Mr. Palmaz stated that is not a practice in the paragliding community.

Councilmember Donelson asked how far the paragliders would be going. Mr. Palmaz stated the record is three hundred miles and the protocol is to not go toward the USAFA.

Councilmember Donelson asked if there are other landing spaces withing the county outside of Section 16 and Mount Herman. Mr. Palmaz stated he is unsure if there is still one located east of the City.

Councilmember Donelson asked if the possibility of tandem paragliding exists. Mr. Palmaz confirmed there is.

Councilmember Donelson asked if paragliders sometimes do not land where they intended to. Mr. Palmaz confirmed those types of landings are sometimes associated with cross-country flights.

Mr. Deitemeyer stated there are some incredible features within Blodgett Open Space that make it unique and special which garners additional attention and the proposed Master Plan process has completed that. He

stated the Master Plan addresses the three pillars of land management which includes engineering, education, and enforcement, so from an engineering perspective, they intend to enhance the open space with a trail system, trail heads, and on-the-grounds amenities to provide the infrastructure to accommodate public use, from an education standpoint, there are ways that they will communicate to users how they should effectively utilize that property, and from the enforcement component it is how they will manage that property with a team of Rangers and Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) to protect the resource. Mr. Deitemeyer stated regarding the three claims included in the appeal, they had an in-depth robust public engagement process, they had a significant amount of data collected after every meeting which was made available on the City's website, the surveys that corresponded to the public process meetings were also made available for thirty days so those who could not attend had the chance to provide feedback, it was very transparent process, and there are a lot individuals who have not spoken during the process are comfortable with the proposed Plan. He stated in terms of expertise, the City had a team of licensed, certified, professionals, with degrees in their subject matter. Mr. Deitemeyer stated regarding the review criteria, there has been enough evidence shown that they worked to achieve a balance through the engagement process by providing a sustainable trail system which is open to multi-use that follows our Park System Master Plan and our TOPS Ordinance in which passive recreation such as hiking, bicycling, and bird watching is permissible. He explained there will be a tremendous amount of demand and interest to explore this area and their proposed Plan has accommodated balancing all of those demands and provided a sustainable plan over the next fifteen to twenty years to promote the preservation of the resources and encourage public recreation in an appropriate, sustainable, and resilient way.

Ms. Spiller stated passive recreation is the initial intent of the original Blodgett Master Plan and passive recreation means low impact non-motorized outdoor recreational activities or uses that do not require developed facilities and can be accommodated without change to the area's topography or resource.

Mr. Deitemeyer stated the TOPS Ordinance definition of passive recreation is what he referenced in his earlier statement and does not know where Ms. Spiller acquired her definition.

Councilmember Henjum requested the definition of passive recreation which is used in the Ordinance. Mr. Deitemeyer stated the Ordinance references the TOPS Ordinance Section 4.6.101 which states “passive recreational uses such as trail, trailhead parking, other accessible access improvements, and restrooms.” and Section 4.6.101.7 states “preservation of land for educational opportunities and outdoor recreation areas limited to passive recreational use including, but not limited to, hiking, photography, or nature studies, and if specifically designated bicycling, horseback riding, or fishing.”

Councilmember Henjum asked if the existing trails were created by wildlife or people. Mr. Deitemeyer stated trail origination comes from three components: the first is game trails which are then followed by off-leash dogs, which are then followed by their owners, a second component is illegal trail blazing, and the third is from social use from someone wishing to explore it.

Councilmember Henjum requested more information regarding the parking density in comparison to other open spaces. Mr. Deitemeyer stated the 246-parking density calculation considers what a future build out of all of the parking would look like as suggested in the implementation phases if they were to be accomplished and in comparison to other properties, there are multiple locations where there is on-street parking in neighborhoods that is not accommodated with the number of parking spots available within the open space.

Councilmember Henjum asked when a parking study will be conducted. Mr. Deitemeyer stated they will continue to monitor the parking to see if there are any problems which may arise.

Councilmember Henjum asked how the community’s conservation values are addressed in the proposed Master Plan. Mr. Deitemeyer stated they are addressed in the sustainable trail system to manage where people go and minimize those impacts to the resources because people do not need trails, the land does.

Councilmember Leinweber asked how long this plan will take to be implemented. Mr. Deitemeyer stated it is a fifteen-to-twenty-year plan cycle.

Councilmember Leinweber asked what the differences are between

neighborhood parks and open space. Mr. Deitemeyer stated with neighborhood parks, they consider the level of service, provide access for anyone within half a mile or 10 minute walk to that park, neighborhood parks have a size characteristics typically over five acres, and there are amenities that are both passive and active recreation and some of the informal support activities that happen in open space is meant to protect the natural resources, provide passive recreation, and are available for the community as a whole.

Councilmember Leinweber stated he supports providing accommodations to small groups of people such as the boaters on Prospect Lake and the paragliders.

Councilmember Leinweber asked how they will address making sure the Blodgett Open Space gates are locked. Mr. Deitemeyer stated they currently and will continue to utilize a security service to close those gates and make Palmer Park and Blodgett Open Space priority closures.

Councilmember Leinweber asked if the City is doing more than the US Forest Service to mitigate against wildfire within the community. Mr. Deitemeyer identified the areas where the City has focused mitigation efforts, but it does continue to be a collaboration.

Councilmember Leinweber asked if all the trails are mixed-use. Mr. Deitemeyer stated there are many multi-use trails, but there are also hiking-only and biking-only trails in order to reduce the conflict associated with multi-use trails.

Councilmember Leinweber asked if they are working with the City's Stormwater Enterprise (SWENT). Mr. Deitemeyer confirmed they are required by City Code to go through the process for stormwater review and SWENT will have oversight on any stormwater measures and they have been partnering with SWENT regarding runoff water within parks.

Councilmember Donelson asked why there was no parking study conducted. Mr. Deitemeyer stated when they looked at the existing open space, they acquired an additional acreage that accommodated 384 acres, they have two trail heads which provide a total of twenty-four parking spaces, there has been a sufficient amount of understanding that amount is not enough parking to accommodate the future demand and accommodate

the trail system itself. He stated providing sufficient parking for open space is not very clear because it is very site-specific, it is hard to garner how many spaces are truly needed so they need to be proactive with a flexible plan and the Management Plan addresses that flexibility.

Councilmember Donelson asked why they do not wait until the Pike View Quarry future is determined. Mr. Deitemeyer stated the Pike View Quarry is a completely different use than Blodgett Open Space, they need to address that social use that is happening, the impacts to the resources, and it will be managed entirely differently. He stated if they have the opportunity with Pike View Quarry, it would be a brand-new public process which would engage in a full conversation with the community and likely take the better part of the year to a year and a half which is rooted in the fact that we have an opportunity to be specific with that property.

Councilmember Donelson commented that trails in Palmer Park are severely rutted from bike use and that park has been owned by the City the entire time. He stated the paragliders on Blodgett should not be compared with the motorized boats on Prospect Lake because the motorized boaters had been using the lake since the 1930's. Councilmember Donelson stated the recreation amenities should complement the environment of Blodgett Open Space which is not surrounded by the City is very unique which includes the bighorn sheep.

Councilmember Donelson made a motion to refer the Plan back to the Parks Advisory Board to reevaluate their decision to look at splitting Blodgett into two with hiking in one part of it and mountain biking in another part to keep the trails separated, look at the trail percentages because the hiking trails are too few and the dedicated bike/multi-use trails are too high a percentage, look at parking security/securing the gates, look at the potential paragliders/USAFA conflict, and look at the increased usage potentially creating fires.

President Pro Tem Crow-Iverson stated she supports Councilmember Donelson's motion because she has personally experienced the conflict between hikers and bikers. Mr. Deitemeyer explained how the multi-use trail system is already segregated to accommodate hiking only and biking only.

Councilmember Donelson stated there needs to be a better solution for the

hikers versus bikers conflict.

Motion by Councilmember Donelson, seconded by President Pro Tem Crow-Iverson, to refer the Blodgett Open Space Master and Management Plan back to the Parks Advisory Board to reevaluate their decision to look at splitting Blodgett into two with hiking in one part of it and mountain biking in another part to keep the trails separated, look at the trail percentages because the hiking trails are too few and the dedicated bike/multi-use trails are too high a percentage, look at parking security/securing the gates, look at the potential paragliders/USAFA conflict, and look at the increased usage potentially creating fires.. The motion failed on a vote of 3-4-2-0

Aye: 3 - Crow-Iverson, Donelson, and Risley

No: 4 - Avila, Helms, Henjum, and Leinweber

Excused: 2 - O'Malley, and Talarico

President Helms requested the City work closely with the USAFA regarding the paragliding activities. Mr. Deitemeyer and Mr. Palmaz confirmed they are committed to working with them.

President Helms asked if paragliding is nonmotorized. Mr. Palmaz confirmed they are.

President Helms asked if paragliders will be driving to the site or hiking to it. Mr. Palmaz stated they would be hiking.

Councilmember Risley commented that he supported Councilmember Donelson's suggestion of sending this Plan back to the Parks Advisory Board because he also has some concerns regarding the trail conflicts and with the paragliding but due the small number of people involved with it, he has set those concerns aside. He stated in order to reach a compromise, and because he believes it is time for that land to be managed, he will be supporting the proposed Master Plan.

Councilmember Donelson stated there is already a Blodgett Master Plan which already manages the area, and this proposed Plan will replace it.

Councilmember Donelson asked Ms. Spiller where she obtained her definition of passive recreation. Ms. Spiller stated multiple sources.

Councilmember Donelson stated the nearby community to Blodgett is very concerned about the proposed change of character for the property and this deserves a second look.

Ms. Spiller stated the timeline for Priority 1, which is the Quarry Trail Head and expansion of the North Trail Head is proposed to be completed within one to four years, the security agency costs were not identified in the economic impact of the Plan, and the Pike View Quarry is not completely

separate from this property so they should wait until it is completed because it could have a huge economic increase to the Plan.

Councilmember Henjum requested additional information regarding the one-to-four-year implementation timeline. Ms. Haley stated they have spent seventeen months developing this Plan, and once the Plan is adopted, they have an adaptive management approach included so they could increase incrementally as they work through it, and it is going to take more than one-to-four years to do the things that are identified in the Plan.

Councilmember Henjum encouraged citizens to continue to learn more about each other's preferred activities in order to find a way for everyone to be able to enjoy the area.

Councilmember Avila stated one of the major complaints concerning government is that it is so slow, this has been a very long process, and there have been changes made to be accommodating, and asked everyone to employ etiquette when using these trails.

Councilmember Donelson requested that before the parking lot located near the Pike View Quarry is increased to more than fifty parking stalls, that it requires a public process.

Councilmember Leinweber requested additional information regarding the plan to increase the number of parking spaces. Mr. Deitemeyer the adaptive management plan for the number of parking spaces includes phase one at fifty spaces, phase two at one hundred spaces.

Councilmember Leinweber asked who determines the increase in parking spaces. Mr. Deitemeyer stated the leadership team of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services.

Ms. Haley explained that City Code does not provide clarity regarding what items approved by the Parks Advisory Board are appealable and requested City Council provide as much clarification as possible.

Motion by Councilmember Donelson, seconded by President Pro Tem Crow-Iverson, to amend the motion to include a condition that before the parking lot located near the Pike View Quarry is increased more than fifty parking stalls, that it requires a public process, be decided by Parks Advisory Board, and it be appealable to City Council. The motion passed on a vote of 5-2-2-0

Aye: 5 - Crow-Iverson, Donelson, Helms, Leinweber, and Risley

No: 2 - Avila, and Henjum

Excused: 2 - O'Malley, and Talarico

Motion by Councilmember Henjum, seconded by Councilmember Leinweber, to

deny the appeal, thus upholding the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board's adoption of the Blodgett Open Space Master and Management Plan, based upon the findings that the Blodgett Open Space Master and Management Plan meets the criteria for the 2014 Park System Master Plan and the purposes of the TOPS Ordinance set forth in City Code Section 4.6.101 with the condition that before the parking lot located near the Pike View Quarry is increased more than fifty parking stalls, that it requires a public process, be decided by Parks Advisory Board, and it be appealable to City Council. The motion passed by a vote of 6-1-2-0

Aye: 6 - Avila, Crow-Iverson, Helms, Henjum, Leinweber, and Risley

No: 1 - Donelson

Excused: 2 - O'Malley, and Talarico

3. Adjourn

There being no further business to come before City Council, President Helms adjourned the meeting at 6:56 PM.

Sarah B. Johnson, City Clerk