



MEETING OF THE PARKS & OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

BOULDER COUNTY, COLORADO

Regular Meeting Minutes

September 26, 2024, 6:30 p.m.

Third Floor Hearing Room

County Court House

1325 Pearl Street, Boulder

Members Present: Janet George
Trace Baker
Kristine Johnson
Derek Turner

Members Excused: Tony Lewis
Paula Fitzgerald
Drew Adams
Jackson Moller
Carol Byerly

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1. **Call to Order**
 2. **Roll Call**
 3. **Approval of Last Month's Minutes**

Tabled to next month.

4. **Presentations**

4.1 Boulder to Erie Regional Trail (BERT) Plan

Staff Presenters: Tonya Luebbert, Regional Trails Planner, Community Planning & Permitting and Justin Atherton-Wood, Principal Planner, Parks & Open Space

Action Requested: Information Only

Q: You say this plan will go to the BOCC in October. Will POSAC ever be asked to make a recommendation on this plan?

Response: No, I don't believe so.

Q: One theme from the public comments submitted are that some perceived risks may not be known until the design process. Can you address those concerns?

Response: There is more environmental work to be done in the next phases of the project. There is still a lot of data from multiple agencies to work through. Once we have an approved document, we will try to get further funding from outside sources.

Q: Will there be an assessment of contamination along the railroad corridor? Will that be part of your environmental work?

Response: I assume there will be, but I don't know what kind of survey that will entail.

Q: What is Boulder County's connection to this project? Will it be paid for with open space tax dollars?

Response: It's not an open space project, so open space tax won't pay for it. About 15% of the transportation sales tax goes to regional trails and bikeways, so that is what we would use for our local match. Town of Erie and City of Boulder may contribute to the local match. Then we would look for grant opportunities.

Q: What does Rails with Trails mean?

Response: When rails are officially abandoned, trails can use that corridor. In this case, the rails are not officially abandoned. It's not being used and there are no plans to use it, so it makes more sense to not put the trail on the rail bed. We are leaving the rails there.

Q: If this is used as a regional trail, and if there are seasonal closures, would you close the trail?

Response: At this point, the county is not making recommendations about seasonal closures. We are still working OSMP, CPW, and BCPOS staff to see what mitigation efforts would be if we don't have seasonal closures.

Q: I also share the ecological concerns, but you seem to assume these concerns can be mitigated. Are there any possibilities to look at other routes?

Response: CPW doesn't make recommendations this early in a project, because things can change. That is one of the reasons for phasing a project, so we can be flexible. We might have a different preferred alignment later, but right now we need to have one preferred to start the design phase.

Public Comment:

Karen Hollweg, representing PLAN Boulder County. They support implementation of the BERT, with revisions to preserve environmental resources. They are concerned with the portion of the plan from 75th to the Teller-White Rocks Trail due to the biodiversity areas. They encourage consideration of an alignment running on land south of the critical resources.

Suzanne Bhatt, Boulder. She is troubled by the untenable choice between environmental protection and safety. She would like staff to take time to find a better alignment and asks POSAC to not approve the current plan.

Cathern Smith, Louisville. She believes the recommended route is the most environmentally detrimental option.

Bev Baker, Louisville, speaking Boulder County Audubon Society. They ask staff to find a less ecologically harmful alignment. They would like to see portions of the Valmont route to be reevaluated.

Tabitha Farrer, Boulder County, She lives north of the railway section, between 75th and 95th and has a conservation easement on her property. She states the proposed BERT would undo the goals of the CE.

Ilayana Rael. She commented that the area near Valmont Butte is a culturally important site.

4.2 Cultural and Natural History School Programs

Staff Presenters: Angela Borland, Natural History Program Specialist and Jim Drew, Agricultural Heritage Center Volunteer Coordinator

Action Requested: Information Only

4.3 Update on Soil Health Activities

Staff Presenter: Mike Foster, Agricultural Resources Division Manager

Action Requested: Information Only

Q: Will you measure carbon sequestration during this pilot?

Response: Partnering with NRCS, we have measured soil organic matter to build a baseline. This pilot is more about seeing a behavior change with our tenants and getting them to try something new. Once tenants are committed to a new practices, then we will start measuring carbon sequestration.

Q: I would like to hear some speculation about where you see this going 5 years down the line.

Response: Within 5 years, we will definitely be measuring on a more regular basis. Right now we don't want to have rigorous measuring of metrics. We want our tenants feel more comfortable applying these practices.

5. Public Comment Period for Items Not on Agenda

None

6. POSAC Members Comment Period for Items Not on Agenda

Derek asked about the possibility of having a budget presentation next month.

Therese Glowacki replied that there will be a budget presentation at an upcoming POSAC meeting.

7. Director's Update

- Some POSAC members attended a site visit to Congo Mine NMM and Cardinal Mill on Sept. 20

- Upcoming POSAC Site Visits:
 - Oct. 17: Hall 2 after reclamation
 - Oct. 24: Spruce Gulch (before POSAC meeting)
- Bear Safe Trash Cans: Used a grant and started distributing cans in Jamestown. Program was extended to distribute Bear Cans to the Nederland Area (241 so far with another 54 reserved)
- Colorado Open Space Alliance (COSA) conference is next week
- Monday, Sept. 30: Event at Heil Valley Ranch to celebrate Shared Stewardship successes.
 - The State of Colorado and the USFS signed an MOU in 2019 to vow to improve a Shared Stewardship Strategy for Colorado.
 - “Colorado's forest landscapes and watersheds face increasing challenges. Overly dense forests, fire suppression, widespread insect and disease impacts, population growth and climate change all pose unprecedented threats and contribute to increasing wildfire risk. Increased use impacts recreation infrastructure and wildlife. We must manage Colorado's forests at much larger scales to meaningfully address these challenges. Shared Stewardship brings together national, regional, state, tribal and local players to plan together, prioritize together, and act together.”
 - Governor Polis, Director of DNR Dan Gibbs, Commissioner Stolzmann, and Rep. Joe Neguse are expected to speak, along with Chiara Forrester, representing our local partnership known as the St Vrain Forest Health Partnership.
 - CO Strategic Wildfire Action Plan (COSWAP) funding was used in Boulder County for cross boundary forest management (Hall Ranch, Button Rock Preserve, Private Land) that incorporated a strong collaborative effort.
 - Scott Golden, Jarret Roberts, and Jeff Hiebert will represent BCPOS
- Haystack Mountain Auction Purchase was Tuesday of this week. Boulder County paid \$6.2M for land, water, and minerals. Closing will be on Oct. 22.

8. **Adjournment**

8:52 p.m.