

City of Aurora  
**OPEN SPACE ADVISORY BOARD**  
Webex Meeting  
April 27, 2021

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Victoria Samuel, Vice Chair Suzy Cress, Brad Stratton, Wayne Gallagher, Lee Lindholm, Tom Isaacson, Steve Kennedy

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bob Hunchberger, Mark Christopher

STAFF PRESENT: Rene Abarca Morales, Park Ranger; Pat Schuler, OSNR Manager; Lauren Morales, Administrative Support.

VISITORS PRESENT: None.

CALLED TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order by Victoria Samuel at 5:33 P.M.

- I. WELCOME: Victoria Samuel welcomed everyone to the April meeting.
  
- II. GUEST SPEAKERS: Victoria Samuel welcomed Rene Abarca Morales, City of Aurora Park Ranger. Rene gave a presentation on the Ponderosa Preserve in the City of Aurora. Ponderosa Pines can live up to over 700 years old and grow at altitudes between 6,000-9,000 feet. The Ponderosa Preserve is the northern tip of the Black Forest and is 60+ acres. Rene shared about some animals found at the Ponderosa Preserve- Mule Deer, Coyotes, Abert's Squirrels, Pygmy Nuthatches, and Mountain Lions. Some modern obstacles to the Ponderosa Preserve are fires, human encroachment, and Mountain Pine Beetles. Current efforts at the Preserve include rangers monitoring the area and setting up field cameras, and the community keeping an eye out. The Preserve functions as a great corridor for wildlife, allowing access to Whispering Pines, Sampson Gulch, and Piney Creek. The wildlife there is also adapting to urban life. Some human interference issues include dogs off-leash, fireworks, improper pumpkin disposal, holes in the fencing, ATVs, manmade structures, and feeding the wildlife. Ponderosa Preserve is not open to the general public and may only be accessed via guided tours. Dogs are not allowed on the property, whether leashed or unleashed.

Just south of the Ponderosa Preserve is Douglas County. Vicky asked if the City collaborates with Douglas County at all regarding that border. Pat Schuler shared that a lot of the large lot owners there are very fond of the Preserve and want to help look after it, though there was some resistance to the conservation easement the City put on the area. The City has collaborated with Douglas County some, though not a lot. Wayne Gallagher commented that he was on a trail that goes through the southern part of the preserve and saw a group of people discussing possible improvements to their section of the trail. The board members thanked Rene for his presentation.

- III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA: Tom Isaacson motioned to adopt the agenda. Wayne Gallagher seconded the motion. Motion carried.
  
- IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Tom Isaacson motioned to approve the minutes from the February and March meetings. Brad Stratton seconded the motion. Motion carried.
  
- V. PROS MANAGEMENT REMARKS: Pat proposed some field trips for upcoming meetings. For the May Board meeting - Dale Dishmon and Will Shell from the Maintenance Group will join the board members at Star K Ranch in the Morrison Nature Center parking lot to speak about vegetation restoration projects. Board members can also choose to help volunteer with the start of this restoration project.

The June meeting will include Brian Green, Superintendent, who will meet the board at Parcel 14 of the Buckley Buffer project. He will discuss numerous subjects and lead a walking tour.

The July meeting will include Joy Thompson who will provide a walking tour of Quincy Reservoir.

The August meeting will include Keith Johnson from Aurora Reservoir who will talk about what is happening at Aurora Reservoir and provide a walking tour.

September will be at PCC. Subjects like elections, approval of the minutes, and any other specific questions or site visits will still be discussed, but it will be a walking tour.

The board members were supportive of these suggestions for upcoming meetings. Pat mentioned this schedule is flexible as well.

Pat also led the Open Space Board in a new elections process. Both Victoria Samuel and Wayne Gallagher were officially reappointed to the Open Space Advisory Board for another term. Pat asked who would be interested in applying for the role of Chair or Vice Chair. Wayne mentioned that this has been an extraordinary year with COVID-19 and shutdowns and suggested keeping Victoria Samuel as Chair and Suzy Cress as Vice Chair for another term, so they could have the opportunity to experience it properly. Vicky and Suzy agreed they would be interested in applying for a second term in their current positions. Wayne Gallagher moved to call for a vote. Tom Isaacson seconded this motion. The motion carried and Vicky and Suzy were officially re-elected as Chair and Vice Chair, respectively. Vicky asked board members to reflect on what they would like to see her and Suzy take on this year.

Tom Isaacson mentioned he had worked with Joy Thompson on removing some scotch thistle years ago and was curious how that is going since. Pat mentioned that the seeds can live on up to 100 years so it can be difficult to eradicate. However, the team is doing a good job keeping it at bay. Tom also asked Pat to elaborate on the project at PCC. Pat answered that a Master Plan was done a couple of years ago. One improvement suggested by this Master Plan is a project called the Prairie Meander. It will be about a mile long and give visitors a small taste of the prairie without needing to do a long hike. The design was recently approved. There will also be an Outdoor Wetland Laboratory as well. Pat invited board members to participate in meetings about this new project, if they are interested. Pat also explained that she will be applying for a grant this year that is intended to help fund the construction of the Outdoor Wetland Laboratory and would request a letter of recommendation from the board. Board members mentioned they would be happy to help.

- VI. REPORTS: None.
- VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.
- VIII. NEW BUSINESS: Tom Isaacson mentioned that it might be time to review the site assessment, and suggested Star K Ranch as a good location to do that.
- IX. OLD BUSINESS: None.
- X. ISSUES TO CITY COUNCIL:
  - The board heard a report on Ponderosa Preserve by Rene Abarca Morales, a City of Aurora Park Ranger.
  - Lots of wildlife cameras set up at Ponderosa Preserve, which is helping to catch some of the issues from humans living nearby.
  - The Open Space Advisory Board held its elections for Chair and Vice Chair at the April meeting. Victoria Samuel and Suzie Cress were reelected to the positions of Chair and Vice Chair, respectively.
  - The board set the summer agenda for meetings and would like to invite Council Members to join.
- XI. CHAIR REMARKS: Sent all board members the Arapahoe County open space newsletter, which has their 2020 Annual Report in it. Wanted to inquire about the eagles at Star K. Pat mentioned that after the last snowstorm, the eagles were not on the nest for extended periods of time. So it's possible the eagles may have abandoned the nest. Vicky wanted to know if signage was placed due to anyone breaking the rules. Pat replied she had asked the team to determine a boundary line just to establish how close people could get. Vicky wanted to suggest additional signage to help educate people.
- XII. GUEST COMMENTS: None.

XIII. MEMBER COMMENTS & DISCUSSION:

- a. **Steve Kennedy**- Happy to be back with the board after missing a meeting to be with family.
- b. **Lee Lindholm**- Mentioned it is weed season.
- c. **Tom Isaacson**- Said it was a good call to cancel the outdoor meeting due to rain. Recently had eye surgery but is recovering. The upcoming Saturday is World Naked Gardening Day. Tom encouraged the board members to celebrate in their backyards.
- d. **Wayne Gallagher**- Thankful to have been reelected to the Board and is looking forward to smoother, more productive years in the future.
- e. **Brad Stratton**- Wanted to know if Aurora has ever considered setting up an eagle cam, as it has been popular with the Standley Lake eagles. Pat replied it had crossed their minds but that it would be difficult at the Confluence Open Space nest due to it being so open. The eagles at PCC have not successfully parented any eaglets for the past four years, so would also not be a good option. Star K Ranch might be a possibility for next year.
- f. **Suzy Cress**- Wanted to know who is responsible for cleaning the Porta Potties at Sand Creek. Pat answered it is the company they are rented from and asked if they are not being cleaned enough. Suzy said they are not in good condition now and could use more cleaning. Pat made a note to ask the company to come out more frequently. Suzy also mentioned some new birds at Sand Creek, the White-faced Ibis.

XIV. ADJOURN: Suzy Cress motioned to adjourn. Lee Lindholm seconded the motion. Motion carried; meeting adjourned at 6:54 P.M.

The next meeting will be on May 25 at 5:30 P.M. at Star K Ranch.

Victoria Samuel, Chair

Victoria Samuel

Lauren Morales, Recording Secretary

Lauren R. Morales