

City of Aurora
OPEN SPACE ADVISORY BOARD
ACRE Site Visit
July 20th, 2022

MEMBERS PRESENT: Wayne Gallagher, Tom Isaacson, Bob Hunchberger, Jason Amaya, Vicky Samuel.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Suzy Cress, Steve Kennedy, Brad Stratton, Mark Christopher.

STAFF PRESENT: Brian Green, OSNR Acting Manager; Joy Thompson, Naturalist Supervisor; Lauren Morales, Administrative Support.

VISITORS PRESENT: Council Member Steve Sundberg.

- I. CALL TO ORDER: Vicky Samuel called the meeting to order at 5:37 PM.
- II. WELCOME: Vicky Samuel welcomed the board members to the July OSB meeting.
- III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA: Tom Isaacson motioned to approve the agenda. Bob Hunchberger seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Wayne Gallagher motioned to approve the minutes from the June OSB meeting. Tom Isaacson seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- V. GUEST SPEAKERS: None.
- VI. MANAGEMENT REMARKS:
 - Steve Kennedy, OSB chair, directed Brian Green in advance of the meeting to add a discussion about the windmill at Pronghorn Natural Area to the July agenda. Several board members had requested this be a topic for discussion. Wayne Gallagher shared that this is an issue that some of the board members have been concerned about for some time, as the windmill at Pronghorn has been steadily deteriorating. The board members do not want to lose the windmill, but it is becoming a possible safety hazard. Wayne added that it may be worth it to take down and rebuild the windmill. The windmill adds value to the site and makes for beautiful photos but safety needs to come first. Brian answered that City staff is already looking at the possibilities to remove and rebuild the windmill at Pronghorn. Bob Hunchberger added that the two windmills at PCC are nice and add character to open space sites. Many members of the public are not familiar with the history of windmills and have never seen a windmill up close, especially an operational one. The board members would like to see the windmills be protected and maintained. They reiterated that the windmill at Pronghorn should be rebuilt and not simply removed, if possible. Brian answered that staff is already working with a company from Kiowa and is looking to take down the old windmill and replace it with a new, safer windmill that looks the same or very similar. The whole windmill will need to be redone. The OSB members approved of this action. Tom Isaacson inquired if the windmill would be functional. Brian answered that that has not yet been determined. Ideally it could be, but staff would have to discuss with Aurora Water to discuss water rights and what is allowed. More research is needed on this. Vicky Samuel suggested a wildlife guzzler could be added. A wildlife guzzler is a constructed water facility that collects and stores water to make it available for local wildlife. The OSB members commented that they liked this idea, and that it could attract wildlife to the site of the windmill. Tom Isaacson asked if the windmill will still be rebuilt even if it collapses. Brian Green answered that it will be redone even in that case, and that he processed the paperwork last week. The rebuild of the windmill will be expensive but staff agree that it is worth it. Wayne Gallagher mentioned that if any help is needed to maintain the new windmill, he would love to offer his assistance. Brian thanked Wayne but added that the hope is that the new windmill will last at least 10 years before any maintenance is needed.

VII. REPORTS:

- The outreach presentation committee has yet to set the first meeting date. The committee reported there are no updates yet. Tom has decided to pull out of the group to allow others to add their own input. He passed along his notes and vision for the presentation to Bob. Tom mentioned that the committee will need to ask the communications department for the most updated city branding and logos for the presentations. Lauren Morales, recording secretary, will follow up on this. The first meeting date for the outreach presentation committee is still TBD but will be decided by the next OSB meeting. An update on this will be added to unfinished business on the August agenda.
- During the June OSB meeting, the board members expressed interest in collaborating with the Human Relations Commission for a fall community event. The members asked for an update on this. Lauren Morales shared that she had reached out to Nicole Hodges, a member of the Human Rights Commission, to express the board's interest in collaborating. She had also shared the contact information for OSB chair Steve Kennedy and board member Mark Christopher, who had offered to be the points of contact for the OSB. She had not yet heard back and agreed to follow up again with Nicole.

VIII. ISSUES TO CITY COUNCIL:

- Brian Green, OSNR Acting Manager, led the OSB on a tour of the ACRE Site.
- The OSB Outreach Committee was created and is working on setting the first meeting date.
- OSB members discussed a plan for an update to the windmill at Pronghorn Natural Area.

IX. CHAIR REMARKS: Steve Kennedy passed along that he was very sorry to have been unable to attend the July meeting. He had a family emergency to attend to. Vicky Samuel, acting chair, shared that she has been visiting Coal Creek with great frequency and seeing lots of mule deer. The walks have been very enjoyable. She hopes to hear something soon regarding Eddie's bench. Staff hopes to have official word soon and is also discussing the possibility of a sign system tentatively titled "Take a Hike with Eddie". Staff would set up signs with QR codes in some of Eddie's favorite spots. Hikers could scan the codes and read educational information about each spot, while also learning about Eddie.

X. MEMBER COMMENTS & DISCUSSION:

- Tom- Did a BioBlitz at Jewell Wetlands yesterday. Saw lots of egrets, more than he had ever seen there before. Turtle sightings have been reported in the wetlands as well. A pair of Cooper's hawks are busy fledging two chicks. Both should be able to fly very soon. The butterfly and hummingbird garden both look great.
- Bob- Rescued a Cooper's hawk in his neighborhood and took it to a bird sanctuary. The bird was uncooperative but eventually caught with a fishing net. The bird's wing was broken, most likely from being hit by a car, but it is recovering well at the sanctuary.
- Jason- Has been spending a lot of time out in open space lately. Has gone to Cherry Creek, Mt. Falcon, and spent time exploring Idaho Springs. Offered to accompany Tom the next time he visits Jewell Wetlands.
- Wayne- Bird counts and bird walks are going well. The recent bird walk at Quincy Reservoir was warm but very successful. Around 80% of the participants were over 60 so they took things slow to be safe. There is a red-tailed hawk's nest on the Cherry Creek spillway with two fledglings. One fledgling seems to have an issue with its left talon. Wayne is monitoring as best he can to determine if the talon issue is serious or mild. For now, the fledgling seems healthy, but he will ask for help if it seems necessary. Wayne also got a picture of what he suspects is a Black-chinned hummingbird, though he still needs to verify to be sure.
- Joy Thompson, Naturalist Supervisor, shared a point of interest that mockingbirds are nesting in the orange construction fencing at Plains Conservation Center. This is very unusual. The naturalist teams are very busy, and staff is offering a lot of programming. Feedback is overall very good. Wayne mentioned he recently attended the Astronomy night naturalist programming and really enjoyed it. Joy commented that staff had considered discontinuing this programming because a volunteer was planning to move, but that fell through so the program will continue for now.

XI. NEW BUSINESS:

- Brian Green led the OSB members and Council Member Steve Sundberg on a tour of the ACRE site. The presentation included the history of the site, future plans, and a visit to a currently uninhabited eagle's nest.

XII. ADJOURN: The meeting and site tour adjourned at approximately 7:30 PM.

The next meeting will be on August 17th at 5:30 P.M. at the Ponderosa Preserve.

Victoria Samuel
Vicky Samuel, Acting Chair

Lauren R. Morales
Lauren Morales, Recording Secretary