

City of Aurora
OPEN SPACE ADVISORY BOARD
Ponderosa Preserve Site Visit
August 17th, 2022

MEMBERS PRESENT: Steve Kennedy, Vicky Samuel, Suzy Cress, Wayne Gallagher, Bob Hunchberger, Jason Amaya, Brad Stratton, Mark Christopher.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tom Isaacson.

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

VISITORS PRESENT: Richard Cress.

- I. CALL TO ORDER: Steve Kennedy called the meeting to order at 5:31 PM.
- II. WELCOME: Steve Kennedy welcomed the board members to the August OSB meeting.
- III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA: Mark Christopher motioned to approve the agenda. Vicky Samuel seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Bob Hunchberger motioned to approve the minutes from the July OSB meeting. Wayne Gallagher seconded the motion. Three board members abstained from the vote as they were absent from the July meeting. Motion carried.
- V. MANAGEMENT REMARKS:
 - Brian Green asked for input on potential topics and location ideas for the October, November, and January meetings. Joy Thompson said that David and Kristin would like to present at the September meeting. Mark suggested an indoor meeting for October and suggested the educational outreach presentation could be shared with the board. The board members agreed. Joy said that Morrison Nature Center and Plains Conservation Center could be good options for indoor meetings. The board members agreed to meet at Morrison in October, with a walk tentatively scheduled for before or after the meeting, and to meet at PCC in November.
 - Brian gave a brief update on the PROS system-wide master plan and passed out flyers to the board members. Board members could post the flyers to promote citizen participation. An open house is scheduled for September 20th at Central Recreation Center. There is a survey open for citizens to take, and Brian encouraged the board members to provide their feedback through the survey and open house. The system-wide master plan is the biggest community engagement project PROS has ever taken on, and the hope is to really hear what people want to guide the department for the next 15-20 years. Bob asked if the OSB could show the educational outreach presentation at the open house. Brian responded that a vendor will be running the event and numerous presentations are already scheduled. Mark asked if this information has been shared on Nextdoor. Brian said that yes, the City communication department put out all the information to the public. Any email responses to the flyers will go straight to Michelle Teller and Rian French, PROS project managers. Bob asked what the timeline for this project is. Brian answered that the survey is closing soon but that there will be many other opportunities to contribute. The overall project will likely run through the end of 2023. Joy added that Michelle and Rian would be at PCC that week to present the master plan to the public.
- VI. REPORTS:
 - Board members discussed how conservation easement monitoring is going. Steve said the board had a strong start but that the monitoring may have slowed down over the summer. This item was included on the agenda to remind everyone to get out into the field, as Eric Watts put in a lot of good work to get things set up. Brian added that the board had agreed to quarterly monitoring and that it is already the third quarter (July, August, and September). The task does not need to be

daunting. Staff is particularly looking for the big stuff to be reported and for monitoring photos to be taken. The BioBlitz portion is completely optional and not required. Bob asked if groups should assign a leader to help coordinate when to meet. The board members agreed that might be helpful. Wayne mentioned that some of the posts are coming loose but he tightened them up. Those may need some checking. There was also some equipment right in front of the first photo location at his monitoring site. Brad said that he noticed the windmill at Pronghorn was removed and asked how long the piping work will take. Brian answered that the windmill is at the workshop in Kiowa. The contractor the City hired is rebuilding the windmill and will send it back when completed. The piping was supposed to take nine weeks but is taking longer than expected. He talked to the pipeline crew two weeks ago about restoration methods. Steve mentioned that the board could help encourage contractors to restore natural areas after work is completed.

- Board members discussed the Weed Management Plan update. This is the 5-year update which was late out in the original plan. Brad talked to Eric, who just finished the update to the management plan. The plan was sent to Jason, Tom, and Brad to review for obvious errors. After they review, the board will go over the plan and provide feedback. Eric will then present the update and the board will vote. Steve reminded the OSB members that this is a state required plan, which must be reviewed by an entity. The OSB functions as the entity to review for these state requirements.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- Mark provided a brief update on the plan to collaborate with the Human Relations Commission. He talked to Nicole Hodges about which events the OSB could participate in. Nicole said that unfortunately, boards and commissions cannot create their own events, but could have a table at already established events. Joy added that the naturalist staff attended all City events, and the OSB could join any they are interested in and have their own table for outreach.
- Steve provided a brief update on the educational outreach presentation. The subcommittee working on this presentation set a tentative meeting date and time for September 6th at 5:00pm. The goal is for the presentation to be completed before the September OSB meeting and shared with the board during the October OSB meeting. Vicky asked if the team is still looking for more images for the presentation. Steve responded that that topic could be discussed at the subcommittee meeting.

VIII. BULLET POINTS:

- Joy Thompson led the OSB members on a site tour of the Ponderosa Preserve.
- The OSB recognized Fendi Despres for her interview in the most recent Faces and Places video. <https://www.auroratv.org/video/faces-and-places-plains-conservation-center>
- OSB members discussed updates to the Weed Management Plan, conservation easement monitoring, the educational outreach plan, and board outreach participation in City events.

IX. CHAIR REMARKS: Steve thanked Vicky for filling in as Acting Chair at the July meeting. Steve's father was ill and has since passed away. Steve spent about three of the last four weeks in Iowa looking after his father and making arrangements for the memorial. The board members offered their condolences. Steve thanked Brian and staff for their work on the windmill repair at Pronghorn. He also gave kudos to Fendi Despres for her interview in the most recent Faces and Places video. Brad and Steve were discussing the possibility of putting together an orientation for new OSB members when they join. Jason could give feedback as the most recent addition to the OSB.

X. MEMBER COMMENTS & DISCUSSION:

- Suzy- Asked Brian what is going on at Sand Creek. City staff killed the grass and now there are lots of weeds. Lots of folks are unhappy. Brian answered that the site is undergoing turf conversion to need less water. The grass is being converted to native turf. The process is to kill the grass and then reseed with the preferred turf. Unfortunately weeds always come in when soil is disturbed. The process is not perfect, but staff are working on the issue. Brian will pass along Suzy's feedback to staff. Richard commented that the cottonwood trees look good. He sees lots of beavers around Sand Creek. Brian recently saw a doe and fawn there. Suzy asked who is putting out wildlife cameras. Brian said it must be a citizen as it is not staff. After the rains came, the coves were buried in trash. Suzy asked if the pond is stocked with fish and Brian responded that it is.
- Vicky- An ATV made a track right through the wetlands. Mike Bonham was able to catch the ATV rider. Brian mentioned that one was also caught at the Aurora Reservoir recently. Unfortunately,

rangers are not allowed to pursue rule-breakers and have limited authority but are doing their best. Vicky said she will keep spreading awareness as to why ATV's can be so damaging. She was at the dump recently and saw an asbestos area south of Pronghorn Natural area. Vicky asked if the asbestos could present a danger to wildlife. Brian answered that the asbestos is immediately encapsulated and then buried. There is a lot of federal regulation surrounding the disposal process so it is unlikely any would be able to affect wildlife.

- Jason- Since school has started, the litter at Jewell Wetlands has greatly increased. Jason often sees school kids hanging out around the area. He has been meeting with school authorities to discuss the issue.
- Mark- Asked Brian about an issue he saw on Nextdoor concerning drilling/mineral rights near Aurora Reservoir. Brian mentioned that there is an oil and gas development on 25,000 acres east of the reservoir. The City council decided to sell some of the City's mineral rights, rather than being force pooled to do so. Before that decision, the City seceded some mineral rights. The development cannot come onto City property. The deal that was negotiated was the best deal possible and the City coordinated with Arapahoe County. The mineral rights only protect the surface of an area, not underneath. If majority shareholders agree, minority groups can be force pooled into agreement if they did not negotiate their own agreement. This is likely what would have happened if the City had not negotiated.
- Bob- Looking forward to working more on the educational outreach presentation and tailoring the presentation to different audiences. The content is not one size fits all.
- Wayne- Mentioned a sign near Aurora Reservoir/Pronghorn Natural Area that needs to be moved. People drive very recklessly in the area. Into PCC along Quincy avenue is a traffic issue when turning left from Piccadilly. People cut the corner there fast and hard and it is getting dangerous. Brian agreed to investigate solutions for these areas.
- Brad- Walked at Horseshoe Open Space Area and was amazed at how high the trash got after the most recent rain. Trash was at the top of some willows. He also saw multiple shopping carts. Brad went to PCC recently to do weed removal. He found some Hound's Tongue which is a very nasty weed. Last month was the 10-year anniversary of the Aurora theatre shooting. Brad and Tom both created some chalk art for the memorial event. It was a great day and the program was organized very well.
- Joy- Thanked everyone who came to the Evening of the Arts event. It was very well-attended, and staff is planning to hold the event again in future years. The art was amazing, and the public really enjoyed it. Staff hopes to expand the event in coming years and host it at different nature centers each year. Brad, Wayne, and Tom all submitted art pieces for the event. As always, the naturalist team is staying very busy. Joy thanked the OSB for their support.

XI. NEW BUSINESS:

- Joy Thompson led the OSB members on a tour of the Ponderosa Preserve site.

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

The next meeting will be on September 21st at 5:30 P.M. at Jewell Wetlands.

Steven L. Kennedy

Steve Kennedy, Chair

Lauren R. Morales

Lauren Morales, Recording Secretary