

City of Aurora  
**OPEN SPACE ADVISORY BOARD**  
Morrison Nature Center  
October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022

MEMBERS PRESENT: Steve Kennedy, Vicky Samuel, Wayne Gallagher, Bob Hunchberger, Brad Stratton, Tom Isaacson, Mark Christopher.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jason Amaya, Suzy Cress.

STAFF PRESENT: Brian Green, Acting OSNR Division Manager; Lauren Morales, Management Assistant.

VISITORS PRESENT: Council Member Ruben Medina.

- I. CALL TO ORDER: Steve Kennedy called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.
- II. WELCOME: Steve Kennedy welcomed special guest CM Medina to the meeting and thanked all board members and staff for being present. Wayne Gallagher thanked CM Medina for attending and noted that 2022 had the most council member participation he had ever seen during his time on the board. CM Medina commented that he tries to attend as many meetings as he can and gets that response a lot. He has a special affinity for PROS (Parks, Recreation, and Open Space) as he used to be employed in the department. He noted that he currently serves as the chair for the PFQL (Parks, Foundations, and Quality of Life) Committee and wants to support all things parks related. Steve Kennedy asked the board members and staff to introduce themselves one by one.
- III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA: Steve Kennedy suggested that the agenda be amended to move the discussion of the nature play area to the beginning of the meeting. Tom Isaacson moved to approve the agenda, as amended. Vicky Samuel seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Wayne Gallagher moved to approve the minutes from the September OSB meeting, with edits. Mark Christopher seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- V. NEW BUSINESS: Brian Green led the OSB in a discussion about the Nature Play Area at Star K Ranch. The Nature Play Area is currently midway through the conceptual design phase of the project. PROS staff will seek public input on the conceptual design at the upcoming Trick or Treat Nature Trail event. Brian led the board outside to view the proposed site area for the project. Staff applied for and received a grant to design and construct the Nature Play Area. The overarching hope for the project is that the play area will serve as a point of connection between the indoor nature center and the outdoor open space and trails. The play area would be an accessible way to get citizens more comfortable with nature and open space. Brian then shared a presentation detailing some of the design concepts that are currently being considered for the project. Mark asked what age group the Nature Play Area is intended for. Brian answered that the intended age group is 5-12 but would also be accessible to younger children with adult supervision. Mark asked when the construction phase would begin, and if the Morrison Nature Center would remain open with programming still being offered. Brian answered that construction would likely occur in quarter 2 and quarter 3 of 2023, and that the nature center would be closed during construction.
- VI. MANAGEMENT REMARKS:
  - Brian gave an update on the Confluence Restoration project. The property was an old Rio Grande mining property that had not been restored and still had an active mining permit.

When the city of Aurora took over ownership of the area, staff began working on a plan to meet grading and restoration requirements that would allow the city to exit the mining permit requirement and develop the area as open space. This restoration project is almost completed, right on schedule. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would require all work to be completed by December 1<sup>st</sup> so as not to interfere with the active bald eagles in the area. Staff plans to have the project completed by November 1<sup>st</sup>, well ahead of the deadline.

- Brian shared that PROS has a new PD&C (Planning, Design & Construction) Manager, Nicole Ankeney.
- Brian mentioned that the board will need to begin actively recruiting new members for 2023 soon. Suzy Cress and Tom Isaacson will both be term-limited, and Steve Kennedy and Bob Hunchberger are both eligible to apply for another term, should they wish.

#### VII. REPORTS:

- Conservation easement monitoring is now into quarter 4. Bob shared that when he went out to Coal Senac Creek, it was completely dry at this time, and the mountain of trash at the gate has been getting larger, blowing trash onto the property. Bob suggested a volunteer project or that the board work on a plan to try to address this issue.

#### VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- The outreach presentation subcommittee has not yet met again. The subcommittee agreed to set a date via email and hope to have a final version ready to present at the November OSB meeting. Tom suggested Prezi as another possibility for the presentation format.
- Brad gathered the vest sizes for the board and PROS staff will order vests for all the OSB members.

#### IX. BULLET POINTS:

- The OSB members discussed concepts for the nature play area at Star K Ranch
- Board members are continuing with their easement observations; in quarter 4 now
- The OSB members received an update on the Confluence Restoration project
- Board members discussed the importance of the open space outreach presentation

X. CHAIR REMARKS: Steve shared that he and Brad will be presenting the OSB's 2022 work to the PFQL meeting at the end of the year. Possible topics include highlighting that the board gets out into open space (doing site visits during warmer months), that conservation easement monitoring allows board members to be hands on, and to share some current site improvements that were recently completed or are currently underway. Lauren Morales agreed to find the 2021 presentation and send to Steve and Brad as an example. Bob suggested highlighting the work being done on the educational outreach project and to explain how it is tailored to different age groups and demographics. Especially great is how the outreach is intended for everyone, not just people who are already into nature. Steve shared that he recently went to Pronghorn and there were cattle everywhere. The fence was down and may have been put up wrong. The rangers came out immediately to rectify the situation.

XI. VISITOR REMRKS: CM Medina asked the board members to send him any outreach information that they would like him to share. He has a consulting business and outreach is what he specializes in, with lots of community connections. CM Medina mentioned he would like to join the board members for a conservation easement monitoring visit and frequently connects with a nature clean up group. Brian asked CM Medina if his Ward meetings ever invite groups to speak. CM Medina said absolutely, and to just let him know when.

#### XII. MEMBER COMMENTS & DISCUSSION:

- Wayne- Asked CM Medina if he is familiar with the open space trail steward program. CM Medina said yes, somewhat. Wayne shared that citizens may be interested in the program, which is a pleasure to

volunteer for. Training for the program begins in February. CM Medina asked what people do in the program. Brian answered that it is very open-ended. Some examples of volunteer work are picking up trash, handing out maps, educating others, prairie restoration projects, weed management, and general community building around open space. Wayne added that the program often helps get people interested in joining the OSB. Wayne also mentioned he was on a bird walk last week and asked if some of the raptor perches can be replaced. Brian said yes and that it could be a possible volunteer project. He would like to move toward a more natural appearance for the perches. Wayne was supportive of that idea.

- Vicky- Thanked CM Medina for attending the meeting and asked Brian to talk about the solar garden. Brian shared that a piece of city property has been leased to a solar company at 6<sup>th</sup> and Tower. Lots more solar will be added to the now. There is a 320-foot buffer from the trail, and board members may see fences going up in the area. This might not be ideal for wildlife, but everything is a balancing act. Bob mentioned a program that allows people to buy into a solar panel collective and receive credits towards their electric bills through projects like these. Vicky shared that a fence went up on the south side of Steve Hogan Parkway. The permanent fence is now up and looks great. Vicky has seen some white-tailed bucks in the area and noted that they seem to cross Picadilly often.
- Bob- Wanted to give credit to PROS staff member Fendi Despres for her work on the recent AgFest event. Bob took his neighbor, who is originally from Kenya, and she loved it. It was a great day and they spent many hours at the event. The area was packed so it seems the event was very successful. Brian shared that this was the first time hosting this event and that Fendi did an amazing job with it. The purpose was to connect people to understanding where their food supply comes from. Bob shared that he saw someone making cookies on a soddee and that they tasted incredible.
- Mark- Commented that he finds that the doggy bag fill stations are often located too far apart on many open space trails. Brian noted he will have staff look into it.
- Tom- Has not been out much lately but recently went to Wyoming to watch his grandson play football. The team lost very badly but his grandson had a good defensive block and it was better than years prior.
- Brad- Recommended that everyone go check out the restored windmill at Pronghorn natural area. It is beautifully done and Brad thanked staff for getting the project completed so quickly. Brian mentioned that it was able to move so quickly since staff had already been working on this idea. Brad has been doing some restoration work and a recent project has been to collect native seeds. Naturalists hope to set out some plots at Plains Conservation Center for native plants and flowers. The seed collection could possibly also go towards a seed bank. Brian responded that the seeds would not likely go into a seed bank but that staff hopes to coordinate collection and replanting of plants such as Blue Grama Grass, Yucca, Big Bluestem, Hairy Aster, White Heath Aster, and Rabbitbrush.

XIII. ADJOURN: Wayne Gallagher moved to adjourn. Tom Isaacson seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:54pm.

The next meeting will be on November 16<sup>th</sup> at 5:30PM at Plains Conservation Center.

*Steven L. Kennedy*

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Steve Kennedy, Chair

*Lauren R. Morales*

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Lauren Morales, Recording Secretary