



**TOPS Working Committee Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 6, 2014**

Members Present: Jason Alwine, Jeff Mohrmann, Jim Rees, Kirk Samelson, Leslie Thomas
Members Absent: PJ Anderson, Becky Wegner
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Liaisons Present: Scott Hume, John Maynard
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Liaison Absent: Jackie Hilaire
Staff Present: Chris Lieber, Kurt Schroeder, Julie Lafitte

Jim Rees brought the meeting to order at 7:34am.

Agenda Preview

There were no changes to the agenda as presented.

Announcements

Chris Lieber introduced the candidates recommended by the TOPS interview panel for consideration by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board at their August 14 meeting:

Returning for a second term: Leslie Thomas
Moving from alternate to member: Joe Lavorini
New member: Lee Milner
New alternates: Cathy Grossman and Sarah Musick

Approval of Minutes

Motion – to approve the minutes of the June 4, 2014 meeting as written:
• Jason Alwine/Leslie Thomas Approved – Unanimous

Citizen Discussion

Bill Koerner—Welcomed new chairman, Jim Rees (still interim chairman at this time).

Staff Reports (all given by Chris Lieber)

Northgate Open Space Donation Update

- Continuing through legal review and draft documents; details of conservation easement; moving forward favorably. Next stop: Parks Board, City Council.
- Extension of Smith Trail not precluded by conservation easement.

Community Outreach

If Ute Valley Park is important to you...we need your help

The City of Colorado Springs invites you and the rest of the community to get involved in the public involvement process to develop an updated Master and Management Plan for the Park. Working together, we can create a Plan to ensure that Ute Valley Park continues to be a treasured amenity to the neighborhood, region and community.



Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan

Here's how you can get involved right away:

- Sign up today to host a "Meeting-in-a-Box". All you have to do is invite 10-15 neighbors, friends or family over to talk about what's important to you about Ute Valley Park. Host a potluck in your back yard or have a glass of lemonade in your family room—you choose the setting and we'll provide you a box with all the materials you'll need to have a short, fun, and productive meeting. **All meetings must be held by August 15th.**

Please let us know you're willing to host a meeting by sending an e-mail to Susan Watkins at susan@teezahwatkins.com. She will get in touch with you to coordinate the details.

OR...

- Attend a "Meeting-in-a-Box" that's open to the public at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday August 12th at Fire Station #18, 5830 Hadler View.

For more information, contact Project Manager Sarah Byrley at sbyrley@springsgov.com or 385-6533.



Coming Soon...

Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan Amendment

Because of your hard work as Friends of Ute Valley Park, the City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department is happy to announce the initiation of a community involvement process to create an amendment to the Ute Valley Park Master Plan.

We have selected Taps Associates to work with all of us on this planning process. Taps has an impressive track record in working with the community to create park and open space plans that make a difference.

We are just in the organizing stage so we don't yet know specific community meeting dates. What we DO know is that we can't create a great plan without you. Here's how YOU and your neighbors can have a say in the plan and have some fun at the same time.

Join the Planning Process

- Assess Existing Park Conditions** June - August 2014
City staff and consultant team
- Identify Issues** June - August 2014
Guided tours - Meetings in-a-Box - On-site surveys - Community Meeting #1
- Develop Possible Approaches** August 2014
City staff and consultant team
- Review Possible Approaches** October 2014
Community Meeting #2
- Prepare Draft Master/Management Plan Amendment** November 2014 - January 2015
City staff and consultant team
- Review Draft Master/Management Plan Amendment** January 2015
Online - Community Meeting #3
- Prepare and Approve Final Master and Management Plan Amendment** February 2015
City staff - Public and Recreation Advisory Board

How About Hosting A Meeting-in-a-Box?

Just invite 10-15 friends, neighbors, or family to your backyard, family room or other comfortable meeting location to focus on the future of Ute Valley Park.

The project team will provide you with a box that has the materials you'll need to run your own meeting. All you need to do to serve as a host is set a date and time, invite your guests, and let the discussions begin.

The Meetings-in-a-Box will be held from mid-June to the end of July. You can schedule your Meeting-in-a-Box any time between those two dates.

Sign-up now to host your meeting by sending an e-mail to susan@teezahwatkins.com.




- Press Releases
- Signs
- Flyers
- Website
- Post Cards
- Partner Postings



Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan

Players in the Plan



- January 2015 closing on Phase 2—with \$1,000,000 grant from GOCO
 - Appraisal
 - Amending conservation easement to include both portions
 - Title work
- Master/Management Plan public process is underway:
 - Meetings in a Box—Kit for hosting a meeting at home, business, etc. to discuss issues or concerns
 - Finalized plan due next spring
 - Volunteer from TOPS Working Committee needed for Ute Valley resource advisory group (Jason Alwine committed to this.)
- Q: Is there a way to keep trails narrow even with maximum usage? A: Build many wider trails closer to the parking lot; branch into smaller narrow trails further into the space. Also, dogs on and off leash cause widening. Need to accommodate social aspects of hiking near the trail heads. More trail heads will disperse use. Friends of Ute Valley are surveying users and counters have been installed.

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Wedgewood Farm Update

Photo #3.



Looking south (downstream) at Fountain Creek from a point near south property line
Photo By: Jeffrey Hodge Date Taken: June 22, 2012

Photo #4.



Looking north (upstream) at Fountain Creek from point near south property line
Photo By: Jeffrey Hodge Date Taken: June 22, 2012

Photo #1.

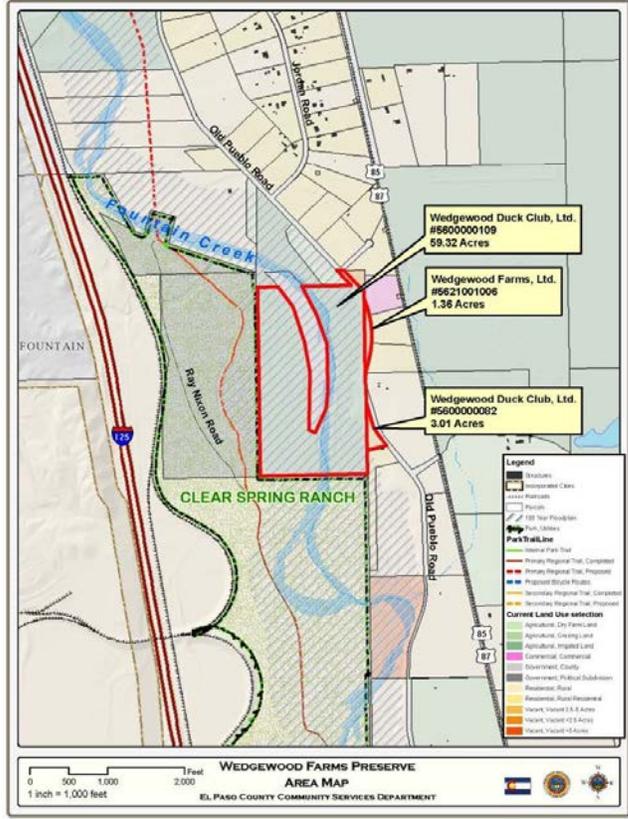
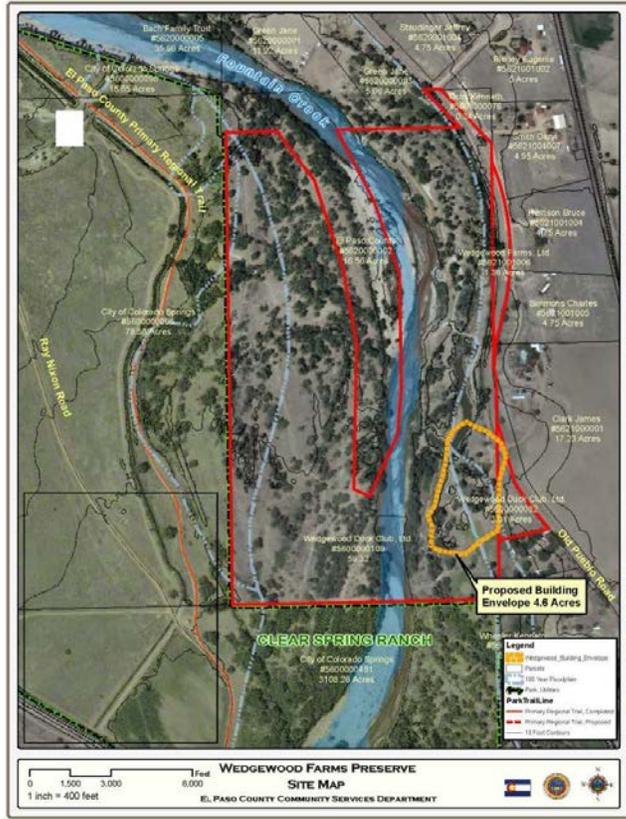


Looking west across Fountain Creek from point near south property line
Photo By: Jeffrey Hodge Date Taken: June 22, 2012

Photo #2.



View looking east along south property line
Photo By: Jeffrey Hodge Date Taken: June 22, 2012





Wedgewood Property

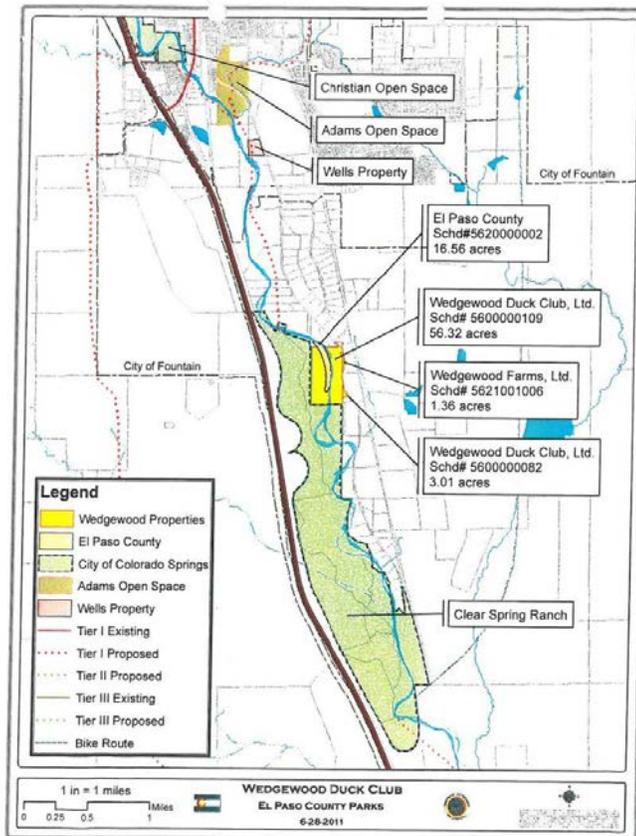


Photo #5.



Looking west along south property line from point near southeast corner of property
Photo By: Jeffrey Hodge Date Taken: June 22, 2012

Photo #6.



Looking east at southeast corner of property
Photo By: Jeffrey Hodge Date Taken: June 22, 2012

- GOCO awarded El Paso County a grant to help buy the property.
- TOPS must obtain an ownership interest in order to contribute to the project; would prefer to not have a “postage stamp” parcel. Can participate as joint holder of a conservation easement that covers entire property to satisfy ownership requirements.
- Palmer Land Trust would take care of maintenance and other ongoing costs.
- One of first in state to try to jointly hold an easement—could be used for other projects. Downside is time the large amount of work the first time. Eventually will enable other partnerships to be formed more easily.
- TOPS as catalyst instead of final owner.

Judge for 2015 Discover Colorado Springs Calendar

- Jeff Mohrmann volunteered for this activity.

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Discussion Item

Review of Draft Park System Master Plan (focused on trails and open space sections)

Funding Recommendations

- Stabilize the amount of City General Fund distributed to the department.
- Increase the TOPS sales tax from 0.10 percent (one tenth of a cent) to up to 0.50 percent through adoption from voters.
- Negotiate water rate reductions with Colorado Springs Utilities, increase resident bills, grey water irrigation use, and landscape renovation to reduces irrigation needs.
- Bond for capital projects to address deferred maintenance.
- Park development fees and other financial tools will be considered to offset the cost of providing needed parks and facilities associated with new development.
- Implement a more focused and proactive fundraising effort through a citywide nonprofit foundation.

Master Plan Vision

1. Take Care of What We Have
2. Diversify Financial Strategies including New Methods of Funding
3. Broaden, Enhance and Promote Recreation Opportunities
4. Continue Open Space Conservation in Advance of Development
5. Build our Community with the Understanding that Parks, Open Space and Trails Create Great Neighborhoods
6. Manage Parks for Better Usability and Greater Enjoyment
7. Enhance and Formulate Strong and Broad Partnerships

Top 10 Issues for the Master Plan to Address

1. Insufficient and uncertain funding,
2. Park structures and facilities in poor condition,
3. Natural and historic resource conservation, restoration and management needs,
4. Gaps in the trail system,
5. Some parks are loved to death (over used),
6. Flood, fire and drought impacts,
7. Lack of public awareness about the importance of parks, trails and open space,
8. High cost of water for park maintenance,
9. Safety concerns and the need for park rule enforcement, and
10. Priorities and values of community members need to be determined.

Key Dates

- **August 6:** Presentation of Draft Plan and Comments presented to the TOPS Working Committee
- **August 14:** Presentation of Draft Plan and Comments to the Park Advisory Board
- **August 20:** Revised Draft Plan Prepared
- **August 25:** City Council Work Session
- **September 3:** TOPS Working Committee Consideration
- **September 11:** Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Consideration
- **September 23:** document adoption by City Council (public hearing)



Figure 1: Process and Schedule



- Open Space Map:
 - Increase in open lands; riparian corridors can be used to link areas.
 - Q: Banning Lewis Ranch—what about the parts that are left out? Can the two parts be connected? A: We have already received many comments on this.
 - Q: Areas of emphasis and focus, some already have houses built but connecting still makes sense. A: Want the plan to be broad enough so that it's not a statement about which exact parcels are going to be acquired. Just candidate areas. Gives flexibility. TOPS ordinance doesn't limit acquisitions to those shown in master plan.
 - Q: How to connect the northeast corner? A: Not much emphasis on that because there isn't much high natural resource value; mostly chopped up parcels; county owns adjacent space. Not using open space as an urban shaping tool as much as preserving high value spaces.
 - Comment: Want the map to reflect existing AND proposed trails as well as open space on same map--layers. A: Dashed lines represent important connections.
 - Q: Is there a connection between Ute Valley and ??? Blodgett Peak? A: Most of those on are shown on trails map.
 - Q: Cost analysis—justification for extending TOPS program. Funding jumps out. What's the price tag? Can we tweak the percentages? A: Decided not to include that in the plan. Staff will create a one to two year action plan which will include funding sustainability.
 - Comment: Suggestion to add in community parks to main map. A: We are encouraging future parks to follow riparian corridors (long and thin) rather than creating postage stamp parks.
 - Comment: Parks we are already committed to need to be in the "take care of what we have" category (even though they aren't yet built).
 - Fulfill current obligations. Connecting trails is also under this umbrella.
 - Will change how we look at funding down the road.

- Trails Map
 - priorities and priority connections:
 - Legacy Loop
 - Ring the Springs (or Great City Loop)—100K, same surface all the way for races/bike races. Where should the big loop actually go?
 - Strengthen east-west connectors
 - Could use gas line for northern connection through Cordera; could also use SDS corridor.
 - Change graphics on map to show future connections—doesn't show priorities but does show entire system.
 - 22 necessary grade separated crossings/underpasses are indicated by circles
 - 300 miles of trails, growing where city grows
 - Challenge to accomplish in 10 years but vision needs to be set now and prioritized which the last one didn't do; Master plan should be aspirational

- Funding Recommendations
 - Need to know costs of recommendations, then extrapolate over time to determine how much to fundraise.
 - Maintenance levels of service are still below 2008 levels. Raising TOPS to ½ cent would fill that gap.
 - Parks needs more prominence instead of being an afterthought.

- Leave the recommendation (increase/extend TOPS) in the bulleted list, but leave out specific percentages/length of extension; should be an item on the action plan
- Spending percentages can be reevaluated; stewardship and maintenance should be defined.

Citizen/Interest Group Discussion

Bill Koerner—TOSC

- Commended the Parks Dept. for good plan. TOSC likes in general, few minor issues. All on same path of creating a future where we can all enjoy the outdoors, pay for it and have something that attracts people to our community—and businesses—and create a better place to live.
- Open Space Map—Corral Bluffs shown as future linear park –what about putting it in a ~~dry wash instead of in~~ the western branch of the creek instead of a dry wash? Parks that are already master planned are shown in background. Capture whole area of BLR.
- Trails Map—create a 100 **mile** loop ~~instead of just~~ in addition to 100k loop. Link open spaces—Corral Bluffs, Bluestem, use trails through developments.
- Funding—bonding could be used to pay for renovation and updates of existing structures; gives big pot of money all at once; TOPS could make monthly payments (just like RRC annual payment); suggests putting it first on financial recommendations page.
- Keep in mind that prices will increase or land will be gone in 10 years; take into account loss of opportunity, known price, etc.
- TOSC will endorse. Thanks to all for work—committee, staff, and consultants.

Lee Milner—personal comments on Open Space:

- Category S previously represented things that somehow got missed (open category)
- If TOPS increased to 5%, 1% could be used to only deal with acquisition, give the rest to maintenance which is what the department had before 2008 cuts. Would be the silver bullet.
- Need to know how much plan will cost.

Adjournment

Motion – To enter a Closed Executive Session to discuss land acquisition and sensitive negotiation strategies.

Leslie Thomas/Kirk Samelson

Approved – Unanimous

The Working Committee entered a Closed Executive Session at 9:28am and finished at 10:15am. There being no further business, the Working Committee adjourned at 10:15am.