

City of Wheat Ridge Parks & Recreation Commission

Wednesday, January 18th, 2023
6:30 PM

Wheat Ridge Recreation Center Conference Room
OR

Join via Zoom:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82346022916>

MINUTES

Commissioners Present: Pat Cervera, Cambria Rollo, John Route, Kathy Koniz, Ralph Habben,
Commissioners Absent: Karen Stanley, Andy Rasmussen
Guests: None
Staff Present: Karen O'Donnell – Parks & Recreation Director

1. Determination of Quorum & Call to Order

- a. Meeting was called to order at 6:35 PM

2. Introductions

3. Approval of Minutes

- a. November Minutes – Spelling correction of Commissioner Rollo under 3B and name of guest. Commissioner Rollo moved to approve minutes.

4. Unfinished Business

- a. **Parks, Forestry and Open Space Manager Position Update** – The posting for the position closed on January 8th and 11 candidates have been selected to move forward. First round of the interviews are video interviews. Hope is to have in-person interviews on February 3rd. Hope to have someone on board by early March with the assumption of the candidates needing to give 2-week notices.
- b. **The Green at 38th** – Design process is at 40% complete for the final design. Due to timelines, unfortunately, there is not enough time to get the RFP for construction out to bid to meet the school districts timeline, as the school's parking lot has to be done during the summer. Based on that, Spring 2024 is probably the earliest construction can begin. Although not ideal, this does provide more time to keep looking for additional grant funding so all the elements that are desired can be included. Looking to potentially have a general contractor come on board for the project to work alongside the designers to hopefully make it a more seamless project.

5. New Business

- a. **Catherine Rooney** – Resigned due to conflict on meeting nights. Open position will be posted next time there is recruitment and Karen O'Donnell has sent it to the City Clerk's office.

- b. **Letters of Support** – Brandon sent an email right before meeting requesting 2 letters of support, Karen believes they are the same letter but addressed to 2 different funding sources. There is the belief that we will have a higher chance of success for these grants now that we have a funded project in the area with the trail work at Tabor Lake. Since we are doing that work, it makes sense to look to the bird habitat and make sure that we address all the challenges with their habitat on the island in Tabor Lake. Essentially, the letters are requesting funding for a part-time position, referred to as a variable by the city, who will spend about 5 hours a week for 16 weeks, focusing on that area of research and providing information that might be relevant for planning, future budgeting, and anything that might be relevant to the trail construction to assist in being mindful to the bird habitats during construction.
 - i. Commissioner Cervera inquired if the position would only last as long as the grant funds were there? Yes, it would only last as long as the grant funds are available.
 - ii. Commissioner Rollo asked for clarification about the number of hours the position is working as it says 20-40 a week but also states 5 hours a week for 16 weeks. Karen O'Donnell will get clarification.
 - iii. If no feedback on changed to letter are received by January 20th, Commissioner Cambria will just sign the letter as Brandon has requested them back by January 25th.
 - iv. All Commissioners were in support of moving forward with the letters looking for funding for a position for the Tabor Lake birds and their habitat.

6. Upcoming City Council Meeting

- a. **1/12/23 - Open Space Management Plan Preliminary Recommendations Study Session** – Logan Simpson will be presenting the preliminary results from all the community engagement that they have done so far. Encourage to attend to listen but they will be coming to the February meeting so Commissioners will have other opportunities to hear that information.

7. Staff Updates

- a. **Town Center Park Update** – Park has been fenced off for multiple reasons since the start of the Pandemic. Prior to that, the City of Wheat Ridge was trying to figure out how to remove that park from the park system. Most of the parks have a reverter on them. It comes from Jefferson County Open Space and a reverter requires use of that space in perpetuity for parks and recreation purposes. When Jefferson County was approached about moving the reverter, they would only allow it if you put it someplace else and unfortunately in this situation, we have no other place to replace it with as all the other parks have reverters. The Green at 38th was suggested but since the city does not own the space, it would not be allowed. Karen O'Donnell met with Jefferson County Open Space staff and their recommendation is that the City gets an appraisal of the property. Will then need to take it to City Council to get a resolution that they are in support of removal of the reverter. And then instead of transferring the reverter or paying the county to remove the reverter, take the value of the appraisal and invest it into the Green at 38th.
- b. **New positions approved in the 2023 Budget**
 - i. **Lifeguards** – 5 fulltime positions have been approved. This is a new approach with trying to reduce the part-time positions, since they never get filled, thus

hopefully reducing the hours that the pools get closed due to lack of staffing.

- ii. **Garden Coordinator** – Used to be a part-time position but will be moving to full-time. This has to do with expanding needs and involvement with Happiness Gardens, Regenerate Wheat Ridge, the grant money received to expand Happiness Gardens and the house the city bought at Randall Park to build another community garden in that area.
- iii. **Volunteer and Events Coordinator** – position will be taking over some internal community events as well as Local Work community events. Local Works mission has changed and that’s why we will be taking over the events like Trunk-or-treat, Movies in the Park, etc. This position will also build a volunteer program for the city and not just Parks & Rec. The position will be supervised with Branden Altenburg as he has been handling the event permitting process and this position will take over that responsibility.
 - 1. Commissioner Cervera asked what type of volunteer opportunities are available with Parks & Rec currently? Currently the opportunities are very sporadic, but one example is trail cleanups and they were occurring more in years prior, but nothing stable. Commissioner Rollo would love to see the Youth more involved in future volunteer opportunities.
- c. **Wadsworth Public Art** – Although not directly Parks and Rec related, there is some cross over sometimes. Karen O’Donnell had a meeting previous Friday and Karen provided examples of what the art might look like. There are 4 artists that are partnering for the work, one having been a Wheat Ridge local. Art will go onto a sound wall on Wadsworth across from Lucky’s Market. There will be zero waste, where the cut outs will be used in future projects. There will be sculptures in the medians where there are pedestrian crossings, although that is not finalized.
 - i. Commissioner Cervera recommended that there are plaques for the art so people understand what they are and what the relationship to Wheat Ridge is. Karen will pass along this suggestion.
- d. **Clear Creek Trail Improvements** – Jefferson County Open Space Trail partnership grant received last year included funding for the trail improvements of changing asphalt sections to concrete. The work was completed at Otis St Trailhead and just west of Prospect Park.

8. Future Agenda Items

- a. **Dog Park on the East Side of town** – Karen O’Donnell shared the recommendation to get feedback about interest in another dog park in the Resident Engagement survey as City staff are currently working on that.
- b. **Future use of the Rec Center Barn** – Anything related to this has to wait till the facility condition assessment, a city-wide process, is completed. It will tell us about any potential use of that space, how we might renovate, and potential costs associated.

9. Commissioner Comments

- a. **Commissioner Cervera** – noticed that a Wheat Ridge Pickleball group established on a group on Facebook. Is there a cost to reserve pickleball courts? Yes, there is.
- b. **Commissioner Rollo** – Is there a reservation system for the pickleball courts or is it first come first serve? There is a reservation system but if not reserved, then it’s first come first serve. Reservations are made through the front desk at the Rec Center. There isn’t

any policing by staff unless there is an issue where the parties who have made reservations are not being able to utilize their reservations. Luckily that has not been an issue yet. Are there other courts within the city that reservation systems are in place currently in the city? There are tennis courts that have the same system, but it looks like most choose to do the first come, first serve mindset for the courts.

- c. **Commissioner Route** – Didn't realize that the Apel-Bacher Courts were lined for pickleball but see people there playing a lot. Karen clarified that it was done years prior but think it was just recently more recognized.

10. Adjournment

- a. Meeting was adjourned at 7:33 PM