

**CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE  
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION**

**MINUTES**

**Wednesday, January 20, 2021  
6:30 p.m.**

**(Via Zoom Virtual Meeting)**

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Commissioners Present: Sally Banghart, Nikki Larsen, Guy Nahmiach, John Route, and Chris Schilling

Commissioners Absent: Kathy Koniz

Guests: Rebekah Raudabaugh, Homeless Navigator, City Manager's Office

Staff Present: Karen O'Donnell, Director, Parks and Recreation

**Item 1 – Determination of Quorum & Call to Order**

Chairman Guy Nahmiach called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

**Item 2 – Introductions – Members and Guests**

Chairman Guy Nahmiach welcomed the commissioners and guest to the virtual meeting.

Director O'Donnell stated the homelessness issues in our community have been a concern for some time. As mentioned previously, the city wanted to hire a homeless navigator and now that person is on board. Rebekah is our guest speaker and will provide an overview of her role in that new position.

**Guest Speaker:**

Rebekah Raudabaugh announced that she is the new homeless navigator for the cities of Wheat Ridge, Golden, and Edgewater. She will be working with these cities in a collaborative group to refer resources out as a county-wide effort. She is located in the City Manager's Office and will be working closely with other departments and courts. They will be sending her referrals of people who are experiencing homelessness and in need of those resources. Her background is in criminal justice and psychology. For the past six to seven years, she has been working in the social work field. She was with Urban Peak in Denver working with youths, ages 15-24 experiencing homelessness and has worked as a case manager as well. She is more familiar with

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working in Denver for the last few years so has been acquainting herself with the resources offered here in Jefferson County. She stated when meeting a homeless individual in person, she can identify the resources that they need or point them in the right direction. She also works on obtaining permanent housing and determines the best option for them depending on their situation. She shared that many times a homeless person prefers living outside and does not want to live in a house, which is their decision. People who have substance abuse or mental health issues, she provides assistance with that as well. As far as connecting with these people, she is still working out that system. The Police Department would like her to be involved when they go on patrol as they have established a rapport with some of the people in the community. She is working collaborative with Jefferson County to put together a street outreach team. This effort is still being worked on which might take a few months. The idea is each of the navigators from the cities would team up with someone from the Public Health Department and they would all go out to do the outreach. One of the hotspot areas is at Kipling and I-70. She expressed that she is not on call but if in need of immediate assistance, call the non-emergency police number. She can be reached through email or by filling out a referral form to include the homeless person's name, date of birth, where they're staying and contact information. Also available is a co-responder team, Jefferson Center for Mental Health, which is contracted through our Police Department. They will go out with officers on call where people might be experiencing mental health issues. She will send everyone a resource page guide containing information related to substance abuse, mental health issues, places for overnight shelters with hot meals and showers, etc. This is a group effort by her, the Police Department with the city, and the responders to help these individuals.

O'Donnell provided Rebekah's email address and webpage link to the commissioners. Commissioner Larsen commented that this is a great effort and a really good program to benefit the homeless, welcome Rebekah and really happy to have you. Chairman Nahmiach shared that he is doing an article in his newspaper about all the resources and funding available that the city has to offer. This is a good way to inform people of what everyone is doing here in the city to help out. It is very different from living on the street vs. along the greenbelt. He also asked if there were more people coming from Denver into Wheat Ridge due to COVID and what about the funding. Rebekah didn't have an exact answer but at this time they are doing a point in time survey for a more accurate count of the homeless population in Wheat Ridge and Jefferson County. She stated that funds are generated from Wheat Ridge, Edgewater, and Golden with her salary coming from those cities. The commissioners thanked Rebekah for her information.

### **Item 3 – Approval of Minutes**

Commissioner Larsen made a motion to accept the minutes from November 18, 2020, as written. Commissioner Banghart seconded the motion, all accepted and approved.

### **Item 4 – Unfinished Business**

O'Donnell shared that there are two commissioner vacant positions that will be filled soon with the new board and commission's recruitment process.

## **Item 5 – New Business**

### **New Year’s Resolution Collaboration with the Neighborhood Gazette**

Chairman Nahmiach announced that he is the new owner of the Neighborhood Gazette. He shared that he enjoys being a publisher now and is focusing on good news for the city. He recently found out that there is a park on 38th behind Right Coast Pizza. He contacted the city and shared his idea to have a scavenger hunt to visit all the parks, like a new year’s resolution. It would be an adventure to take the family and map out every single part of the city that is visited. The mayor was in agreement and announced the scavenger hunt. The Parks and Recreation Center was on board and worked on a map and graphics; such a wonderful job, thank you. The city has done a great job in promoting this venture. O’Donnell shared that they are putting together an assortment of gifts to compliment the event. They are continuing to encourage people to participate. Chairman Nahmiach expressed that they have included Edgewater in their newspaper distribution after the mayor reached out to him.

### **Five Star Certification Program**

O’Donnell stated that this program is for all businesses. They are in the process of completing an application and then an inspection will follow. This will operate under the parameters of Level Yellow if they receive certification. Since the COVID statistics were up, they are hoping those cases will decrease since the holidays are over. They need to be at 350 per 100,000 for a two-week average or below in order to move into this Five Star Certification Program. The certification will show that you have implemented and met all the safety measures and sanitation requirements beyond what is already required to help slow the spread of COVID. Masks are mandatory to keep employees and patrons safe, six foot distance separation decals are on the floor near the front desk, sanitation cleaning of high touch areas will continue, and daily screening which is already being done through an app. Customer screening and logging in will have to be implemented which will start next week. It will entail asking a series of CDC screening questions and taking temperatures of people coming into the facility and reservations are required. We will need to have an outbreak response system with procedures and plans in place which we already have. Ventilation improvements have been upgraded to the HVAC system. We have established contact tracing through our registration system but it is not available for rentals, only for the person filling out the application. That will have to be implemented for everyone in the group to fill out a form. Chairman Nahmiach asked how many are allowed in a room. O’Donnell stated that 20 people are allowed on the fitness floor. That number can go up slightly but because of the square footage calculator, we cannot increase the number of patrons. Jefferson County is stricter than the state so not sure about the requirements for Level Yellow. They are uncertain how much they will be able to expand rentals or classroom space. She noted that signage will have to be added to show how violations can be reported.

### **CDPHE – update to organized sports guidelines**

O’Donnell reported that the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment have changed the requirements for sporting events. All participants will now have to be screened for symptoms prior to any game, meet, or practice. CDPHE has created a set of rules that the Recreation Center will need to follow such as temperature checks and screening that our coaches

will have to do on the players. Game balls will have to be sanitized before and after each game, no sharing of personal equipment, food or beverages. We will have to provide staff on the field for every sports event. The participants will be required to wear face coverings while playing as well as the coaches and attendees. Contact information for all participants will be kept up to date to aid in contact tracing and notification.

### **COVID Response – no-shows at the recreation center**

O'Donnell stated that they had to implement a no-show policy covering a two-week period so people are aware if a reservation has been made and needs to be cancelled, to please call the Recreation Center but unfortunately you can't cancel online. They are trying to fix that problem in the system to allow people to cancel online. Cancellations should be two hours prior to a reservation, if not, a \$4.00 no-show fee is added.

### **Commission Discussion – any initiatives that you'd really like to work on this year?**

#### **Things you'd like to learn more about?**

O'Donnell commented that they will need public engagement as they move forward with the Open Space Management Plan. She stated to participate in that process and give feedback is really important in providing information to your constituents. Commissioner Larsen shared that she is interested in what Parks, Forestry & Open Space continues to do to maintain and keep our parks beautiful.

### **Item 6 – Staff Updates**

#### **Grants:**

#### **CPW Planning Grant – Tabor Lake**

O'Donnell stated that this idea came from a previous commissioner about completing a trail around Tabor Lake which led to applying for this grant for \$40,000. The feasibility and costs will be examined associated with completing the trail and managing the erosion issues that exist.

#### **GOCO/Mile High Youth Corps – Emerald Ash Borer**

O'Donnell reported that the department was successful in this grant application. The grant provides labor, equivalent to \$41,800, work that is supplied by Mile High Youth Corps. They will assess the ash trees for the emerald ash borer and take care of any problems associated with that.

#### **NACD Agriculture Grant**

O'Donnell informed everyone that NACD stands for the National Association of Conservation Districts. They are putting together a grant with the Jefferson County conservation district on regenerative agriculture. We will be connecting farmers and producers with land and using Happiness Gardens as a model to provide education.

#### **Big Projects for 2021:**

- **Open Space Management Plan**
- **Prospect Park Phase II**

O'Donnell reported that they will be working on RFP's for both the Open Space Management Plan and Prospect Park Phase II. They had planned to complete the pavilion in 2020 and that didn't happen as there were issues with the RFP and had to start the process over. So, it makes more sense to have one contractor and combine both projects together. Phase I was completed in 2018 which included two softball fields and a football field, drainage associated with the three fields, sidewalk trail connections and ADA compliance work. Phase II includes the large pavilion which was funded in 2020 with pickle ball courts, lighting, shelter parking, lot improvements, new entry road, signage, fishing dock, relocated playground, additional parking amenities near the pavilion, and road improvements on the south side of the park for safer access. Chairman Nahmiach asked if fish would be added to the lake with the addition of the fishing pier. O'Donnell did not know but indicated that she would find out.

### **Community Concerns:**

#### **o Goat Grazing Program at Lewis Meadows**

Chairman Nahmiach reported that a constituent has been irritated about the fences being up year round at Lewis Meadows and is blocking off a large parcel of open space. He claimed that people have been cutting through the fence and creating a dog park. Director O'Donnell explained the restorative agriculture program and why the city continues to do it. Four panels of the fence are removed to allow people to utilize that open space when the goats aren't there. Then the panels go back up when the goats return which should eliminate the dog park usage. Signs are posted indicating dogs need to be on a leash in that area. O'Donnell stated the goats stay at Lewis Meadows for a period of time and transferred to Kipling Trailhead for several weeks and then to Happiness Gardens. It's a great program as they take care of the noxious weeds.

#### **CAPRA Re-accreditation**

O'Donnell reported that they were accredited in 2016 and now they are going through the re-accreditation process which will be held virtually in April. Their documentation will be submitted next week.

#### **Change in position within Parks, Forestry & Open Space**

O'Donnell informed everyone that their previous supervisor Margaret Paget had retired some time ago and in that transition Keith Alcott was placed into that role. Keith has since retired and that position will now be filled next month. Besides overseeing Forestry & Open Space and the horticulture work group, Margaret was managing environmental education opportunities and grants. She was maintaining a massive amount of relationships and attending meetings both in our community and regional statewide. So, we are reclassifying a vacant full-time forestry tech position to a full-time environmental interpreter position. We currently have someone that works part-time in that capacity but have so much need and that person is spread too thin already. This new position can maintain those relationships with different partners that Margaret started and will improve our environmental education opportunities in the community.

#### **Tree recycling program – mulch available**

O'Donnell stated that they have a Tree Recycling Program at Prospect Park where people can pick up mulch at that location year round.

**Item 7 – Future Agenda Items**

- Prospect Park Updates
- Green at 38<sup>th</sup> Updates
- Prospect Lake Water Quality
- Spring Tree Event
- Vape Pen Exchange
- Alternate Use - Barn Building (between Kipling & Recreation Center)

**Item 8 – Commissioner Comments**

Commissioner Route: I take my niece to the parks periodically to play on the playground. Our favorite park is 44<sup>th</sup> and Marshall, Hopper Park.

Commissioner Banghart: No comments.

Commissioner Schilling: Quiet in my district.

Commissioner Larsen: Parks are being used a lot, especially Panorama.

Chairman Nahmiach: District III has been really quiet.

**Item 9 – Adjournment**

With no further business, Chairman Nahmiach adjourned the meeting at 7:55 p.m.