

**MINUTES
OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS BOARD
REGULAR SESSION
December 6, 2022
530 East Main St. Aspen, CO 81611
Zoom Video Conference**

OSTB Present:

Graeme Means Dist. 1, Vice-Chair	Howie Mallory Dist. 2	Amy Barrow Dist. 3	Michael Kinsley Dist. 4	Wayne Ives Dist. 5, Chair Not Present
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Staff Present: Gary Tennenbaum, Dale Will, Janet Urquhart, Paul Holsinger, Drew Walters, Richard Neiley, Kim Arensdorf

City of Aspen Staff Present: Matt Kuhn, Chris Petersen,

Others Present: Craig Ward, John Wilkinson, Bob, August Teague, Mark Godomsky, Bob Wade

Media Present: Halle Zander

Graeme Means called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Howie Mallory motioned for the OSTB to approve the 11/03/2022 OSTB Regular and Executive Session Draft Minutes as amended. Amy Barrow seconded. Motion passed (4-0).

Snowmaking Feasibility Report

John Wilkinson, Aspen Snowmass Nordic Council President, stated that the Nordic Council serves as an advisory group to the Pitkin County Open Space and Trails (PCOST) and the City of Aspen Open Space and Parks departments who fund the Nordic operations. Over the last year the Council has funded a snowmaking feasibility study to look into extending the Nordic season. Wilkinson noted that one potential issue with snowmaking is water use, however it was determined that the amount of water needed for Nordic snowmaking is equivalent to one week of irrigation for Aspen Golf Course in the summer. Snowmaking should be considered as the Nordic system is a great asset for the community, he said.

Craig Ward, stated that it has been fantastic to see the contributions from the County, City, Town of Snowmass and Town of Basalt to the Nordic operations since it was started in 1984. The Nordic trails are a part of the County's Master Plan, and the value of the "5th Mountain" is a huge asset. Ward noted that nationally as well as internationally snowmaking systems are being employed to ensure coverage for Nordic skiing. Ward stated that in the winter there are less

places for the public to recreate than in the summer, therefore Nordic trails help diversify recreation. The Council is looking into a snowmaking system that needs to be as cost efficient and labor un-intensive as possible. The estimated 3 million to install a snowmaking system is doable, he said. The participation of the PCOST, the City of Aspen and the metro district is important for collaboration on this potential project. Ward explained that the Nordic Council is looking at a phased approach for two sites for snowmaking; the Aspen Golf Course and Five Trees/Aspen Valley Ski and Snowboard Club (AVSC).

Mark Godomsky, Executive Director of AVSC, stated that as a club the AVSC has been looking into new initiatives, which includes supporting snowmaking for Nordic Trails.

Bob Wade, Aspen Cross Country Center, commented that the Nordic season has been shortened by up to a month due to lack of snow, therefore the trails need to be protected as a comprehensive trails plan.

Tennenbaum stated that acquiring a snowmaking system for Nordic trails budget would come from OST's Trails/Capital funds. Any future maintenance of that system would come from OST's Maintenance funds. He noted the issue of finding seasonal employees for maintenance. A public process would be critical for moving forward with this project, he said. Kinsley asked how the project would affect the Trails/Capital budget. Tennenbaum commented that staff would need to figure out what system would be used, then can provide the Board with a cost estimate.

Amy Barrow asked about the snowmaking feasibility at the Aspen Golf Course. Ward explained that the feasibility relates to the compaction of the snow. The compacted base is approx. 8-12 inches, which determines how much water usage and time the snowmaking will take. Once the base is down the snow will stay for a while, Ward said.

Howie Mallory asked how the snowmaking at the Rio Grande Park compares to this project. Matt Kuhn explained that the snowmaking at Rio Grande Park is required by the City of Aspen Parks department to create a compacted snow surface to protect the park turf. Aspen/Snowmass Ski Company provides the generator, compressor and one fan gun, which makes enough snow to cover the field. It is hard to compare the Park with trails, he said. The snowmaking trials the City conducted required more manual operations, whereas the City is not flush with staff in order to maintain that kind of system. Due to staffing issues there would need to be a more automated system set in place, Kuhn said. Mallory commented in favor of approving snowmaking for Nordic trails, however requested a better estimate of the costs and staffing requirements.

Kinsley asked if there has been thought of relocating Nordic athletes to higher altitudes instead of a snowmaking system due to rising climates. August Teague, AVSC, stated that the club is looking into higher altitudes, however one challenge is proximity from the schools to the Nordic tracks at higher altitudes.

Barrow stated that having the earlier Nordic platform for AVSC and the public would be beneficial. Staff should be cautious with the energy and water consumption that would be needed for this system, she said.

Kinsley expressed concern with the project due to economic challenges and lack of staff.

Graeme Means commented that it is within OST's purview to support the recreational aspect of Nordic, however not the competition aspect. He recommended that other potential sites for Nordic systems be looked into for early season, such as at Ashcroft, the base of Buttermilk, or at Highlands. There is concern with the high costs and environmental impacts for installation and maintenance of the snowmaking system, he said.

The OSTB recommended to move forward with the snowmaking feasibility study.

Wheatley Agriculture Lease Recommendation

Drew Walters commented that the Wheatley Open Space Agricultural Lease was open for public proposals for the month of October. This request was primarily due to the Lessee discontinuing their potato production operation in the Roaring Fork Valley, which was their primary purpose for leasing Wheatley Open Space. Applications were scored based on the criteria outlined in the Agriculture Policy and Process and the RFP, which include experience, compatibility, organization and equipment, and practices and sustainability. Three proposals were received by staff, he said. The selection committee comprised of three OST staff and one outside party that is knowledgeable about the property (Aspen Valley Land Trust).

Walters provided an overview of the three proposals:

- Aspen Valley Sustainable Solutions (AVSS) (Laurie Adams)
 - Aspen Valley Sustainable Solutions is proposing to use the field for potato production. Adams has experience as a landscaper and a three-member team that has experience beekeeping and in biology.
- White Buffalo Farm (Randy Chase)
 - White Buffalo Farm is not currently an operational farm, but would be the name of the farm that Randy Chase would like to start. Chase is proposing to plant an orchard on the northern pasture and potatoes on the southern pasture. Chase has experience working on a farm.
- Wheatley Tract II LLC (Matt Rome)
 - Wheatley Tract II LLC is the neighboring ranch and is proposing use of the property for alfalfa and grass pasture. They would implement rotational grazing with their neighboring property to allow fields to rest and plan to have around 20 yearling cattle. Rome, the ranch manager, has experience on large acreage agricultural operations and has a staff with expertise with managing pastures.

Walters explained that after scoring the proposals, the selection committee interviewed the applicants, in order to clarify any questions. The selection committee recommends Wheatley Tract II LLC (Matt Rome) for Wheatley Open Space Agriculture Lease. Wheatley Tract II fits well within their expertise and the property needs, Walters said. Staff is proposing to recommend approval for a lease to Wheatley Tract II LLC of five-years for the Agricultural Lease at \$21.88/acre. The lease will also have contingencies including supporting this new livestock business by providing a three-year window to market their beef locally, and the lease's term is contingent upon Matt Rome's management of the property due to his expertise.

Kinsley asked about the marketing requirements for the RFP process. Walters stated that the intention is for the leasee to market locally, which can be clarified in the lease. Kinsley offered an objection to imposing only local marketing within the lease as it could constrain the operations. Barrow stated that selling locally is beneficial to our community.

Mallory asked about irrigation improvements for the proposed operations. Walters explained that Wheatley Tract II does have irrigation guns that can be utilized. Additionally, staff budgeted funds to add irrigation that will stay with the property.

Board action below

BOARD AND STAFF COMMENTS

Holsinger commented that John and Janie Bennett, 2211 East Sopris Creek Road, submitted a land use application to have the structures on their property designated historic to obtain a TDR which they would then sell to fund the construction of the Bennett's daughter's home. It is scheduled for Wednesday 12/7 at BOCC and they recently decided to officially offer a conservation easement on 45 acres to sweeten the pot. The property comprises irrigated meadows, a stretch of East Sopris w/ a wide riparian edge, and elk winter range. Tennenbaum explained that OST will not be expending funds for the conservation easement but staff will need to monitor if the application is accepted.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Amy Barrow motioned for the Open Space and Trails Board to enter into executive session in accordance with Property Interest Acquisitions CRS 246402(4)(a); Negotiations CRS 246402 (4)(e); and Legal Advice CRS 246402 (4)(b) for the purpose of providing instruction to negotiators and discussing property interest acquisition at 10:35 a.m. Graeme Means seconded. Motion passed (4-0).

JOINT OSTB – BOCC WORK SESSION

Commissioners Meeting Room; 530 E. Main St., Aspen

OSTB Trustees Present: Graeme Means (Vice-Chair), Michael Kinsley, Amy Barrow, Howie Mallory

BOCC Present: Patti Clapper (Chair), Francie Jacober, Kelly McNicholas Kury, Greg Poschman, Steve Child

Staff Present: Gary Tennenbaum, Kim Arensdorf, Paul Holsinger, Brian Pettit

Others Present: Shelley Grail, Wyatt Price, Kevin Warner

Media Present: Grassroots TV

Patti Clapper called the joint work session to order at 12:03 p.m.

The entire joint work session meeting video is available from this link by selecting the meeting date: <https://pitkincounty.ompnetwork.org/embed/sessions/258393/bocc-work-session-12-06-2022>

USDS Forest Service Update

Tennenbaum explained that the Forest Service is one of OST's biggest partners. Pitkin County, through OST and the General Fund have been funding two full-time Forest Service Protection Officers (FPOs) to help manage and enforce FS regulations in the Castle Creek area and Wildwood/North Star boat put-in. OST also funds with the City of Aspen and Independence Pass Foundation a summer seasonal position to help manage summer use on Independence Pass and the Smuggler and Hunter Creek areas. Due to significant growth in recreation the partnership has been very beneficial, he said. OST is also conducting a recreation user survey which has taken place on many Forest Service trailheads.

Patti Clapper noted that the information presented today will be helpful when the BOCC potentially supports the Shred Act, which would enable national forests to retain a portion of the annual fees paid into the U.S. Treasury by local ski areas.

Brian Pettit stated that Road and Bridge provides funds to the FPO positions in order to enforce unlicensed off-highway vehicle use on County roads. Additionally, part of the program is to take care of other enforcement issues on nation forest lands, he said.

Greg Poschman asked about the Sherriff's Office involvement with this program. Kevin Warner stated that it has been a successful partnership between the Forest Service and the Sherriff's Office. He noted that at least once a week staff from the Sherriff's Office and the FPOs have been patrolling the backcountry together.

Shelley Grail stated that this partnership has made it possible to get three positions employed to help with recreation management. She noted that the FPOs work with Forest Service rangers, volunteers and interns on additional projects such as replacing trailhead signs and kiosks, cleaning bathrooms such as one recently installed at the Upper Lost Man Loop trailhead, and removing trash from the backcountry.

Wyatt Price explained that the FPOs can write citations for crimes against the forest, however they cannot make traffic stops, therefore working with the Sherriff Deputies helps with coverage. FPOs focus on education and enforcement of local routes. He explained that the partnership with OST rangers was very successful at places like Wildwood. The FPOs high priority is regulating motorized use in the back county, as well as patrolling dispersed camping. Kevin Warner explained that the FPOs also assist with fire restriction education and enforcement.

Warner stated that due to the funding from the County the Forest Service was able to hire permanent seasonal staff that will return every winter and summer. All three of the staff are living in Forest Service housing, Grail said.

Mallory recommended the Forest Service to come up with a plan for addressing increased recreation pressure in the Aspen area. Analysing the carrying capacity would help plan for maintaining the quality of experiences, he said. Warner stated that he Forest Service plans to start work next year on a new Forest Management Plan, which will look into recreation management and wildlife habitat. It will likely be about five years before the replacement is completed. Warner explained that the Forest Service has started updating visitor-use data, indicating that visits were significantly higher in the latest five-year period examined compared to the prior five years. Tennenbaum stated that currently staff is conducting a trailhead user study that will be brought back to the Boards in March. All of the data collected can be incorporated into the Forest Service's Management Plan, he said.

Grail explained that the Forest Service and other partners are working on a plan to better manage crowds at the popular Maroon Bells. The reservation system is easing the crowd peaks and filling the valleys, she said.

Means asked how OST and the Forest Service can work together on forest health. Warner explained that it is important to continue to look into opportunities/projects in the field, similar to the Hunter Creek prescribed burn that took place this year. Tennenbaum noted that there are upcoming 2023 projects for forest health on OST's work plan.

Warner commented that the White River National Forest generates approximately \$1.5 billion dollars. He thanked the Boards for providing support for the Forest Service.

BOARD ACTION

Wheatley Agriculture Lease Recommendation

Howie Mallory motioned to recommend to recommend approval for a lease to Wheatley Tract II LLC of five-years for the Wheatley Open Space Agricultural Lease at \$21.88/acre to the Board of County Commissioners. Amy Barrow seconded. Motion passed (4-0).

Craig Ranch

Howie Mallory motioned to recommend the County purchase conservation easements on the Craig Ranch which extinguish residential development rights on Lots 3 and 6, with easements and/or covenants on the balance limiting residential structures to the building envelope on Lot 5, for a purchase price of \$6,352,500. Amy Barrow seconded. Motion passed (3-0).

ADJOURN

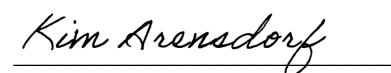
The OSTB and Joint OSTB-BOCC meetings of December 6, 2022 adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

Approved:

Attest:


Graeme d means (Jan 18, 2023 08:32 MST)

Graeme Means, Vice-Chair
Pitkin County Open Space & Trails Board


Kimberly Arensdorf
Pitkin County Open Space & Trails
Administrative Specialist

2022.12.06 OSTB BOCC Joint Regular Minutes_Aproved

Final Audit Report

2023-01-18

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