

**STEAMBOAT SPRINGS PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

February 8, 2017

The regularly scheduled public meeting of the Steamboat Springs Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order at approximately 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, February 8, 2017, in the Citizens' Meeting Room, Centennial Hall, 124 10th Street, Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

Parks and Recreation Commission members in attendance were Chair Alan Koermer, Vice-Chair Doug Tumminello, Frank Alfone, Holly Weik and Kady Watson.

Absent: Sarah Floyd, Dave Kleiber

Staff members present were Director of Parks, Open Space and Recreational Services John Overstreet, Front Desk, Marketing and Event Specialist Tara Cusack and Staff Assistant Ally Press.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Eric Meyer, 2775 Riverside Drive, Routt County Riders:
I was looking for an update on the high school bike race and to see if there was any follow-up on that.

John Overstreet:
We spoke with Craig Robinson. He is estimating right now that one of the trail reroutes is going to cost about \$15,000 and the other maybe \$5,000. We're just trying to get that figured better.

Meyer: Is there a timeline when that would go to Council?

Overstreet: We hope to get it finalized soon, but it has to go through the whole process of going through all the other departments. I'm going to say within the next month, month and a half.

Watson confirmed that the application was received 2-3 weeks ago.

Koermer: Is that an item that will come up on the agenda?

Overstreet: I would recommend that it come before you guys to make you aware. It's going to be about 450 racers, and it could be an annual thing that would bring in some commerce on an off month.

Watson confirmed that it is the same weekend as the Run Rabbit Run race.

Overstreet: That's one of the things we're looking at in the resource load.

Approval of Minutes: January 11, January 25

January 11:

Add waste to “dog composting station.”
Add Holly Weik to commissioners present.
Make sure Kady is spelled correctly.

Commissioner Alfone moved to approve the January 11, 2017 public meeting minutes as amended; Commissioner Watson seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

January 25:

Correct the spelling of Alan’s name.
Make sure Kady is spelled correctly.

Commissioner Weik moved to approve the January 25, 2017 public meeting minutes; Commissioner Koermer seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Yampa River Stream Management Plan

STAFF PRESENTATION

Kelly ROMERO-HEANEY, Steamboat Springs Water Resources Manager: My job is two-fold; part of my time is dedicated to the Water Department. I manage water rights and raw water supplies; in the other part of my job, I manage water quality and stream health through our Stormwater program.

The Yampa River is one of the key assets in our community. It’s one of the healthiest watersheds in the state. Part of that is because we have limited trans-basin diversions – taking water out of our basin. (Really, no trans-basin diversions.) We don’t have acid mine drainage turning our river yellow; we have less urban development than other basins. Much of our riparian [?] corridor has been conserved in conservation easements; the city manages much of that property. Most importantly, we have a lot of community support for protecting stream health and water quality, as evidenced in the 2015 Community Survey where 64% of respondents said that protecting our air and water quality is essential for the city to dedicate its limited resources to.

Even though we have a very healthy river, we do have some emerging issues. One concern is that we may potentially have some temperature issues on the Yampa, and temperature is closely correlated to flow. When we have our lower flow years is when we have drought. So what we’re really looking to do is develop a drought resiliency plan for the river. For

those of you that were here in 2002, you may recall the river got down to 17 cfs; a lot of years it doesn't get below 100. We saw a real hard hit to our whitefish population, trout population; it was very hard on the river. We had similar conditions in 2012, yet what happened was the Colorado Water Trust, a nonprofit organization that works on stream flow projects throughout the state, stepped into this basin. They were able to raise some funds and work a deal with the Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District to have 4,000 acre-feet of water released to support stream flow. That really saved the aquatic life, ecological integrity, etc. of the river that year. 2013 we saw a similar drought; the Colorado Water Trust helped again, and they have helped us in other years. They helped in 2015-2016 as well when we weren't getting rain in the summer.

The challenge for us as a community is that we cannot rely on an outside entity like the Colorado Water Trust to step in and rescue us every time we have a drought year. Further, there are some other water rights issues that need to be worked out. So this opportunity came up for us to do a stream management plan. The state completed a water plan last year, and in that plan the state recommended that stream management plans be in place for 80% of the prioritized streams in Colorado by 2035. They made funds available to develop these. We applied for funds from the Colorado Water Conservation Board; we received around \$52,000 from them. We got matching funds from the Yampa, White, Green Basin Roundtable – another \$21,000; we got funds from Routt County, Yampa Valley Fly Fishers, and the city is also putting in \$15,000 cash match and \$12,000 for my time and a little bit of Craig Robinson's time.

In the plan, there are several questions to be answered: What should our environmental targets be for the river? How do we meet those targets? How much water would we need to meet our flow targets? Where do we focus our efforts on stream restoration and potential riparian conservation? Any policies that we need to look at to try to protect stream health.

It's important to note that the segment that will be analyzed as part of this project starts at the Chuck Lewis State Wildlife Area and goes down to the wastewater treatment Plant. The scope of work will begin with the convening of an advisory committee. That should kick off here soon; we're finalizing the contract with the consultant right now. Once we convene our advisory committee, which will include representatives from the city, county, Trout Unlimited, hopefully Friends of The Yampa, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the Colorado Water Trust, Community Agriculture Alliance. That committee will really guide the consultants and the project team. They will be convening probably every other week or so throughout the life of the project.

Once we do that, we'll develop and implement a stakeholder engagement plan. This is not just a plan; it's really a process. That process means we

need to engage specific stakeholders that may be able to provide some guidance and information and may have key interests in the river. Also, we need to engage the public at large so that everything we're doing is transparent. We may identify additional stakeholders that can really guide this process in a more specific way.

The next task will be to complete a functional assessment of the Yampa; something that will build upon the work that has already been done. Also, there will be a field work component over the summer where our consultant will be doing quite a bit of work on the river itself.

The next task will be to identify our specific targets (flow, water quality.) Beyond that, we'll be looking at ways to evaluate alternative water management strategies, and we'll be working with the Colorado Water Trust on that. We'll look at potential storage opportunities; maybe some flexible water rights leasing opportunities, etc.

We'll be evaluating restoration project opportunities. Are there segments of this river where we could do some bank treatments, channel stabilization, riparian restoration, wetland restoration that can help support and buffer the river during those low flow years? How do we get the most out of the flow?

Finally, we'll complete the final report and present that to Council, commissioners and the public at large. The project will wrap up in May, 2018. Our budget, including the in-kind match from the city, is \$109,875. This stream management plan is not intended to address all the river user conflicts. I think there's an opportunity for the stream management plan to inform that discussion, but that really needs to be a standalone stakeholder engagement effort; I think it's an important one and hopefully one that we can accomplish in the near future. Right now, we'll be focusing on the ecological health of the river.

We have selected a consultant. The project manager will be Activity. Her name is Julie Baxter. She's actually here locally, but she works on projects throughout the state. They will be teaming up with a sub-consultant out of Carbondale, Alotic [?] Environmental. They've successfully done several of these plans. They're also teaming up with Ecometrics based out of the Breckenridge-South Park area; they've done a lot of work throughout the state on restoration projects in both streams and wetlands.

Really excited to kick this off; I think this is going to be an important part of preserving this key asset for our community. We're hoping to have the first advisory committee meeting before the end of the month.

QUESTIONS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Weik: When you say that this management plan process could potentially inform user conflicts, do you picture that it could actually do a user count of the various modes that people are using the river for over the summer?

Romero-Heaney: Not for the scope of this project. This will really be looking at water quality/stream health.

Weik: I was just hoping that if you're going to have field workers out on the river, they could do a nose count at the same time that would serve both purposes, but probably not.

Romero-Heaney: Probably not, because these field workers will be doing something entirely different.

Alfone: Since updating the Yampa River Management Plan is one of our goals, I think our being part of this process is important. I understand Kelly's point that the user conflict issue is separate and distinct, but what we can glean from this study could go towards the development and revisions of the Yampa River Management Plan. I just want to make sure that we don't lose sight of that. With the inception of the river rangers and Chief Christensen's involvement, I think it's going to be important that they have an understanding of what Kelly and her team are doing. I think it's all going to tie together at the end of the day. If we can educate the user groups during and after the study, I think it's going to help us develop our revised management plan for the river.

Watson: I think this entire subject is a great idea for an article maybe this spring, so we can push a lot of this information forward. Tying your study into user group conflicts, etc., as we start off the summer.

Tumminello: Is the work you're doing on the entire Yampa River and its tributaries?

Romero-Heaney: No, it will be limited to the segment of the Yampa from Chuck Lewis to the wastewater treatment plant. What we do to benefit stream flow for this segment will benefit upstream and downstream, and we may be looking at upstream sources for that. But we wouldn't be looking at riparian restoration for the entire watershed. There is a watershed plan already in place; this would be an implementation project within that context.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

Steamboat Digs Dogs Rita Valentine and Other Off-Leash Areas Proposal

APPLICANT PRESENTATION

Kathy Connell, Steamboat Digs Dogs:

We have three goals tonight: We'd like you to look at the changes and additions Josh did for Rita Valentine and let us know what you think, because we're anxious to move on to the next phase which is working with staff on the budget. The second goal is to give you a presentation overviewing what we're trying to accomplish. The last goal is we very much want you to see what we're talking about with trails and parks, because we'll be coming to the next meeting to have a more in-depth dive.

Josh Anzulewicz:

After January's meeting, we looked back on the public comment and what we could improve. Our goals are to make the best use of this site while improving a greatly-needed amenity for Steamboat Springs. We'd also like to provide some permanence for this site. We believe we can also create a park that blends within the city and the surrounding neighborhoods but also serves as a showcase dog park that other communities around the country can look toward.

Anzulewicz showed the new design concept.

Anzulewicz: We're using more of the site. We've added different trails; we've added more parking. With the demand for parking and how this park is used, it made a lot of sense to have parking on both sides. It's straight pull-in parking. We have 26 parking spaces, three handicapped. Instead of having all the evergreen trees in front on both sides as a screen for headlights of vehicles that may be pulling in a little later in the day, it made sense to just have an Earth berm in front of the parking. Another use of these berms is to allow people with elderly dogs to back right in and have their dog walk right off the truck instead of having to lift them in and out of a vehicle.

A lot of public comment was about the placement of the shade structure. Initially, we had it out near the front of the park for various reasons. We pushed that deeper into the park. It's a 26x14 shade structure on a concrete pad. There's a water fountain there with dog and adult basins as well as a jug filler. There's some evergreen trees around it to provide a little bit of a screen and also gravel around it so that as people and dogs are running two and from, the surrounding area doesn't wear.

Off of the new parking, we have a larger trail circling through here. The benefits of this are to make more use of the site – more areas for people to walk their dogs. Also, it's more of a passive entrance. If people want to avoid the more active central area, they're able to come in here and use the park going this way.

We did add more trees throughout. There is a trail cutting through the middle to the pavilion.

We had some comments that a lot of people like to use the little boulder field and run their dogs up there; there was a little bit of an existing trail. So it made sense to just make a little loop up that way, provide a bench. We changed the symbol for the benches to hopefully make it a little more readable for you. Two of them on top of Mutt Mountain; nine of them throughout the park. Two picnic tables underneath the shade structure. One of those tables could be used with a wheelchair. We have a concrete pathway coming up the center access for accessibility.

We have an anaerobic digester, which is kindly being donated by Laura Brewer and her husband. There will be special bags for picking up dog waste. They will be placed within the anaerobic digester, which will be buried beneath the surface. People could come in and learn better ways to control dog waste, which we know can be an issue. We think this component will better encourage people to pick up after their dogs and actually be pretty excited to use what we're putting in here. We would have signage both educational and directional about how to use it, how it works, why it makes sense. The methane captured within this digester would light a little lamp here which would help with our signage. It's a very unique feature that other communities could look toward.

We did get comment about the fenced-in area. We increased the size of it pretty significantly. Right now, the size of the entire area is about 10,000 square feet; the small dog area is about 2,500 square feet or a little larger; the large dog area is just over 7,000. Within that, there's agility equipment. We're recommending recyclable plastic. It's like a playground for dogs. They don't have to be directed through the courses; they can just run around and have fun. We have several benches throughout here. We have two entrances to the small dog area; one off of the parking circle because small dogs can sometimes be intimidated by larger dogs. We do have some aspen trees being donated so we have a screen to the right of the fenced-in area. We'd like to work with the city to bring in irrigation for these trees that we're proposing for the site.

A lot of people felt pretty strongly that this is an open space for dogs and animals; it's not a space to be shared with bikes. Currently on site there is a commuter trail for bikers heading from Hilltop to Anglers Drive. We would recommend a new trail which would take bikers off Hilltop straight to Anglers Drive. We did think about curling that around to the parking area. That's an option, but we're trying to be careful of not mixing the uses.

We added quite a bit more in trails off the main ring. We would like to improve the surfacing on the existing trails with road base so they're better maintained.

QUESTIONS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Watson confirmed that the parcel is 38 acres.

Overstreet: In the winter, how would you clear snow off the digester?

Laura Brewer, Steamboat Digs Dogs:

All that would need to be cleared would be the top and the crank. If it's a daily use thing, then hopefully the public can clear off the snow that gathers on it.

Watson confirmed that it requires compostable bags.

Recycled paper bags recycle even faster. The plastic compostable bags leave behind some residue over time. There are recycled paper compostable bags that even come with a poop scoop in them. Dave from Paws and Claws is looking into that. He would like to create an incentive program where if you buy these compostable bags, maybe you get coupons for food or whatever. When we donate these two digesters, we're going to donate bags up front to get public education going.

Alfone confirmed that anaerobic digestion leaves nothing behind; Brewer said that once a year the digester will need to be cleaned.

Brewer: We are starting this program first at the Humane Society where we will have constant data gathering with the staff. We'll have it all ironed out way before Rita Valentine gets developed, so we'll have all those kinks worked out by the time the second digester gets installed.

Alfone asked about the tanks.

Brewer: The two tanks are for the digestion. The poop turns into methane gas, and you can use that to power whatever. We can use it to power an eternal flame for lost pets or a little gas lamp for our signage. It depends on how much poop is going into this digester to create enough gas. The reason we'd like to get it started at the humane society first is to see how much dog poop is composted and how much pressure is contained in these tanks and how much monitoring it will take. We'll have a staff there as well as my husband and I to monitor. There is some liabilities that we're concerned about with buildup of gas. This particular kind of composting has been going on for decades.

Alfone: I think public education will be key so if people are smelling gas, they're not going to be calling the city. We just need to make sure they understand the purpose of it.

Brewer: The two anaerobic digesters that we are donating are not going to be enough to handle the poop problem in this town. Based on how many

registered dogs we have, we have 1.5 million pounds of poop per year produced in this community. I have 1,000 pounds in my household alone. So, this is hopefully to educate the public how important it is to pick up the poop, turn it into renewable energy. There are very quick, inexpensive ways to compost at home, but we also need help with enforcement to get people to pick up their dog poop.

Connell: We are raising money right now through our YVCF fund to be able to fund these special bags, and we're hopefully meeting very soon with city staff concerning the dog registration program. It will cost a little more for the dogs, but people will get these poop bags. We'll be working with our resort community as far as sponsoring these bags. We recognize it's bigger than having this thing right here.

Brewer: But up front, this is no cost to the city.

Koermer remarked that the underground digester looked pretty tamper proof.

Brewer said that the digester at the Humane Society will be above ground to help facilitate public education.

Overstreet: How much of the acreage on this 38-acre parcel will be used?

Anzulewicz: Maybe 66-70% of the parcel.

Watson: So you wouldn't be looking at the entire 38 acres for annual maintenance costs.

Anzulewicz: No. As far as maintenance and snow removal, snow removal for parking and the concrete path up the center. People would want to use the pavilion year-round. Nothing needs to be done in the fenced-in area. That should be used every day, so getting in and out of the gates should be just fine. We'll want to have a bear-proof waste receptacle up there near the pavilion; that would need to be serviced. But we're not adding anything that would need any type of mowing.

Watson: In our notes, it's noted that it's \$6,000 per acre of annual maintenance costs. That's \$225,000 give or take. That's going to raise alarm bells if we accept this and push it to City Council in my opinion. I just want to be very clear on those annual maintenance costs. If they're inflated for some reason, I think we need to be very careful with that.

Overstreet: The \$6,000 would probably pertain to the parking area and the fenced area. We have an open space formula for the rest; I can't recall the number. The plowing of the trail up to the pavilion – if it has to be done every day we'd have to find some way to put some kind of equipment up there.

Weik: What is the expectation of city Parks and Rec maintenance on that even in the winter? I don't think you can get away with not clearing that fenced-in area, or it will rapidly become a non-fenced area in the winter months. As the snow builds up, it will become jumpable, I suspect.

Connell: We'd like to sit down and do more number-crunching with staff. This area gets a lot of sun, and there's a lot of usage. Maybe we don't need to have it plowed all the time. With the number of dogs and people that are going in there now, those trails are really trampled down. With staff, what we'd like to do is a kind of phase-in thing, because we do not want that cost to turn into a "no." We'd rather walk into this quietly. We're also talking about people as part of the Steamboat Digs Dogs team also volunteering out there. We'd like to finalize the concept, then go to the budget, then come back and hopefully take it to Council.

Weik: The group could purchase a snow blower, station it up there, and it doesn't become a city burden to clear that path. That's an option. It's very early to make decisions like that, but if the sticking point is there isn't room in the Parks budget to do additional snow removal, that's an option.

Connell: We recognize we need to bring money to maintenance as well, which is why we're doing a maintenance fund. I think we have some work to do with staff on this and how we phase it in. The Cadillac version is concrete; maybe it's not concrete the first year or two.

Alfone: Has the group looked at potentially building a pond that could be filled annually with some runoff and then also with diverted water from either Spring Creek or Fish Creek? This would add cost but allow dogs a place to splash around and have fun as well as creating a source for potable water.

Connell: We would love that. Our fantasy is to have the kind of running water that you have at the mountain where the dogs go crazy. I think that's a really good point that we look at a bigger vision and phase it in. What we're trying to do is walk first and have it be as little of a change but an important change for the neighborhood.

Tumminello: Shouldn't a park that's going to have this type of use also have human restrooms associated with it – especially given its remoteness?

Anzulewicz: We did look into that after you said it back in December. There's ways that it can be done. I think a great precedent is the marina at Stagecoach. They have nice ones there; it's just a matter of us finding out more information on that. It's something that could be phased in. As far as siting for the restrooms, there is sewer and drinking water running underneath the site. I think on the south end not too far from the parking

lot if we could fit something in there and blend it in with some trees. I do agree that it would probably make sense.

Tumminello: As far as the trails go, does this use the currently existing social trails that are on the site? If not, what will be done with those trails?

Anzulewicz showed the existing social trails.

Anzulewicz: You don't want to break those trails up at all, but we're trying to provide some more opportunities in other areas of the park as well as disperse users throughout.

Tumminello confirmed that these trails would be off limits to bicycles.

Tumminello: That's obviously a big change in usage to that park. I expect that the biking community is going to have something to say about that. I understand the purpose to it; I think this is a great plan. I don't know about that particular aspect of it, so I'd like to hear what the comments are on that.

Paula Silverman, Steamboat Digs Dogs:

My husband and I use this park a lot. We see very little bike traffic; what we see is mostly commuters. We're trying to meet that need. We're keeping the commuter trail, but it's not cutting through where the dog activity is.

Connell: I think when we say no bikes, bikers are going to have the same reaction we had to no dogs. I'd like this to be a dog priority area with us helping provide a better commuter trail. We want to eliminate conflicts between bikes and dogs unless a biker is used to having dogs around them. From the people we've interviewed, there's hardly a bike up there except to cut across. So if we provide them a good trail access, we're hoping this will be a dog priority area.

Tumminello: I can also see where you may have little kids out there on bicycles with their families with dogs. I don't think that's the bike usage you're trying to address.

Connell: I think we can all work together on this. It makes sense that this is a dog park. If someone's going to use bad judgment and bring their bike up with their small kid and all those dogs, go for it.

Weik: I cut through that park all the time when I'm running because I live in Longview Park. I cut through those trails in multiple directions as part of my bike or my run. I'm obviously not going to be real thrilled at the idea that I cut across there at my own peril. I think that what we need to do is define what the expectation is when you have off-leash dogs in an off-leash approved area, what they do when they encounter a runner or a biker, and what the owner should be doing. I don't think it's a "cross this at your own risk," and I don't think it's "if you have the poor judgment to take

your child in this area, and they get knocked off their bike, that's too bad." So I think we probably need to define some rules and expectations on that. Maybe that's not something you're prepared to speak to, but I think it's going to have to come up because there are lots of areas where we want to coexist.

Connell: You're absolutely right. The problem is not the dogs but the people who own the dogs. The problem isn't bikes; it's the people riding the bikes and the joggers, etc. It's our personalities that get in the way. So education and cooperation is the whole name of the game. Right now, we all use these areas at our own peril, and I think we can do this with education and look at ways to avoid conflicts as much as possible. If we can meet biking needs and try to help people avoid these areas as well, I think this is going to be positive. We'll continue to work with the biking group. But bikes have practically every trail in town; dogs don't have one trail or one area. We're saying look, right now you have bike-only trails all over Steamboat and outside Steamboat; we don't have anything for the dogs. We're just trying to say hey, let's have this be a dog-priority area.

Weik: I think that may be one of the things that needs to be discussed is whether it's a dog-priority area. We've also had a lot of discussions about the fact that this is open space. I think the city officially classifies it as a park that's been treated as open space and has not been developed. It was never designated a dog-only area. I think it's not accurate to say that the trails throughout town are bike only. Every trail that we've got other than NPR (bike only, downhill directional) is multi-user. That requires that everybody deconflict including horses. Just like you're not used to seeing a lot of bikes up there, we haven't seen any horses up in Rita Valentine, either. But I think we need to make sure that we're creating an expectation for all the park users on how they're going to react when they encounter each other. For example, I would want to still be able to transit Rita Valentine on my bike or on foot and that as I'm on any of those trails, if somebody has their dog off leash they will recall their dog and have their dog heel or sit until I either say it's okay or I pass them. I've actually gotten tackled off my bike by a dog cutting through there. But I think that we need to create those expectations, and I don't think we're going to want to say that something is dog only or bike only, for that matter.

Connell: We will address that in a matter of time. I think the one thing we'd like to hear from you tonight is: We'd like to go on to the next phase working on budget and then bring this back in front of you. We will certainly address those concerns so that we're all working together and we have communication. I think dog-people etiquette is very important.

Weik: I think the cycling community (I'm on the RCR board as well) wants to look at areas where we can make accommodations so there are more dog off-leash opportunities. But the expected interaction and behavior is going to be key to that.

Josh, on your proposed commuter trail, which doesn't actually follow my commuter route, where is the northern terminus of that?

Anzulewicz: The city also owns the parcel to the northeast. There are several trails that go through that. This commuter trail would match up with one of the existing trails that are shooting down through Rita Valentine currently. It could catch up with one of those trails and match up with Hilltop above it.

Weik: So you're thinking that this connects to the Fox Creek Trail?

Connell: For the next meeting, I think we should bring the bigger picture.

Weik: I think that would help. I just need to see where the rest of that trail is proposed to go, and I think we need to keep in mind that there are people in that Longview neighborhood who aren't going to go climb up Hilltop to circumvent Rita Valentine; we're probably going to keep cutting across. I think the reason you don't see much mountain biking activity through there is because it's not been permitted. There are social trails and public trails, but very few of them are actually approved trails.

Alfone pointed out that one of the objectives of Steamboat Digs Dogs is to expand the park using adjacent open space to 70 acres. Alternative routes could be incorporated there.

Overstreet: With that parcel, we may need to have some more dialog with CPW because I know a couple years ago they had concerns about the wildlife corridor along the northern part of the park.

Tumminello highlighted the need for park management that will not be undertaken by city staff, including the possibility of Steamboat Digs Dogs incorporating as a 501(C)(3) and entering into an agreement with the city to manage the park. That would give the city one point of contact for the park to deal with any concerns or situations that may arise with wildlife, etc.

Koermer brought up the public comment from an individual concerned about small dogs interacting with large dogs. He wondered if there should be an entirely separate area of the park for small dogs.

Connell reiterated the separate areas within the fenced-off area, including the separate entrances into that area for small dogs.

Koermer: Do you feel based on the research that you've done that this is adequate to keep them separate and avoid any potential conflicts?

Anzulewicz: I think so. That central access is where we're going to see most of the activity. Having two entrances into the small dog area from the parking lot – I think even if we did site a small dog area in another portion

of the park, you still might be running into users that have a large dog. As far as placement of the fenced area and having them together, it seemed to make sense. If small dog owners need to get water for their dog, they're not too far away from the pavilion and water fountain there.

Koermer mentioned the request for a small dog park at Fetcher's Pond.

Koermer: I think the commuter trails are a really important discussion topic based on the multi-use component of this park. If there's a way to explore having another trail maybe on the west side of the park connecting to an area where there may be more usage. That might require observing current usage where these commuters are coming through. In any community space, we're going to have to address conflict management. Our job is to try to assess any potential conflict that may come due to this and make sure that when this plan is put forth to Council that we've vetted these issues.

Weik: One of the things that comes up a lot in pedestrian and bike path planning is the desire line. You put the trail where people want to walk. It's going to end up happening, so it's better to plan for it in advance.

Koermer: The impetus of Bear River Park was the fact that there was a rogue pump track up in Rita Valentine. So it's hard to really dictate what the community at large is going to interpret this park as, and what they're going to use or not use it for.

Anzulewicz: We're aware that there may be park users that are going to ride their bike there with a dog on leash. We're not trying to outlaw bikes and have it just to ourselves. It's just trying to be cautious about mixing the different uses. I agree with you that the commuter trail on the east side doesn't fully address because this park is accessed from all directions. We see the trail off Longview, so there is definitely opportunity to create a way for bike users to get wherever they need to go.

Commissioners liked the overall vision for the design.

Weik: I think the improvements here are going to benefit everybody. I just want to make sure we include different user types. I appreciate that you're willing to continue to consider those.

APPLICANT PRESENTATION

Deborah Black, Steamboat Digs Dogs:

At least 5,600 dogs live in the Steamboat Springs area, including Heritage Park, Steamboat 2, Silver Spur and Treehaus. That's according to the 2015 Community Survey and census report.

7,000 occupied households; half of the households surveyed had dogs at 1.6 dogs per dog household.

$3,500 * 1.6 = 5,600$ dogs.

Two off-leash areas: Lower Pond at Spring Creek, 0.5 acres. Pond water, a shelter and a porta-potty. Uncertain future due to the possibility of the city breaching the dam and eliminating the pond in 2018.

Rita Valentine Park: 38 acres with 29 more available; 1.5 miles of trail. No water, no trees, no cultivated grass, no facilities, poor drainage, insufficient parking.

Communities across the country actively plan and finance dog-friendly lifestyle areas into their master plans.

Parks and Rec Commission Minutes
February 8, 2017

Steamboat Digs Dogs has established funding resources. Our GoFundMe campaign earned \$4,050 as of December 31. Our Yampa Valley Community Foundation account is open and has a balance of \$3,720, which was transferred from the GoFundMe account less a \$330 fee.

The Steamboat Digs Dogs 501(C)(3) application was approved as of January 18, 2017.

Don Valentines donation of approximately \$22,000 from his Rita Valentine fund and \$22,000 from his personal funds are forthcoming.

Jeff Sessman's [?] \$1,000 donation is forthcoming.

Donna Sage has promised a donation of six aspen balls; the trees will be between six and eight feet tall.

Cam Boyd has continued interest in funding the startup costs of a dog-only trail at Emerald Mountain.

Ski Butlers Adopt-a-Park fund will continue; funded by Glen Trailer.

Laure Brewer and Jerry Bigelow intend to donate two anaerobic composting digesters; one for the Humane Society, and if approved, one for Rita Valentine.

Laura and Jerry represent the Ray Bigelow Trust, and now that our 501(C)(3) is approved, we expect funding to increase just as it did for the Routt County Riders.

Black showed examples of other parks similar to Whistler and Staley .

All have multiple areas of groomed grass and a trail structure; all are along a river system; all use existing park amenities and require no additional funding.

Sedona has a park similar to what's proposed for Rita Valentine.

Black showed a material that could be used for the fencing at Rita Valentine Park.

Another example of environmentally-friendly fencing as well as an entrance to an off-leash area can be found in Park City. Biodegradable bags are available, and they provide a shovel. They also participate in the Yellow Dog Project, a nationwide program in which a yellow ribbon is used to signal that a dog has a special situation (injury, age, youth, disability or fear-related behavior.) They have brochure boxes and display a sign that outlines the rules and expectations for the off-leash area.

They recommend keeping children out of the off-leash zone.

They provide the phone number of the Police station for problems of a serious nature.

The park includes toys and an agility area (rings, ramp, see-saw, posts, etc.)

Durango has one large off-leash dog park. 6 square miles with trails and open space. It follows the river. The Durango Chamber promotes Durango as a dog-friendly town.

Gunnison has one off-leash dog park that was funded by a GOCO grant. Gunnison enthusiastically promotes their community as dog friendly. Their city website front page is currently displaying a full-page announcement that the dog park is now open.

The site also provides a list of dog-friendly hotels, bed & brekfasts and retailers. Dogs are welcome in most shops.

If we look at the number of websites that are in place to assist people with all of the pet-friendly information needed to more easily travel with their pets, it's evident that the number of people that bring their dogs on vacation is significant and growing. Gunnison wisely has their finger on the pulse of this trend and is attracting visitors to their city.

The Gunnison off-leash dog park is 2.2 acres. It includes three fenced dog runs (one for small dogs,) three shade shelters, three dog play features, vegetation improvement, two dog and human water fountains, and five trash and dog waste receptacles.

Crested Butte has six off-leash areas made up of parks and trails. They have dog-friendly areas close to ball fields to try to divert dogs away from those fields.

Steamboat Digs Dogs believes that we should have a plan that best meets the needs of our community and uses the resources that are available to us. The plan we submitted does this.

We changed the city ordinance to allow off-leash areas. We ensured that the ordinance allows for easy modification and oversight of the designated off-leash areas.

The ordinance says:

The Parks and Recreation Commission may recommend to City Council temporary off-leash programs, areas and times for Council's approval. Such temporary approvals, if granted by the City Council, may be rescinded by the Council at its discretion.

Our next objective is to redefine the scope of Rita Valentine Dog Park. This is a little bit of a grey area. As it was explained to me by some members of City Council: In 2005 Council designated Rita Valentine as an off-leash dog park. We now suggest two things:

Establish Rita Valentine Dog Park as the main hub of our Steamboat Digs Dogs community theme. Make it a visitor attraction. Advertise it on websites like BringFido.com and have the chamber promote it. The Chamber is already promoting this as a dog-friendly town, but we can really expand on that with Rita Valentine.

We would like to expand the park using adjacent open space. This would total 70 acres as a designated dog area. This was supported by public comment.

Objective 2:

Suggest and discuss the first enhancements to make Rita Valentine a premier dog park. Access the existing water and infrastructure to get drinking water and an adequate water system. Improve the grass areas and the trail system. Fix the drainage and create parking. This was supported by public comment.

Objective 3:

Discuss expanding off-leash areas to specific parks and trails. We would like the Commission to think about approving off-leash areas at neighborhood parks and trails across the community and to consider approving multiple areas simultaneously. This would allow neighborhood users to remain in their neighborhood and prevent overcrowding and undue impact in one area. This was also supported by public comment.

Since 2005, our dog population has grown considerably, and most people in our community recognize that. We have learned that many people in specific park neighborhoods, especially those bordering the park, are not opposed necessarily to off-leash areas but are opposed to being the only park to receive an off-leash designation.

These are some parks and trails that could easily include off-leash areas: Whistler Park, Staley Park and Butcherknife Trail, Fetcher Pond (small dogs only,) Memorial Park (by the high school.)

Trails: Spring Creek Trail (including Lower Spring Creek Trail behind the high school,) Blackmere, The Gas Line and Orton, Old Lift Line Trail, Bluffs Loop, Overlook, Howelsen Meadows, Lower Loop and trail.

Between now and the next meeting, you might want to think about what new areas for off-leash use you would like to talk about first. Spring Creek Trail with Lower Spring Creek, Blackmere Trail at Emerald Mountain, and Fetcher Park for small dogs only, might be good areas to talk about first. These locations are not impacting people's yards, and they are beloved by dogs and dog walkers alike in addition to being highly used.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Doran Dugal, 1053 Pine, Steamboat Digs Dogs:

I just want to be clear that we're asking for a dog park. The concept of multiuse is going to go away for the dog park area. It is not unreasonable to have an area as a dog park. As Deborah just pointed out, lots of other communities have dog parks. We have a big user group here, and I think it's a reasonable ask to start acknowledging that Rita Valentine was meant to be a dog park per Mr. Valentine.

Eric Meyer:
Is 38 acres our second-biggest park in town?

Overstreet: Probably so.

Meyer: That's a big park. Any master plan the city has run, they've had a website setup where people can leave comments and have a good record of those comments. We got a ton of that with the Trails Alliance, and I think you guys will be getting the same thing. You can always come down to the numbers and vet a proposal by doing that. I think that's really important. I think separation of use by design is absolutely the way to go. Obviously, there's going to be little to no enforcement. If it's not by design, you start getting more conflict. I think the concept of splitting the park in some fashion to encourage cyclists to go through the park one way is definitely a step in the right direction. Refining that through a public process I think would benefit the whole project.

RCR is definitely a huge potential to tap in the narrow trails. For construction of the all-weather trails, we would need to partner with the city or someone else, but RCR is definitely equipped to help out with narrow trails as long as everything is approved.

Possibly our second-biggest park off limits to bikes just isn't going to fly. Having a route through that works and segregating it – even if it's 75-25. There's one trail that's bikes only, and there's a specific reason for that, because it benefits everybody on Emerald. We've seen a massive decrease in high-speed bike use on other trails. Don't force people to go somewhere; encourage people to go somewhere because they have a better use there.

The better use might be exactly where you put it; I just am not familiar with Rita Valentine. Places that are tough to put trails are flat, soggy areas because you have to build them up. They need contours, grade dips; those are all things that RCR can help with.

There's definitely potential there. There have been wildlife issues with the open space up there with off-leash dogs. Kids have created their own little bike amenities, and the neighbor gets mad and shuts it down. That has happened not only on that extra 29 acres, but just passed that there was a feature that had significant use. Once the word gets out and it's not approved, it gets shut down. But there's definitely demand in that area, especially by kids.

Black: Rita Valentine Park is a flat area; it's not an area that attracts mountain bikers because it's not that exciting. It's a great area for dogs

and strollers. It's just a place to get some exercise; it's a wonderful place for seniors because it's flat. One thing I would like to emphasize is how badly we need a designated off-leash area just for dogs. We need some dog-only space. Of course, we can have some shared space. I would say that Routt County Riders dominates a lot of the trails. Even though they are multiuse, a lot of people don't use them anymore because they feel too intimidated by the bike traffic. I'm a mountain biker, too. I'm at Emerald almost every day. I feel like RCR and the rest of the community might want to start thinking about how best to share the space and to maybe recognize that just as they maybe have a lot of dominance and a lot of presence that the dog community also needs a special place that's just kind of theirs.

Lindsay Rois, 32377 HWY131:

I do think we need space for dogs. There's just no safe, designated space for dogs alone – especially those of us who have multiple dogs. With regard to bikes, I see no reason why Rita Valentine couldn't have trails down either side that would be bike designated. But it is intimidating when a bike is coming at you and you're gathering multiple dogs. It's difficult to be multiuser on certain areas, especially that inner area of Rita Valentine. I'm willing and interested to work with all the groups,; everyone wants to have a good quality of life. We definitely need some space in this town that's just for off-leash dogs because there are so many dog owners. They're a user group as well that really deserves some consideration alongside other user groups. I have no problem on Rita Valentine with the bicycles that do come through. I don't see many, and nobody's speeding through there.

I do think a wonderful solution is to just bring the bike trails down either side.

I'd really like you to consider that we need an off-leash spot for just dogs.

Laura Brewer, 3122 Heavenly View:

Our group formed because our number one goal was safety for dogs, people and wildlife. That is constantly on our agenda when we are making these plans. I do think we have support from law enforcement. Chief Christensen has worked with us; he's a dog lover as well. We're getting a lot of support from law enforcement, so I don't agree that there will be no enforcement.

With regard to dogs and large dogs entering a park together, one of the things we discussed that other parks and off-leash trails are doing is where you get your dog out of the car on leash and under control and introduce them to the park before you take them off leash. I think we left it out of our proposal. I have three dogs – two of them small – and I don't trust them to be off leash, ever. I think our group is working on educating the public on how to introduce dogs to off-leash areas before we just run amuck, which is not our goal at all. We have also discussed at length educating the public on if you encounter wildlife or someone on a bike,

you get control over your dog and let it pass. This is something we're working on.

Candy Garrison, 1465 Mark Twain Lane, Steamboat Digs Dogs:
Our group has grown so much, and I think we've learned a lot over the past few months. We need to work with everybody: City Council, Parks and Rec, CPW. We've learned to temper what we have come up with and try to move forward. Let's not come up with negatives – you can't do this – let's come up with positives and make us move forward so we can have a park that we can be proud of. My husband and I travel every spring and fall. I cannot tell you how disappointing it can be to come to this town and go, what a beautiful town, but there's no place for a dog to be. We have so many ways we need to go to make this a dog-friendly town. Let's work together to say how can we make this better.

Fred Garrison, 1465 Mark Twain Lane:
When we go to dog parks, we don't see any barbeques in dog parks because the dogs wouldn't go anywhere else. You don't see very many human bathrooms there either, unless it's next to an athletic field or something like that. Most people don't camp out there. Even the people I've talked to here, in the summer it's hot; in the winter it's snow. We don't need one of those things. So it's something we should look at, but before we spend money for something like that, we ought to see if we really need it.

In all these parks, there are never separate fenced-off areas for small and large dogs. There are common parking lots and entrances, and the rules always say: "Keep your dog on leash until you get him into the area." So I don't see the need for separate fenced-in areas. CPW was concerned with wildlife going through there; fences stop that. Their big concern was too many fences in there.

I am a member of Routt County Riders. I do a lot of road biking also. In the three years that we've had our dog over there, I've only seen one biker come through. I doubt she'll come back because she didn't know it was a dog-friendly area. One thought that I've had is that there's a city publication I think that has all the bike trails in it. It's in all the bike shops and everything. Maybe in the index just a line for dog-intensive areas or dog-particular trails or something like that so anyone with a dog concern can see where these places are.

In terms of the snow, if you go to Rita Valentine now, the snow that is tramped down in that picnic area only comes up to the benches of the picnic table. When you mentioned that dogs could jump over the fence, the fence that Josh is intending on building has that hog square wire on it with brown cedar poles and is probably six feet high. I think it would be hard for them to get out.

Lauren Mitchell, 720 Yahmonite:

I love Rita Valentine and Spring Creek, but I'd love to have something more than a dog park to take my dog to. I like to exercise; I like to exercise my dog. I know a lot of people in Steamboat do. Emerald Mountain is the logical place to go. I would love to have one or two trails be off leash. I'm fine with multiuse, but I'd love it to also be that I legally can take my dog up on Emerald and exercise both of us.

Mary Darcy, 2600 Heavenly View:

I'm not a member of Steamboat Digs Dogs, but I'm really impressed and interested in what they've done. I support their efforts to find more off-leash areas. The places I've enjoyed over the years with my dogs have been Whistler, Spring Creek, Fetcher Pond and near where I live. I would also like to see more off-leash areas that aren't a dog park. Dogs are part of the joy of life with your kids, and there are so many areas near where people live where I've almost never had a problem. I know we have to cooperate and keep everyone safe. I just would like to encourage Animal Control to respond to complaints but not stalk and not prevent you from letting your dog swim in a creek at a place that's really far from downtown crowds. In my neighborhood, we've had situations that I would say are overdone by Animal Control. I encourage cooperation among these groups, and I support more off-leash areas – especially where it makes a lot of sense.

Rich Ganther, 1847 Clubhouse Drive:

Right now, if you want to exercise a dog, you can go to a park that's totally empty with nobody around and try to play Frisbee with your dog, and you're a criminal. Aside from Rita Valentine, if you want to play with/exercise your dog, there's no place in this town to do it. I think we can agree that there are a lot of dogs that need exercise to be happy. A happy dog is a healthy dog and a safe dog. If we confine our dogs where they can't get any exercise, I think we create more problems than we solve. I don't want to be a criminal, and I don't want to be stalked. I just want a reasonable number of places where we can take our dogs and exercise them and be good citizens.

Bill Philip, 42535 Deerfoot Lane, Steamboat Digs Dogs:

I think there is plenty of opportunity for these groups to work together. I don't think it is dogs versus bikes. I bike, run, cross-country ski, hike on Emerald, and I don't think that there are a lot of dog-bike, dog-people conflicts that can't be managed pretty well. I think a lot of areas can truly be multiuse and safe and fun for everybody.

Grant Feton, Blue Sage Drive:

I think this is a fabulous idea. The need for a dog park and off-leash areas is really strong in this town, and there should be a place that makes that happen. I think this is a great place for it to happen. It's already approved that way; that's what it should be. I feel a tension in this room between

different users, and I don't think there needs to be at all. I agree with the last speaker that there's an opportunity here to create great off-leash areas for dogs, create some type of access between Hilltop and Anglers for those going through running or biking. Other groups can use the remaining open space to do different things; add some amenities for kids learning to ride bikes, or whatever the case might be. But I think there's an opportunity to bring these groups together.

RCR can help with trail design. I don't think anyone within RCR wants to trample all over the dog park. It should be a dog area, but we can create multiuse areas and use the same space for a variety of different uses and not have conflict. I think all of this can take place in a master plan that's not far off from what's already been created. I hope these groups can come together and speak, and I encourage you to encourage that to happen.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION

Watson encouraged the creation of a website to solicit public input. She pointed to Bear River's outreach effort as incredibly helpful for everyone involved.

Connell: We had a website, and then the person leading that cause got very busy. I think it's a great idea. We're going to get together to try to make more of this public. We've always encouraged anybody to come to our meetings. We've used the paper a lot to highlight meetings coming up.

Alfone: Kathy, what do you feel is your next step? What do you want this commission to consider? The communication form that we received I think was a little misleading, because we're not going to endorse a plan for Council right now. You mentioned that you want to sit down with staff and start looking at budget based on operations and maintenance. Is that the ask tonight?

Connell: That's the ask tonight because we want to move as quickly and expeditiously as possible for you all to say, : I like this; let's take it through more public process to Council. #2: Because you do have the powers now to recommend off-leash areas, we have a plan for trails and parks that we alluded to tonight that we want to talk to you about more specifically. We want to institute something in off-leash areas for our dogs throughout the town, and we want to do it so it's not one area. If you remember last meeting, the public was worried that if we allow off-leash usage in Whistler, everyone in town will come to Whistler. We got that. We pulled that from consideration to come back with a holistic look at multiple places that we can have temporary off-leash use.

Alfone: If you're looking for an endorsement to move forward to sit down with staff, I certainly would make that motion. I'm talking about Rita Valentine at this point.

Overstreet: If you wanted to do an endorsement of the plan and concept and to start to work with staff and engage the public further, some kind of message like that in the endorsement.

Koermer: I fully support the ideas that have been put forth for Rita Valentine Park. This is an opportunity to create an amenity for our community that is unparalleled in Steamboat right now. I think we had a couple things that came out of the discussion on the plan you put forth related to commuter trails and potentially multiuse existence within Rita Valentine. I get that the dog owners and dogs need a spot here in Steamboat Springs that we can utilize and market. I think there is a lot to be said for people who go to communities with their dogs who want to have places where they can play and not be harassed by local authorities – feel like they are comfortable in those zones.

Tumminello asked whether there needed to be a period of public viewing of the revised plan since it was just presented at this meeting.

Overstreet: We can attach the concept to the Parks and Rec Commission Report that's going to Council. I know they will have some questions as well.

Connell: Steamboat Digs Dogs will be happy to sponsor a community meeting so people can comment on it. We will work with staff on a plan to do a community presentation.

Adams: I would like that listed as a caveat to the endorsement that part of this will include more public comment. This is the second-largest park in the city. Yes, Rita Valentine and the Valentines had specific requests to have this as a dog park, so I think we need to honor that, and that's where a lot of the funding is coming from. I think that's important for the community to understand.

Connell: Maybe you want to say, "with the caveat that we have a community meeting as soon as possible in which we have this plan and get community feedback."

Koermer: And to include – it sounded like Eric was throwing out there the harmonious combination of RCR and Steamboat Digs Dogs so the trails are...

Connell; We're going to do that. We've already been contacted by Glen Trailer of Ski Butlers. We are definitely wanting to work with the other user groups so we're not creating a war here.

MOTION

Commissioner Alfone moved to endorse the conceptual plan as presented with the condition that there is an opportunity for public participation through an open house moving forward and to encourage meeting with staff to discuss the details of the plan with regard to operations and maintenance at Rita Valentine Park;
Commissioner Tumminello seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

City Council Meeting Report

Overstreet: Your goals were featured, and one of the things that caught their eye was the attendance. They want to institute a measure of 75% attendance. That would impact a couple members of this panel. I just wanted to let you know that that's something they want to do.

Koermer: Can we make a recommendation that 65% might be more realistic?

Overstreet: I can bring that back to them.

Weik asked about the numbers.

Overstreet: I think the lowest was 57% and the highest was 89-90.

Alfone confirmed that this also includes work sessions.

Koermer: I'd be in favor of 75% attendance for actual meetings and maybe a lower percentage attendance for work sessions.

Press: Almost all of you were at 75 except one.

Watson: I think 75% should be doable if you want to be on this commission and you want to make an impact. I think we have a lot going on right now, and if somebody is not engaged, let's find those that are. I think that's fair.

Overstreet: The other thing they brought up was your goal of attending one Council meeting a month. The consensus was for you to attend a meeting where there was something relevant to Parks and Rec versus just showing up when we have nothing on the agenda.

Koermer confirmed that at this time there is no alternate on the Commission.

Press: In 2016, everyone here had 75% or above attendance.

Commissioners would like to discuss adding additional commissioners as well as an alternate.

Parks and Rec Commission Minutes
February 8, 2017

Overstreet will check with the city clerk.

Weik asked if the 2005 City Council designation of Rita Valentine Park as an off-leash area was permanent; Overstreet said he believed it was permanent. He will find a previously-published timeline of the park.

Weik wanted to make sure there is a clear process for temporary off-leash designation, monitoring, and determining when it would become permanent or be revoked.

Adams: I agree; if there's processes and historic consequences we can look at, I think that's important. Our job is to really vet this and make it so they're successful when they go to City Council as far as I'm concerned. Right now, I don't think there's enough information for them to be successful. I think that's what we pointed out tonight.

Tumminello said there was a newspaper article on the history of Rita Valentine.

Overstreet: There was an ordinance from 1994 that the Ice Rink Advisory Committee was under Council. I was thinking it would be better to have them under you guys. They meet about once a quarter right now unless there's a big thing at the arena that they need some input on. That was fully endorsed, so they will be reporting to this commission.

Doug, just contact me and I'll let you know.

Koermer will continue to work on the goals and user groups article.

Press said that the information is published on the department website.

Koermer will get the article to Ally who will distribute it to the group.

Commissioners decided to make February 22 a regular meeting.

Commissioner Weik moved to make February 22 a non-work session in order to allow formal approval of the Parks and Rec Commission goals for 2017 for later publication;

Commissioner Tumminello seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Next Meeting Agenda: February 22

Approval of goals, ebikes.

Tumminello reported that legislation was just introduced to regulate ebikes statewide.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Alfone moved to adjourn the meeting at approximately 7:58 p.m.

Commissioner Weik seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.