

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

April 12, 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, April 12, 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 and Sarah Floyd.

Absent: Weik, Watson, Alfone

Staff members present were Director of Parks, Open Space and Recreational Services John Overstreet and Staff Assistant Ally Press.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None.

Approval of Minutes: March 8, March 22

Commissioner Floyd moved to approve both sets of minutes; Commissioner Koermer seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Commercial River Operations Discussion and 2017 Permitting

STAFF PRESENTATION

Craig Robinson, Parks, Open Space and Trails Manager:

We are here to talk about 2016 annual commercial river operations, and then we'll roll right into the request for 2017 one-year permits. As part of your packet tonight, I have included the headcounts and money totals for 2016. As you look at the uses, it's broken down by the commercial operations that we've approved: tubing, rafting, fishing, stand-up paddleboards and kayakers. As you look at the year-end totals, tubing is by far and away the most numbers that we have. Those are actually capped within the River Management Plan and have the most stringent rules applied to them, followed by rafting, which has some rules, kayaking, which has maybe a little less regulation, and then fishing and stand-up paddleboards down the line. July is by far and away our busy month. Lots of people here in town enjoying the river – more than double what we're seeing in June and August. The dollars correspond as well.

The way the River Management Plan is set up there's a 5% fee that's required to be submitted by each outfitter monthly with a report of how many people they're doing per day. We're monitoring that information to make sure they're complying with the caps and permits that have been set forth. That total amount came out to be just under \$25,000 last year. All that money goes into the general fund, and it's there to offset the cost of that division's responsibility for taking care of that asset. The cost of river management far exceeds this \$25,000 as far as the work we do cleaning up trash, treating noxious weeds and then the river work we're doing to improve access points and structures in the river. Ally is looking for the 2015 number. I think they're comparable.

When the economy is doing well, we see a lot more people enjoying the commercial operations on the river. In low water years like 2012, we see less revenue and less use on the river because the water runs out so to speak, and we have thresholds where we shut off the commercial operations.

Conflicts: Last year we had one conflict where we actually received a phone call from somebody. It was more about a miscommunication. There was the client's story, the operator's story, and putting together the pieces that kind of made sense, it sounded like there was a breakdown in communication. It didn't pertain to anything that happened on the river; it was about them trying to get on the river, and the tubing cap had been reached for the day. So she thought she was within the cap, and they said no, you're not within the cap; so she didn't get to go tubing with her family.

In 2014-15, we saw some bumper stickers pasted around the Core Trail at river access points; we didn't see that in 2016. I don't think the person who posted those is feeling any different; they just didn't spend their personal money to paste bumper stickers on city property that year.

We've heard general comments that Fetcher Pond is very busy – not only with private recreationalists trying to enjoy the area, people with dogs on and off leash (probably more off, even though it's not an off-leash dog park,) and commercial operations that are now utilizing that area. We leave it up to the commercial operations to figure out the best schedule to have minimum impact to the public and each other until such time as we hear public complaints formally. Then we'll take action, but right now we're letting the commercial operators work that out themselves.

Portions of the Yampa near River Creek Park, Rotary Park and Emerald Park are subject to conservation easements held by Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Those lands' conservation values include public fishing and wildlife resources. Other activities are not supposed to have negative impacts on those. When the River Management Plan was done in 2004, CPW was part of the process and agreed to the plan that moved forward, which allowed commercial activities in this stretch. So the question is: Are

these commercial operations having negative impacts to angling opportunities and wildlife resources. As we've talked about, we believe that the commercial operators are a positive aspect to operations on the river where they're educating their clients on river etiquette, minimizing user conflicts and respecting wildlife. Personally, I do not believe that we're impacting those values, but that's an ongoing discussion and CPW is aware of tonight's meeting.

2017 Requests for One-Year Permits:

In 2016, we had five permit requests and five people were approved. This year we have five vendors requesting operations for a one-year permit, but they're not all the same as last year. This year it's four stand-up paddleboarding and one angling. I attached their business plans for your review. Everything they talk about seems to adhere to the River Management Plan and acknowledge insurance requirements for the city.

As we move forward, we are a little challenged on staff resources to oversee the commercial operations. We're not out there asking if they are commercial operators and verifying their numbers for the day. We're relying on their reporting and others' reporting to follow up on that. If we gain any additional staff, that is something we can maybe do a better job on, but right now we're still trying to manage trash and impacts to the bank, minimizing access points, protecting resources.

Tumminello confirmed that the Yampa River Management Plan will be updated as part of the comprehensive Parks, Rec, Open Space and Trails plan update that was approved by City Council. Overstreet said he is drafting the RFP document right now and hopes to have the consultant onboard by the beginning of June with the expectation of finalizing the plan by next spring.

Robinson: The current plan mentions tubing, angling, rafting and kayaking. It didn't talk about stand-up paddleboarding, but that in my mind is a lot like kayaking; you can do it at the same water levels, and it has the same types of impacts. The plan did call for a River Steering Committee that would hear a lot of the issues and help make decisions. About ten years ago the city did away with that committee among other advisory committees; this commission is now acting as the advisory committee for everything parks and rec. That's why we're bringing this to you. Staff wants to have public vetting of these topics related to the river.

If we have challenges with people not following the guidelines, we can let the operators know they're non-compliant; we can pull their permit; we can not renew their permit in the future. We don't have that situation today with these operators.

Paddleboard Adventure Company:
Danny Tebbenkamp:

We saw a 12% decrease in our business on Yampa and Fetcher. Mostly that was because the drop in flows caused a shorter season. We had a 50% drop in yoga business on Fetcher. We actually stopped pushing it as much because of the crowdedness over there; it just wasn't creating the atmosphere we wanted our clients to experience. We've moved all our yoga to Perl Lake. I think there's a great increase as far as permits for yoga using Fetcher. We do still do lessons there in the morning for an hour. We do have some dates on the calendar this year for some bigger groups as we did last year. We're working with Kids Adventure Club, Steamboat Soccer Club. We did see a drop across the board in our lessons and yoga here in Steamboat.

Other than that, though, we had no conflicts here to my knowledge; no major incidents or injuries. I was personally involved with picking up trash along the way. I did not make a river cleanup myself, but I had employees go. Always heavy on education on safety, etiquette, noise, trash – whether it be my clients or just other people using the river.

This year, we're still at our location on Lincoln next to Verizon. Last year we kind of became an educational hub for a lot of people. That location has been good for that.

Lessons on the river will be taught by me; I'm a Level 3 certification from the ACA. We do keep our ratios at 3:1. If we get higher than that, we like to bring on a second guide. I am a wilderness first responder; just renewed my swift water. As this sport is not sanctioned by the state, I want to be ahead of the curve when they do come down with requirements. A lot of outfitters don't have certified guides and don't have proper safety training. If someone were to die and someone doesn't have training, it's going to come back on you guys or the state. It just doesn't look good. They're in good hands with me. I don't just send out my part-time employees; take personal pride in teaching them river safety and paddleboarding.

We put in at River Park for beginner lessons when the flows are above 1200. We don't go below Fetcher when they're beginners. When it drops below 1200 we start to do lessons below Fetcher, or if they're intermediate we do Fetcher down to Bear River or maybe Stockbridge.

I think I ran across one or two people who were doing illegal lessons last summer. It's not my job to get them in trouble, but I did run across that a few times. For me, that's discouraging, but at the same time we don't have the resources to do that, and I'm not going to do that. But thanks for letting us do what we love to do – making some money and teaching people paddleboarding.

Koermer asked for any feedback Tebbenkamp may have on the River Ranger program.

Tebbenkamp: I ran into them quite a few times; mostly what I saw was them just getting dogs on leashes. They weren't river-savvy guys in my opinion. Most of the things I saw were on the shoreline. I think that presence is good, but it would be nice to have a ranger on the water. I know that's probably not in the budget, but someone who's going to do laps on the river. I don't want to police the river; I feel like that's not attractive for our city, but at the same time, if we're going to put the money into the program, it would be nice to have one on the river. A lot of times all three rangers were grouped in one spot. Put one in a kayak, canoe, paddleboard, just doing his job on the water for water safety issues and trash issues on the river, not just on the bank.

Mountain Sports Kayak School:

Barry Smith:

This is like our 35th year teaching kayaking and now stand-up paddleboarding. I think that was maybe 15% of our business last year. We go from River Creek Park down to Fetcher with our beginners. We take two hours to do that section; just kind of get them out on the water enjoying the sites and teach them some skills. As they get better, we'll go all the way down to probably Rich Weiss Park – maybe a little farther if they're better. Last year we only took like eight people in August because the water got really low.

So we're teaching them river safety and river etiquette. My big thing is dogs on the river without a leash and all the moose. We saw quite a few moose last year. I told a few people with dogs that their dog should be on a leash because that moose is going to attack you or me. That's what I saw a few times.

Other than that, we've had a great time with it, and we're going to keep doing it hopefully another year.

We saw the river rangers a lot. I saw them at Fetcher mostly. Never saw them much up at River Creek Park. I don't think it was as wild with tubing last year, although July 4th was still a wild day. But I think it's good to have the ranger presence there.

Koermer: Do you have any insight on educational approaches that maybe we should look at commercial vendors having in their stores? We know you guys are out there doing as much education as you can, but any ideas we might be able to implement that you may have thought of over the past year or so?

Smith: Educating the people who sell the tubes at the stores would probably be a good thing. Maybe get a meeting with them just so they can tell people where to go, etc. I remember last year someone had mentioned

that one of the resort companies had a bus, and they'd just drop everyone off at River Creek Park. And I said something to the driver, and he was real receptive. I just said hey, I don't know if you guys know but according to the River Management Plan you're not supposed to tube from here down. I know a lot of those conservation easement areas are not supposed to be tubed because of their access and money that they got from GOCO. So I would like to see some of the rangers be more up top and filling in people. I think if we can talk to the people who sell the tubes and maybe give them a printout of where they should send their tubers. It's still the same; you're picking up lots of trash and blown-out tubes and things like that.

Yampa Valley Anglers:

Ryan:

This is I think our fifth season utilizing the city permit system. From my point of view, everybody's been great to work with. We haven't had any major conflicts on the river. Our business has probably gone up 3% each year. We probably do a lot more business outside of town.

My biggest concern is the trash issue. I've been participating in the designated river cleanups, and I haven't really seen as many people there that are outfitters as I'd like to see. I've seen Walgreens people, Wal-Mart people, but I think a lot of people kind of bypass it. Yes, we all clean up the river when we're out there, but it's nice to see everybody come together as a community. I know Pete at Back Door Sports does a great job. I just don't see as many people showing up as I'd like to. This is a golden resource, and I'd like to protect it as much as I can.

I haven't seen the river rangers too much out there. I agree with Dan about maybe having a little more river-savvy people. I think they should come together and know the outfitters and know the guides. We do see some pirating out there. This is our livelihood; we feed our children with this job. I'd really like to see more input from river rangers out there really dissecting this river, because there are some piraters out there, and we want to try to protect it as much as possible. I feel like a little bit more of the funds we contribute should go into more patrolling and understanding this resource that's vital to a lot of us.

I hope we can continue our business and doing what we love to do.

Koermer suggested a meeting between outfitters and river rangers.

Smith thought that would be a great idea.

Smith: The safety aspect is huge also. Having qualified guides out there is important. You never know what can happen on a river.

Koermer: Have you noticed any concerns with the health of the river?

Smith: We've got a healthy fishery. I think we need to clean more of the trash downstream by the bowling alley and that area. Let's have a party and clean that all up together. There should be a guaranteed day where we all have to show up.

Overstreet will work to facilitate a meeting between the river rangers and commercial river vendors, as well as perhaps resort companies, concierge and the Chamber.

SheSUP:

Jen Le Roux:

I started SheSUP summer before last; blew my knee out at the beginning of the summer and only got into the river end of August and did a few courses then. Last summer I needed to go to South Africa to take care of my parents. The reason I want a permit is that I don't want to be teaching without having a permit. I just want to get out there, have fun, women teaching women. Jen Howland, who is the marketing/branding person for Hala Gear, has joined me. She's going to be teaching the yoga portion; she's certified and has insurance. I'm certified Level 2 with ACA for stand-up paddleboarding. I've done swift water rescue; my CPR is current. I was a river guide for 15 years, and I do family rafting still.

My whole goal is to get women out on the river and have fun; mostly working above Fetcher. As everybody said, Fetcher is pretty busy, so it's nice to spend as little time there as possible and just get them onto the easy part of the river. We talk a lot about safety, about the gear, about the leash – how to use it on the river and off – because that's really been the main cause of death on larger rivers.

My last thing is just being a role model in terms of wearing a helmet, life jacket, having river gear. We have so many families coming down in Wal-Mart rafts with little kids 4 or 5 with no life jackets – just no idea, because we've never had a bad incident.

I echo Danny's points on the river rangers; I found them mostly checking up on parking. They didn't really know anything about the river. Two years ago I suggested that there's a sign at the Ore House bridge at high water, alerting people that if they feel they can't get under that bridge that they're definitely not going to get under the next bridge if they go left to avoid that bridge. A lot of people get swept down the left to try and avoid that and get into a worse situation.

But hopefully we can get a permit.

Tumminello confirmed that insurance requirements are \$1 million per occurrence with the city named as co-insurer.

Hala Gear:

Jake Castle:

I'm the general manager for the store that's opening at 910 Yampa Street. It's going to be Hala Gear's retail store and demo center. We are not going to be renting a ton of our own clinics; we are going to be helping try to book trips for Danny. The kind of stuff we're applying for a permit for really has more to do with the use of Fetcher Pond from time to time to do very basic clinics and more demo operations. There will be a Hala Gear employee there making sure that people are wearing a PFD and are not intoxicated – things like that.

A lot of the people who will be on the river using Hala Gear will be using it for demo purposes. It will be unguided. They will be going out on their own after signing waivers.

One thing we want to do for an education piece is have a map of the Yampa River in the store. Before anybody leaves the store, we want to educate them where they can and can't get out of the river, as well as pertinent things about not trashing the river, etc. Hala Gear intends to have all our 15 employees out for river cleanup. We want to make sure that everybody is keeping our river healthy – doing the best we can from an outfitter perspective to get ahead of that. It's my personal belief that a lot of this trash has nothing to do with the outfitters at all; it has more to do with general public coming in that have next to no education about this.

For the river rangers, I want to echo everything that everyone else has said here. They seem to be more into parking and dogs as opposed to what's actually going on on the river. We need to have somebody on the river. I don't think that policing the river is the best idea, but from an education piece there needs to be something there. We need to maybe space people out so that we have a ranger stationed at the put-in just to see who's coming on the river – these pirates for instance. I think having eyes on where they're getting in and out would kind of drive us figuring out who these people are and whether they have a permit or not.

Overstreet: What day during the week would you say will be the busiest besides the weekend?

Castle: Friday. It's kind of hard to tell. Our shop isn't open until the second week of May. We're just not quite sure what the popularity is going to be – how many people are going to be demoing. We would like to use Fetcher Pond once a week if we can get enough people together to be able to get them out on their boards in an area where they're supervised.

Koermer: Do you have a rough estimate of what your demo fleet might be? How many boards could potentially go out in one day?

Castle: One day on the river would be in the ballpark of 20 boards. I would say it's highly unlikely that we're going to rent 20 boards in a day, except maybe 4th of July.

Tumminello asked Robinson if vendors are required to name the city as a release in any waivers they have their customers sign.

Robinson: We don't. Their personal liability forms are typically not the city's concern; it's that the business names the city as additionally insured for \$1 million.

Tumminello: It might be nice to have the city named as a release in the waivers. I don't know if it's something we can require, but it would certainly be a good idea.

Robinson: I can check with Legal on that.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION

Overstreet will talk to Corey about the best venue to organize a meeting with the rangers.

Floyd: I still think we need to pursue educating the people who are selling tubes; what tubes are likely not to blow up halfway down the river; the resort companies; maybe a laminated card about river safety in your condor when you check in. Something that doesn't involve a lot of staff work but let's people know the rules in every place they're likely to go. I think the Chamber staff should be educated as well. Maybe put it in the paper every week during certain times.

Overstreet: I'll be meeting with Kara from the Chamber next week; maybe I can bring something up with her.

Tumminello: We can deal with the bigger issues through the master planning process. I think there needs to be some changes to city ordinances to facilitate some of this. I think we need to have a forum which identifies concrete steps that can and should be taken that has all constituents at the table.

Floyd mentioned fostering river education in schools.

MOTION

Commissioner Tumminello moved to approve all five vendors pending proof of insurance if not yet submitted.
Commissioner Floyd seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

Director's Update

Overstreet: We are working on the Howelsen Hill Site Master Plan right now. There will be an open house next Wednesday evening from 5:30-7:00 at the Community Center. We would love as many people as possible from the commission to show up.

The Site Plan is targeted on the hill, the lodge, outbuildings in that area, parking and circulation patterns. We hope to bring it back to this body in May.

Open Positions

Koermer: We have some open positions on the commission. We've had three applicants thus far. What's the timeframe on that?

Overstreet: Deadline for applications is May 9 because it was pushed back. I can get that date back to you. Three applications for four slots.

Koermer implored anyone interested in serving on the commission to submit an application on the city page.

Meeting Agenda Outlook

Ally Press:

April 26 meeting is cancelled.

May 10 will probably be a long meeting: IRAC interviews and two agenda items with the dog park group.

The meeting will start in the Citizens Room; interviews will be conducted in the Crawford Room.

There are eight people to interview for seven spots on the committee.

The dog group would like you guys to send the Rita Valentine plan on to Council. Then they have some other proposals with trails and parks for off-leash.

Tumminello asked if they had a cost with the Rita Valentine plan yet; Press said they haven't mentioned that.

Overstreet: No. They had different concept plans. They had a public meeting three weeks ago, and I don't know what has come of that.

I would like to bring back some of the findings from the public meetings on the Site Master Plan – hopefully on the 10th. Council would like to see a completed plan by end of June.

The soil study should come back around the time that this plan is completed, so those two can be married and we'll have an idea of how much the vision will cost as well as the soil stabilization.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Tumminello moved to adjourn the meeting at approximately 6:24 p.m.

Commissioner Floyd seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.