

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

August 9, 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, August 9, 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, co-Chair Doug Tumminello, Craig Keith, Holly Weik, Sarah Floyd and Cady Watson.
Staff members present were Director of Parks, Open Space and Recreational Services John Overstreet and Staff Assistant Ally MacDougall.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None.

Approval of Minutes: June 14, July 12

Commissioner Tumminello moved to approve the June 14, 2017 meeting minutes; Frank Alfone seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Floyd moved to approve the July 12, 2017 meeting minutes; Commissioner Keith seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously with abstentions.

Howelsen Hill Vision and Future Planning Discussion

STAFF PRESENTATION

John Overstreet:
City Council would like the Commission to help with the planning process over the coming months. On August 1 the planning firm presented to Council a vision plan. This plan took 3-4 months when it should have taken 6-8, but we were trying to get it to combine with the soil study and other things. The Council wanted to send it back to the Parks and Rec Commission to help with the public process.

The first plan was the 2014 Howelsen Hill Park Draft Master Plan. Howelsen Hill Ski Area improvements totaled about \$6.6 million. A renovated lodge was included as well as the lighting of Mile Run, improved lift access, creating a new office space and museum for the Winter Sports Club, new snowmaking, a terrain park. This is still a draft document.

In 2011, the Steamboat Springs Economic Strategy highlighted partnering with the WSC on Howelsen improvements and to develop and promote non-ski-season activities.

There was a taskforce that did a draft study in 2011 looking at the issues that were impacting Howelsen Hill. The group looked at the mission of Howelsen Hill and involved many civic groups providing information on the values, funding strategies and revenue potential. They came up with a mission statement: Howelsen Hill is an iconic, family-owned, community landmark that provides four-season multi-use recreational resources for a wide variety of affordable, non-motorized winter and summer activities.

In the 2009 department plan, which we'll be updating in the coming year, (the RFP process closes tomorrow; we hope to kick that off in September,) Some of the strategies included researching traditional funding opportunities and exploring the community's willingness to support a dedicated tax, pursue alternative funding, enhance recreation opportunities for identified populations, assess the current facility conditions and conduciveness, add new parks and facilities and possibly repurpose some parks (moving ball fields, etc.)

The 1999 Howelsen Hill Master Plan was revised in 2005 and was developed in house with representatives from the then Howelsen Hill Commission, Parks and Rec Commission and citizens. The plan identified expanding skiing and snowboarding terrain, constructing new lifts, adding lighting for night racing, lodge and training center expansion, new snowmaking and snow tubing. The priority 2 items included constructing and amphitheater area, burying the transmission lines, creating a Nordic center, improving parking and making the jump complex which we now have, and developing a winter-summer freestyle area.

In 1990 there was another plan developed by the same group that presented the latest plan on August 1. That plan called to improve the ski lifts and trails, enhance the ski jump area, adding a bobsled/luge track, add an alpine slide, expand the lodge and develop an amphitheater area, pool for freestyle jumping and summer use and building a roller skiing training center.

It all started in 1973 to develop a ski jumping complex with six jumps, a new ticket office and improved parking.

Tonight City Council wishes for the Parks and Rec Commission to work on a public outreach process that will assist staff in completing the Howelsen Hill Ski Area Site plan in six months – just the hill, the lodge, the parking and circulation area and any associated buildings.

Tonight we want to work on concepts to engage the public and formalize a recommended strategy at the August 23 meeting to take to Council.

Kyrill Kretzschmar, Recreation and Enterprise Manager:

Council asked us to provide an engagement plan with the public with the goal to find out what the vision really is for Howelsen Hill. We've done this numerous times, but Council feels that at this point we still need to do more to really reach consensus in the community.

We could do it as we normally do it with open houses and try to engage the public. What I really want to do is give you guys a toolkit so we can take that to the next level and really get the public to participate.

I got this toolkit from a colleague in Boulder that they use to effectively engage the public.

First the group must answer some questions about the purpose and goal of the project.

To come up with an engagement plan by August 23 is a very tight timeline; we're going to have to work very hard to make that happen.

I think the more time and energy we spend on planning this process, the more effective it will be.

First and foremost, we need to answer those questions on pages 2 and 3; read through the entire document so you have an understanding of what it is that I'm trying to do when I work with you as a group.

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION

Commissioner Weik:

Is it Council or staff's impression that the current public process when applied and followed is not effective?

Kretzschmar: No, I don't think so. I'm trying to find a more effective tool to gather community input; think first about how we're going to do it and what we're trying to accomplish before even engaging something like that, and that's where this toolkit can provide guidance.

Watson asked about the existing outreach process to 28 user groups.

Weik said as a member of Routt County Riders, one such group, she did not feel the process was effective.

Weik: Do we need to come up with a new process, or do we need to follow the process we really ought to have followed in the first place?

Alfone: I think Council is looking for us to be more active out there with these user groups getting their input.

Weik suggested using the user group assignments already made and attempting to engage with those groups on this topic.

Weik: Council has said they want us to look just at the ski area, but when you look at the picture of everything plan, it affects more than just the ski area.

Other commissioners agreed.

Tumminello: I don't think you can just aggregate it; you have to look at the whole thing.

Overstreet: The direction from Council earlier this year was to look at the alpine, Nordic jumps and summer uses at the ski area.

Tumminello: We have major issues I think we need to look at: park usage, soil slides, the private management RFP process, the joint use agreement with Winter Sports Club, cost and cost recovery.

Weik: We're probably going to need to go back to Council and say we cannot look at just this one portion.

Tumminello: When I saw the video, I didn't think the charge was so limited; I thought there was plenty of room to exercise discretion.

Watson confirmed that Suiter affirmed Council's direction to look only at the hill in the meeting he had with Kretzschmar this morning.

Alfone: The direction I heard was to focus on this vision plan.
Overstreet agreed.

Floyd: The topic that continues to come back to the drawing board is the ski hill. It's pushed by the JUA, the challenges with Barrow's lift which is on its last legs, and the soils test. So if it wasn't for those three items, I'm not sure that we'd be tasked to be looking at Howelsen Hill right now. To me, the objective of this plan is to keep Howelsen Hill Ski Area open. I don't know how much longer the city can subsidize it, and it needs repairs.

Tumminello: I think the difficulty is the conceptual plan that was presented is mostly focused on summer use.

Overstreet: The Council said the winter use was not really looked at.

Weik: They felt like they had a good handle on what the public wants – not necessarily a good solution for how to meet those needs.

Alfone: Is Council working on those three main issues Sarah brought up and feels we don't need to worry about those and let's focus on this plan?

Overstreet: We continue to work on the JUA with the Winter Sports Club. There has been a verbal agreement to back that up a year to continue to look at planning for the hill. Relative to Ski Corp and their proposal, it's still

up here. We really haven't seen anything to take in writing that we could evaluate. The Barrow's Lift if you look at the conceptual plan, it does call for realignment of the lift, but as of right now that is just a plan. Before there is a lift alignment that says yes let's try here, we're going to have to do some test boring to see how the soils are with that alignment. The soils study has been presented. They are continuing with some analysis of some areas; they're going to do some more test areas I think this fall near the magic carpet area. There was some sliding to the north side of the jump area, so they want to see how that all is flowing. There's a slow creep towards the jump areas, but as you work towards the alpine slide area it gets more and more immediate.

Alfone: So those three things are pending, but there is some movement and some direction and people working on these things. So if we set those aside and then go back to the concept plan, I guess one of my questions is are we comfortable even acknowledging this plan and trying to create a strategy to get the public input that Council is looking for? Or do we need to go back to them and say we need a little bit more information on the whole park as opposed to just focusing on what's been presented August 1?

Commissioners had a wide-ranging discussion attempting to define the task before the Commission.

Weik: I do not feel that our task is to figure out what will make money; the very clear message I got out of the video was: Find out what residents want at Howelsen Hill for themselves. I would say that if we come at it from a financial standpoint, in one sense we're exceeding our charter because that's Council's concern of whether it's affordable. I'm also very sensitive personally to a public versus private conflict on that. We are not a resort. What works to make money for a resort and a private corporation is not necessarily appropriate for a public facility and service that is done with tax moneys. So I don't want to go there. If everybody comes in here and says create whatever will bring in money and we'll turn it over to being a resort facility, okay. But I don't think that's going to happen; I think we need to focus on what does everybody in town want to see on Howelsen Hill for themselves, and we feed that back.

Koermer: That makes sense. But as we add these amenities, the cost of sustaining the hill will go up.

Tumminello: Unless the public says they don't want any amenities there. They just want the skiing to be available and affordable.

Weik: The Community Survey was pretty clear that there's a strong appetite for continuing the subsidies at Howelsen Hill and continuing it as a ski area. But pretend everybody said it's too much; shut it down; let it go. What happens there? You still have Nordic; you still have summer use.

You lose the alpine slide and jumping, downhill, snowboarding, the terrain park. But the park doesn't disappear. If the city had to make that decision, it's still a park; there's still things that happen there. It's going to depend on what people say they want to be preserved or added and what price tag they're willing to stomach to make that happen. We need to see where people draw their lines.

Watson thought it was pretty clear that Council's direction to the Commission was to create a public engagement process for Howelsen Hill Ski Area. She suggested answering the questions and proceeding with the toolkit that Kretzschmar provided. The park could be worked on in conjunction with this process.

Weik: We could point out that there are other areas that are going to be affected by changes to the hill.

Tumminello: I'm not sure how realistic that is if we say to the soccer group we're not going to talk to you because we're not focused on soccer fields; that's not going to go over well.

Weik: It doesn't do a good job of finding out what people want to see at Howelsen.

Watson: I completely agree with you; I'm just saying it would be outside of our purview to discuss those.

Weik: We could tell them our plan and include why we think this is an incomplete plan.

Floyd: I think the challenge is that the group was invited to come in to establish a vision of what the ski area could be, but the vision that we have in front of us encroached on many other amenities. So that's why we're struggling. We want to say ski area because that's what we've been tasked to do, but the vision that's in front of us impacts many other user groups that are not ski area related and are primarily summer users.

Koermer: I think there's also some conflict in the catchphrase they use of "Community first." Our community may have different interests that tie into a variety of things that happen at Howelsen Hill. There are people who make gains by folks coming to seek out those attractions versus those who seek out activities.

Weik: They did say they wanted to know what residents wanted to have at Howelsen Hill for their own use. They did not want us to look at the economic side – second and third order effects.

Watson clarified that the user group engagement that occurred earlier this year was focused on the hill: alpine, Nordic jump and summer uses.

Tumminello: Then how did the resulting plan end up being bigger than that?

Weik: The consultant said at the August 1 meeting that the reason things got moved around was she's looking at flow, access and parking and making sure that it makes sense and is safe. In their mind, that necessitated moving some things around. So her initial scope may have been just those things, but in order to make them make sense, they proposed some relocations, which have the ripple effect that we're all talking about that stymie's us.

Tumminello: And a restaurant.

Floyd: We could very well with this plan have a successful park downtown that doesn't have a ski area related to it. I think that's the conflict. What we're seeing are amenities for guests and community and whatnot, but they're not related to a ski area.

Tumminello: So is it as simple as asking the public: What do you want to see by way of winter usage? What do you want to see by way of summer usage? How much are you willing to pay for it? How do you propose we pay for it?

Alfone: Is it really our purview to ask the financial questions?

Tumminello: I think that was part of the charges to us was how do we pay for this.

Commissioners agreed on those questions.

Commissioners worked to answer the questions on Page 2 of the toolkit.

Purpose:

Create a public engagement process that results in a community vision, including financials, for Howelsen Hill Ski area summer and winter usage.

Alfone wondered whether or not the vision plan should be presented to these community groups to facilitate engagement.

It could jumpstart discussion, but commissioners felt it was too focused on summer use.

Weik thought the vision plan could help at the first public meeting but at later meetings buzz would be generated by the newspaper.

Start by visiting with the user groups and city staff that has worked at Howelsen Hill.

Kretzschmar mentioned a process design team perhaps made up of one councilmember, one commissioner, one Winter Sports Club rep and one staff member that could create the engagement process, because it's difficult in this setting to come up with an effective plan.

Floyd advocated for a deliberative process regardless of the given timeline to ensure that changes made to this 105-year-old institution aren't rushed through.

Weik asked Overstreet about a survey in conjunction with the upcoming overall Parks and Recreation Master Plan; Overstreet said there would be a statistically-valid survey as part of the process that addresses the whole system.

Weik: I think what we get out of the survey should be rolled into a final report to Council side-by-side with what we get out of the public outreach process.

Overstreet: It should be done by the end of the year.

Tumminello: I'm wondering if people are starting to get wary of surveys and planning efforts that don't result in actions.

First ask people what they want. Once that's defined, ask them how they are willing to pay for these activities.

Overstreet recounted holding public meetings and giving people \$100 to spread between all projects/activities as a good way to gauge what people are really willing to pay for.

Alfone pointed out that this engagement process has already been undertaken earlier this year and in 2014.

Overstreet: We talked to the city of Boulder this morning, and she said that open houses is one of the worst things you can do.

Keith: I think you'd be more successful sitting at Starbucks at 8 in the morning talking to locals as they come in.

Floyd thought the process design group could do something similar to what Steamboat Digs Dogs did in collating the responses from the broader group and creating a more tight-knit proposal – in this case by combining the 2014 and earlier 2017 input with the input from the two surveys and any other input gathered from new outreach efforts.

Weik suggested making sure people understand that they can email their thoughts – they don't need to stand up in front of a large group on camera.

Overstreet: Mike Lane is here to take down what he's hearing because this is what he does. We could set up a blog. During the Bear River Park Plan we had the mailbox area where people could send in comments online.

Koermer suggested getting more random input in addition to user-group-centered input.

Starbucks, farmers market, Core Trail, Howelsen Hill itself.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Eric Meyer, 2775 Riverside Drive:

You're already losing your public engagement. Whoever is here to do this doesn't have an hour and a half to sit around. That's part of it. The ones that have worked in the past were the ones that partnered with the National Parks Service. They came in professionally with a website that allowed you to not come to meetings. Those worked at Emerald Mountain Park and Bear River. This commission doesn't get crowds; I've been coming here for five years, and you're not getting anybody in here. You'll get somebody to rally a group, (WSC, Steamboat Digs Dogs,) but you need to get into the web space where you have good questions that people can answer real quick. Get input in writing and get it in one place where it can be analyzed, because you're all going to hear it differently even if it's the same words. Put the past plans on the website for people to see. If one thing comes up across all those plans, that's important. This all should be done after the master plan that ends in 11 months, because if you just look at Howelsen you're not going to get questions answered like: Do we want four ball fields down there? First you come up with how many ball fields we need in town. The big picture is really important before you get into the little details. Unfortunately, I think the timelines are tough. Maybe you do stick to something really small, but clarify with Council before you go too far. I would say fill this out and come back together; don't define purpose tonight because it's clearly not going anywhere.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION

Weik: I think we also have to caution Council that even though we're going to give them that data, which informs whether or not they're interested in this concept plan, all of that still has to wait on and be incorporated into the Master Plan. But the information we're trying to gather does not preclude master planning and would actually help the process.

Revised Purpose:

Create and execute an engagement process which reveals the uses/activities/amenities residents would like to see on Howelsen Hill and indicates the costs residents would be willing to endure to establish and maintain those uses, as well as how these funds are generated.

Result:

A report with specific information furnished by our community by February, 2018 provided to City Council.

Floyd was in favor of presenting a more focused proposal to City Council rather than facts only.

Tumminello agreed and thought the design team should function similar to how Floyd previously indicated.

Commissioners thought it was too soon to say what a report would actually look like. They did not feel they had the resources to put together a full plan or proposal.

Floyd thought a more focused proposal could be created if it pertained solely to the ski area.

Weik suggested two design teams: One to design the process by which public input would be solicited and another to incorporate that input into a plan or proposal that would meet the majority of public wishes.

Alfone: The outreach program has to be submitted to Council by the 23rd, and they have to sign off on that. I think we're getting way far ahead of ourselves because they may say: We don't want to do a project design team; you need to go in a different direction. So let's just put out there that we recommend that a process design team be part of this effort.

Weik: Here's what we think you want us to find out; here's our plan for finding that information; we propose that we use a process design team to help us with that outreach process.

Watson mentioned a two-pronged approach with a heavy web presence.

Set dates for meetings for which outreach will be on the agenda.

Purpose of Public Engagement:

Solicit what people want in the winter and summer on Howelsen Hill.

Members of The Public Who Should be Engaged Are:

Everybody. User groups. Some user groups may not be particularly relevant.

Draft a letter to user groups giving them notice of this process.

Koermer suggested that each member of the design team bring a buddy who has nothing to do with this.

Floyd agreed and highlighted the need to solicit input from the people who aren't traditionally involved in these processes and who may not have even set foot on Howelsen Hill outside of maybe the Winter Carnival.

School system, integrated community.

Floyd: We've got a project in place to help facilitate this; getting school kids in each grade to come over in the winter. Summer use also includes concerts.

Floyd suggested that all commissioners have a role in coming up with questions and reaching out to people in everyday life to turn this into more of a community project.

Tumminello wanted to make sure there's room for skeptics; Watson said those opinions are likely to come through the website.

Keith pointed to hockey players as a group who aren't stakeholders in Howelsen Hill; Floyd suggested the Old Town Hot Springs group.

Process Design Team:

Determining how to best engage with the public in a short amount of time.

Team Members: Kyrill Kretzschmar, Mike Lane, Alan Koermer, Doug Tumminello, Brad Setter, WSC member, councilmember?, Chamber member?

Weik: The Chamber and Main Street do a good job of outreach; ask them if they're willing to help us design a communications plan to figure out what folks in town are looking for.

Process design team will start meeting Friday at Townies.

Define Success:

Floyd: I think it will be successful if we feel like we have representation from a broader community base than we've ever had before – including the naysayers that don't care about Howelsen or who are opposed to it. I don't know how you measure it exactly, but that's what we've been tasked to do so that we come back with comprehensive community feedback.

Emerald Park Access Update

Koermer: it has started.

Lane: Ben has held a public meeting a couple weeks ago, and we've been outreaching through our construction updates, which hits quite a few people.

Next Meeting: August 23

Discuss and vote on the process created by the process design team.
Nominate chair/vice chair.
Review recommended CIP items.

Adjournment

Commissioner Weik moved to adjourn the meeting at approximately 7:59 p.m.
Commissioner Watson seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.