



**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
ARAPAHOE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2024**

ATTENDANCE	<p>A regular meeting of the Arapahoe County Planning Commission (PC) was called and held in accordance with the statutes of the State of Colorado and the Arapahoe County Land Development Code.</p> <p>The following Planning Commission members were in attendance: Randall Miller, Chair; Rodney Brockelman, Dave Mohrhaus; Richard Sall; Lynn Sauve, Chair Pro-Tem; and Jamie Wollman.</p> <p>Also present were Robert Hill, Senior Assistant County Attorney (attending online); Jason Reynolds, Planning Division Manager (attending online); Ava Pecherzewski, Development Review Planning Manager; Molly Orkild-Larson, Principal Planner; Roger Harvey, Open Spaces Planning Manager; and Kim Lynch, Planning Technician.</p>
CALL TO ORDER	<p>Mr. Miller called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and roll was called.</p> <p>The meeting was held in person and through the Granicus Live Manager platform with telephone call-in for staff members and public.</p>
GENERAL BUSINESS ITEMS:	
APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES	<p>The motion was made by Ms. Wollman and duly seconded by Mr. Brockelman to approve the minutes from the January 16, 2024 Planning Commission meeting, as submitted:</p> <p>The vote was:</p> <p>Mr. Brockelman, Yes; Ms. Latsis, Absent; Mr. Miller, Yes; Mr. Mohrhaus, Yes; Ms. Sauve, Yes; Mr. Sall, Yes; Ms. Wollman, Yes.</p>
STUDY SESSION ITEMS:	
ITEM 1	<p>OPEN SPACE REQUIREMENTS / PLANNING COMMISSIONER TRAINING – ROGER HARVEY, OPEN SPACES PLANNING MANAGER; MOLLY ORKILD-LARSON, PRINCIPAL PLANNER – PUBLIC WORKS AND DEVELOPMENT (PWD)</p> <p>Mr. Harvey presented a PowerPoint, a copy of which was retained for the record. He stated the purpose of this study session was to impart information about the current Arapahoe County (AC) Open Space Master Plan, the Open Space Department's budget and purchasing methodology, and how open</p>



space was calculated on projects being reviewed by Planning staff as had been requested by the Planning Commission late in 2023. He explained the AC voters established the open spaces program in 2003 to “preserve urban and rural open space and natural lands; protect the land that preserves water quality in rivers, lakes and streams; provide, maintain and improve neighborhood parks, open space, sports fields, picnic facilities, and biking, walking and multiuse trails; protect wildlife habitat and corridors; protect views, vistas and ridgelines; preserve agricultural and ranch lands; and enhance and maintain designated heritage areas.” He said since its inception, this program had built or improved more than 78 miles of trails, supported more than 190 park and trailhead projects and protected more than 32,000 acres of open space countywide. He described how, within unincorporated Arapahoe County, the program had acquired in fee 5,424 acres and conservation 23,347 acres through conservation easement acquisitions (CE). He clarified these were properties where Open Spaces or a partner acquired only a CE interest and fee title was still privately owned. He described how funding for this program began in November 2003 with the passage of Question 1A Ballot Measure: Water, Wildlife, Open Space, Trails, and Neighborhood Park measure which established a quarter of a penny sales tax (for every dollar spent countywide on taxable sales) on the sale of tangible personal property at retail and the furnishings of certain services within the county. He added the voters then re-authorized the Open Spaces Sales Tax Resolution two times: 1) 2011 voters extended the sales tax to December 31, 2023; and 2) 2021 voters passed extending the tax in perpetuity until repealed by a vote of the voters. He articulated how this had created a paradigm shift in the program and in what Open Spaces could accomplish. He stated the ballot measures also removed language that restricted multi-modal funding, allowed more active funding for playgrounds, increased the maintenance funding to 9.9% from 3.24%, and decreased the acquisition fund to 20% from 26.66%.

He outlined the key components:

- **Share Back:** Fifty percent of the sales tax revenue is given directly back to the county, cities and towns based on the population. Twelve municipalities are included; the City of Aurora, with 337,422 residents, receives the most funding: \$12,603,834 in 2022.
- **Open Spaces Grant Program:** Awards money for grants to support local park, trail, and open space projects in Arapahoe County. Grants are open to municipalities, metropolitan districts, park, and recreation districts, and other quasi-governmental entities. Each grant is reviewed and scored by an independent group of County employees, the appointed Open Space Advisory Board, and Open Spaces staff. The Board of County Commissioners (Board) has final approval of all awards. Ten to fifteen applications are awarded funds each year depending on the grant request amounts and currently the Board has authorized \$4.5 million for grants.
- **Working Groups (WG) and Joint Projects:** Funding from the 20% Acquisition and Development Fund also funds projects in the South



	<p>Platte River WG, High Line Canal WG, Cherry Creek WG, East Metro WG, and Dove Valley WG.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heritage Areas: Two Board-designated Heritage Areas as defined in the OS resolution are funded by sales tax receiving 4.1%. The two areas are the 17 Mile House Farm Park and the Fairgrounds Park and Event Center. These funds are for structures, grounds, and staff.• County Acquisitions and Trail Development & Maintenance: Unincorporated Arapahoe County receives 29.9% of the sales tax. These funds are for acquisition, planning, design and development of new and existing parks, trails and open spaces and maintenance of parks and OS and miles or trails with 14 operations maintenance staff. <p>Mr. Harvey said the Open Space Master Plan was created in 2009 and updated in 2019 to chart the course for the future, define opportunities for conserving and enhancing natural lands and water resources, and for closing the gaps in the County's outdoor recreation network, setting priorities for programming, encouraging more residents to spend time in these places, refining operations, and maintenance practices, and ensuring a sustainable long-term future for the program.</p> <p>Other Master Plans and studies conducted that guide decision making are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4 Square Mile Sub-Area Plan.• County 2018 Comprehensive Plan.• 2017 Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan.• 2015 4 Square Mile Recreation Needs and Opportunities Assessment.• Numerous natural resource studies and assessments.• County Prairie Dog Management Plan.• Park Master Plans: Fairgrounds, 17 Mile House, Dove Valley Regional Park, Longs Pine Grove, Cheyenne Arapaho Park, Bijou Basin, Kiowa Creek Open Space, HLC Master Plan and Crossing Studies, various drainage master plans. <p>Site Acquisition Selection:</p> <p>He explained one of the 2019 Master Plan's focus areas was to provide detailed analysis of existing conditions and a gap analysis to identify priority areas where Open Spaces should concentrate efforts and implement acquisition recommendations.</p> <p>Gap Analysis:</p> <p>He described the park and open space assessment that examines the distribution of parks and open space at a county-wide scale where service areas were determined by the average distance users are willing to travel to reach a park. He said the assessment was used to determine if there are geographic gaps in the provision of access to parks and how in Arapahoe County, urban and rural areas were assessed with different park service area standards due to the nature of their differing land uses and land ownership. He said urban homes would ideally be within a one-quarter mile or one-half mile of a park or open space and homes in the urbanized western county that</p>
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were not within a one-quarter mile or one-half mile park service area were in a park gap. He said rural homes, such as those in the central and eastern parts of the county, would ideally be within one to five miles of a park or open space. He described in addition, a systems analysis of trails, wildlife habitat, landscape characteristics, working lands and ranches and scenic resources were mapped and then overlayed to create an overall map of priority areas for Open Spaces' acquisition. He stated this high-level tool provided direction and goals for areas within the county, both rural and urban. He said Open Spaces then incorporated finer tools to assess any potential acquisition for compatibility and fit within the Master Plan's goals and objectives via an analysis evaluation matrix and further studies like the 4 Square Mile Recreation Needs and Opportunities Assessment.

Design and Maintenance of County-owned Parks, Trails, and Open Space:
He explained that with the 20% funding, the planning section of Open Spaces (consisting of three staff members) plans, design, and develop developed parks, trails, and open spaces, and conducts studies and assessments. He added due to the small staffing of this section, the County contracted landscape architects and engineers for design and planning assistance. He said there were 14 full-time staff who maintained the County parks, trails, and open space.

Ms. Orkild-Larson said the Planning Division has been reviewing applications for unobstructed open space since 1961 (Zoning Ordinance, dated August 17, 1961). She explained, per the Land Development Code, the zone districts requiring unobstructed open space were as follows:

- R-2-B.
- All business and industrial zoned districts (B-1, B-3, B-4, B-5, I-1, and I-2).
- Cultural and Open zone districts (C and O).
- Multi-family and SFA (single-family attached) in the Strasburg Business/Commercial Overlay District.
- Planned Unit Developments (PUD).

She explained chart calculations and how they were applied in the majority of applications that were reviewed in AC Planning (PUDs predominately). She concluded staff was contemplating reducing the open space requirement for all zone districts to encourage affordable housing in Arapahoe County and these would need to be further studied by staff and open space requirements used by other municipalities and counties would need to be researched.

There was discussion regarding the 40 acres on the east side of Dove Valley Regional Park, possible allocations for Piney-Creek trail in Centennial, and whether native grasses could be paid for in a grant, or with city jurisdiction share back. It was agreed this was possible and could be arranged with the new Trails Recreation District which was formerly known as Arapahoe Parks and Recreation District. There was clarification that any green space in all the applications considered by the PC were not always planted but



	could be hard spaces like barbeque areas and rooftop decks, gazebos, playgrounds, community pools, or plaza gathering spaces.
ANNOUNCEMENTS	<p>Ms. Pecherzewski said there would be a March 12th PC meeting where the annual election of PC officers would take place. She said there were also 2 other items on the agenda including the hearing for CZ23-001 Greenland Estates and a study session on the Sign section of the LDC.</p> <p>Ms. Percherzewski added that further O&G regulations had been requested by the BOCC.</p>
ADJOURNMENT	There being no further business to come before the Planning Commission, the meeting was adjourned.