Audio recording of this meeting can be found here: https://bouldercolorado.gov/boards-commissions/upcoming-osbt-meeting (tape start times are listed below next to each agenda item).

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT
Tom Isaacson  Curt Brown  Hal Hallstein  Karen Hollweg  Dave Kuntz

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT
Dan Burke  Mark Davison  John Potter  Heather Swanson  Lauren Kolb
Leah Case  Erika Jensen  Megan Grunewald  Phil Yates  Jim Reeder
Heather Swanson  Kasey French  Steve Armstead  Alison Ecklund  Andy Pelster
Mark Gershman  Brittany McLure  Victoria Poulton

CALL TO ORDER
The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 1 – Approval of Minutes (00.35)
Curt Brown moved the Open Space Board of Trustees to approve the minutes from Feb. 12, 2020 as amended. Tom Isaacson seconded. This motion passed unanimously.

Tom Isaacson moved the Open Space Board of Trustees to approve the minutes from Feb. 13, 2020 as amended. Curt Brown seconded. This motion passed four to zero, Karen Hollweg abstained.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – Public Participation for Items not on the Agenda (5:05)
None.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – Matters from the Department (5:22)
Dan Burke noted that the March 30 meeting will remain as scheduled, however staff is leaving room on the April 8 agenda for follow-up discussion on the South Boulder Creek Flood mitigation item if needed. He also mentioned that the Voice and Sight monitoring results will likely be pushed back to a later date.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – Request for a recommendation to City Council of staff’s preferred alternative for the management of OSMP-managed irrigated agricultural lands occupied by prairie dogs in an area north of Jay Road and generally east of US Highway 36 and northwest of Colorado Highway 119 (8:50)
Mark Gershman, Senior Planner, presented this item.

Public Comment (48:40)
Molly Davis, Preserving the Vision, said Delta Dust is not recommended for areas around watersheds, areas of high winds, areas with steep slopes. The Delta Dust’s own label cautions for many things; application and handling instructions says to use increased caution. Please take your fiduciary responsibility very seriously.

Christine Pacoche, Healthy Ecosystems and Agricultural Lands (HEAL), said she wanted to speak on the mismanagement and poor maintenance of Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP) Oasis property. She said she values the health and wellness of her animals and her grandchildren and worries that the health of
prairie dogs could have detrimental effects on public health. She said she supports lethal control on city-owned property.

David Hester, Financial Power of Attorney for Adrienne Hester, said they own land that is zoned for agricultural use by Boulder County despite neighboring City of Boulder owned land. These OSMP lands are outside the City of Boulder corporate limits and should be subject to the Boulder County land use code. He said their land does not include hosting prairie dogs as a permitted use. The land use code for Boulder County allows people to use land as they please, however you may not use without regard to their neighbors. As a property owner, Boulder Open Space lands outside of corporate limits need to comply with same land use as their adjacent neighbors.

Ben Valley, Boulder, said along with oil and gas and industrial agriculture, prairie dogs are crippling local farmers. He said farmers are an endangered species; without lethal control farmers will be driven from Colorado, and Boulder needs farmers to look after the land. We need to act as the natural predators that prairie dogs used to have.

Raymond Bridge, Boulder, thanked staff on a useful analysis and a good start. He urged the Board and staff to follow a more realistic alternative. An emphasis on relocation will not work unless the plague happens to come in and save us. Please seriously consider alternatives D and E; continuing current policies does not fulfill the Charter purposes of sustaining agricultural purposes. Allowing prairie dogs to starve, which is currently happening, is not humane. The city needs to modify ordinances to eliminate the prohibition on disturbing burrows on agricultural properties and allow the use of lethal control expeditiously on leased agricultural lands.

April Story, Boulder, said that she would like the Board to change the staff proposal to remove prairie dogs from irrigated agricultural lands. She said staff was supposed to delve further into options C, D, and E, but rather disguised option C as option B. She would like this option to be rejected and the Board to come up with their own option to protect irrigated lands.

Chris Brown, Boulder, said that the staff recommendation does not consider the current population growth and that prairie dogs are growing at a much faster rather than 3%; it is actually higher than 12%. None of the staff proposed options will not help to reduce the prairie dog growth. The math should be revised, and only Option E will get ahead of the current prairie dog growth. Boulder supports agriculture and farmers, and now is the time to support both.

Paula Shuler, HEAL, said that many Open Space neighbors are killing thousands of prairie dogs a year that have migrated from City Open Space land. She said this is not something any of us want to do, but it is a necessity because we are neighbors of Open Space. For progress to be made Open Space needs to keep ahead of the true growth rate, which would include individually owned parcels, and make progress on decreasing the actual prairie dog population.

Elizabeth Black, HEAL, said Open Space has budget woes and option B2 will cost $2.1 million dollars for 3 years, $8,200 dollars an acre. Option E will come in $342,000 under budget, $2,250 dollars an acre. She said even this option is too expensive; following a similar approach to Boulder County Open Space and bringing work in-house you would be able to save money. Scarce funds must be allocated wisely and strategically.

Linda Parks, Boulder County Horse Association (BCHA), said she questions the Prairie Dog Working Group (PDWG) and the results they came up with. Relocation is a large amount of money that Open Space does not need to spend, and the use of Delta Dust will affect the wildlife around Boulder; additionally, the Delta Dust used will be displaced and be breathed in by Boulder residents. Relocation is
a waste of time and money that could be put towards lethal control and the true protection of Open Space agricultural land.

Cody Douglas Oreck, HEAL, said that the soil is suffering because we abandoned our principles developed through various management plans, and now we are letting prairie dogs harm the lands we committed to managing. Prairie dogs must be stopped from making deserts of our irrigated agriculture lands. OSMP needs to modify the code so we can adequately protect farmland. Soil health needs to be a priority and the restoration process is a far more important cost than what is presented in option B2. She said she would support Option E.

Eric Skokan, OSMP Tenant, said changes need to be made to the ordinance. As it stands, it is a fundamentally flawed ordinance. The ordinance should additionally allow tenants to participate in this; bring us in as partners. He said when the ordinance was written there was no back up plan; when you choose an option, please also allow for a contingency plan.

Robert O’Donnell, Longmont, asked staff to come out and actually see the true damage that is happening on the land. He said he is fighting this problem day in and day out. He said when he uses Open Space he follows all regulations, but now Open Space prairie dogs are on his property and he said they need help.

Brian Coppom, Boulder County Farmers Markets, said this is a question of balance, but this is also about responsibility. This is not about just individual farmers, this is also about a food system. Boulder is a place of responsibility and we need to take responsibility for the food we eat. These are hard choices, but not having a food system is not a choice we want to make.

Jeremy Gregory, Tindak, said within the model of his company they strive for the triple bottom line; profit, people and planet. He said they have figured out how to coexist with prairie dogs while maximizing profits. He asked the Board to seek his advice as there is a way to coexist with nature and still have sustainable agriculture.

Maria Jasson, Longmont, said she has been a neighbor to Open Space for 17 years. She said there is no way to please everyone, so please just figure out what you can do realistically; it is a waste of money to trap and relocate. She said Option E is the best and most viable alternative. She said being your neighbor is very expensive and if OSMP is not willing to set up for success, please sell your land.

Lindsay Sterling Crank, Prairie Dog Coalition; Carse Pustmueller, Keep Boulder Wild; Taylor Jones, Boulder, said they appreciate staff’s attention in considering all sides of this issue. They said they have focused their attention on the preferred alternative, however provided some modifications including focusing on areas of greatest conflict and making the number of acres that will utilize lethal control and those using relocation equal. They said they would like to see the trapping window extended to 21 days and to identify conditions where the city manager could cease expedited plan. They said the prairie dog working group was about decreasing conflicts using the most non-lethal control possible; they have not had a chance to introduce concepts so conflict could be reduced. They added that the soils and sequestration should not be part of the expedited process, and we need to be doing plague management in order to protect the remaining prairie dogs.

Lynn Segal, Boulder, said we need to reduce our food waste in Boulder as well as stop cattle production. Overpopulation and conflict with natural wildlife needs to be talked about. We are displacing many animals out of their natural environment.
John Brown, Brown’s Farm, said this is not just one issue or just one species. If we can have abundant seed stocks, we can keep the bird population. He said we should view the prairie dog as a cancer; exercise and remove as immediately as you can. He said he is in favor of Option E.

Marcus McCauley, McCauley Family Farms, said we are talking about agricultural land with some of the best farmers in the county. There are a good amount of them in this room asking for help. Please act quickly on lethal control.

Jenny Bryant, on behalf of Deb Jones and Prairie Dog Action, said she is concerned about the eagerness to rush to judgment that the prairie dog is the guilty party. The prairie dog and their ecosystem is our natural heritage. She said she spent two years in group meetings with the PDWG; we all agreed that prairie dogs and irrigated agricultural fields are not a good match, and developed strategies to improve this situation. She added that there are many unexplored issues or studies yet to be done; please do not move forward so quickly.

Leslie Hitchcock Cushman, Cushman Cattle, said she does not think the prairie dogs are the bad guy in this. These families have poured their hearts and souls into this land; this issue is gutting them. We need to figure this out.

Christopher Boardman, Boulder, said he questions the wisdom of removing a potentially very large number of prairie dogs from Open Space, both from the standpoint of impact on this keystone species and the adverse effects on associated wildlife such as nesting bald eagles and other raptors. Please ensure that you know what you are doing and the consequences for prairie dogs and species that utilize prairie dogs as a prey base. This could be an ecological catastrophe.

Tessa Hail, Boulder, said prairie dogs are a native keystone species. They are an ecosystem regulator providing countless ecosystem services, such as churning the soil, increasing plant diversity and helping recharge groundwater. Prairie dogs enhance the habitat for over 150 other wildlife species. She asked to increase the number of acres relocated to 70 acres annually and decrease the number of prairie dogs otherwise removed to 70 acres annually. Additionally, please expand the trapping window from one week to 10-14, and allow flushing for removal acres not being relocated by the City. She asked to Pilot 1-2 innovative alternative leases, such as leasing prairie dog occupied properties to conservation organizations that manage and protect the land for wildlife habitat or working with lessees to explore different agricultural crops or methodologies.

Liv & Maeve Hourihan ages 13 & 11, Boulder; Charli & Leo Rosenthal, ages 6 & 11, Boulder; Lily Lisbon, Age 10, Boulder; Emma, Della & Celia Baumgartner, Boulder, ages 6, 8 and 10; Lucy & Savannah Krank, Ages 6 & 10, Boulder, we the undersigned ask the Open Space Board of Trustees to maximize non-lethal prairie dog management in your decision tonight. We would also like to volunteer with the relocation efforts.

Return to the Board (1:58:58)
The Board discussed the alternative and provided suggestions to amend the staff proposal. Staff captured all comments and will make the requested changes.

Motion (4:21:50)
Hal Hallstein moved the Open Space Board of Trustees to make a motion to recommending that the City Council approve the preferred alternative as amended for the management of irrigated agricultural fields on City-managed Open Space and Mountain Parks lands occupied by prairie dogs in the project area. Curt Brown seconded. This motion passed unanimously.
AGENDA ITEM 5 – Matters from the Board (4:22:30)
Tom Isaacson noticed the upcoming public participation events: Open House for Wonderland Lake ISP, Monday, April 6, 5:30-7:30 p.m., OSMP Hub, 2250 55th St. Dan Burke noted this event could be changed depending on the progression of the COVID-19 virus.

Dave Kuntz stated his concern the status Eldorado Canyon Visitor Use Management Plan. He wants to make sure that staff is participating sufficiently in the process and that concerns the Board have will be addressed.

ADJOURNMENT – The meeting adjourned at 10:38 p.m.

These minutes were prepared by Leah Case and Erika Jensen.

APPROVED BY:

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Curt Brown
Board Chair

DATE