

CITY OF BOULDER OPEN SPACE & MOUNTAIN PARKS
Prairie Dog Working Group
66 S. Cherryvale Road, Boulder, CO 80303
February 13, 2017
Meeting Summary - FINAL

ATTENDANCE

Participants: Dan Brandemuehl, Kristin Cannon, Patrick Comer, Aaron Cook, Elle Cushman, Keri Konold Davies, Amber Largent, Amy Masching, Valerie Matheson, Andy Pelster, Carse Pustmueller, Jesse Rounds, Eric Sims, Jr., Lindsay Sterling-Krank, Heather Swanson, and Jon Wold

Facilitation: Heather Bergman, Sam Haas

SUMMARY OF WORKING GROUP FORMATION AND OBJECTIVES

Keri Konold Davies, OSMP staff, presented on the City's appointment process for the advisory working group and the primary objectives and priorities of the group.

Why Are We Here and What Are the Objectives?

- City Council suggested that City Manager Jane Brautigam appoint an advisory working group of resident and non-resident members who demonstrate City values and who can recommend, based on a broad understanding of the full range of community perspectives, adaptable management practices that be implemented under existing policy as well as possible longer-term policy changes.
- The objectives of this Working Group are both to serve as a model for the City regarding collaboration, innovation, and respect, and to build trust in the City's implementation of existing policies, and to work toward meeting the Working Group priorities as described below
- The Working Group will deliver a report of consensus-based recommendations to the City Manager by May 2017.

Working Group Priorities:

- The first priority is to determine relocation methodologies under existing plans and policies that can be used in 2017. To learn more about existing plans and policies, visit https://www.municode.com/library/co/boulder/codes/municipal_code or <https://bouldercolorado.gov/pages/prairie-dog-working-group>.
- The second priority is to determine relocation methodologies under existing plans and policies that can be used in 2018 and beyond.
- The third priority is to determine longer-term ideas that might need further exploration or require changes to City plans and policies.

How Will These Objectives Be Accomplished Effectively?

1. Convene people who are impacted by and interested in prairie dog management, including members of the public and public land management representatives.
2. Apply the values of collaboration, innovation, and respect to the work and actions of the group.
3. Develop a shared understanding of the existing City policies and plans as well as perceived constraints.

PREFERRED GROUP OUTCOMES

The participants were reminded that they had been selected because they represent a broad section of the community. Some of the selected participants offered deep experience in prairie dog management, and some were personally interested or involved in their community about this issue. The intent of the Prairie Dog Working Group is to find an overlap of objectives and collaborate on a set of recommendations to the City Manager. The facilitator clarified that the Working Group had ownership not only of the outcomes but of the process as well. She asked the Working Group participants to share their goals for the group. Key themes among participant responses are captured below.

- There are group members who shared the goal of prairie dog conservation. Within this goal, specific topics were raised, including plague management and long-term prairie dog survival on Open Space and in the region, relocation/transportation best practices, and the maintenance of ecosystem health.
- Some group members also expressed a need for raising public awareness of the complexity of prairie dog management, specifically in terms of public and private lands, state and regional dynamics, and land-use objectives. There were also goals related to the creation of educational opportunities for the public to learn about prairie dog colonies and the larger ecosystem context.
- Some group members also voiced a desire to create a balance between agricultural activity and prairie dog occupation, with the long-term goal of ensuring the health of native grasslands while maintaining opportunities for agriculture in the area.
- Some group members hoped that the Prairie Dog Working Group could serve as a model of collaboration for Boulder in the future.

PROPOSED WORKING GROUP PROCESS

The facilitator outlined a potential process for the first and subsequent five meetings, which is summarized below. The Working Group was invited to adopt, reject, or revise this preliminary proposal.

Step 1: Outlining Goals and Creating Operating Protocols (1st Meeting)

- Sharing Working Group member goals for the process
- Group discussion of values, protocol concepts and options
- Preliminary agreement on protocol concept at first meeting
- Finalizing protocols at subsequent meetings

Step 2: Group Learning (2nd Meeting)

- Brief staff presentations on key issues including Council direction, goals, and considerations for the Working Group to include in their deliberations
- Working Group member suggestions and requests for information they need to create a shared understanding of the issues at hand and have an informed discussion (information could be requested from City staff or outside entities)
- Agreement on shared learning priorities and plan for getting information in a timely fashion

Step 3: Developing Criteria to Evaluate Recommendations (3rd meeting)

- Group discussion and brainstorming of possible evaluation criteria to assist them in selecting or prioritizing strategies and approaches
- Group agreement on list of potential evaluation criteria
- Group discussion on whether and how to weight proposed criteria
- Group agreement on weighting strategy
- Group agreement on methodology for application of criteria to proposed recommendations

Step 4: Brainstorming Recommendations (4th and 5th meeting)

- Open Working Group brainstorming of ideas and proposals for strategies and approaches
- Clarifying questions about intention of suggested approaches
- Group discussion of any information they need to effectively evaluate proposed strategies and approaches

Step 5: Evaluating Ideas Proposed Recommendations (6th meeting)

- Application of evaluation criteria to proposed strategies and approaches
- Group discussion of results of criteria application and whether their results are meaningful and helpful in selecting one or more strategies or approaches to recommend to the city manager
- Group agreement on one or more strategies or approaches to recommend

Below is a summary of the themes from the ensuing group discussion about the Working Group process.

- Some group members thought it would be beneficial to devote the entire second meeting to learning and hearing from experts on certain topics and have short (10 minutes) presentations by experts on other issues as they arose throughout the process.
- There were also group members who expressed a desire to commit more time to the idea generation and evaluation earlier in the process and have presentations on topics as they arose in discussion.
- One person encouraged the group to explore what is working in prairie dog management first, then think sequentially about how to tackle the parts that are broken.

- Some in the group raised a concern about the prioritization of relocation methodologies under existing plans and policies. The concern was that existing plans and policies are limiting in terms of accommodating long-term holistic solutions. For example, an issue such as the plague may be long-term, but there is also urgency on this topic when considering the 2017 relocation season and the health of the prairie dogs.
- There was some interest among group members to both summarize and debrief the Armory colony relocation, as there were issues that arose in that context that could be relevant to the management of future cases.
- There was a group discussion about the benefits of forming sub-committees in the Working Group to answer questions and gather information between meetings that could be presented to the group.

PROTOCOLS AND GROUND RULES

The Working Group discussed options and issues related to the protocols that would guide their discussions. Below is a summary of the group discussion and agreement on collaborative group protocols.

Group Name

The group agreed to the name: "Prairie Dog Working Group."

Purpose and Authority of the Group

The group itself can propose recommendations but does not have the authority to bind City staff to any decision.

Group Membership and Alternates

Working Group members were appointed as individuals to fill the seats on the Working Group; no alternates were reviewed or considered by the City Manager. If a member is unable to attend a meeting, he or she will not send an alternate. However, the group can request outside experts or speakers to attend and present on key issues. Exceptions: Working Group members who represent government agencies may send alternates if the named member cannot attend in order to ensure that the Working Group has access to the information and expertise that person is intended to provide.

Representation

Working Group members discussed whether they are representing themselves as individuals or representing their respective organizations and employers. Several Working Group members indicated that they would be representing themselves, but the following members provided clarification on their function:

- Keri Konold Davies, Valerie Matheson, Andy Pelster, Heather Swanson, Jon Wold are representing the City of Boulder in the Working Group.
- Kristin Cannon is speaking on behalf of Colorado Parks and Wildlife.
- Jesse Rounds is speaking on behalf of Boulder County Parks and Open Space.
- Lindsay Sterling-Krank is speaking on behalf of the Humane Society's Prairie Dog Coalition and will clarify when she is speaking for herself.

- Aaron Cook is speaking on behalf of Naropa and will clarify when he is speaking for himself.
- Amy Masching is speaking on behalf of the Human-Wildlife Conflict Collaboration and will clarify when she is speaking for herself.

Subcommittees

The group agreed that subcommittees will only be formed for information gathering purposes and not for issue resolution or substantive discussion. Subcommittees are permitted to reach out to external experts at the request of the group, providing all relevant information is shared with the entire group during a meeting.

Decision Making

The group agreed to operate under consensus, with no reserve majoritarian voting process. For the Working Group, consensus has the following components:

- Consensus is both a process and an outcome. During the consensus-building process, it is the job of the Working Group members to help each other reach an agreement that everyone can live with.
- It is not the function of the facilitator to force the group to reach agreement.
- If an agreement is not possible, the group will draft a single report to Council that explains the reasons for the recommendations and the reasons why certain members could not agree to them.

Public Meetings

All the Prairie Dog Working Group meetings are public. The agendas will be posted one week in advance on the City website, and meeting summaries will be posted at least a week before the next meeting. Working Group members can distribute the final meeting summaries and agendas freely and should encourage public participation.

Public Participation

The Working Group agreed to take 10 minutes of verbal public comment at the beginning of each meeting. If there is not enough time to attend to each public comment or question, members of the public will be encouraged to submit a written comment. Before each meeting, facilitation staff will read the written comments and quickly summarize and send key themes to the Working Group. Facilitation staff will also distribute the comments themselves to the Working Group members. Facilitation staff will also offer a verbal summary of the written comments during the meeting. There will be 10 minutes left open on the agenda for addressing written comments. Written comments will be obtained both online via the Prairie Dog Working Group project webpage and at meetings, as needed.

Documentation

Facilitation staff will take notes during the meetings and write summaries, which will capture the key themes from the group conversation. These summaries will not have member attributions. The summary draft will be circulated to Working Group members, who can send edits or suggestions to facilitation staff during a week-long review period. The group agreed that only final summaries will be disseminated publicly.

Meetings

The Prairie Dog Working Group is committed to six meetings.

Media Interaction

Working Group members agreed to refer the media to the public meeting agendas and meeting summaries and to encourage them to attend the meeting.

Interaction with Other Entities

If any group members would like to solicit information from, or discuss the working group with individuals or entities who might serve as decision-makers in future policy change discussions, they must do so with the permission of the group. Any substantive discussion must be deferred to public comment (either written or verbal). This applies to the Boulder City Council, City of Boulder Open Space Board of Trustees, City of Boulder Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, Boulder Planning Board, Boulder County Commissioners, and Boulder County Planning Commission.

PROPOSED GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Working Group agreed to adhere to the following common guidelines for open, transparent, and focused collaboration.

Member Responsibilities

Working Group members will:

- Abide by these protocols, and allow the facilitator to enforce them if necessary.
- Engage in meaningful and productive dialogue.
- Actively participate.
- Focus on the discussion at hand and avoid side conversations.
- Speak up if in opposition to a proposal.
- Provide an explanation for all objections.
- Avoid destructive language and personal attacks.
- Read materials prior to meetings and come prepared.
- Be or become knowledgeable about the issue at hand.
- Proactively work to keep constituents, colleagues, and managers informed about the group.
- Avoid surprises.
- Characterize your own needs, desires, and interests; let others do the same.
- Disclose conflicts of interest.
- Respect the time of the group; speak briefly and on-topic.
- Learn from the past but let it go; work for the future.

Facilitator Responsibilities:

The facilitator is responsible for:

- Logistics.
- Facilitating meetings to be on point, productive, and on time.
- Enforcing protocols.

- Neutrality.
- Fair and equal treatment of all participants.
- Maintaining confidentiality of any discussions that are requested to be confidential.
- Documentation based on non-attribution.
- Making a best effort to incorporate all suggestions for change into draft documents or explaining why suggestions were not incorporated.

PLAN FOR NEXT MEETING

Working Group members brainstormed and prioritized topics that they would like to learn more about during the next meeting. Topics included:

- Plague 101: What happens to prairie dog populations when the plague comes, and what can be done about it?
- Adaptive Management: How does it work, considering established policies and plans?
- The Armory Prairie Dog Relocation: What happened, and what lessons can be learned?
- Permit procedures and criteria.
- Information on how the City interacts with the County concerning prairie dogs.
- Information on the numbers, location, etc. of the prairie dog population in Boulder: Where are the colonies, and in which areas are the City meeting the conservation goals?
- The Endangered Species Act, and state listing status; how it interacts with prairie dog management.
- A brief history of prairie dog management in Boulder, including an overview of the Grassland Management Plan, the Ordinance, and the Urban Wildlife Management Plan.
- Information on the interface between prairie dogs and agricultural priorities.

The facilitation team will work with City staff to develop an agenda that reflects these information requests. The entire next meeting will be dedicated to group learning.