

City Council Meeting Minutes

**February 13, 2024
Library Meeting Room
951 Spruce Street
6:00 PM**

Call to Order – Mayor Leh called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. **Roll Call** was taken and the following members were present:

City Council: ***Mayor Chris Leh
Mayor Pro Tem Caleb Dickinson
Councilmember Tim Bierman
Councilmember Deborah Fahey
Councilmember Barbara Hamlington
Councilmember Dietrich Hoefner
Councilmember Judi Kern***

Staff Present: ***Jeff Durbin, City Manager
Samma Fox, Deputy City Manager
Adam Blackmore, Parks, Recreation, & Open Space Director
Ember Brignull, Open Space Superintendent
Abby McNeal, Parks Superintendent
Meredyth Muth, City Clerk***

Others Present:
 ***Parks and Public Landscaping Advisory Board Members:
Cynthia Corne
Ellen Toon
John Webb
Shannon Mihaly***

***Open Space Advisory Board Members:
Susan McEachern
David Blankinship
Charles Danforth
Michiko Christiansen
Andy Dorsey
Jessamine Fitzpatrick
Mark Poletti
Brad Pugh***

PARKS & PUBLIC LANDSCAPING ADVISORY BOARD UPDATE AND 2024 WORK PLAN

Cynthia Corne, board chair, reviewed the work of the board over the past year. She noted successes with advising on the 2C ballot language, providing input on median and playground projects, and getting the City designated as a Bee City. She reviewed the board's proposed work plan for 2024.

She asked for feedback from Council on the economic impact of parks on the community, if the work plan aligns with the City Council work plan, and if the current communications strategy for Parks is working well.

Public Comments

Sherry Sommer, Louisville, stated she would like to see more communication between the boards and Council and more ways for input from residents to be incorporated in decision making.

Members all agreed parks are an important asset to the community for economic and quality of life reasons. They need to be properly maintained as an asset and be accessible to all members of the community.

Councilmembers and board members discussed the need for including sustainability in decision making around parks.

Board members noted concerns that the split of the Parks and Open Space Funds could reduce the budget for parks. Everyone agreed this will need to be considered in the 2025 budget.

Councilmembers agreed the Board work plan aligns with the City Council's plan. Members also agreed that the communications strategy for parks has been working well.

OPEN SPACE ADVISORY BOARD UPDATE AND 2024 WORK PLAN

Chair Susan McEachern reviewed the role of OSAB and the highlights from 2023. She reviewed the board 2024 priorities including open space management, wildfire mitigation, and creating an acquisition policy.

David Blankinship stated the current acquisition process is too slow and we need a policy in place so we can move quickly if a property becomes available.

He reviewed projects the Board would like to see funded with any new funds generated by the approved open space and parks tax including habitat protection and restoration;

wildfire mitigation; and a sustainable grazing program. He also reviewed suggestions for capital projects for 2025.

Blankinship stated the Board would like feedback on if the Board should continue in a quasi-judicial role for land use applications and how best to communicate with Council.

Councilmember Kern stated she would like to see more in the work plan about open space management and wildfire mitigation.

Board members stated they feel acquisition has been short-changed in recent years and they want to be sure there is a good long-term plan for the new 2C acquisition money becoming available.

Councilmember Hamlington would like to see the board work plan better differentiate between what is a board role and that of staff. Many of the items listed appear to be staff duties.

Public Comments

Cathern Smith, Louisville, stated the division of the parks and open space funds needs citizen input to be sure to represent what residents want. She stated citizens do want more acquisition.

Sherry Sommer, Louisville, stated we should look at the big picture of how to do both acquisition and fire mitigation. Find a way to do both. She wants to see the knowledge provided by the board members incorporated in decisions.

Cynthia Corne, Louisville, stated the City needs to hire experts and write an open space management plan. The City should hire a consultant to help better determine the organization of the parks and open space divisions.

Mayor Leh noted that serving in a quasi-judicial capacity is challenging as you can't speak freely on land use cases. He feels this role is important for OSAB and PPLAB.

Councilmembers agreed they want the OSAB and PPLAB to continue in their current quasi-judicial roles. They feel getting that quasi-judicial input on land use items from the boards is critical in their decision making. Staff will arrange for more quasi-judicial training for the boards.

Everyone agreed to continue work on a better acquisition policy. Someone on staff should be tasked with making contacts with the owners of parcels that are a high priority so the City can request first right of refusal.

Members encouraged the Board to continue to communicate with the Council through the established staff liaison channels.

Mayor Pro Tem Dickinson stated he wants to make sure we are maintaining our existing open space to the highest standards before acquiring additional land.

Councilmember Fahey asked the Board members to consider fire mitigation in all their decision making.

Members agreed to continue discussions on a better acquisition policy and open space management plans.

ADJOURN

Members adjourned at 9:01 pm.

Christopher M. Leh, Mayor

Meredyth Muth, City Clerk