FOOTHILLS PARK & RECREATION DISTRICT
REGULAR BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

April 28, 2015

The regular meeting of the Foothills Park & Recreation District was held at Peak Community and Wellness Center, 6612 South Ward Street, Littleton, Colorado 80127.

I. CALL TO ORDER: Director Maulik called the regular meeting to order at 6:03pm.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Director Maulik led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

III. ROLL CALL: Director Maulik: Present
Director Bielkiewicz: Present
Director James: Present
Director Sutton: Present
Director Bradley: Present via conference phone

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Ronald Hopp, Executive Director; Paul Rufien, District Counsel; Derek Eberhardt, Manager of Recreation Facilities; Patricia Parkin, Director of Administrative Services; Colin Insley, Director of Parks Planning and Construction; Tom Woodard, Director of Golf; Barb Butler, Manager of Parks Planning and Construction; Richelle Riley, Recording Secretary; other Foothills staff and members of the public.

Potential conflicts of interest were disclosed pursuant to Colorado Revised Statutes 18-8-308(2), 24-18-109(3)(a), 24-18-110, and 32-1-902(3).

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

MOTION: Director Bradley moved that the Foothills Board of Directors approve the April 28, 2015 agenda as submitted. Director Bielkiewicz seconded the motion. Poll of the Board: Director Maulik, aye; Director Bielkiewicz, aye; Director James, aye; Director Sutton, aye; Director Bradley, aye. The motion was approved.

V. APPROVAL OF MARCH 10, 2015 MINUTES:

MOTION: Director James moved that the Foothills Board of Directors approve the minutes of the March 10, 2015 board meeting as submitted. Director Bielkiewicz seconded the motion. Poll of the Board: Director Maulik, aye; Director Bielkiewicz, aye; Director James, aye; Director Sutton, aye; Director Bradley, aye. The motion was approved.

VI. COMMUNITY COMMENTS:

A. Children’s Programs Staff Introductions

Amber Stowe introduced Meredith MorrisWhyte, one of our new site directors for school age programs. Meredith is going to be at the Devinnie Before and After School program and running the Ridge Camp Hoppers during the summer months. Paula Bullington was introduced, also a site director for our school age programs. Paula is working at Lilley Gulch Recreation Center at the Before and After School programs and Summer Camp Kids on the Move.

VII. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Past Board Member Facility Benefits

Ronald Hopp recalled this was on the board meeting agenda in January as a discussion item. At that time, staff were asked to provide a recommendation for the Board’s consideration of what it might look like if the District would enter into some sort of facility benefits program for past board members. Mr. Hopp reminded the Board of comments made at the last meeting in regard to the possible program, and mentioned the policy for staff who leave or retire from the District was reviewed as well.

Referring to the memo provided, Mr. Hopp pointed out what various districts throughout the Denver metro provide to their past board members. He proposed that if the Board wanted
to consider doing something for past board members, it could be something in the effect of Foothills Board Alumni Club. Upon departure from the Board of Directors, Mr. Hopp explained a past board member would be extended an invitation to be a member of the Foothills Board Alumni Club. The club members would be extended the same facility benefits that they received as a board member, with the exception that it would just be the individual, not the full family. The board member would receive those benefits for half of the years he/she served on the board, e.g., if he/she served eight years on the board, he/she would receive a four year membership to the Foothills Board Alumni Club. In exchange, the members of the Foothills Board Alumni Club would be asked to commit to help advocate for the District by providing feedback, helping with district initiatives, mill levy elections, bond elections, etc. Those would be a case by case basis where we would reach out to those individuals and see how they would like to be engaged and provide service to the District. 

Mr. Hopp talked about benefits the Foothills Board Alumni Club would provide to the District, and indicated that we don’t believe development of this club would compromise revenue streams. We would intend to offer this benefit to all past board members.

In addition, Mr. Hopp explained, we wanted to revise the current policy for retiring staff. The proposed change is that a full-time employee who voluntarily separates from the District, and who has a minimum of 10 years and up to 20 years of full-time continuous service, would be eligible for a facility pass for half of their length of service with the District for themselves only. An employee with 20 years or more full-time service would be eligible for life time benefits for themselves only. That would bring it more in line with what we are proposing as a recommendation for the past board members. Mr. Hopp requested if the Board is inclined to extend the benefit and create the Foothills Board Alumni Club, that we change the full-time employee policy in our Employee Manual as well. There was some discussion and questions answered.

**MOTION:** Director Sutton moved that the Foothills Board of Directors adopt the creation of the Foothills Board Alumni Club for past board members as well as update the full-time staff retirement policy as discussed. Director Maulik, aye; Director Bielkiewicz, aye; Director James, aye; Director Sutton, aye; Director Bradley, aye. The motion was approved.

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS:**

**IX. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT:**

Adding to the report provided, Mr. Hopp discussed that according to a news wire on April 22, facebook users have been invited to an event for April 22, 2020 to attend a barbeque in Clement Park. In answer to Director Sutton, Tom Woodard explained the pace of play clocks that were installed at Meadows golf course. Mr. Hopp recognized Larry Bigay in the audience who is interested in providing a concessionaire option for water sports in Clement Park, and discussed that potential option.

**X. DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

A. **Prairie Dog Discussion**

Mr. Hopp introduced Tina Gurdikian, who has been working with staff for a year or longer at Mossbrucker Park to help control prairie dogs from expanding by utilizing Reverse Dispersal Translocation, and she has had some success. Mr. Hopp expressed appreciation for Ms. Gurdikian’s efforts, recognizing that if we can find ways to save money on controls and not have to pay contractors, that is something worth investigating. That has led to conversations with Ms. Gurdikian about Schaefer Athletic Complex (SAC) and the BMX track. The BMX track is going to be located on prairie dogs, as part of a larger colony. Ms. Gurdikian and others in the community have offered to do a Reverse Dispersal Translocation as well as an on site relocation effort at SAC to mitigate the prairie dogs in a humane manner to make way for the BMX track. Pointing to a site map, Mr. Hopp showed where the on site relocation would be, and mentioned Gina Writz has been helping her with that process. Mr. Hopp said we have been engaging, through Brooke Martin, with individuals from the neighborhood to the east. They have done some polling amongst the neighborhood about whether they would support a relocation effort, control, etc., and the results are included in the memo provided.
Ms. Gurdikian introduced Gina Writz, Sandy Nervig with Growing Ideas, Ellen Kessler, Leslie, and Blythe Ramsdell who are part of the Prairie Dog Task Force. Using Power Point, Ms. Gurdikian discussed prairie dogs, including some benefits and facts about prairie dogs, concerns she has heard from people about prairie dogs and neighbor’s concerns. She offered that the Prairie Dog Task Force they have started would like to be the first responders for the District when there is a complaint from homeowners about prairie dog encroachment. Outlining some duties and responsibilities seen for the task force, Ms. Gurdikian pointed out they are volunteering their time to do this. The only support requested from Foothills, Ms. Gurdikian said, is permission for the task force to continue doing what they are doing, and on occasion, provide materials for passive relocation. A revised Prairie Dog Management Plan, that they proposed, was distributed for staff to review.

Regarding relocation of the prairie dogs at the BMX site, Ms. Gurdikian asked if the Board would allow an on-site relocation of an estimated 45 prairie dogs. Sandy Nervig mentioned a meeting is set up with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) for approval as well. In answer to Director Bielkiewicz, Colin Insley addressed the timeline for the disc golf course shut down during BMX construction, and its reopening.

Ms. Gurdikian talked about relocation of prairie dogs from Columbine Drive. She asked the Board to consider their proposal for having this task force and partnership with the District to have a humane solution for dealing with encroachment, they would like staff to review their prairie dog management plan, they requested the Board’s permission for relocation of the prairie dogs from the BMX site, they would like the Board’s help in moving forward with the Columbine Drive prairie dogs and find a location for them, and asked the Board to let the task force work in partnership with the District outside of these major projects with any other issues.

Director Maulik expressed concern that relocating the prairie dogs from the BMX site would be breaking our own policy, although they would be relocated on the same parcel. Discussion about the proposal and cost ensued.

Director James expressed favor for the proposal. Considering Gina Writz’s activities last year with the Board, Director James pointed out a Columbine Courier story from six months ago and summarized that Writz was critical of Foothills’ handling of the situation saying the District reversed course and quietly decided to not move prairie dogs to another of its properties. Ms. Writz was quoted as saying “Foothills said it had to do with money which was really deceitful. We offered to move the prairie dogs for free”, Writz said. “They also changed their prairie dog management plan without notifying us and I will be saying something about it at the next meeting.” Ms. Writz confirmed that was a correct quote, and explained. Discussion ensued and Director James requested from Ms. Writz a recognition that the District did work with her and allowed her relocation to happen. Discussion continued and Director Bielkiewicz expressed concern about the negative publicity that happened. Director James made clear he is asking for a retraction or a public apology letter to the Courier and then we can approve move forward. There was much discussion and opinions expressed.

Director Bradley complimented Ms. Gurdikian’s presentation. He pointed out there is mutual understanding on all parties on potential future relocation policies, particularly in terms of the area we are looking at. Director Bradley expressed he would like to move forward and look to the future. He sees a mutual effort between the agency and the group we are currently speaking with.

Director Maulik opened the floor for public comment.

Diane Suchomel, district resident, questioned in regard to this potential task force, liability insurance and the use of Foothills Park & Recreation’s name on their website. Ms. Suchomel called attention to Highlands Ranch Prairie Dog Management program and talked about passive relocation, suggesting that we need a balance.

Ellen Kessler said she was a member of the Ken-Caryl Prairie Dog Task Force and was partly responsible for finding the land for the Coal Mine and Wadsworth colony. She acknowledged everyone’s feelings were hurt but there is an opportunity to erase that black eye by helping this colony at Hampden.
Chris Holodny, district resident, suggested Ms. Gurdikian has been successful with what she has done and she is very responsive. Expressing concern with the multiplication rate of the prairie dogs, he gave the group credit for trying.

Joni Campbell, district resident, proposed an updated newspaper article could do a lot to repair some of the damage and recover some of the relationship issues.

Blythe Ramsdell, district resident, said she originally got involved in this because her mother, through her illness, had a special attachment to the Coal Mine and Wadsworth prairie dogs. Her mom has since passed but she did live to hear that the prairie dogs were being moved. Ms. Ramsdell said there is a silent constituency, and expressed appreciation to the Board for the work they have done.

Brooke Martin, district resident, recognized everyone’s goal is to compromise, keep costs down, and balance things. She suggested to focus on the common goal.

Tina Gurdikian said as far as keeping the prairie dogs back from paths, she is working with Mr. Hopp and Mr. Insley to do that, and it does work. She discussed passive relocation she has done at Mossbrucker Park.

Director Sutton offered that first and foremost this is an agency about parks and recreation for people, and doesn’t see prairie dogs as any different from other wildlife. He said it’s nice the group wants to relocate them, and pointed out the numbers won’t work and eventually we’re going to have a problem anyway, somewhere. We can come up with a solution to further the group’s efforts, it also comes to the advantage of this agency. Director Sutton suggested this comes up against our policy, but feels it is a nominal amount of money that will be going in to it and potentially it is a near win/win.

Mr. Hopp suggested we have multiple issues happening all at the same time. We have the fact that the District cooperated with the relocation effort on those parcels of property on Coal Mine and Wadsworth, recognizing that we have another opportunity at Columbine and Wadsworth. Regarding this, Mr. Hopp said if people are able to find land that is not our property, and they are able to develop the funds necessary to do that, we absolutely would cooperate with that option.

Another issue related to this discussion is the fact that Tina Gurdikian has done an admirable job of trying to find ways to mitigate prairie dogs in problematic areas that potentially could be at a diminished or reduced cost to the District. He supports continuing to pursue and engage the Prairie Dog Task Force, a volunteer effort, to try to figure out ways we could more humanely do some controls, and recognized we need to develop some parameters around that.

Another issue that has been brought up is the Prairie Dog Management Plan, Mr. Hopp explained. Staff will look at their proposal in comparison with others and may or may not make recommendations; that’s a future issue.

The fourth issue, Mr. Hopp said, is this specific site. Recognizing the fact that the prairie dogs are going to expand, and is there an opportunity to humanely figure out a way to mitigate these issues. Mr. Hopp proposed he and staff should be part of the meeting with CPW on Thursday to talk about things such as density and capacity, etc., and suggested we will know more after that meeting. Mr. Hopp asked that we allow staff to continue to work on the feasibility of this internal relocation effort after meeting with CPW on site and keep that issue separate from all the others.

Staff will continue to work with Ms. Gurdikian about the validity of the Prairie Dog Task Force and what they can offer to the District in the long term. Mr. Hopp suggested if staff were to move forward with the relocation at the BMX site, the cost would not require board approval. Our policy says that we shall not relocate prairie dogs on any of our properties, if that is interpreted as meaning on site or on a different site, that might be up for board consideration. If the interpretation is whether it is on site or off site, we would be asking to supersede our policy. There was board discussion. It was agreed to delay the decision until after the meeting on Thursday with CPW. Mr. Hopp indicated if the Board is willing to interpret our policy that a relocation on site is allowable, that would give staff the opportunity to consider that as an option.
Paul Rufien declared the Board can interpret their policies however they choose. He acknowledged this specific issue was not contemplated when the Board adopted the language, so interpretation is appropriate. Mr. Rufien believes it would be reasonable to say this is not that type of relocation because what was contemplated then was picking them up and moving them miles to an entirely different place rather than nudging them to the south. Mr. Rufien observed the cooperative relationship going forward between the District and this group of people, unless the Board does not want the expense to get out of hand, has got to stop well short of partnership because then there would be liability issues that would be at least Memorandums of Understanding that would have to be in place. As with Adopt-a-Park, Mr. Rufien encouraged the Board to direct staff to keep the collaborative effort in that kind of a box where we have a group of concerned volunteers very willing to help, and they will help just like our playground volunteers and other groups we have that help in the parks, and keep it at that level. As far as the policy, make sure that the task force or any other group is not charged with responsibility under the policy, it has got to be the District’s policy.

Mr. Hopp suggested the trigger point that might make the difference on whether it is a relocation or not is the requirement for a permit from CPW. That is what we can ascertain after Thursday. Mr. Hopp proposed it is a full blown relocation if it requires a permit; it is a passive effort if it does not. The Board agreed to interpret the relocation on site as permissible per the policy, giving Mr. Hopp as much latitude as possible to go forward. Mr. Hopp added if in the event we allow a potential relocation of the Columbine and Wadsworth parcel prairie dogs, that potentially if a home can be found for them, that home could be large enough to receive prairie dogs from other areas, and this colony could also go with that relocation effort.

B. Volunteer Park Ranger Overview

Colin Insley recalled that a few months ago, Diane Suchomel had approached the Board about looking into some sort of ranger program or volunteer program. The Board asked staff to research what other agencies are doing and what kind of opportunities there are.

Colin Insley introduced Brenda Nix, Park Operations and Planning Coordinator, who has spent time researching ranger programs. Ms. Nix provided a Power Point talking about ranger programs in general, including volunteer programs.

Ms. Nix indicated we are introducing a part-time and seasonal ranger program just for Clement Park. She explained their role will be on the customer service end of things and to monitor the shelter rentals. Mr. Insley added that the program is funded by a small increase we did for park shelters, and clarified it is a weekend position only.

C. Finance Update

Patricia Parkin explained we have challenges this year as we have not near enough money for all the capital needs throughout the District, but we have finished the first quarter higher than planned. According to the report provided, she said the year to date ending March 31, 2015 revenues are higher than planned and expenses are less than planned, and explained. She pointed out that quarterly reports are included in the information section of the packet.

D. Facility/Program Financial Reports

Mr. Hopp prefaced that over the last several years we have been putting together these reports that demonstrate the performance of our facilities when we combine the program revenue with them. We can have a good understanding of how each of our facilities perform when we consider all of the activities that are happening within them, including internal programs, external programs, rentals, etc.

Using Power Point, Mr. Hopp went through all the facilities including all revenues and expenditures, all internal and external programming, all staff wages and personnel costs allocated by proration, Mr. Hopp explained. He reiterated it is inclusive of everything except administrative costs and debt. Mr. Hopp explained that very consistently throughout this report, revenues are remaining relatively static; we are running into capacity issues and don’t see dramatic increases. We can see over the last three years it has gone up about $180,000, and our expenses continue to rise at about two and a half to three percent.
E. Financial Forecast

Referring to the financial forecast spreadsheet, Mr. Hopp indicated we have taken the financial forecast out all the way through 2029. The reason we have done that is to demonstrate all of our debt and by 2029, all of our existing debt is completely fallen off. He indicated we are doing a lot of detailed accounting measures to make sure we have a really good understanding of what our future looks like. We are demonstrating with all transparency what our top 20 expenditure line items are, what our purchased services are, what our tax revenue streams are, what our revenue streams are from earned income. Moving forward, we have put variables together on conservative and moderate growth in terms of revenue projections, Mr. Hopp explained.

Going to the second page of the document, given that we were unsuccessful with the mill levy election, Mr. Hopp pointed out that we have a projected deficit in 2016. These numbers, Mr. Hopp explained, are inclusive of funds for capital to address the most egregious issues. If we really need to balance it with the deficit, it would likely come out of the capital funds. Mr. Hopp said he would be relatively confident that we can balance 2016; it may be that we do little to no capital. In 2017 and beyond, the deficit goes up. We may squeak by 2016 and future years, not without potential service cuts and potential closures unless we have an influx of revenue opportunity.

Mr. Hopp suggested it’s not too early to start talking about when we want to try the mill levy again, and discussed. Pointing to the last page of the spreadsheet, Mr. Hopp detailed the estimated impact of mill levy proceeds to estimated net revenues and losses. He acknowledged we did get some feedback from the public, and there was some discussion about doing a sunset, four mills would take us out about 10 years; 3.5 mills would take us out about eight years. Mr. Hopp indicated another variable at the end of 2021 is a bond debt that will expire so there may be an opportunity then to ask for an extension specifically for capital. Director James requested that 2 mills and 2.5 mills be added to the variables in the spreadsheet.

F. Board Member Resignation/Appointment/Process

Mr. Hopp indicated he was notified by Director Maulik that she will be resigning her position on the Board; she will be here for the May 26th board meeting. Referring to the memo provided, Mr. Hopp outlined protocol for when a board member resigns and we have an unexpired term. As a reminder, Mr. Hopp said it is Ward 5 that Director Maulik is representing. He suggested we could solicit for interest and appoint at the May meeting when we have the election for officers. Or, we have 60 days from that date to do that appointment.

It was agreed to promote the fact that we have a vacancy, collect candidate information, and then determine a vetting process.

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. Legal Matters per 24-6-402(4)(b), C.R.S.

MOTION: Director Bielkiewicz moved that the Foothills Board of Directors move into Executive Session to discuss Legal Matters pursuant to Colorado Revised Statute 24-6-402(4)(b). Director James seconded the motion. Poll of the Board: Director Maulik, aye; Director Bielkiewicz, aye; Director James, aye; Director Sutton, aye; Director Bradley, aye. The motion was approved.

The regular meeting adjourned at 9:09pm. Executive Session started at 9:13pm and ended at 9:37pm. The regular meeting reconvened at 9:37pm.

XII. ADJOURNMENT:

The regular meeting was adjourned at 9:38pm. The next regular board meeting will be held at 6pm on Tuesday, May 26, 2015, at Peak Community and Wellness Center, 6612 South Ward Street, Littleton.

Submitted by: Richelle Riley, Recording Secretary