

MINUTES OF THE
SANTA FE COUNTY
COUNTY OPEN LAND, TRAILS AND
PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

May 3, 2023

Santa Fe, New Mexico

I. This meeting of the Santa Fe County Open Land, Trails and Parks Advisory Committee (COLTPAC) was called to order at approximately 6:00 p.m. on the above-cited date at the Plaza Conference Room, 100 Catron Street, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

This meeting was conducted as a hybrid with in-person and online participation.

II. A quorum was achieved with the following members present:

Members Present:

Christopher Mann, Chair
Steven Forde, Vice Chair
Jill St. Thomas
Paige Grant
Jan Cohen [virtually]
Genna Waldvogel
Dan Potter

Member(s) Excused:

Elise Apple Snider
Sandra Madrid-Massengill

Staff Present:

Adeline Murthy, COLTPAC Team Leader
Robert Griego, Planning Director
Monica Harmon, Resource Management
Angela Bordegaray, Senior Planner

Others Present:

Erik Aaboe, Interested citizen
Amelia Adair, Interested citizen
Stephanie Lindsell, NM Wildlife Center
Sarah Sirica, NM Wildlife Center
Karen Farrell, Wordswork

Those present introduced themselves.

III. Approval of Agenda

Introductions were handled prior to action on the agenda.

Mr. Potter moved to approve the agenda with that change. Mr. Forde seconded and the motion passed without opposition.

IV. Approval of Minutes

- A. October 19, 2022 – Special Meeting**
- B. January 18, 2023 – Special Meeting**
- C. February 1, 2023 – Regular Meeting**

Ms. St. Thomas moved to approve the minutes of the three meetings cited above. Her motion was seconded by Mr. Forde and Ms. Cohen. The motion passed without opposition.

V. Matters from the Committee

- A. Introductions – Addressed earlier**

- B. Acquisition Subcommittee Update**

Chair Mann said the subcommittee currently consists of himself, Mr. Forde and Ms. Waldvogel. Another COLTPAC member can join without triggering any quorum issues. Ms. St. Thomas expressed her interest to work with the subcommittee.

Mr. Forde said while the subcommittee has met and talked over the interim following the previous meeting there was nothing at this point to report. The subcommittee reviewed the pertinent forms the County uses for purchased or donated properties in an attempt to clarify and perhaps streamline the paperwork.

Chair Mann said the forms are from many years ago when the County had a sizable budget for acquisitions and are complicated and confusing. The rating and ranking appears subjective. Regarding funding, in the past, the County would hold back a percentage of its GRT for open space acquisition and in 2010 that practice stopped. Following research a variety of funding options were discussed to provide a regular stream of revenue for additional land acquisitions. Funding other than from the County and/or State is preferable. The Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund is a potential source and other grant options at the federal level. The County could include an item in its budget. A memo has been created that requires further review prior to distribution amongst the COLTPAC members. He noted that the charter that established COLTPAC tasks them to recommend funding sources to the BCC.

The state's Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund may not be intended for counties but is available to various state programs. Ms. Murthy said the County has received grants from the Watershed Stewardship Program managed by NMED and those monies may originate from the Legacy Fund. Otherwise, she was unaware of any programs geared towards acquisitions.

It was mentioned that meeting quarterly has its downside in moving items forward. The subcommittee will firm up the proposed changes in the acquisition evaluation document and funding ideas and forward that to COLTPAC in the form of a recommendation to take action and then pass it on to the BCC for consideration. Another bond issue may be among the suggestions.

C. Los Potreros Open Space Site Visit

Ms. Murthy said a site visit to Los Potreros near the Santuario de Chimayo may be warranted. There was consensus to do so.

Ms. Murthy clarified that Los Potreros was purchased by the County and some months ago an adjacent landowner expressed interest in selling his property to the County. An application has not been submitted. The Trust for Public Land may acquire the adjacent parcel and sell it to the County. The Trust can serve as an administrative facilitator – government moves slowly and an NGO can move more quickly on transactions.

Ms. Murthy offered to start a Doodle-poll to schedule a site visit to Los Potreros.

Mr. Griego said the County is considering placing TDRs on Los Potreros.

VI. Presentations

A. New Mexico Wildlife Center Rehabilitation Program & Release Proposal

Chair Mann thanked Ms. Cohen for bringing this to COLTPAC's attention. Ms. Cohen said she has been involved with the center since its inception and the work being done there is "quite amazing." The center takes in orphaned or wounded wildlife with the intent of releasing them back in the wild.

Stephanie Lindsell, rehabilitation manager at New Mexico Wildlife Center, shared her screen and provided a presentation on the center. She highlighted that the center admits between 700 and 1,000 animals annually and their goal is to release them back in the wild. Approximately 60 percent are released. Staff is made up of certified wildlife rehabilitators, a wildlife veterinarian and many volunteers. In 2021, New Mexico Wildlife Center treated 882 animals representing more than 130 different species of animals. The patients ranged in size from the tiniest hummingbird, to eagles, bobcat kittens, and mule deer fawns. The center's hospital is fairly extensive as are several outside enclosures, which provide the necessary spaces for recovery before release. There is a surgical suite, incubators, and extensive analysis capacity,

2022 was a slow year and the center treated 673 animals, the majority of which were birds. The majority of the patients come in during the summer. There are winter releases but typically juveniles are released in the summer. The majority of the animals treated are from the Santa Fe area and suitable release sites back in the Santa Fe is preferable. Santa Fe's open space properties may be appropriate.

Sarah Sirica, New Mexico Wildlife Staff Veterinarian, said releases of mammals, reptiles and amphibians are regulated and required to be released in the county where rescued. Reptiles and amphibians generally are very connected to their original home and are usually released within a mile of where rescued, as long as the location is safe. The center is looking for sites close to the rescue location and a place where the animal can survive, thrive and complete their lifecycle. A suitable location includes food, water and shelter and not too many of the same species or humans. Safety is a major consideration and animals are released following hunting season.

Dr. Sirica said she reviewed the County's list of open space and land and offered that Cerrillos Hills Park has easy access and good habitat. Los Caminitos another large uninterrupted conservation area which is easy to access and close to the center. Urban wildlife can be released near Agua Fria/Burro Lane Park, Rio en Medio, Arroyo Hondo, Thornton Ranch, or Peñasco Blanco wetlands. La Cieneguilla is especially good for water birds. Access is a problem and small pocket parks are inappropriate. In La Puebla there is barbed wire which presents problems, i.e., owls get entangled in it.

Having release areas identified upfront would be useful to the center. Partnering with the County to find out how to access the sites was needed. A detailed list of where the County properties are and how to access them would be useful.

Mr. Griego asked whether the center has written agreements with other entities for release. Ms. Grant said the center released a couple of kestrels and a bag of dead mice on her farm up by Peñasco with minimal paperwork.

A County liaison would be useful, along with an outline of what type of habitat is required.

Those properties that are closed to the public would be perfect habitat. The Ortiz Mountain as well as Thornton Ranch should be considered as prime release sites.

Mr. Potter suggested talking to Commonweal Conservancy that has a large holding within Galisteo Basin Reserve of 5,000+ acres. He understood the Conservancy plans to remove whatever barbwire remains in the summer.

Chair Mann requested the center work with staff. He noted that COLTPAC is charged to assist the County with public education and outreach regarding open space and a partnership with the Center would be useful.

VII. Matters of Public Concern

Erik Aaboe, ex-COLTPAC member and former County employee, and currently serving on the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee as well as the County Planning Commission, said he was interested in the E-Bike policy listed on the agenda as item VIII.B.

Amelia Adair said she was present as a trail advocate and serves on the Eldorado Community Improvement Association. She was particularly interested in how equestrians can co-exist with other trail users and requested that she be considered a candidate when a vacancy opens on COLTPAC.

Ms. St. Thomas said she was interested in developing a bike/hike path throughout the Hwy. 14 coordinator which could travel from the Outlet Mall to Cerrillos Park.

VIII. Matters from County Staff

A. Open Space, Trail and Parks 2023 Annual Work Plan Overview

Ms. Murthy reminded the committee that this had been on the previous agenda but with time constraints was not addressed. Her plan was to start this process earlier next calendar year. The

plan can be amended. She reviewed the plan's three sections: resource management; educational programming and stewardship; and project development and implementation and planning and program development.

She highlighted some of the points regarding resource management:

- Two management plans need to be finalized this year – Little Tesuque and Tayala Hill
- Update management plans for Los Potreros and Arroyo Hondo
- Draft plans for three open spaces
- A series of species-related management plans that require implementation
- UNM is surveying rare plants on open space properties
- Invasive species are also monitored and a youth group manages some invasive plants
- Santa Fe County is participating in a grant process with NMED to assist in river restoration
- Installation of wildlife friendly fencing
- Forest thinning project in Ortiz Mountain open space
- Erosion control projects with master naturalists in open space
- Conduct a flow plain restoration project in Rio en Medio
- Continuous review of maintenance schedules for open space properties
- Facilitate sustainable trail design and construction with maintenance staff – workshops information will be shared

Ms. St. Thomas mentioned a NM DOT mowing problem that affects pollinators and the loss of wildflowers. Education is essential for the mowers.

It was noted that it would be beneficial to integrate the Public Works road crews with open space maintenance sustainability workshops.

Regarding educational programming and stewardship, Ms. Murthy noted the following:

- The Master Naturalist program is a training program for volunteers and facilitated by the Santa Fe Botanical Garden and the Audubon Center
- Enhance the volunteer maintenance program
- Explore more programming educational opportunities
- Install educational and safety signage
- Improve maps

The Cerrillos Park has created village participation with events from star and bird watching to historic hikes.

An interpretive ranger is in the budget for open spaces.

The County needs to be proactive in regards to trail right-of-way. Safety-wise the multi-use trails should have signage identifying horses as having the first right-of-way. Cerrillos Hills signage should be used as the model. Mr. Griego noted that the County's Open Space Ordinance establishes the regulations regarding yielding.

Steve Griego was mentioned as a wonderful resource for trails.

In terms of project development, implementation, planning and program development, Ms. Murthy noted the following:

- BLM is working on an Environmental Assessment of Thornton Ranch which is required before trails are developed; the County has requested to be the cooperating agency on the EA
- Public Works is focused on the river trail from Siler to San Ysidro Crossing, Phase 2 of Romero Park, Segment 6 of the Rail Trail, Eldorado trail, improving the Madrid ballpark, and realigning, repairing and rerouting a number of trails
- Engaging with tribal entities for co-management of cultural resources in Thornton Ranch open space
- Modernize acquisition process
- Update the maps of open space and trails within the County Code

Chair Mann pointed out how dense the material work plan material is and said he'd like to spread the discussion out over a couple of meetings in the future. A special meeting may be appropriate. COLTPAC meets quarterly and can hold special meetings. Additionally, subcommittees can be created as needed as long as a quorum is not present.

Ms. Murthy said the completed management plans can be found on the County website and those still in process will be presented to COLTPAC for review and approval.

B. E-Bike Policy Update

Mr. Aaboe was no longer online and Ms. Murthy said she would reach out to him. She offered that the state passed SB 69 which defines different classes of E-Bikes and removes the lowest classification from being defined as a motor vehicle. The consequence of that is Class 1 E-Bikes are allowed wherever bicycles are allowed unless a local jurisdiction specifically prohibits it. Consistent messaging to the public is warranted.

Chair Mann said this is a salient issue for the committee since it will affect the safety and experience one has on a trail.

Ms. Cohen said having E-Bikes on the trail can be very distressing. She supported the committee developing a recommendation to the BCC.

Mr. Potter pointed out that allowing the E-Bikes make trails more accessible for elder cyclists and perhaps motorized wheelchairs.

Ms. Waldvogel offered that LANL is starting an E-Bike program and she'll share that information with staff.

It was determined that additional information was necessary, and a discussion and possible presentation at the next meeting was agreed upon.

C. Transfer of Develop Rights and Open Space Conservation Program Update

Ms. Murthy said a surveyor is developing the first TDR plat at the Santa Fe River. Work has begun on getting a contract for the second parcel which would be in Los Potrerros open space. Once the contract is in place, there is a 90-day period in which to create the plat.

Chair Mann said it was discovered during the South Meadows incident that most of the County's open space land is not stripped of development rights. As a technical matter, the County Commission has the authority to sell the land. Last year, COLTPAC recommended to the BCC that deeds contain an amendment that development rights are not exercisable and those rights be placed within the TDR bank.

D. Open Space Acquisition Update

COLTPAC recommendations on acquisitions: accept the donation of a two-acre parcel near Cerrillos Hills Park and the purchase of 160 acres near Golden. Appraisals will be developed and brought back to COLTPAC.

IX. Next Regular Meeting: Wednesday, August 2, 2023

Staff will communicate regarding a site visit at Los Potrerros and potentially having a special meeting to discuss the acquisition review process.

X. Adjournment


Having completed the agenda and with no further business to come before COLTPAC, Ms. St. Thomas moved to adjourn and Mr. Potter seconded. Chair Mann declared this meeting adjourned at approximately 8:10 p.m.

Approved by:



Christopher Mann, Chair


Respectfully submitted by:


Karen Farrell, Wordswork

COUNTY OF SANTA FE) COLTPAC MINUTES
STATE OF NEW MEXICO) ss PAGES: 7

I Hereby Certify That This Instrument Was Filed for
Record On The 4TH Day Of October, 2023 at 03:55:59 PM
And Was Duly Recorded as Instrument # 2020938
Of The Records Of Santa Fe County



Witness My Hand And Seal Of Office
Katharine E. Clark
Deputy  County Clerk, Santa Fe, NM