

# **CARSON CITY OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

## **Minutes of the July 28, 2004 Meeting**

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A meeting of the Carson City Open Space Advisory Committee was scheduled for 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, July 28, 2004 in the Community Center Sierra Room, 851 East William Street, Carson City, Nevada.

**PRESENT:** Chairperson Steve Hartman  
Vice Chairperson Dan Jacquet  
Laura Bird  
Margaret Robinson  
Bruce Scott

**STAFF:** Scott Fahrenbruch, Acting Parks and Recreation Director  
Juan Guzman, Open Space Manager  
Vern Krahn, Park Planner  
Larry Werner, City Engineer  
Mary Margaret Madden, Deputy District Attorney  
Kathleen King, Recording Secretary

**NOTE:** A tape recording of these proceedings is on file in the Clerk-Recorder's Office and is available for review during regular business hours.

**CALL TO ORDER AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM (1-0008)** - Chairperson Hartman called the meeting to order at 9:18 a.m. A quorum was present. Members Fischer and Riedl were absent.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDIZED ITEMS (1-0015)** - None.

1. **ACTION ON APPROVAL OF MINUTES (1-0014)** - None.

2. **CHANGES TO THE AGENDA (1-0014)** - None.

3. **AGENDA ITEMS:**

**3-A. BRIEFING ON THE WATERFALL FIRE DAMAGE TO THE CARSON CITY SIERRA FRONT LANDSCAPE, AND WATERSHED (1-0015)** - Mr. Guzman introduced Burned Area Emergency Response ("BAER") Team Leader Genny Wilson, and commended her on the assistance she had provided to Carson City. Ms. Wilson introduced U.S. Forest Service Staff Hydrologist Casey Shannon and State Forester Pete Anderson. She referred to the BAER Plan included in the agenda materials and narrated a PowerPoint presentation. At Mr. Guzman's request, Ms. Wilson discussed the obligation to conduct a cultural assessment, including field review of existing resources and determination of their significance, if the City accepts federal funding for rehabilitation. In response to a question, Ms. Wilson advised that the archaeologists' primary mission will be to record their findings prior to rehabilitation treatments beginning. They then work with the State Historic Preservation Office to document their findings.

Mr. Shannon narrated the hydrology portion of the BAER Plan PowerPoint presentation. He reviewed concerns and recommendations to address the potential for the City's water system to become contaminated with ash and silt following the first regional rainfall; the location of the primary water intakes; the potential

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for the Quill Water Treatment Plant to be affected by debris flows; possible sedimentation build-up in the Vice Canyon infiltration ponds; the potential for flood/debris flows to impact residential areas immediately below the alluvial fans on Ash and Kings Canyon Creeks; anticipated increased runoff from the burned areas above the subdivisions in Lakeview, Timberline, and Kings Canyon; protection of water intake structures; installation of an early warning system; loss of soil cover and water resistant soil. Mr. Shannon emphasized the importance of restricting public access into the burned area because of hazardous conditions. He responded to questions regarding the method by which the Debris Flow Runout Map was developed. He acknowledged that the map is based on a 25-year storm event. In response to a question, Mr. Werner explained the function of the early warning system.

(1-0705) Ed James, of the Carson Water Subconservancy District, explained the function of the Douglas County early warning system. He advised that Douglas County received FEMA funding to install the early warning system. He recommended that Carson City install an early warning system "because there is no way to warn people in enough time." He offered to provide Mr. Werner information on the equipment used in Douglas County.

Member Scott suggested that home owners consider the potential for debris to flow in places other than it has in the past because of plugging and sedimentation. He noted that the public information process will be critical, and should include information for what people should be aware and watchful. He suggested that the Committee could assist in providing such information to the general public. Mr. Fahrenbruch advised that the reverse 911 system was one of the topics discussed at the most recent City staff meeting. City Manager Linda Ritter, Battalion Chief Stacey Giomi, and Development Services Director Andrew Burnham emphasized the importance of fast tracking installation of the system. Mr. Fahrenbruch advised that funding sources are being researched. Member Bird commented that the gabion structures and the log erosion barriers will be instrumental in mitigating landslide risks, but will not prevent them. She agreed that installation of the early warning system is critical. Mr. Shannon advised that many people have approached him with concerns regarding what to do and what to expect. He agreed that, in this type of situation, education and information is critical.

Vice Chairperson Jacquet referred to the storm water issues which have been addressed over the last several years in conjunction with the freeway construction. He inquired as to whether the project time lines can be accelerated in light of the risks presented by the fire. Mr. Werner advised that the storm water systems which remain to be completed are those in Combs and Timberline Canyons, and that they are downstream of the burned area. There are not yet any drainage plans in place for Ash and Kings Canyons other than cursory considerations with regard to flow direction. City staff will be utilizing information gathered by the BAER Team to discuss treatments for the various canyons, and will hold neighborhood meetings to provide information to the property owners. Mr. Werner advised that Joanne Skelly, of the Cooperative Extension, will be coordinating the City's public information program. He noted that there are many inter-related drainages particularly in Timberline and Combs Canyons. The City is developing a process to get information to residents quickly. In response to an earlier comment, Mr. Werner advised that City staff is working to develop one contract in which the City will participate as a partner rather than having multiple, competing contracts. Ms. Ritter will coordinate identification of funding sources to implement the BAER Plan.

Chairperson Hartman commended the BAER Team on the hard work done in a very compressed time frame. He agreed with Mr. Werner regarding the importance of one contract rather than multiple,

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competing contracts. He expressed the concern that coordination will be critical to the small time frame associated with implementing rehabilitation. He advised that the Committee will be very supportive of getting the BAER Team what they need as quickly as possible. Mr. Werner discussed funding sources being pursued by the City. In response to a question, Ms. Wilson advised that a USFS implementation team leader was brought in last week. He is gathering contract specifications so that, once authority is granted to begin allocating funding, plan implementation can begin immediately.

(1-0915) State Forester Pete Anderson discussed landowner assistance programs which have been available through the Nevada Division of Forestry over the past fourteen years. He noted that the National Fire Plan brought to the forefront the need to address cultural resources. He advised that the Nevada Division of Forestry has an excellent relationship with the State Historic Preservation Office, and that an efficient process is in place with eight personnel certified to conduct archaeological overviews. Cultural surveys are only required if land is to be disturbed. Aerial seeding does not require a cultural survey; rangeland drilling does. Mr. Anderson advised that the real hurdles will be seed availability, placing seed orders, and getting contracts in place. In response to a question, Mr. Anderson advised that a team leader has been retained, and commented that the coordinated effort is working well. Lead persons from each agency will meet immediately to identify all implementation hurdles and develop a strategy. Mr. Anderson pointed out that most of the available funding is for short-term, emergency rehabilitation. The short-term issues will be addressed first and then a long-term strategy will be developed. Locking in funding streams is critical. Mr. Anderson discussed the Nevada Division of Forestry Seed Bank Program, and advised that NDF staff will place seed orders as quickly as possible. NDF has open contracts with a variety of seed dealerships, and Mr. Anderson expressed the opinion that this will be the most efficient way to “tie up seed” before more rangeland fires occur.

Chairperson Hartman agreed that contracting for seed and hay is an important element to accomplish as soon as possible. He advised that the Committee’s concern is to ensure the rehabilitation team has all the tools necessary to do the job as quickly as possible. In response to a question regarding long-range rehabilitation, Mr. Anderson advised that the fire burned in varying intensities. In some of the upper elevations, the forest floor was “cleaned up and the trees will do fine.” In other areas, the trees are completely gone and hazardous situations have been created. The standing dead trees will provide habitat for beetles, and Mr. Anderson discussed the importance of addressing this issue. He noted the goal to return the water shed to an aesthetically pleasing, recreational area, and advised that this will take planning and coordination. He advised that the Nevada Division of Forestry has nurseries and that informal discussions have taken place with regard to ensuring sufficient seed collection on the eastern front to have the same species and seed sources available. Mr. Anderson advised that there are a variety of avenues to pursue concurrent with the short term effort, and that NDF staff will continue to work closely with the Committee and City staff. He expressed the opinion that the same type of vegetation should not be planted on the burned landscape. He advised that more thought, from a fire protection and forest health standpoint, will need to be put into the plan.

Member Scott referred to the City’s master plan update process, and noted the “unfortunate opportunity” created for the west side with regard to trails, recreation, fire protection, revegetation, visual quality, etc. He inquired as to what could be done to integrate some of the potentials with regard to open space trails, water shed values, etc. as part of the master planning elements being considered. Mr. Guzman reviewed details of the integrated approach to rehabilitation, including revegetation, recreation, access, fire protection, etc. Mr. Krahn reviewed the BAER Team recommendations, including to address emergency

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situations, close roads for public safety and begin opening them once they are deemed safe for public transportation. He advised that medium range recommendations include beginning to consider trail planning in conjunction with the U.S. Forest Service. The Clear Creek/Kings Canyon Landscape Analysis outlines opportunities to identify recreation areas, methods by which to protect the resource, etc. Mr. Krahn advised that emergency funding is available for road closures and improvement for the main access roads. He discussed long range plans which include the use of existing fire breaks and segments of the multi-use path system. He advised that the kiosks and road signs identified in the initial report will be reused as part of the trails plan.

Mr. Guzman advised that access will most likely begin to open from south to north. Gail Durham has advised that the C-Hill environment will grow relatively fast and that vegetation will be present within a year. Further north, salvage operations for existing logs will be set up to take advantage of the resource. With regard to opportunities for altering the vegetation, Mr. Guzman advised that Mr. Werner has been considering the use of effluent to establish a greenbelt in the area of the interface. Resource Concepts, Inc. offered their services to the City for fire rehabilitation, and Mr. Werner hired them. RCI staff have been advising primarily on vegetation and road treatments. John McLain, of RCI, has developed a visual concept for the landscape which includes substantially fewer fire susceptible materials closer to the urban interface, followed by a band of large-type plant materials such as brush, followed by manzanita, and finally the forest. Mr. McLain's recommendation involves a succession of structure, height, and plant types which promote fire safety and, at the same time, are aesthetically pleasing. Mr. Guzman advised that the U.S. Forest Service emphasis has been on vegetation which grows quickly to protect the water shed. In addition, the USFS has a mandate to consider native vegetation while the City doesn't have those constraints. Mr. Guzman advised that staff is taking advantage of opportunities where they present. He suggested ensuring that the seed mixes contain more ornamental flowers and diversity. He advised that the BAER Plan provides the minimum requirements for safety and health, but that it can be built upon. He further advised that the City's engineers met with the BAER Team to formulate recommendations for roads. He referred to the "Short and Long Term Restoration Needs" authored by Ms. Wilson which was distributed prior to the start of the meeting.

Ms. Wilson referred to the "Engineering/Roads and Recreation Access" tab and the specific Short, Medium, and Long-Term Management Recommendations contained therein. She explained that some of the ornamental and wildflower species were eliminated from the BAER Plan because they are not considered primary vegetation species which hold soil. She encouraged the Committee members and City staff to take the opportunity, through the Nevada Department of Wildlife and the Nevada Division of Forestry, to include ornamental and wildflower species in the seed mix which will be applied for erosion control measures. Member Scott expressed appreciation for Ms. Wilson's comments and noted the Committee's mission to protect the visual quality of the community. He noted the interesting blend of property ownership in the burned area, and the USFS investment of resources in the immediate effort and in the mid- and long-term picture. He advised that the Committee will appreciate the USFS handing off things to the City or to the Nevada Division of Forestry which will more quickly expedite the rehabilitation efforts. He expressed appreciation for the efforts of the BAER Team. Ms. Wilson encouraged the Committee to keep attention on this project. She advised that Tom Baker, the USFS Capital City Coordinator, is available as a resource, and noted that USFS Supervisory Forester Larry Randall will be a key contact to assist with recreation and access issues.

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Vice Chairperson Jacquet discussed potential general public expectations for rehabilitation, and inquired as to whether the BAER Plan included enlightening the general public with regard to what to expect. He further inquired as to the role of the Committee and the Open Space Program in providing information to the public. Ms. Wilson advised that the regional forester was in Carson City during the first 2-3 days of the fire, and met with the BAER Team and most of the local agency representatives. She discussed the regional forester's concern over burned areas not being reforested. She advised of talking with many of the homeowners in the burned area, and that it is very much a priority to complete the reforestation effort. With regard to the lower elevations and the C-Hill area, she agreed that reforestation is probably not a good idea. Ms. Wilson advised that the BAER Team does not deal with providing information to the general public. The BAER Team did include a recreation monitor / public information officer in the Plan because, as time goes on, people will forget about the hazardous situations in the area. Ms. Wilson advised that the BAER Team recognized the need for conveying information to the public regarding the rehabilitation expectations, and accordingly recommended a small amount of funding.

Mr. Guzman advised that the City has entered into a contract with the Cooperative Extension to establish a program for interacting with the general public on various aspects of the rehabilitation process. He advised of having proposed using the Committee as one avenue for educating the public, formulating public policy, and determining the process for visualizing the future of the burned area. Mr. Guzman discussed the unique opportunity of having the regional forester available during the fire. He noted that the City has a great friend in Pete Anderson and that he will help implement the plans. Nevada Division of Forestry staff have expressed an interest in reforestation, and Mr. Guzman reiterated the importance of the Committee and the Open Space Program in helping to formulate the long-range public policy. He advised that although the USFS has withdrawn the Clear Creek/Kings Canyon Landscape Analysis, there will be an opportunity to revive those discussions in the near future and incorporate concepts regarding the future vision for the forest. USFS Hydrologist Sally Champion and Supervisory Forester Larry Randall also served as part of the BAER Team.

Mr. Anderson noted that fire rehabilitation in this region is ongoing and in every different stage of recovery possible. He agreed with previous comments that the general public may have unrealistic expectations of the rehabilitation process. He suggested that it may be useful to provide a PowerPoint presentation or an actual tour so that people can see what happens over time. He noted that there is a teachable window of 1-2 years. He pointed out that the same conditions exist in the Clear Creek area and along the Sierra Front, and discussed the need to move quickly to reduce fuels while recovering from the Waterfall Fire. In response to a question with regard to planting Jeffrey pines prior to 2006/2007, Mr. Anderson advised that the best success will be to utilize east side seed, grow the seedlings at the NDF nursery, and plant them back on the mountain in 1-2 years. He explained that there are many things to consider with regard to slopes over the next year. The first step is to stabilize slopes with grasses and begin nursery seedlings. Because of the drought, careful consideration must be given to how and when to plant in the hope that moisture will follow. Mr. Anderson advised that unless there is a way to irrigate, re-establishing plant species is very difficult. In response to a question regarding soil treatments, Mr. Anderson advised that drill seeding creates a better environment for germination. Aerial seeding involves a mulching component which also improves the germination environment. Mr. Anderson referred to the displayed Fire Severity map, and advised that the areas which burned extremely hot will not change back without some type of physical manipulation. The majority of the areas which burned the hottest are on slopes which are impossible for people and equipment to access. Ms. Wilson advised that the seeding, log erosion barriers, and wattles were recommended in an attempt to hold residual soil. She advised that there was a lot of

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“perched soils” on shelves that were held in by boulders or logs. The fear is that a summer thunderstorm will result in the loss of residual soils. Mr. Guzman advised of having discussed with Gail Durham the alluvial fan soils which are, in some areas, as deep as six inches and in others superficial depending upon the severity of the burn. Ms. Durham anticipates that, in some cases, it will take at least a year for the soils to come back to normal texture and characteristics. The treatment is to add organic material on the top to begin the process of keeping the soil in place and adding moisture. The scale is so large as to make this a daunting task. For the areas closer to town, Ms. Durham prescribed drill seeding and physical manipulation of the soil.

Mr. Fahrenbruch inquired as to whether annual grasses were considered as part of the seed mix to get quick cover to stabilize the soil and allow perennial grasses to become established. Ms. Wilson referred to and reviewed the seed mixes listed in the BAER Plan. She advised that Ms. Durham proposed crested wheat grass for much of the burned area because of its massive root system which is successful in holding soils. Mr. Guzman provided background information on the discussions which took place regarding proposed seed mixes. In response to a question, Ms. Wilson advised that a consensus was reached. There was frustration when some of the ornamental flowers were eliminated, but Ms. Wilson reiterated that they couldn't be justified under emergency processes. She discussed an ongoing debate with regard to the timing for applying the seed mixes and advised that, if necessary, the seed mixes can be applied under multiple contracts. She clarified, however, that every land owner can adjust the contents of their seed mixes and apply them under one contract. Mr. Anderson discussed the various treatments used over the years to rehabilitate burned areas across the State, and the knowledge gained from each experience. Member Scott noted that the success of the treatment is very dependent upon the weather. He expressed the opinion that it would be unfortunate to not have applied a seed treatment in the event of good rainfall. He suggested that if the seed treatments are not successful, re-seeding treatments may have to take place.

Chairperson Hartman thanked Ms. Wilson and the BAER Team, and expressed appreciation for the organized and efficient way the BAER Plan was developed. He expressed an interest in bringing back the ornamental seed which was eliminated as part of the emergency process. He agreed with Member Scott's comments that the restoration process may be long. He expressed the opinion that the Open Space Program should do whatever possible to facilitate purchase of seed, straw, etc.

**3-B. ACTION TO RECOMMEND TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS A PRELIMINARY PLAN OF ACTION TO FACILITATE THE REHABILITATION OF AREAS AFFECTED BY THE WATERFALL FIRE (1-1859)** - Mr. Guzman advised that a better idea of funding sources and what they will cover will soon be known. FEMA representatives are in town beginning today, and a team comprised of City and NDF representatives are conducting a tour of the burned area. Mr. Guzman advised that Deputy City Engineer John Flansberg will take over now that the planning process is nearly finalized. He expressed confidence in Mr. Flansberg's abilities and experience with construction projects, contracts, and administration. Mr. Flansberg has been introduced to the BAER Team members who will remain for the implementation process. Mr. Guzman explained that a general recommendation will convey the Committee's willingness to help and will be in keeping with the provisions of Question #18. Chairperson Hartman noted the importance of expediting the process. Vice Chairperson Jacquet suggested that Open Space Program funding could be matched against federal funding sources and eventually reimbursed. Chairperson Hartman advised that the recommendation must be within the purview of the Committee's charge.

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Member Scott discussed the importance of keeping the Committee regularly and consistently informed of the status of the rehabilitation process and what assistance can be provided. Mr. Fahrenbruch advised that the City is researching available funding and funding mechanisms. He noted the Committee's concern over the opportunity to fund aesthetic treatments to the view shed. He expressed certainty that funding will be available for the base revegetation treatment. Chairperson Hartman expressed the opinion that the seed mixes need to be ordered now in order to ensure availability. He suggested that the Committee may need to meet more frequently, at least in the short term. Mr. Fahrenbruch advised that the Committee's position would be carried forward immediately. Member Scott suggested involving the Parks and Recreation Commission in the process, and Mr. Fahrenbruch discussed the steps being taken to do so. **Vice Chairperson Jacquet moved that the Open Space Program support the emergency fire rehabilitation process within the context of the Open Space ordinance, and that specific projects be timely presented to the Committee for evaluation of their individual merits. Member Scott seconded the motion,** and discussion took place with regard to the same. Chairperson Hartman called for a vote on the pending motion; **motion carried 5-0.** Chairperson Hartman suggested scheduling a Committee meeting in the very near future.

**4. NON-ACTION ITEMS:**

**STATUS REPORTS AND COMMENTS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS (1-2129) -**

Member Scott expressed the opinion that the Committee needs to make a concerted effort to collect names and to thank people involved in the process. Chairperson Hartman advised of having met last week in Washington, D.C., with Rick Spees, Carson City's lobbyist. He discussed the importance of identifying costs as soon as possible to coordinate available funding, and of keeping Mr. Spees informed. With regard to the public information issue, Chairperson Hartman suggested the possibility of coordinating with the local newspapers to publish weekly articles regarding access, volunteer opportunities, etc.

**STATUS REPORTS AND COMMENTS FROM STAFF (1-2216) -**

In response to a question, Mr. Guzman reported on the clean up activity recently sponsored by the Committee. He advised that the Open Space Program appraiser will be presented to the Board of Supervisors at their August 5<sup>th</sup> meeting. In addition, a conceptual deal for Horse Creek Ranch will be presented to the Committee in the near future.

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS (1-2285) -**

Chairperson Hartman suggested agendaizing discussion regarding a clean up activity in the Clear Creek water shed.

**5. ACTION ON ADJOURNMENT (1-2298) -** Member Scott moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:23 a.m. Member Robinson seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.

The Minutes of the July 28, 2004 meeting of the Carson City Open Space Advisory Committee are so approved this 30<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2004.

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STEPHEN D. HARTMAN, Chair