MINUTES
CITY OF FORT COLLINS • BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

NATURAL RESOURCES ADVISORY BOARD

TYPE OF MEETING - REGULAR - EXCERPT

January 18, 2023 6:00 – 8:00 pm
Via Zoom

a. **Urban Lakes Water Quality Management Policy and Guidance Update –** Richard Thorp (Lead Specialist and Watershed Program Manager, Utilities) updated the Natural Resources Advisory Board on the project team's Policy development approach and shared final drafts of the Policy and Guidance. The project team is seeking a formal motion from the Natural Resources Advisory Board to recommend that City Council adopt the final draft Policy. (Action)

- Discussion | Q + A

  - Barry – **Q** – I found it hard to evaluate or give a thumbs up/down because of a lack of detail. For instance, I am interested specifically in the water quality metrics that are being measured and how they compare with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards for water quality thresholds. That is data information. An example that's recently appeared in the media about polyfluoroalkyl substances found in all the fish that were sampled by a variety of agencies including Parks and Wildlife and in every case the fish exceeded the EPA standards by a huge amount suggesting that there were human health issues particularly with people who would consume those fish. I only live a block away from City Park and the lake and I can tell you lots of people catch those fish and keep them presumably to consume them. It is hard for me to judge whether it got the appropriate rigger or not to protect community welfare without information on what exactly is being measured and how the current measurements compare to EPA water quality thresholds. Richard – **A** – That is a good question, Barry. To be clear the actual measurements of water quality would be management plan specific. That is not what is intended with the guidance at all. It is supposed to summarize information hat is known and supposed to provide some basic tools for managers as a starting point. So specific measures, we are not adding water quality criteria to the guidelines or anything like that. It is well beyond the scope of this project. Barry – **Comment** – I guess I am saying I think that is what should be included. As a citizen that is what I want to see. What are you measuring? Why are you measuring these metrics? What are your thresholds for triggering a response that you are not meeting federal water quality standards? I mean those are things for me that I want to see. Richard – **Comment** – I agree and that is where the rubber meets the road. It is again outside of the scope of this guidance. These are really good questions for the managing departments that are managing specific lakes. The managing departments are going to be tasked with determining what to measure and

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how to prioritize certain lakes for management and I think that should be communicated with them.

– Dawson – **Q** – Going off that, the managing areas are Natural Areas, Parks and groups like that, that we can find in the final draft of the Guidance Documents? Richard – **A** – Exactly. There are three managing departments. For example, Natural areas is going to be prioritizing what lakes they want to put resources to, developing specific management plans for those lakes and for water quality issues that they are concerned with, and then going from there.

– Danielle – **Q** – One of the things that I think is noticeable is the two predominate issues identified by public were fish kills, algal blooms, and odors associated with these events. I remember a large fish kill, in 2019 or 2020 in the Poudre River and there was a lot of misinformation round it being caused by chemicals or a variety of things and a lack of understanding of the importance of climate change and warmer temperatures causing and driving these events. The key aspect of managing these events is managing expectations, public education that people recognize is part of our warming future. One mitigation option that does hold a lot of potential, is increase shade cover. Beavers are one of the most powerful tools in ecosystem engineers to increase shade cover that can then decrease water temperatures and prevent these events from happening. The second is increasing tree canopy. I am wondering if these actions are something that are potentially on the table, something that is being discussed, and if not if there is opportunity for the Board to recommend these features. Richard – **A** – Part of the guidance development is we pulled together contemporary best practices for some of that, like sedimentation, algal bloom, and lot of the primary water quality issues we face. By no means is the Best Management Practice Tool and the Guidance supposed to be all encompassing. I think that gets back to this developing specific management plans for the issues you are facing. We have 304 urban lakes within the City that the City owns. To develop a plan that captures the issues of all those lakes is just really not possible or practical. So specific things like introducing beavers is not necessarily within our Best Management Practices, and that is something that certainly might be considered by one of the departments. I assume you are taking about lakes too and not just the Poudre. Danielle – **Comment** – Yes, It would apply for all water bodies. Obviously, the Poudre Rivering systems are better suited or preferred by the beaver but here are some successful examples from isolated lakes as well. Richard – **Comment** – That is a good point. The best practices that we do include are meant to be a starting point and then you know there is a possibility City Staff, that has been tasked with managing these resources are going to need to reach out to

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consultants for additional help for particularly challenging situations.

- Matt – **Comment** – Barry, I appreciate what you are saying, and I get it. I get where you are going with that. It might not be analogist, but I would refer back to our discussion on the guardians of the river and feel like this is a foundational policy and item because the alternative staff has been dealing with in the past is no guidance and no guardrails about who is responsible for what lakes and who is responsible in the City for these things. I think what I hear Richard saying is that this can be an interim process. This provides a toolbox that is foundational. It can be reviewed maybe someday with the aspirational goal to get where you are at with specific measurements. I don't disagree with that, but I feel like it is a really solid foundation and I appreciate the applicability in scope section how it divided out who is responsible for what. I thought the toolbox was a good start for staff and private lake managers. I appreciate the work. Barry – **Comment** – I must say to that after reading the reports about the PFAS found in all fish samples throughout Colorado in rivers and lakes the magnitude with which they exceeded EPA standards suggested to me a sense of urgency of moving quickly to monitoring those indicators and those monitoring state variables that are tied directly to the EPA water quality thresholds.

- Dawson – **Q** – So the question on the table is if the Board will show support going forward with this draft. Richard, when thinking about that is there a way in which we showcase that through a memo, vote, or just on record here for the Council? Richard – **A** – I think the latter, just basically going on record. Then we can putt and submit that as part of our materials to Council and include the full minutes as an attachment. Dawson – **Q** – Honore is the best practice of this process to do a vote of support? Honore – **Q** – That is a good question. Richard what have you seen on other boards? Richard – **A** – We have only gone to one other Board with this ask and they put it to a vote of we support this final draft policy with a motion, second and that sort of thing. Honore – **Comment** – Nice and clean in the record of the minutes that way.

- Dawson motions and Matt seconds to put forward support of this draft going forward to the City. Motion passed unanimously. 8-0