

Ecology Advisory Board Meeting Notes

April 20, 2021

Remote Zoom meeting

Attendance: Steve Simms, David Batts, Carse Pustmueller, Kate Zalzal, Kurt Carlson, Bob Brakenridge, Greg Lowell

Guest Attendees: Ian Brighton (Chair of PRC), Chris Cope (Vice Chair of PRC)

1. *Call to Order Motion*

Steve Simms began meeting at 6:35 (MST).

2. *Approval of March 2021 Minutes*

Carlson moved to accept minutes, Zalzal seconded. Minutes pass unanimously.

3. *Follow up discussion.*

a. Weed Management Plan w/ PRC Presentation Ian/Chris/Robert
Ian Brighton, Chair of PRC; Chris Cope, Vice Chair of PRC in attendance. Cope gave PowerPoint talk summarizing Lyons Weed Management Plan passed in 2020.

Cope: This plan is a compromise of a lot of different stakeholders. Plan called for increased transparency and documentation, synthetic herbicides not for cosmetic uses, only to help handle noxious species.

Discussion of Weed Management Plan Hierarchy details: Brighton brought up soil health as a good indicator/metric...best approach to amend soil to match with desired plant. Then cover crop can outcompete the invasive species. "If you can fix the soil, a lot of times you can fix that issue."

Discussion of Flood recovery warranty. Cope: When contractor quoted a project, they quoted it with traditional methods. Concerns about potential, but unlikely, clawbacks from feds. Concerns that warranties are invalid if contractor cannot use products that they desire. Example is multi use fields in Bohn Park; contractor doesn't think the organic product worked as desired, so they want to use synthetic.

Brighton: When we have a disturbed site, it is ripe for invasive spread...this is the need for the warranty exception.

Discussion of when warranties expire. LMJ is out of warranty now. Phase 1 Bohn Park is now out of warranty; Bohn Park Phase II is still under warranty.

Brighton: A challenge area is the wild meadow fields in Bohn Park; could be fenced when herbicide is applied. Contractor said that there is no alternative to synthetics in that area; organic treatment was deemed a failure. Dave Cosgrove is underway with applying to use synthetics at these sites.

Non-native, noxious weeds only considered for synthetic treatments.

Regarding the use of synthetic herbicide application form, Pustmueller asked about the application question of “reasons that other measures will not be adequate.” She requested that the application paperwork require more clarity on why non-synthetic techniques didn’t work. She would like more evidence of why synthetics are needed as a last resort. Cope and Brighton suggested more details about tracking what was done and the result.

Discussion of McConnell Drive. Cope: Will not use pre-emergents on McConnell, will try other methods first, but could find that synthetics are needed. Will try non-synthetics this year, but will return to synthetics next year if needed.

Zalzal asked a question about medium-to-long-term strategy and holistic system functioning. “How long do you give it for organics to work? Is giving it one year of organics just a way to say “organics didn’t work?” so now have the justification of synthetics? It may take several seasons to move beyond the need for synthetic herbicides.”

Brighton: Yes, this is a challenge. We need to look at other examples, look for case studies that detail how to do this. We need a science-based approach and strategy.

Carlson: “It’s a case-by-case situation. With Downy brome, for example, sequence and timing matter. It’s true that you want to not use synthetics for as long as you can, but you hate to have to revert back and have more trouble later. Every weed is a case-by-case basis. Every season is case-by-case. It is really a moving target.”

Pustmueller: “Using organics is not going to be 100% weed free. If that’s the goal, that’s unfortunate as nothing is weed free.”

Simms: Referencing Organolawn...”can we make it a multi-year regime? Can they get a multi-year contract and pay them for the results? Can they do the science? We are paying them for that long-term contract and long-term goals, they have an obligation to meet goals. Then Lyons doesn’t have to figure it out every year and go back and forth from year to year. Have to have some teeth behind the contract...that’s what we are paying contractors for...to solve the weed problems over the course of whatever time makes sense.”

Brighton: “We are a small town, we don’t have a staff ecologist. But if we can get the contractor on board that would be good. I’m in favor of contracting this out. Can we take the political pressure off of Dave and give it to a contractor? That is a worthwhile avenue to explore.”

Carlson: “[Dealing with weeds] is complaint driven, I think a lot of that needs to be understood...we’ve got to have realistic expectations. It’s a good path forward to put responsibility on the contractor.”

Discussion of Weed Management Challenges. Brighton: We are understaffed. We need to be honest about challenges of staffing. Need more volunteers.

Simms: In the RFPs is it specifically noted that Lyons has this weed plan?

Brighton: Need a cheat-sheet, summary to give to contractors.

Simms: Signage is to go up two days before and remain two days after. It could be better to be posted for longer after application...depends on the potency of the chemicals. There might be a good need to post for a longer period of time based on chemical used, half-life, potency.

Simms: "How does Walsch quantify the failing of the organics?"

Cope and Brighton: Don't know how Walsch quantifies failure but definitely worth looking into.

Brighton: Maybe we identify a certain percentage of weeds in an area. We need to identify goal posts. Can we place them somewhere in the middle between pro-herbicide folks and non-herbicide folks? Then we may be in a place where the communities need.

Simms: Maybe certain items need to go to vote in the community or before BOT and let the decision go through proper town/democratic process?

Simms: "A note on metrics: Maybe we set a goal of how much chemicals we dump in the community over time. Something that we can easily share...some metric that we all want to use and strive for. Give us something to shoot for and try to achieve. Then we can say we dumped X-amount more or less than the year before. It gives us an identifiable way to see if we're going in the right direction.

Cope: Before the flood, Dave Cosgrove was already trying to cut down on synthetic usage. Town was too. Working internally to reduce herbicides. Once the flood happened, they were more focused on other things. Coordinated with lots of community groups to pull weeds. Town contracted considerable amount of work to Boulder County Jail crew before covid hit.

Brackenridge: About metrics, how do you know if you are making progress? Many community members are probably asking "What is so different about synthetics?" Discussion of "precautionary principle" in Europe...used in medicine, drugs, GMO foods. When you have new products created, err on the side of caution. It is difficult to prove long-term safety of something that has never existed before. What we have to keep in mind with the ToL, it's not a bad principle, we use it in our school related to peanut allergies for example. Science and our understanding and standards are changing. "A healthy dose of the precautionary principle is a good thing when it is applying chemicals in its public spaces."

Brackenridge: The plan has ambiguous parts, for example "treatment is only for cosmetic purposes." We want flexibility in the plan, but ambiguity can cause problems. This doesn't settle everything, but it does provide more guidance than before. I'm intimidated by what the Front Range is up against. Going to be hard to address the legacy we've been handed..McConnell hardscapes for example. That has been touted as water-friendly landscaping. It's easy to keep those landscapes tidy and free of weeds by using an herbicide like round-up. That's what we're dealing with. This legacy of what people expect and are used to. It is a really difficult challenge. It's easy to use herbicides to make your lawn look

nice. Maybe combining two or three of these slides could be turned into a handout for a contractor. They could read a pdf file in this format.

Cope: We could put together Do's and Don'ts handout. We don't have a review of effectiveness of products and strategy. What are our metrics? What was the actual failing? In some circumstances, cheatgrass for example, time is of the essence. For others, if time is not critical, should we extend oversight to Victoria or BoT?

Pustmueller: "I would like more specifics on what "organics first, synthetics as a last resort" means. Are there time frames to this? Would like wording to be stronger about using synthetics as a last resort, particularly on documents given to the contractor. Would add separate sentence such as "synthetics not allowed for cosmetic purposes." Is there a list or description of what is considered cosmetic weed?"

Brakenridge: There are specific state lists of noxious, invasive weed species. So if not on CO list then could be considered just cosmetic weeds.

Pustmueller: "In regards to how long signage remains up after application...I agree it's probably best to flag for longer. How safe is two days after application? Who came up with this timeframe?"

Brighton: "It was recently added and it depends on specific chemical, site conditions. It's so variable, it's hard to generalize the right approach. It's one of the toughest things to wrangle into a neat little box."

Cope: "I can't see the town having a problem leaving the signs out for a few more days."

Brakenridge: Thinking about certified pollinator-friendly towns. Town's that are designated as this must have an Integrated Pest Management Plan. They look a lot like this plan. Might find it interesting to look at examples...represents a trend that people are becoming more restrictive of using these chemicals in public areas.

Lowell: This is great work. A great collaboration between these two boards. But what are you going to do with this PowerPoint?

Simms: How do we disseminate it? How do we keep it alive?

Lowell: Keep visiting it from year to year, especially when you get some metrics. This has some educational value.

Batts: We are just educating ourselves. I love this PPT and I think this should be the talking points the two boards use to do outreach. Host town workshop, use this as a tool to get out there to talk. This is a great foundation to do that.

Cope: People should understand what we are doing and why. This plan doesn't apply to private property. People can put whatever they want on their yards. Needs to be more public awareness for our residential homeowners that it's not a great idea to use these things even if you are technically allowed to.

Brakenridge: Another audience is the St. Vrain School district. It would be interesting to arrange some kind of briefing for them about what ToL has instituted for its own property. Schools are such a part of the community.

Brighton concluded by speaking on balance of herbicide use...when intended to protect natural species and resources. Fields of cheat grass...seeing that in Lyons and worried about that getting up to RMNP. Brighton: "Fighting invasives is so important to me..but also have total empathy to folks who have sensitivities to chemicals. The balance that Bob and I struck feels like we moved town in the right direction. I hope we don't go in the direction of another vote. I think it would divide the town. I don't think that's how we should operate as a town, we should see everyone's perspective and find common ground. Bob and Dave deserve lots of credit. It's imperfect, I wish there were parts that made it easier to use herbicides, but I respect those concerns. I think we need to keep looking at innovative ways to keep out invasives."

Simms: Will provide and share minutes from this meeting with PRC.

Agenda shuffled to allow for discussion of Community Garden project

d. Community Gardens/food forest

Simms: As a board we need to decide collectively if we stand behind the development of a community garden as an NGO and its own organization versus a town-organized project.

Lowell: Last night had Food Forest people came before BoT, they want to use lot 315 for food forest. If EAB wants to use 233 for community garden, then you should probably put an application in early and arrange for the lease for that site. There is a water tap there, just need insurance. Should come before BoT and see how much interest is there.

Zalzal discussed the two community garden models proposed by Victoria Simonsen in the first zoom meeting with Reyana Jones, Victoria, Brakenridge and Pustmueller: NGO route with application, board of directors, leased plot, insurance, etc. OR town-run garden. Zalzal shared impression that during second zoom meeting, Simonsen and Cosgrove said that there was no funding from Town (outside of occasional project assistance when possible) and that the NGO model was preferred.

Brakenridge: EAB could simply resolve that they support the reestablishment of the town community gardens as it was before the flood.

Pustmueller: If we present it to town that we want to do this, we just want their support. We don't have to ask them to do anything. One of us could organize the plots and take the "rent money". Town could just support it and agree to let us go do it on this plot.

Discussion between Simms, Zalzal, Brakenridge, Pustmueller about what options and steps were presented by town staff.

Carlson: It's a staffing issue, there's no people to help.

Brakenridge: If town doesn't have the resources this year, who if anyone wants to pursue this?

Lowell: Water tap is in place at site 233. Town does not have the staff to do it, we just don't have the resources. Apply for the site, but somebody will have to pay for the water.

Brakenridge: Town spends so much money on other park needs. Is town staff on board or not?

Simms began discussion of previous community garden in Bohn Park and the efforts involved in starting. Simms: "Is anyone on this board going to address the potential problems that could come about if EAB claims the plot and it is haphazard in how/who/what is planted etc? And this is where it seems to fall apart. The concept is simple and it worked for the old community garden...but there was concerted effort to get it started and going. I don't see any community individual doing that. It's a simple concept but is the EAB the group to claim 233?"

Brakenridge: I offered to set up a brochure with guidelines. I hope the EAB would endorse the idea of a community garden, so that town staff knows that it would be good to restore it.

Simms: So what if EAB makes a formal statement that EAB supports community garden at 233. If any individual brings a proposal to us, we'll review it.

Carlson: Rules are already embedded to some extent, these are deed-restricted lots. Town has to be careful and keep things at arms length because there are other deed-restricted lots. The rules have been written and they are trying to keep things as consistent as possible.

Brakenridge: I don't think there's anything wrong with getting more input from Victoria and Dave. Could we make a resolution for the return of a community garden to ToL?

Simms: EAB supports garden.

Carlson: I support it if it works within the deed-restrictions. It doesn't have to be town-run.

Pustmueller: "Can we put a hold on 233 without us getting a license? Can we put the EAB stamp on it?"

Batts: EAB should say we feel that there should be a community garden on this lot and see where it goes. Can a community member stand up and turn it into NGO? If so, great. If not, can the town take it over? EAB doesn't want to start an NGO and EAB doesn't want to run a garden. We want to get back on track on what EAB as an advisory board can do.

Discussion about writing EAB statement of support for the return of a town-run community garden.

Zalzal wrote:

The Lyons Ecology Advisory Board encourages and supports the reestablishment of a Town-supported community garden. Through its public participation process, the DrBOP Concept Plan

identified the reestablishment of a community garden as a highly ranked community priority (ranked 6th out of 33 identified site elements). Of the DrBOP sites remaining, the Concept Plan identifies Site 233 as desirable for a community garden and the EAB supports this designation. The EAB encourages the development of a community garden at Site 233 as soon as feasible and is available to support this endeavor as appropriate.

Batts makes motion to accept resolution. Pustmueller seconds motion.
Unanimous support in favor of recommendation to be sent to Town of Lyons staff.

Next Meeting Date and Adjourn

(Tuesday 18th May 2021)

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Zalzal, EAB Secretary