

THE RED ROCK RAG

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News and Views on Red Rock Canyon

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TPL secures Red Rock option

COLORADO SPRINGS (November 27, 2002) --

The Colorado Office of the Trust for Public Land (TPL), announced today that it has secured an option to purchase the entire 787-acre property known as Red Rock Canyon from the estate of John S. Bock. The signing of this option agreement begins an approximately six month exploration phase that will hopefully result in TPL selling this important foothills property to the City of Colorado Springs for permanent protection.

"This is a great day for the citizens of Colorado Springs," says Scott Flora of the Red Rock Canyon Committee, the citizens advocacy group that has worked hard for its protection for over three years. "Most citizens of Colorado Springs have no idea what a gem Red Rock Canyon really is."

After completing extensive due diligence reviews and finalizing the acquisition from the Bock Estate, TPL will then offer the property to the City of Colorado Springs for purchase as open space.

Terry Putman, Manager of the TOPS program for the City of Colorado Springs explains "the city will purchase the property from the Trust for Public Land with money from the TOPS sales tax once TPL has complete its due diligence review of the property. Although if the TOPS extension isn't passed next April, the city may need to look for a development partner for the frontage along Highway 24 in order to be able to afford to buy the majority of the property."

Prior to TPL's completion of their due diligence period and formal acquisition of the property, Red Rock Canyon continues as private property, privately patrolled and without public access. It is very important that people respect Mrs. Bock's private property rights. Anyone caught trespassing will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Our Thanks

The Red Rock Canyon Committee wishes to express its appreciation to one anonymous donor for contributing toward the Red Rock Rag's expenses during the past month.

We would also like to express our appreciation to the Village at Skyline for providing our meeting room.

CALENDAR:

Meetings of Possible Interest:

December 2 ***El Paso County Commissioners***
9:00 A.M. County Office Building
27 E. Vermijo, Third Floor

December 3 ***Manitou Springs City Council***
7:00 P.M. Manitou Springs City Hall
606 Manitou Avenue

December 5 ***Red Rock Canyon Committee & Red Rock Canyon Foundation***
7:00 P.M. Village at Skyline (off Lower Gold Camp Road), Activities Room, Building No. 4 (The Easternmost Building - enter from the parking lot north of the building)

December 10 ***Colorado Springs City Council***
9:00 A.M. City Council Chambers,
The historic City Hall, Nevada & Kiowa

December 11 ***TOPS Working Committee***
4:00 P.M. Colorado Springs
Parks and Recreation Building
1401 Recreation Way
(East of I-25, 2 blocks north of Uintah)

December 11 ***Manitou Springs Planning Commission***
7:00 P.M. Manitou Springs City Hall
606 Manitou Avenue

December 17 ***Manitou Springs City Council***
7:00 P.M. Manitou Springs City Hall
606 Manitou Avenue

NOTE: Scheduled meetings can be subject to change or cancellation. Check these web pages within a week of scheduled meeting for items of interest:

Colorado Springs City government: www.springsgov.com

El Paso County government: www.elpasoco.com

Also, check the CONO web site: www.csono.org

EDITORIAL:**Waddling down the green mile**

Let me see if I understand this:

1) County voters reject, by a 2-to-1 margin, a bond issue that would have financed an expanded county jail.

2) One week after the election, the county commissioners - including two lame duck officials who will be out of office in January - vote to issue debt to finance an expanded jail.

3) And while they're at it, they authorize another \$20-odd million in debt to expand the courthouse, even though ...

4) There has been absolutely no public process to identify the need for such a facility, or to choose a site - nope, the commissioners just decide to ...

5) Build some ugly-ass, bulking monstrosity athwart one of downtown's premier view corridors.

I was born here 62 years ago. For much of that time, I've been involved in local government, as a student, critic, neighborhood activist, elected official, and newspaper columnist I thought I'd seen it all.

But I've never seen such arrogant, sleazy and fundamentally dishonest maneuvering by any Colorado government body. It just defies belief. I mean, just what the hell is going on here?!! Let's think about it for a moment.

Every local government, every entity that has the power to levy and collect taxes, is itself subject to the rule of law. And virtually without exception, the law forbids Colorado governments to contract long-term debt without the consent of the voters.

That's why School District 11 won't be renovating/improving their buildings this year; the voters, by a narrow margin, refused to authorize the funding. And that's why the County can't use long-term debt to build a jail annex; we turned 'em down.

The reason that the law, be it a city charter or the state constitution, forbids politicians from contracting debt without voter approval is rooted in the long wisdom of our Republic.

We've learned that elected officials are often spendthrift, foolishly optimistic, and happy to spend other people's money. We've learned that governments that eagerly take on debt soon find themselves so far in hock that they can barely provide essential services.

And we've also learned that voters are, especially compared to the pols they elect, cautious, prudent and conservative. And if they aren't? Well, they have only themselves to blame.

So how can the commissioners get away with flouting the law? They're using so-called Certificates of Purchase (COPS), arcane financial instruments intended to mask indebtedness (Hi, Enron! Hello, Qwest! How're you doin', WorldCom?).

See, it's not long-term debt at all - it's just a lease/purchase! And see, the commissioners can vote to terminate the lease any time! It's just like leasing a car, only this time it's a jail and a courthouse!

Bullshit. If it walks like a duck, acts like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then it's a duck. And this, my friends, is the \$6 million duck, an albatross of debt that's

going to cripple county government for a generation. Moreover, there's no realistic possibility that the County can get out of the deal; once they sign on the dotted line, we're screwed.

Representative government is not all that difficult. It means exactly that. You represent your constituents. You vote your conscience most of the time, but when your constituents tell you, by an overwhelming margin, not to do something, you don't do it. And if they tell you to do something, you do it.

Two weeks ago, we told 'em not to borrow tens of millions to build a jail. For that matter, two years ago, we voted 2 to 1 for the governor's transportation bonds. And El Paso County residents, by supporting both TOPS and COCO, voted to preserve open space. So what are the commissioners doing? They're borrowing tens of millions to build a jail without voter permission, and stripping money from transportation and parks funding to support their fantasy lockup.

They're basically saying that they don't give a good goddamn about the clearly expressed will of their constituents. They're going to defund what they don't like, and use the money for what they do like. . .

And if you or I don't like it, tough; there's nothing we can do about it.

Or is there? It seems to me that there are two avenues: a lawsuit and a recall. A lawsuit would ask the courts to declare that COPS are in fact long-term debt, and forbid the County to issue them without voter approval.

And a recall would seek to remove some of the commissioners from office. I don't know about you, but I'm ready to go. . . -- jhazlehurst@csindy.com

By John Hazlehurst, reprinted with permission of the *Colorado Springs Independent*,

* Originally published November 21, 2002.

Commissioners to vote on budget cuts

At their meeting on December 2, the El Paso County Commissioners will vote on a collection of budget cuts which have been proposed to make funds available for an expansion to the County jail. The proposed cuts will affect road and bridge funds, capital improvements, transit funds, the County Fair, the Penrose Equestrian Center, the Pikes Peak Center, the Public Health Department, and the El Paso Parks and Leisure Services Department.

The proposed cut of \$750,000 a year from the Parks budget would require the Parks Department to use State Conservation Trust funds for operating expenses, which would prevent the department from ever acquiring Section 16 unless there is some source of new revenue for the department.

The Commissioners could also approve issuing certificates of participation (COPS) for jail funding at the December 2 meeting.

Those who have not seen their Commissioners in action should find this meeting especially interesting.

Red Rock Canyon Foundation President's Report December 2002

Great news travels fast. The Option to purchase the Red Rock Canyon is signed. Hurray!! The Foundation has been working hard to clarify its goals and objectives for the short term while the due diligence is performed and the funding is arranged. There is a lot to do. Now that it is public, we can activate the volunteers to help in the preservation of Red Rock Canyon.

One of the most important objectives is to increase our official membership. The more people we have, the stronger our voice will be in giving citizen guidance in creating public Open Space.

The Foundation is committed to helping the TOPS extension campaign pass next April. That is the best way to raise money for a comprehensive plan for the whole property, which compliments Open Space. Fund raising for TOPS extension is a top priority.

The Foundation will work with TFL, the Pikes Peak Community Foundation and other organizations to write grants and fundraising proposals to raise private funds to lower the cost to taxpayers and guarantee that all the land is used for the public good now and in the future.

While the Foundation represents the wishes of Red Rock Canyon supporters to preserve and restore all the land for the good of future generations and nature, it is equally committed to making sure that citizens of our community have input into the planning process.

This Thanksgiving we truly have something to be thankful for. We thank Mrs. Bock for offering to sell the land, for TFL and the City of Colorado Springs for the work they have put in on this project and look forward to partnering with them to make something wonderful

happen in Red Rock Canyon. We have a lot of work ahead to make sure that Red Rock Canyon is in fact saved, but for now lets have a great Thanksgiving holiday!

Shandi Toll

TOPS Extension Committee seeks support

At its December 10 meeting, the Colorado Springs City Council is expected to approve placing the TOPS Extension ordinance on the ballot for the City's April 2003 election. Supporters of TOPS extension are encouraged to show their support by attending the December 10 City Council meeting.

To succeed in winning voter approval of TOPS extension, the TOPS Extension Committee will need continued financial support and volunteers. The TOPS Extension Committee is seeking contacts within supportive organizations and volunteers who can give presentations to those organizations about TOPS extension. In addition, they would like assistance in writing articles for newsletters, letters to the editor, sending mailings, and other campaign activities.

At this time the TOPS Extension Committee is especially in need of additional financial support. Contributions may be sent to:

TOPS Extension Committee
P.O. Box 62937
Colorado Springs, CO 80962-2937

If you would like to volunteer or have any questions about the campaign, please call Kjersten at: 471-0875.

Red Rock Canyon Foundation - MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Membership dues: _____ (\$25 suggested)

Membership level (8 month commitment - check one)

Supporter (willing to write occasionally e-mails or letters)

Helper (willing to volunteer 5 to 10 hours a month)

Leader (willing to volunteer 3 to 6 hours a week)

Areas of interest for volunteering

Computer support

Worker

Brochure or grant writer

Community outreach

Other (please describe) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Send this membership form to:

Red Rock Canyon Foundation
2207 W. Colorado Ave
Colorado Springs, CO 80904

HELP SUPPORT THE **RED ROCK RAG!**

Enclosed is my contribution. (Check payable to "Red Rock Canyon Committee", not tax deductible.)

___ Do ___ Don't acknowledge my contribution in the **RED ROCK RAG.**

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ E-mail: _____

Mail to: **Red Rock Canyon Committee / P. O. Box 2352 / Colorado Springs, CO 80901-2352**

For more information, contact **Linda Hodges** at the **Trails and Open Space Coalition**: 633-6884,
or e-mail: help@saveredrockcanyon.com

Opinions expressed in THE RED ROCK RAG are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Red Rock Canyon Committee.

WE WANT YOUR INPUT!

Letters, articles, comments may be sent to:

Rag Editor
Red Rock Canyon Committee
P. O. Box 2352
Colorado Springs, CO 80901-2352

Electronic submissions may be sent to:

rag@saveredrockcanyon.com

Please send electronic text in plain ASCII (.txt) format

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