

THE RED ROCK RAG

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News and Views on Red Rock Canyon

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P. O. Box 2352, Colorado Springs, CO 80901-2352

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Crystal Hills East gains approval

In a meeting which lasted about seven hours over the course of two successive evenings, the Manitou Springs City Council gave approval to the Crystal Hills East development. The development covers slightly over 18 acres adjoining the northwest portion of the Red Rock Canyon property. Approval of the development actually involved five separate approvals: rezoning of the property from General Residential to Hillside Low Density Residential, approval of the Preliminary Plat, approval of the Major Development, and two annexations which involve a small lot to be used for part of the new private road, Crystal Valley Road, which will connect to Red Canyon Place.

The development will consist of 18 residential lots, with lots located on each side of the new Crystal Valley Road. Lots to the uphill side of Crystal Valley Road will be substantially larger than those on the downhill side, but the upper slope is considered unbuildable and will be protected, giving residents of the uphill lots large open steep back yards overlooking Sand Canyon.

A major issue which Council addressed before approving the Preliminary Plat concerned land dedications which Manitou Springs requires from new subdivisions. The Manitou Springs Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC) had at one time recommended dedication of two strips of land adjoining an existing utilities easement for a trail connecting Crystal Hills to Red Rock Canyon Open Space. However, there was significant public opposition to the trail when it was discussed at a Planning Commission meeting. So, OSAC subsequently withdrew its recommendation. The developers asked Council to accept the trail dedication along with a small park parcel and a conservation easement on the upper slope in complete fulfillment of the dedication requirements. The Planning Commission recommended partial credit for these dedications, while OSAC recommended no credit for such dedications since the trail was unwanted and the upper slope had low open space value and would not be public. After hearing arguments for each of these positions, Council decided to adopt OSAC's recommendation and take payment of \$61,626.31 in lieu of the dedications.

Despite not receiving the requested credit for dedications, Crystal Hills East co-owner Kathryn Lucas was visibly jubilant after Council voted to approve the Preliminary Plat.

OSAC proposes to use its portion of the payment received in lieu of the dedications to help pay

for Red Mountain Phase II and for a portion of the money which Manitou Springs plans to contribute to the Red Rock Canyon purchase.

Second reading and public hearing on the annexations will be at the regular Council meeting August 5.

Red Rock property mobile home burns

One of the mobile homes on the Red Rock Canyon property, near the lower switchback on South 26th Street burned on the afternoon of June 24. The fire was extinguished by the Colorado Springs Fire Department.

The couple who lived in the mobile home with their two children returned later that afternoon to find their home destroyed.

Our Thanks

The Red Rock Canyon Committee wishes to express its appreciation to the Red Rock Canyon Foundation for its contribution supporting the Red Rock Rag this month.

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

OSAC, Colorado Springs Council change meeting times

Beginning with its July meeting, the Manitou Springs Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC) has changed its meeting date to the fourth Monday of each month. Meetings are at 7:00 P.M. in the Manitou Springs City Hall.

Also, beginning in August, Colorado Springs City Council meetings will begin at 1:00 P.M. Council meetings have previously started at 9:00 in the morning.

EDITORIAL:**Public process?**

Since last Fall, the Red Rock Canyon Foundation has consistently promoted public process in the planning for Red Rock Canyon, especially the area near Highway 24. This has been reflected by several statements published by the Red Rock Canyon Foundation's President beginning with the November President's comments in which Shanti wrote, "... we can have a public process to collect and evaluate different visions of the areas near the roads. We can evaluate the cost and benefits of the various visions. We can take the time to make the right decisions."

Just this past month, in his Red Rock Canyon Foundation President's Report, Shanti stated: "We need to go through a public process to receive feedback from our supporters to find out what they want in the non open space land at the north end near highway 24. We support and trust that there will be an open public process run by the city Park and Recreation Department to receive citizen suggestions and ideas of how to develop the open space park and the lands near Highway 24, 31st Street and 26th Street. Advocates for open space should help define what 'compatible uses' happen around the land purchased by TOPS funds."

On several occasions Parks staff has offered assurances that planning for Red Rock Canyon would include such a public process.

To me the first, and absolutely most important, decision which should be informed and shaped by public input through a public process is the decision as to whether the current residents of the Red Rock Canyon property will stay in their present homes or whether they will be relocated.

In a letter to the Red Rock Canyon residents dated July 10, Paul Butcher stated, "There have been numerous rumors, notices and incorrect newspaper articles concerning your status ... (All tenants will eventually be relocated to other housing or mobile home parks."

There may still be public process on this decision, but the appearance is that any public process has been preempted.

During the past two months, there have been several conflicting news reports concerning the city's intent with regard to the Red Rock Canyon property residents. Parks staff asserts that these have been incorrect. Nonetheless, they have created a public impression that the decision process has been capricious.

As far as the open space master plan, Parks staff assured us as recently as July 24: "There will still be public process for the plan for the open space." The open space plan involves trails, trailheads, trailhead facilities and trailhead access.

Yet, in an article in the July 24 Independent, states, "Most of the mobile homes are located where the city plans to construct the park's main entrance, at the mouth of the canyon near the intersection of Highway 24 and High Street." Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services

Department director Paul Butcher is cited as the source for this information. If the city has, indeed, already planned the location of the main entrance (High Street rather than 31st Street), this influences trailhead locations, which in turn affects the design of the trail system. The appearance, whether true or not, is that Parks staff has chipped away at preempting the public process with regard to the open space plan.

With the appearances of these situations, Parks staff has the added burden of regaining public trust. I believe that they should shoulder that burden and begin their public processes sooner rather than later. And, I believe that they should start with a robust, meaningful public process concerning the decision as to whether to relocate the residents or let them stay where they are.

Don Ellis

CALENDAR:**Meetings of Possible Interest:**

- August 5 Manitou Springs City Council
7:00 P.M. Manitou Springs City Hall
606 Manitou Avenue
- August 7 **Red Rock Canyon Committee / 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)
- August 12 Colorado Springs City Council
1:00 P.M. City Council Chambers,
The historic City Hall, Nevada & Kiowa
- August 13 **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)
- August 19 Manitou Springs City Council
7:00 P.M. Manitou Springs City Hall
606 Manitou Avenue
- August 26 Colorado Springs City Council
1:00 P.M. City Council Chambers,
The historic City Hall, Nevada & Kiowa
- August 27 **TOPS Working Committee**
7:30 A.M. Colorado Springs
Parks and Recreation Building
1401 Recreation Way
(East of I-25, 2 blocks north of Uintah)
- August 25 **Manitou Springs Open Space
Advisory Committee**
7:00 P.M. Manitou Springs City Hall
606 Manitou Avenue
- August 30 **Section 16 trail workday** .
contact Gary Michels 685-9304 or
gmichels@coloradocollege.edu
- September 4 **Red Rock Canyon Committee / Foundation**
7:00 P.M. Village at Skyline

EDITORIAL:

We all knew that eventually the trailer park would be dealt with if the land was purchased for an open space park. Most of us want the tenants to be dealt with fairly and be supported in finding housing that is at least as good or better than what they have now. The City has said the same thing. We should be supportive of their process to solve each tenants housing needs. I talked with Chris Lieber from Park and Recreation on July 24th and he expressed the city's openness to meeting with us to explain the factual situation and discuss our concerns on the trailers future or any other issue. We owe it to the City to listen to them and give them the benefit of the doubt.

The question of how and when public input is received by the City is an important issue. The open public process may be time consuming but it allow democracy to work. People will feel better if they have been heard, even if their ideas are not accepted as policy. In the end the City will make final decisions about its parks and open space but community involvement is necessary before decisions are made. We have time, but if we and the city wait too long, decisions will be made without enough public input. That is when problems happen.

Shant Toll

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For more information, contact **Linda Hodges** at the **Trails and Open Space Coalition:**

633-6884,

or e-mail: help@saveredrockcanyon.com**Red Rock Canyon Foundation
President's Report, August 2003**

We are now having our board meeting in conjunction with a public open meeting of the Red Rock Canyon Committee the first Thursday of every month. We welcome new people to come see what we are doing. The next meeting will be at 7:00 PM, Thursday, August 7th at the Village at Skyline. Our meetings are in the community room in the far east building.

We had a very positive meeting with Tom Kay, Mrs. Bock's Representative, and Woody Beardsley from TPL. We are in the process of setting up a "Day in Red Rock Canyon," some time this fall. We are talking about a ½ day work session for re-vegetation in Red Rock Canyon property, followed by a hike and barbecue. We wish to thank you for your patience and ongoing support. This day of celebration on the Red Rock Canyon Property will be your first opportunity to see the land we have worked so hard to preserve. We will let you know in the next Red Rock Rag when and where the event will be.

North Crystal Hills area access to Red Rock Canyon open space has been denied by Manitou Springs when accepted money instead of land from the developers of Crystal Hills East (see article on page 1). The Red Rock Canyon Foundation discussed the implications for Red Rock Canyon access from Crystal Hills. Local neighbors are concerned about a trailhead from the northern part of Crystal Hills through Crystal Hills East to the Red Rock Canyon Open Space Park. We agree that the privacy and property rights of neighbors should be protected. There is no reason to have cars parked on Crystal Hills Blvd. at a trail access to Red Rock Open Space.

Yet there are hundreds of people living in the northern end of Crystal Hills that will want access to the open space. Social trails are likely to develop and we ought to plan for minimal conflict. We encourage planning for a way to protect the neighborhood and allow possible future access to the open space of the Canyon. At some point in the distant future Manitou Springs might determine that it is willing to pay for a right of way for a trail from north Crystal Hills to Red Rock Canyon. We encourage the city and the developer to keep this in mind as the final plans are drawn. I talked with the developer and representative of Manitou Springs about these ideas and appreciated both parties' willingness to consider these concerns. Both parties have worked very hard to encompass the needs of open space. The Red Rock Canyon Foundation is not taking an official position on the development. It will be a shame if planners think about this problem in only the short term.

Shant Toll

Red Rock Canyon Foundation - MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____ Phone: _____

_____ Membership donation: (checks payable to Red Rock Canyon Foundation)

Membership level

_____ Supporter (wanting to be kept informed)

_____ Helper (willing to work on occasional committee or help with work projects)

_____ Leader (willing to volunteer a few hours a month)

Areas of interest for volunteering: _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Send this membership form to:

Red Rock Canyon Foundation

2207 W. Colorado Ave

Colorado Springs, CO 80904

(Phone 634-1810)

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:

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Red Rock Canyon Committee

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Colorado Springs, CO 80901-2352

Electronic submissions may be sent to:

rag@saveredrockcanyon.com

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

THE RED ROCK RAG reserves the right to publish or not publish any submission and to edit submissions for style and length.

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