

Session 7 E: “Improving the Effectiveness of Citizen Advisory Boards”

11th Annual Conference of the Colorado Open Space Alliance
September 13-15, 2010 Westminster, Colorado

Citizen Advisory Boards

How do they bring value to the policy-making process?

What is program staff’s perception of their value?

How should they be utilized to maximize value?

Agenda Setting

Elected Reps ► Board ► Staff ► Elected Reps

Staff ► Board ► Elected Reps

Board ► Elected Reps ► Staff

Other

Communication Paths

Staff



Board



Elected Reps

Control Issues

Seen yet only Heard when Summoned (Token Public Processes?)

Resource Pit & Source of Aggravation for Staff? (Why are those Citizens here?)

Volunteer Consultants v. Delegates of Constituencies (What do they bring to the table?)

Heat Shield and Forum for Airing of Grievances (Let the Board study it!)

Independent Voices v. Constrained Program Staff v. Factional Pressures on Elected Reps

Toward a Future of Better Public Policy

Challenges v. Opportunities

Relationships, Interdependence, Timing, Communication

Efficient and Effective Use of Human, Financial and Natural Resources

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Fort Collins City Council Member and county open lands board liaison Ben Manvel, Mark Sears, Fort Collins Natural Areas Program Manager, and Nate Donovan, former chair of Fort Collins Natural Resources Advisory Board who serves as an Assistant Attorney General advising the Colorado Wildlife Commission and Divisions of Wildlife and State Parks, will lead a discussion of the dynamics and role of citizen advisory boards for public land conservation programs, such as "who sets the agenda, and how do we navigate the communication channels among citizens, elected officials and staff?" While citizen advisory boards can serve an important function in advising elected officials, such boards present challenges and opportunities for the governmental entity and the open space program. Program participants will learn how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of open space program citizen boards, through consideration of several topics, such as:

- How is the public policy process improved by use of citizen advisory boards?
- What factors help shape the effectiveness of advice given to elected officials by board members?
- Are board members primarily advisors to elected officials, representatives of constituent views, or collaborators with program staff?
- Should board members primarily react to the policy direction provided by elected officials, or do board members have a responsibility to develop a vision for the topics under their purview?
- Are the public resources invested in board work an effective use of taxpayer funds? Why?
- Should boards be led by staff or individual board members in developing topics for consideration and the output produced by the board?
- In an age of information overload and term limits for elected officials, do board members serve as an important community and institutional memory for programs?
- Do board members provide an important conduit of information to elected officials without the limitations imposed on program staff? How?

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