

**FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS FOR CHEESMAN PARK
ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES AND NOTES
Tuesday, January 22, 2019 - 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.
Embassy House - 1250 Humboldt Street**

President Jay Rust called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and introduced the Board.

Officers: Jay Rust, President; Greg Sorensen, Vice President; Paula Kauffman, Treasurer; and Kathleen Rust, Secretary.

Members Present: Don Tice, Marcia Whitcomb, Kathleen Wells, Bob Beck, Tim Haddon, Angel Vargas, Leslie Beltrami, Mike Schranz, Joe Gensheimer, Amy Ostrander, Tom Morris, Don Bain, Sheila Bisenius, Carol Peeples, Patrick Bertch, Hara T-Evjen, Barbara Huff, Tom Fanta, Tim Brown, Christine Shore, Donald Sutton, Steve Kiely, Fred Bender, Nick Brown, Renee Ruderman, Steve Rothenberg, Philip Beck, Brad Whitfield, Dan Butler, Len Keating, Jill Thiare, Richard Wilsey, Betty Caruso, Doña Dodson, Sarah Peasley, Enid Slack, Joe Wood, Kent Schnurbusch, Eric Berkemeyer, Donald Missey, Brad Cameron, and Rebecca Bliss.

1. President's Remarks: FANS Endorsement for City Council: The FANS CP Board met with Councilman Wayne New to discuss in detail his accomplishments, status of current issues and future challenges for Council. The councilman has and continues to honor his campaign pledge -- "Neighborhood Friendly, Development Smart." He believes historic Cheesman Park is the crown jewel of the city, a park people of all ages enjoy. He works hard to address both citywide and District 10 issues. After due consideration, the FANS Board unanimously voted to endorse Councilman Wayne New for re-election to the District 10 City Council Seat without reservation. Thank you, Wayne! We look forward to a continued constructive working relationship!

2. Approval of Agenda: Don Bain made a motion and Tim Hadden seconded to approve the Annual Meeting Agenda. The Members unanimously approved the motion.

3. Approval of Minutes from October 17, 2017: On a voice vote the Members unanimously approved the Minutes of the previous Annual Meeting.

4. Treasurer's Report: Paula Kauffman, Treasurer, made the following report:

*Balance as of last Annual Meeting on 10/17/17: \$662.04

*Revenue Receipts: \$.00

*Expenses Total: \$594.87

Annual Meeting Costs: Printing -- \$16.47; Refreshments -- \$50.47

INC Membership Dues, 2018 -- \$40

Name Renewal with State of Colorado --\$5

Holiday Cookie Gifts (Dist. 6 PD, Parks and Rec.) 2017--\$132.54

Holiday Cookie Gifts (Dist. 6 PD, Parks and Rec.) 2018--\$126.85

Greeting and Thank You Cards -- \$33.54

INC Membership Dues, 2019 -- \$40

CHUN Membership Dues, 2019 -- \$150

*Bank Balance to date: \$47.61

*Cash on Hand: \$19.56

*Current Balance as of 1/22/19: \$67.17

5. New Business

- **Denver Right to Survive Ballot Initiative 300: Representatives from the City Attorney's Office Bradley Whitfield and Dan Butler**

Bradley and Dan emphasized they were presenting information about the measure and not offering their opinions or taking a position for or against the initiative.

The proposed wording of the Denver Right to Survive Initiative:

Shall the voters of the City and County of Denver adopt a measure that secures and enforces basic rights for all people within the jurisdiction of the City and County of Denver, including the right to rest and shelter oneself from the elements in a non-obstructive manner in outdoor public spaces; to eat, share, accept or give free food in any public space where food is not prohibited; to occupy one's own legally parked vehicle, or occupy a legally parked motor vehicle belonging to another, with the owner's permission; and to have a right and expectation of privacy and safety of or in one's person and property?

Definitions in the Initiative:

"Public space" is any outdoor property that is owned or leased, in whole or in part by the City and County of Denver and is accessible to the public, or any City property upon which there is an easement for public use.

"Rest" is the state of not moving, and holding certain postures including but not limited to sitting, standing, leaning, kneeling, squatting, sleeping or lying down.

"Shelter oneself from the elements" is not defined in the Initiative.

"Motor vehicle" includes camper coach, trailer coach, or noncommercial or recreational vehicle as defined in the Colorado Revised Statutes.

People would be able to sleep, camp, and live throughout all of Denver on any city owned land – parks, rights-of-way, alleys, mountain parks, trails, greenways, open spaces and riversides.

There may be many unintended consequences and impacts to this broad initiative. Allowing people to sleep outside in public places is not safe, healthy or helpful for the people experiencing homelessness or for the broader community.

This initiative will be on the May 2019 ballot.

- **Denver District 6 Police Department Report: Officer Austen Munson, District 6 Community Resource Officer and Lieutenant Tony Galloway**

1. **Crime:** Bike thefts are a big concern in the District. Be sure to take a picture of your bike and note the VIN # so you can give them to the police for identification.

2. **Thefts:** People are having packages taken off their porches and out of their vehicles. Be sure to lock your car and don't leave packages where they are visible in the vehicle.
3. **Scooters:** There has been a lot of discussion and concern about where the electric scooters can be ridden in the City. A new ordinance is being formulated by City Council and Public Works to clarify this issue.

Jay thanked the Officers for being more visible in the Park by doing their paperwork in their patrol cars and driving through the park during all hours of the day and night.

The Officers reminded us, "If a crime is occurring and we don't call them – they won't come."

- **Jacob Wells, Supervisor of Park Rangers, and Scott Willingham, Cheesman Park Ranger:**

Thanks to the strong advocacy and support of FANS CP for the Ranger Program, they now have 35 Park Rangers working in the urban area. They started with five. This increase in staff enables the rangers to work longer shifts with more assistance.

Parking Signs: We should notice there are now stand-up signboards at each entrance to Cheesman Park with parking information and park hours. These signs enable the Rangers to cite people for illegal parking during non-park hours.

Park Curfew Hours: The Parks Department has added Rangers working shifts during the park curfew to enable them to better enforce park closure rules and reduce illegal activities. The curfew crews work from 10:30 p.m. to 8 a.m.

Homeless: The Rangers do not transport people. They work with the Denver Homeless Coalition and DPD for needed services. Being "homeless" does not mean someone is doing something wrong. During park hours everyone is welcome to enjoy the park.

Denver Day Works Program: People are hired on a part-time basis to help clean up and maintain the parks. Four people have been hired so far.

Off-leash Dogs: This is an ongoing problem and seasonal staff has been brought in from 6:00 – 8:00 a.m. and 3:30 – 5:30 p.m. to better address the issues. Rangers have also been offered overtime hours to focus on Cheesman with additional help being added for the summer. Rangers follow a proactive model of giving a warning before citations are written.

Enforcement: FANS member Joe Gensheimer voiced strong opinions about the need for more enforcement of all the rules in the park. If Rangers don't issue citations, illegal behaviors will continue. Jacob indicated they do their best to catch people breaking the rules, but people warn each other and scatter when the Ranger or Animal Control arrives. There are only so many Rangers to address all the issues in all the parks. Please call 311 if assistance from a Ranger is required and you will be put through to the Ranger Assistance Line. If you have to leave a message, ask for a call back from the Ranger.

Motion: Jay suggested FANS pass a motion to request that each Regional Park have a Park Ranger. ***Len Keating made a motion and Angel Vargas seconded the motion to encourage the City to have a dedicated Park Ranger at each Regional Park.*** During discussion of the motion it was mentioned that there is a cost to this motion. Jay reminded the group that the voters “de-Bruiced” property taxes a few years ago allowing the City to retain funds above inflation and population growth. Also, voters just approved a ¼ cent sales tax as a dedicated revenue source for parks that is expected to generate an additional approximately \$40 million per year. Jacob reminded the group that our efforts as citizens have really made a difference. This year alone they were given funds to hire 6 additional FTE for the Ranger Program. **The motion to encourage the City to have a dedicated Park Ranger in every Regional Park passed on a voice vote of the Membership with one person voting “no.”**

- **Recycled Irrigation Water in Cheesman Park: Tree Health, Park Impacts, Jay Rust**

Cheesman Park went on recycled water for irrigation in 2013 and was placed in a study being conducted by Denver Parks and Rec. and Denver Water to assess the effects of recycled water on conifer trees. Cheesman had 16 conifer trees placed in the study in 2013 and six additional trees were added in 2016 due to their visible decline. Even though Cheesman has only been on recycled water for six years, of the original 16 conifers, six show significantly elevated levels of chloride, one shows a very high level of sodium and one shows elevated levels of both. The other eight trees do not yet show problems. Of the five conifers added for testing in 2016, the latest testing results indicated that four had high or very high levels of chloride and two also had high sodium levels. All four of these trees have been rated “very poor”; one is slated for removal and another has already been removed. Cheesman used to lose an average of three trees per year due to age, drought, wind and disease. Between 2015 and 2018 Cheesman lost an average of 10 trees per year presumably due to recycled water use although some losses could have been due to an early frost one year, and some root damage during trenching for the new irrigation system.

Parks in the study such as Washington Park and City Park have been irrigated with recycled water for 14 years and their legacy conifers have shown more extensive damage due to elevated levels of chloride and sodium. Many trees are in dire condition and/or have been removed. These results demonstrate the inability of most conifer species to survive long-term irrigation with the salt levels contained in the existing recycled water.

Mitigation efforts are being tried in the affected parks but some of the options to further treat recycled water, such as reverse osmosis, are costly to implement. Mitigation efforts in Cheesman this past year included mulching around the conifers, adjusting sprinkler heads to prevent water spray on the soil around conifers, deep root watering with potable water, and flooding certain areas in the park with potable water to leech out the salts. The City Recycled Water Committee continues to work with Parks, Forestry, and Denver Water to determine next steps to address conifer trees’ concerns.

- **CHUN Plans for Tears McFarlane House and Annex: Greg Sorensen and Board Members**

CHUN owns the Tears-McFarlane house that is 120 years old. They rent out the 2nd floor as office space and the rest of the House (and Annex) is rented for events and community use.

CHUN is looking at major renovation costs to the property (\$250,000 for immediate repairs and between \$1 - 3 million dollars in long term costs.) CHUN hopes to develop a new business model that will support the house on a long-term basis as well as fund renovation efforts. After hearing that CHUN was considering a full-time restaurant in the house and other potential commercial changes to the Annex that could affect nearby neighbors, FANS and CPAG board members and other Cheesman neighbors asked for a meeting which was held in January with CHUN leadership and partners from City Street Investors (CSI). CSI has been working with CHUN to hold “neighborhood focus groups” to hear what “neighbors” would like to see happen to the property. CSI indicated 150 “neighbors” had been selected and invited by CHUN to the “input sessions,” although to our knowledge no members of FANS or CPAG or neighbors living adjacent to the park were included in the focus groups. Using the feedback from the focus groups, CSI began developing concept plans and drawings for some potential new commercial uses of the facilities that might be profitable for both CHUN and CSI. A restaurant was high on the list of desired uses by the focus groups, but CSI indicated it was probably not viable due to high costs to accommodate restaurant needs.

Plans for the Annex still being considered include replacing it with a new structure to house restrooms and selling coffee, wine, beer, salads, sandwiches and ice cream, with an outdoor garden space including bike racks and access to the park.

These potential changes at the Tears-McFarlane House and Annex would require re-zoning approval to enable the commercial use of the facilities, an application and approval for a liquor license, and approval from the Landmark Preservation Commission. If a restaurant is included, there are potential parking, noise and odor concerns for nearby neighbors. Another consideration is the commercialization of the park with food and beverages being sold out of the Annex that has part of its facility on Cheesman Park’s land. The change in zoning would create a precedent that could allow the commercial use of other homes and properties on the park. CHUN is continuing to investigate its options and they indicated they plan to involve the neighbors in the process.

- **Comments from our District 10 City Councilman Wayne New**

Councilman New has been on City Council for 3.5 years and his background in hospital management is a good fit with city management. Wayne feels the City has been lacking a systemic approach to planning and management.

Homelessness: Councilman New co-chaired the City Council Retreat on Homelessness, making recommendations for improvements in the City’s 2019 Three-Year Homeless Plan. Currently when a homeless person goes to a shelter they are fed, given a cot for the night, and released the next day. The new Homeless Plan will convert shelters to triage facilities to coordinate mental health, addiction, and job training services for the homeless.

The Right to Survive Ballot Initiative 300: Councilman New feels if this initiative passes it will eliminate all regulations on how the police, City officials and service providers work with many of the homeless issues we face today. More needs to be done to address homeless concerns, but this initiative is not the way to solve these issues. It will not be safe for the

homeless to be living in the parks and public spaces, nor will it be good for other City residents.

Safety Concerns in District 10: District 10 has the highest density, and we have the most issues with traffic, parking, speeding and pedestrian safety in the City. To address these concerns, Councilman New has been focusing on the following projects in the District -- marking of pedestrian crossings; increasing use of traffic monitoring equipment and speed detection; working with citizens to implement city-wide construction project management practices including traffic management plans; use of pedestrian canopies, construction worker parking plans, performance bonds for every construction project; and parking management to enforce plans by an increase in staff.

Councilman New also funded the implementation of a Congress Park Neighborhood and 7th Avenue Traffic Improvement Study and a Cherry Creek East Design Overlay Study. He also initiated an evaluation study on the development and operation of a Cherry Creek Parking District that will bring more effective local parking control and enforcement.

Housing Issues: Councilman New stated that we needed 25,000 affordable housing units and only a few hundred are funded. The Citizen Initiative, "All in Denver," should bring in \$15 million to \$30 million per year to help build more units. He also focused on ensuring proper neighborhood zoning regulation compliance to help preserve neighborhood character. He worked to strengthen the City Minority Participation in Construction Contracts Ordinance to end discrimination in payments to minority and woman-owned businesses. He participated in the Slot Home Task Force to create new regulations that would close zoning loopholes.

Other: Tom Morris asked Councilman New if he supported returning management decisions of Parks and Recreation to City Council. Wayne indicated he totally agreed. There will be big changes now that we have the tax revenue and a dedicated revenue source for Parks and Recreation.

- **Councilwoman Debbie Ortega's Aide: Josh Wood**

Due to prior commitments, Councilwoman Ortega was unable to attend the meeting. Josh Wood remarked that Councilwoman Ortega is focused on the following:

- Workforce Development, Apprenticeship, and Day Worker Program;
- Safe Streets with a focus on Federal Boulevard -- working to reduce death rates;
- At-Large Council Issues: Traffic; impacts on infrastructure; flooding on west side of I-25; and affordable housing; and
- Councilwoman Ortega is the Co-Chair of the 2020 Census.

6. Election of FANS Board Members for 2019: All current Board members were re-elected by acclamation. Jay Rust nominated Doña Dodson to join the Board. Kathleen Wells seconded the motion. The motion passed on a voice vote of the membership.

7. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:06 p.m.