

BPLC/Open Space Questionnaire

Bob Yates Responses/October 13, 2019

1. Survey after survey has shown that people who get out into nature have a stronger desire to save the environment. Fostering this love of nature means finding ways to excite people with different backgrounds who may not simply want to slowly hike through our open spaces. But, we know that more users means more impact. Where do you draw the line in terms of increased access for groups who may want to enjoy our open spaces in different ways like picnic areas, biking trails, fishing, etc? Can we increase and improve the recreation opportunities on Boulder's open space and also save our more-wild places like designated wilderness areas?

I believe that we need to help users and visitors become more familiar with lesser-known and infrequently-used Open Space opportunities. By spreading out visitors across more recreational properties, we can reduce the need for trail and facility maintenance, while still protecting those properties that we have designated as wilderness areas.

2. The North Sky Trail, a vital multi-use connector trail between Boulder City and open space areas to the north, was approved after lengthy discussion during the North Trail Study Area process but has been stalled for nearly five years. If elected to council, how would you unstuck this process and complete the trail within your first term?

I voted to approve the North Sky Trail on June 7, 2016. As I was quoted in the *Daily Camera* after the council vote, which endorsed the OSBT and staff recommendation, "Council needs to rely upon staff and what our boards tell us, because they're the experts." I know that, in the three years since the trail was approved, city staff has been laying the groundwork to complete the connector. If re-elected to council, I will ensure that this project is completed in a timely manner.

3. What is your position related to acquisition versus maintenance of our current OSMP land stock? On what grounds should we acquire new properties?

A significant majority of our resources and efforts going forward should be on maintaining what we have. With that said, there are a few properties that have already been identified by the Open Space staff as completing key connections, which we should purchase opportunistically if they become available.

4. How would you address increased visitation of OSMP?

I would educate our Open Space users and visitors on the availability and beauty of lesser-known and infrequently-visited properties in order to reduce the concentration in popular site that we are now seeing. This education might be enhanced by providing shuttles to the properties that we want re-direct folks to, perhaps even shuttling them *from* popular facilities—like Chautauqua and Sanitas—when they become too crowd.

5. What role does recreation play in a healthy society? How would you support that in future policy?

Recreation, of course, is good for the body and the mind. The city has scores of recreation programs that span interests and abilities. And for those who cannot afford the programs, we provide subsidies, so that all have access. We should better market the city's plentiful offerings, so that everyone in our community is aware of the recreational opportunities.

6. Where do you see yourself on the conservation vs. recreation spectrum with regards to Open Space? Specifically, as a council member would you likely vote against an OSMP-recommended new trail or other recreation facility because of conservation or environmental concerns, or would you support it if the research showed that those concerns were insignificant or could be mitigated?

Except for environmentally-sensitive habitats, our Open Space should be enjoyed by people who visit it respectfully. We should let science and data show us where human activity would upset sensitive habitats. Subject to those designations, I will continue to support the recommendations of the Open Space board and staff for new trails, as I have during my first four years on city council

7. Do you feel that hikers, mountain bikers, trail runners, equestrians, and other trail users can all have a positive experience on a shared multi-use trail in OSMP?

It, of course, depend on the physical characteristics of the trail. Some trails are designed as multi-use and can be readily shared. With other trails, this can be more challenging and we may need spatial or temporal separations to allow the respective users to enjoy the trail in their own way.

8. Several multi-use regional trails have been proposed over the years (including the Front Range Trail, the Boulder-to-Erie Union Pacific Rail-Trail conversion, and others) but the connectivity stalls when there is a need to include OSMP land in the process. Would you support these regional trails, and why or why not?

If these trails are recommended by the Open Space staff and board, I would tend to support them, as I have with staff and board recommendations during my first four years on council. If large swaths of land are not available for purchase where connections are needed, trail easements should be procured.

9. One of BATCO's initiatives is the Trail Around Boulder, a 34 mile multi-use trail encircling the City of Boulder, which would allow access to, and appreciation of, Boulder's amazing geographic setting. It would connect neighborhoods and would offer transportation alternatives to the car, encourage a healthy lifestyle, attract visitors to Boulder, and make trails fun again. It would link existing trails, 80% of which are already in place, and would require only about 7 miles of new trails all of which could be carefully designed to avoid sensitive habitats. Yet the City of Boulder (OSMP) has resisted all attempts to complete the Trail Around Boulder. Would you support this trail, and why or why not?

I think that this would be very cool and I support it. If there are connections that impact sensitive habitat or which are simply not available, we should seek work-arounds. If large swaths of land are not available for purchase where connections are needed, trail easements should be procured.

10. Recent articles in the local media have spotlighted communication issues within several City departments, including Planning, Public Works, and Transportation. A consulting firm hired by the City found that arduous, slow, and unpredictable decision making, a lack of discipline in implementing procedures, and lack of support from Council, resulted in staff dissatisfaction. The same problems plague Open Space and Mountain Parks but the issue is much larger than staff dissatisfaction. Many members of the public have contributed thousands of hours of volunteer time, expertise, and effort to OSMP management -- only to experience similar frustration with Council overriding sensitive negotiations in seemingly arbitrary votes that promote a different preconceived agenda. As a Council member, how would you improve relations between the City and the public?

I think much of the challenge is created when city council members do not stick with the work plan laid out at the annual council retreat in January. With the exception of true emergencies (which are rare), council should not veer off in new directions in the middle of the year, frustrating staff and the community. By electing a council that commits to adhere to the work plan that is negotiated and agreed to in January, staff members can balance workloads appropriately and the community will know what to expect.

11. Do you feel that recreation is adequately represented on the current OSBT? Why or why not?

I think that it is important that we maintain a balance of perspectives on the Open Space board. When council becomes unbalanced, that risks creating an unbalancing of the boards that council appoints, including OSBT. I believe that the community should carefully consider this balance when selecting council members they vote for.