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## Open Space Questionnaire for Candidates

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To: Steve Watts <stevenup@gmail.com>

Sun, Oct 13, 2019 at 9:56 PM

Good Evening Steve,

Please see below, if you have any questions for me please reach out:

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?

As a committed environmentalist, I look at this and other local issues from the global perspective: what is best for the planet as a whole? People have a certain need and desire to be in nature, and this is something we should encourage. But in reality, our open space close to the city is not, for the most part, prime habitat. Even absent the visitation, it's too close to roads, houses, and agriculture to be as valuable ecologically per acre as truly remote, undisturbed areas. So to the extent that we can meet people's needs for recreation or simply being in nature locally, where many can walk or bike or take the bus to the trailheads, and reduce visitation in more valuable areas that generally people have to drive to access, that seems like a net positive for the planet.

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 un-stick this process and complete the trail within your first term?

I don't know exactly why this is "stuck", but my understanding is the alignment is along a historic rail bed, so definitely not a pristine location. Common sense as well as basic respect for the process would say that this should go forward.

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

Unlike some, I wouldn't say we should completely stop all acquisition. If a prime property that could fill a hole in our system or that is particularly likely to develop in a way that wouldn't be beneficial came on the market, we should be open to acquiring it (or a conservation easement). But it is clear that we have a dire backlog of maintenance, especially of trails, so that should be a priority.

4. How would you address increased visitation of OSMP?

I think we should welcome visitation. It's always healthy for people to be out in nature; and if those people are from out of town and after they hike Sanitas (or whatever) they go spend money on Pearl Street, that's a great thing. But we need to improve trail maintenance; ensure that if people are going to drive to trailheads that they pay for parking and the related impacts; that visitors are

well-educated on etiquette and rules; and that there be adequate policing to make sure that everyone is safe and having a good time, and that impacts to nature are minimized.

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

Recreation both inside and outside the city is extremely important. Our parks and rec centers are great, and we need to do better to make walking and biking in the city safe, fun, and appealing. As described above, we need to continue to facilitate appropriate recreation outside the city.

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?

I would support it if the research showed that those concerns were insignificant or could be mitigated. I believe that we have to be good steward of the environment in order to ensure its preservation/sustainability for future generations to come.

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?

In general yes, but it may be appropriate to have use-specific trails in some cases (like downhill mountain bike trails, equestrian trails, or restrictions by day as at Betasso) to minimize conflicts.

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?

These are extremely important both for recreation and for transportation, so OSMP absolutely should not be a barrier. We need to think outside the bubble.

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 hadn't heard of this trail, but it sounds great to me. I think it would be a wonderful addition to the city's trail system.

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?

Council needs to (1) respect facts, science, and expert opinion; (2) always keep in mind the interests, long-term goals, and plans of the city as a whole, rather than paying undue attention to vocal (and usually privileged) interest groups; (3) abide by predictable and well-defined public processes.

11. Do you feel that recreation is adequately represented on the current OSBT?

No, but as described above, I'm not even sure that a wide-view environmental perspective is even adequately represented. There's too much thinking inside the bubble.

On Tue, Oct 8, 2019 at 12:59 PM Steve Watts <[stevenup@gmail.com](mailto:stevenup@gmail.com)> wrote:

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Together we will leave no one behind