ROLL CALL:
Jerry Hodgden, Chair of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:
The Agenda was approved on a motion by Jerry Harcek, seconded by Laura Weinberg, and carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:
The Minutes of June 19, 2012 were approved on a motion by Emmy Dimitroff, seconded by Jerry Harcek, and carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT:
See Clear Creek Corridor Discussion.

CLEAR CREEK CORRIDOR DISCUSSION:
Jerry Hodgden led the discussion regarding the corridor which he assumes most are here
tonight to discuss. He referred to the river in Durango and their issues with rowdy tubers. He said the hot weather has drawn large crowds across Colorado. The City has already taken some action and posted signage regarding the rules of the Clear Creek Corridor. Jerry said the Board deals in an advisory capacity. We have with us tonight City Manager, Mike Bestor, to lead the discussion and give all of you more information. We would also like to hear your comments after Mr. Bestor’s discussion.

City Manager Mike Bestor said this is a strange and difficult situation, the river has become more and more popular. The original intended use was as a kayak course, in the past we have had normal run off and you could see the skill levels of the kayakers change with the river. Typically late in the summer when the river is slow and shallow we start to see the tubing crowd. This year we had almost no run off coupled with extreme high temperatures and what resulted was similar to a flash mob. Bestor said he spent a lot of time on the river observing and talking to users. He said the way he sees it, 95% of the people out there are having fun responsibly including parents, people getting exercise, families, etc. Even if this was all we had to deal with there would still be too many people. We have had problems with bank erosion and the ecology of the river due to the volumes of people. They are trampling the vegetation and building pools to sit in which will redirect the water and continue erosion. Next spring the run off could be particularly difficult. This leads to urbanization of the river. We have purposefully urbanized sections, but no one wants the entire bank to be cement and rock. We need to preserve those stretches that are natural.

Bestor added the Public Works Department is looking for a consultant to help us preserve the natural areas of the river. Then we also have the problem of people behaving badly. The Police Department has changed their schedule to include a lot of forced overtime along the river. We are currently short several police officers. They have really stepped up to help regardless. The police officers want to enjoy their summers with their families just like the rest of us. They have written a lot of tickets. Most were for open container and dogs off leash. Both are currently against state law and city ordinance. Most of the people on the banks are drinking responsibly. However, we don’t allow alcohol and it isn’t legal. A lot of citizens even think the river is a great dog park; however, the dogs shouldn’t be loose in the river. The Golden Municipal Code gives the City Manager the power to set rules on city property for safety and as necessary. Bestor said we have approached this as an experiment. We have spent a lot of time observing and talking about options. We know that a lot of what we do will be wrong or could cause issues elsewhere. The code gives us this flexibility. Bestor said originally he set Administrative Action ruling no glass containers and smoking along the creek. He said there is a group in town that wants smoking banned in all parks. Also on the theory that City Council outlawed smoking in playgrounds, this seemed a good idea. Possession of alcohol is also prohibited. So today, we are enforcing no smoking, possession of alcohol, glass, open container, and dogs off leash. The signs are there for the judge for the legal requirement. Bestor said he doesn’t know how many violations we had last weekend from the Police Department, but he knows there is continuously a lot of open containers and dogs off leash. It would be nice to convince some people that there would be
better places to go play. He said we need to restrict the access from the bank to the river. The lawyers are working overtime and we now have trespassing for people using the sensitive areas that are marked.

We would love to get lots of ideas and reactions from the community as we try to create balance. Last weekend we shut down the parking lot along the trail including the lots by Lions Ball field and the Clear Creek RV Park. Bestor said he had noticed the weekend prior that the lot was a common area for parking your party supplies. For those reasons we can give more room to pedestrians along the trail and make it more difficult to hide alcohol. We know the neighborhoods are already full of parking issues. We ran the police up those streets several times and wrote numerous tickets. We have parking enforcement watching the streets all week.

Bestor said he is concerned a lot of people who are visiting Golden don’t know a lot about river run off. He said there is a tremendous amount of people who aren’t careful with the river. Next June we will have a normal run off and we will have all these people riding tubes down the river. We will hopefully figure out how to keep them safe beforehand.

Jerry Hodgden said he was at the Farmer’s Market last weekend and we have parking issues all weekend long. He said the market is seasonal and very popular but is contributing to the problem. Bestor said there are lots of demands on the corridor, combined creating this perfect storm. He would give the market preference, but we don’t have any choice. Bestor said we don’t want to chase people from the corridor, though we cannot accommodate the volume. Council can add more Ordinances but what is the correct balance?

Jerry Hodgden said the Clear Creek Corridor Master Plan talks about relocating Street which would help this type of issue. Bestor agreed and said maybe we need to remove part of the fence from the ball fields when we don’t have games. The environmental damage to the banks is the most serious issue. It won’t go away on its own. If we restrict where people are going to be and keep people from camping within the river banks it could help. Camping along the river might be something we legislate against. With the consultants we can create more clear access then restrict trampling everywhere else. If we let them grill on the ball fields or in the park maybe that will help.

Bestor said the Colorado School of Mines side of the river has a whole list of environmental problems of its own. We have asked Mines Police to help enforce. It’s hard for our police to enforce that side, they don’t have a boat and we don’t want them driving an ATV up the creek bed. Mike said the south side was, since the turn of the last century, the CSM research institute and did a lot of experiments with uranium which they buried around the property. 20 years ago a city water line broke and washed a lot of dirt and debris which was radioactive into the creek. The old mill buildings were up there. Then CSM got together and found funding to tear it all down and remediate the area. They are in the final stages of getting approval from the Public Health Department. We have had money for years to build
the South Side of Clear Creek trail, but we cannot get approval from CSM to give us the easement.

Susan Westoff from Jefferson County Public Health was in attendance to listen and said she has been working with residents in the community who are advocating for making all parks smoke free. She said we are also working with Jefferson County Open Space to make their parks smoke free. In her own personal experience, she went for a walk along the creek and she said she couldn’t avoid the smoke. She said she also has a friend who shared she was happy that enforcement was happening along on the creek and how the rowdy crowd changes the atmosphere in Golden.

Jerry Hodgden said he would like to add that Susan addressed the Board a couple months back about smoking in the parks and the consensus at the time was no smoking in the playgrounds. We didn’t want to over restrict the parks. He asked if there was any further comment. The Board did not comment.

Heather Sheneder said she lives on Street. She said she appreciates the change in enforcement in the last couple weeks. She said if you regulate one part, it affects the other parts. She said on Street we have parking issues and she would like to see permit parking and more trash cans. With the volume you can only do so much and she sees the staff working hard. The signs may or may not be read but she would like to see image related signs to try to catch as many people as possible. She said she is constantly closing her windows to avoid her children hearing expletives.

Bestor said one of the first things we did when we fell victim to the mob was put traffic counters on Street to compare it to a normal weekday. The numbers were huge and we started to up patrols. Counts went from 300 to 1,600 or something to that effect. We may need more strategies for long-term and we recognize that need. Heather said she knew they could have problems like this when they purchased their home. Bestor said he refers to it as “Occupy Clear Creek.”

Rhonda said she lives on the other side of Highway 58. She said everything we do will take money and she would wonder if we would consider City of Boulder’s model to have a fee to park unless they are a resident. It could be a source of revenue for the city. Bestor said we have discussed parking and once we finish the summer that option will definitely be vetted. 84% of tickets have been to non-residents. Mark Buckland asked about the banks along the river. Bestor said we can’t allow them to all be mud; it could take a while to recover.

Peg Hooper from the Golden Library said the Library may be one of the only public restrooms along the creek. We have hired a security guard and janitorial because of the massive amount of use. She asked if there has been thought to additional porta potties? Bestor said it has occurred to him, and yes, we are discussing getting more restroom facilities. Peg said she doesn’t mind the public use but they cannot handle the volume. Bestor said we wrote a lot to tickets in the library lot.
Torston Lyon asked if the security guard could enforce the lot. Peg said yes, but only on the weekends.

Laura Weinberg commented the Library parking lot was full this morning before the Library even opened. Peg said if you come in to use the computer it takes some time she doesn’t want to penalize the library users. Torston said the library parking could be validated by the front desk at the library. They could then ticket anyone in the lot without a parking slip. Bestor said his most precious resource is Police time. He said he is stealing it from other places, if there is a car crash, they won’t be on the creek. Peg said they appreciate everything the city has done so far, the crowds were definitely unexpected. Paul Burkholder said we could put porta potties near the library lot to assist.

Laura Weinberg said Lion’s Park is the nearest restroom to the Farmers Market if the Library isn’t open.

Chuck Allen said he appreciates the enforcement this year; though would argue the mob has been going on for years. He feels he loses the trail for three months every year. He is glad enforcement is finally getting out there. He said he has tried to get kayakers off the trail. He said he is concerned about concessions of tubes also. He said Boulder’s idea is great, permit parking on and needs to happen immediately. He said there needs to be four officers down there every hour. Their presence will chase away the undesirables. Put the police car in the parking lot and do this for a couple weekends and people will get the idea. On the of July there were people carrying 12 packs on their shoulders. It’s time to really push permit parking and enforcement. Paid parking if you are not a resident would be great.

Mark Buckland said he thinks Golden is a vibrant and happening place and there are many who enjoy it.

Jerry Hodgden said when we plan something we certainly want to keep our citizens in mind. We are also a great community to visit and we want people to come in and enjoy themselves to provide amenities, etc. The balance is always a struggle. The merchants will like to see people come in and enjoy downtown.

Samara Wilson said the city advertises Golden as the “Two Hour Vacation” and then we want the visitors to go away. To try to encourage them to park downtown and encourage them to maybe get some food, etc should be what we are aiming for. She said let’s encourage drop off only areas, paid parking, etc.

Torston Lyon said Mr. Bestor indicated lots of discussion as to what to do. He said one thing we could do is close the parking lots on the weekends. If we have too much trash, booze, etc. If you have to use the garage parking downtown you might drastically reduce what waste is carried several blocks.
Chuck said closing the lots could just push people to the neighborhood. It has to be a joint effort, with permit parking in the neighborhoods. He said he has no problems with crowds, thought we have allowed the creek to become the party place on the weekends.

Robert Anderson said it sounds like the field of dreams, if you build it they will come. Let’s figure out how to get their money. He is in favor of gaining revenue. Bestor said part of the problem is we don’t own the river, so we cannot legislate the water. The Sheriff can close the river to certain uses such as inner tubes. If we charge people to access the river we are now opened up to more liability. Bestor said parking would be fine. We talked about controlling the number of tube licenses and we could ticket for an unlicensed tube. Eventually someone will drown. Police are not cheap and hard to get.

Emmy Dimitroff asked if we can contract out police officers. Bestor said we can hire off duty officers but we really want to control who is enforcing in Golden. We want to be sure that we are dealing with our citizens in a manner we have in the past. It is also very expensive.

Mark Buckland asked about handing out warnings. Bestor said if you are going talk to someone who has been drinking heavily all day you will get push back. The Police said they had never encountered so many abusive people as they encountered on the of July. Bestor said they have talked about park rangers and writing ordinances to help enforcement, etc.

Jerry Hodgden said Golden is fortunate to have the one of the best Parks and Recreation Departments in the nation for our population. We want to responsibly create a parks system everyone can enjoy, we don’t want to fence our parks and we are not an enforcement department. He said right now there is a sign by City Hall that says if your dog is off leash you could get a fine of up to $1,000. It’s expensive! Summer is when everyone goes looking for recreation and it stays light late. This issue is happening everywhere.

Mayor Marjorie Sloan said they discussed this issue at length last Thursday night and Council is relying on the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to gather public comment as we are doing tonight. She said you have heard a lot of good ideas tonight, it is a moving target, and the city will honor all suggestions and remain flexible.

Torston Lyon said we are in emergency mode and we are planning for next year. Meetings hopefully this fall will be looking for long term solutions.

Councilor Saiorse Charis-Graves said she gets notices including the Agenda and the Minutes of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board because she subscribed to the city website. The website also has become more user-friendly and we want people to have notice. She said this is the perfect situation for this type of notice. In addition, the city has rolled out a new tool for online civic engagement. It is very convenient If you don’t want to attend a public meeting or don’t have the time. The website is://goldenvision.cityofgolden.
Mayor Marjorie Sloan said Saiorse expressed her point very well. She also added she has a website you can subscribe to for information on the City at marjoriesloan.

The Board requested data from the Police Department on citations written for their next meeting.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT:

- Amber Thill said the Vanover Park Improvements as discussed at the last meeting will be on City Council Agenda August.

- Next week we will have details from Jefferson County regarding their decision to remove A1-Organics from Rooney Road. A1 will desist operations in October and be cleaned up by year end.

- Staff has been working with the Golden Connector Trails Group to prioritize their plans. Likely more information on the Connector Trails will be available at your next meeting. Council encouraged the group to work with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.

- The August Study Session was cancelled by the Board. The next meeting will be the regular meeting on August.

BOARD MEMBERS’ COMMENTS:
Laura Weinberg said she has a couple comments; the big concern that has come across to her is we need to maintain the quality of life for our residents. She said we want to continue to enjoy Golden year round. Whatever those long term solutions are, permit parking, lot closures, etc., that we keep in mind the residents want to keep their community. The second part to keep in mind is there is also a need to cater to Golden businesses. Free downtown parking makes sense. She said keeping those two ideas in balance is what she has heard around town.

Jerry Hodgden said over the years we have built a great park system, apparently too good. Jerry said we don’t want to drop the quality of life, just figure out how to strategically manage what we have.

Peter Gotseff said it seems that there are others to consult on this topic such as Durango, Lyons, Confluence Park, and Boulder Creek. He said he doesn’t like to compare anything to Boulder, thought they have instituted so many parking plans it probably works. They have a current program for parking downtown and it is quite difficult. They have a lot of creek users but nothing compared to us. They might have ideas they could share with us. We are not alone here.

Emmy Dimitroff said she lives on Street. She said the comment she would add first is to thank everyone for coming. We would love to have even more avenues to connect with the
public. She said Street also receives the overflow of people. We have permit parking, it has its pluses and minuses but it gets the message across. She said we just finished sending our recommendations to City Council for capital infrastructure needs. It seems budgeting for police overtime, or signage should be most important right now. She would also add she has heard stories from neighbors of finding pot which was turned into the police. There were people fighting in the dirt lot, it is like a tailgating party most weekends. She said she saw a police officer on the Clear Creek Trail several time, and we are making progress. She also suggested a stakeholder committee to weight different strategies for next year similar to what we did for the Clear Creek Corridor Master Planning process.

Bestor said there are a lot of good ideas out there and some of the emails he has seen have been wonderful and thought provoking.

Torston Lyon said he reached out the last couple weeks trying to understand where the community and his neighbors are on the river issues. He said he looks forward to thinking about solutions. How can our businesses prosper while our citizens enjoy what we have here and make enough revenue for enforcement to keep bad guys out? He said Chuck talked about this earlier, the flash mob; certainly Clear Creek is currently the place to party. Torston said he lives on Street and he loves the energy of the corridor. He said he rides his bike everywhere. He said we can agree there are parts that have gone too far. He would like to see us push the pendulum in the other direction to get the word out that Golden is a total buzz kill… one of the ways might be to make it so you have to park downtown, not even a drop off zone. The kayakers are gone this season anyway. He also agreed anything we do that drastically affects parking has to include permit parking in the neighborhoods.

Paul Burkholder said we have heard wonderful comments tonight and speaking for his staffs that clean up after the crowds, we spend a lot of resources on the park side to maintain the corridor. If we didn’t spend so many resources here, they could be spent elsewhere.

Laura Weinberg said she strongly supports more porta potties in the immediate future. She also wondered about trash cans. Torston said he can speak for the Street area; they have a lot more use. For the most part, there isn’t a huge issue. On a busy weekend he parks a couple cars in front of the house. Torston said there are trash cans in Lions Park and along the corridor. He said he doesn’t think we can address that issue, parking permit would better discourage. Torston said one of the long term challenges is how to get out of town visitors to visit downtown while they are here. We need to drive users to the parking garages downtown.

Paul Burkholder said trash is a fascinating issue. Emmy said what she is thinking is wouldn’t it be more efficient to have it in cans. Paul said if you offer more capacity they will use it. We are at full capacity in our dumpsters. On the weekends we actually drive trash to the Cemetery dumpsters because we cannot get more pick-ups downtown.
ADJOURN:
A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Torston Lyon, seconded by Emmy Dimitroff, and carried unanimously.