

## **Tour Summary – Fort Chambers-Poor Farm**

**January 27, 2025**

### **Summary**

Andy Pelster, Agriculture and Water Stewardship Senior Manager, started the tour at 1:08 p.m. by welcoming attendees and introducing Open Space and Mountain Parks staff, including Vanessa McCracken, Lauren Kolb, Katie Knapp and Dustin Allard.

Katie Knapp, Open Space Planner Principle, provided a background of the property, including the presumed location of the sod Fort Chambers, a training grounds for Company D prior to their participation in the Sand Creek Massacre. She described the collaboration with representatives from the Northern Arapaho Tribe, the Northern Cheyenne Tribe and the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes to develop a concept plan for the property, which includes ecological restoration along Boulder Creek and the gravel pits, as well as the construction of a trailhead and healing trail. The department is currently in the planning and design phase for this restoration, as well as in process for designing the interpretative experience.

Andy discussed the primary and secondary goals for the property and directed attendees to look at the relevant pages in the department's Agricultural Resources Management Plan to better understand those goals. He indicated that operations should discuss how they intend to achieve primary and secondary goals in their proposals.

Andy then covered the timeline for the proposal process, highlighting dates for submitting clarifying questions and proposals. He emphasized the terms and conditions of the proposal process, underscoring that proposals are prepared at the proposer's expense and become part of public record. He indicated that information in the proposal can be kept confidential, but that this confidential information needs to be marked as such and should be in one area of the proposal, not scattered throughout.

Andy covered acceptable ranges for bids for the different types of agricultural production, including haying, grazing, and vegetable production. He called attention to the need for the selected operation to have insurance meeting the city's requirements for liability and worker's compensation prior to the execution of a lease agreement.

Andy detailed how staff determines what a responsive proposal is and that the proposal form that is on the last page of the invitation for proposal (IFP) is required with each submission. Each application is limited to 8 pages, including the mandatory proposal form and references. He discussed the evaluation criteria on page 9 and directed attendees to use the Agricultural Use Assignment Guidelines for specific information on how each

criterion is scored. He then provided information on the appeal process and how appeals regarding the selection on non-selection of an operation must be made.

Finally, Andy discussed specific property information for the Fort Chambers-Poor Farm property, including the lease area size, the number of shares of ditch water, and the facilities present on the property. He indicated that organic certification will not be possible until at least December 2027. In addition, there are list A noxious weeds present on the property that will require herbicide treatment to manage. Hand pulling is likely not a viable option, due to the population size.

## Questions:

### General

**Should the proposals cover plans for three years or longer?** Proposals should cover the three-year initial term, with some discussion of longer-term vision so that it is understood what tenant needs would be so that operational fit relative to management goals can be determined by the reviewers.

**If there is more than one proposal that together would create a good fit for the property, would the department pair them up to use the land and infrastructure?** No, staff will not pair two operations without a relationship or partnership being suggested by the proposers.

**Can two operations apply in partnership?** Yes. Please describe the relationship or partnership and which entity is responsible for which parts of the management proposal. The entities of this partnership will not be allowed to submit a second proposal as individual operations for the property.

**How does the monetary component, how much is offered for rent, fit into the evaluation?** Lease rates are factored into the evaluation criteria, but they are less important than other factors. Other monetary factors that are considered are outlined in the “Demonstrated Financial Ability” criterion in the Agricultural Use Assignment Guidelines.

**How should applicants calculate a mixed use (vegetable acres + haying and/or grazing) into their bid?** Calculate the number of acres used for each component and multiply by the range of acceptable payments referenced in the bid document.

**Is the property closed to the public?** Yes, the agricultural lease portion of the property will be closed to the public.

## Land

**What was the most recent use of the land?** Recent agricultural uses included some vegetable beds and irrigated hay. The property was operated by 63<sup>rd</sup> St. Farm.

**Do you have ton or AUM information for the past couple of years?** The previous tenant underutilized the property for both haying and grazing, so any yield information would not be useful to gauge the productivity of the property.

**What are the hay species?** These fields are dominated by brome and fescue. In the wetter parts of the field, close to the southeast corner of the agricultural lease area, there are sedges, rushes, and grasses, like reed canarygrass, that are more tolerant of saturated soil conditions.

**Is there alfalfa?** There are minimal forb species (alfalfa, birdsfoot trefoil) in these hayfields.

**Can you ballpark grazing head per acre?** This number would be dependent on whether hay was cut or if the land was used for grazing only, so it is up to the applicant to propose a reasonable stocking rate.

**Are high tunnels or low tunnels allowed?** Yes, however, the lessee will have to complete the department's structure request process and get administrative approval from Boulder County.

**What is the responsibility of the ag tenant for the healing trail?** The healing trail will be excluded from the lease area. Please see page 13 in the IFP for a schematic of the trailhead and healing trail area.

**Does the department require or desire collaboration for restoration?** This is not required and there are no expectations that the tenant will be involved in the ecological restoration or construction of the healing trail and trailhead.

**What types of livestock are allowed?** While lease templates are geared towards cattle, other livestock, like sheep, goats, chickens and pigs are permitted. Horses may be allowed, but they must have an agricultural purpose. Horse boarding or horses kept for riding lessons/recreation purposes will not be permitted.

**Will additional acreage be added to the lease?** No. Only the 37 acres are currently offered for lease. No additional acreage from the rest of the property will be added into this lease.

**Will prescribed grazing be allowed by the lower ponds?** This might be feasible, but this would be at the request and direction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and OSMP staff responsible for restoration of these areas.

## **Water**

**What is the priority number for the ditch?** North Boulder Farmers Ditch admin number is 4535 for the most senior right at 10.735 CFS. The ditch is approximately number 10 on Boulder Creek during irrigation season. Nbfd has a secondary right with an admin number of 4900 for an additional 37.06 CFS.

**When is the end of the water season?** The end of North Boulder Farmers Ditch season has been as early as late July or early August under low stream flow conditions. The 1950-2019 average run dates are May 8 – September 30 but it depends on the snowpack, hydrograph, and summer precipitation.

**Where is the livestock water gap?** The historic water gap for livestock was in the northeast corner of the property on the northern shore of the pond.

**What is the water quality of the water in the constructed pond?** The water filling this pond comes from North Boulder Farmers Ditch and is diverted from Boulder Creek. This water has not been tested by the city.

**Can you pump out of the lower ponds for water?** No.

**Was flood irrigation used for the pastures and hayfields?** Yes, flood irrigation was used to irrigate most of the property except for the vegetable production beds. The pond was used for drip irrigation in the vegetable production areas. The tenant will be responsible for lining the pond and providing a pump.

**What is going on with the well?** The permitted well on the property was constructed in 1956 and is approved for domestic use only for rental houses and apartment on the property. This is a shallow 12 foot well and at the time of construction, yielded 13 gallons per minute.

**How big are the well cisterns?** There is a 5000 gallon cistern by the well / pump house and 2500 gallon cistern near the rental home.

**For flood irrigation, was it done out of the laterals or was there gated pipe?** Irrigation was all done using tarps in the laterals. The department can work with the lessee if gated pipe is desirable, or the lessee can work with NRCS's EQIP program for cost share on gated pipe.

## Housing / Outbuildings

**What is going on with the brick house?** The Queen Anne Victorian has had a structural assessment completed. Staff are currently working out a budget and timeline for this work.

**What is the cost for the residential housing lease?** The price for this housing will be determined by who is living in the house (farmer versus farmworker), how many people are living in the house, and household income. The current Boulder Housing Partner Affordable Rental rate for a three-bedroom home is \$1,350. For households with incomes higher than area median, the rent would be \$2,500.

**What if an applicant does not need this housing?** Preference will be given to operations that will utilize the land and the housing.

**Will you take Section 8 vouchers?** The city of Boulder does not discriminate against tenants based on their source of income, which includes vouchers used to pay rent.

**What month would the agricultural lease start?** The start date for the lease will be negotiated with the selected proposer. The lease would start no earlier than March 2025, but it is expected that the tenant will be using the property for the 2025 growing season.

**For the outbuildings, is there any estimate for a timeline for renovation into workable spaces? Limitations?** There is no estimate or timeline for renovation into workable spaces. The planning, permitting and construction process will be subject to review by the Boulder County Historic Preservation Advisory Board and Boulder County's Community Planning and Permitting. Extended timelines may be required if extensive or complex improvements are requested. This work is also expensive, so would need to be prioritized in the farm site improvement budget. The department will work with the selected lessee to prioritize their needs and a proposed construction schedule for priority improvements.

**How would the department feel about mobile or temporary structures to satisfy a need before modifications and improvements are made to the existing outbuildings?** If this temporary infrastructure would be necessary for your operation to succeed on this property, please disclose this in your proposal. This infrastructure would need to go through the department's structure request process and get whatever approvals are necessary from Boulder County.

**Will the department be amendable to the ag tenant seeking grant money to improve structures?** The department is open to partnership, but any monies that the tenant secures towards capital improvements would not be refunded when a tenant vacates the property.