



Minutes

City of Flagstaff

Open Spaces Commission

Thursday, January 23, 2014
4:00 pm – 6:00 pm

City Hall, Council Conference Room
211 West Aspen Avenue, Flagstaff, Arizona

A quorum of the Flagstaff City Council may be in attendance of the Open Spaces Commission meeting.



In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact 928-779-7660 (774-5281 TDD). Notification at least 48 hours in advance will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements.

CALL TO ORDER

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Rick Miller, Chair
Bryan Burton
Carrie Eberly
Jessica Gist
Stephen Hirst
Christopher Ives
Paul Moore

CITY STAFF:

Rebecca Sayers
McKenzie Jones
Erik Olsen
Marty Jacobson
Martin Ince

COMMUNITY MEMBERS:

Ellen Tibbetts
Jacob Dayley
Amanda Dickson
Karen Vanaman
Breanne Grazer
Emily McGough
Dirk Pratley
Bruce Higgins
Tish Bogan-Ozmun

I. GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Call to Order

Chair Miller called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm.

2. Public Participation

At this time, any member of the public may address the Commission on any subject that is not scheduled before the Commission on that day. The Arizona Open Meeting Law prohibits the Commission from discussing or taking action on an item which is not listed on the prepared agenda. Commission members may, however, respond to criticism made by those addressing the Commission, ask staff to review a matter, or ask that a matter be placed on a future agenda. To address the Commission on an item that is on the agenda, please wait for the Chair to call for Public Comment at the time the item is heard.

3. Approval of Minutes

Commission member Eberly moved to approve the November 21, 2013 meeting minutes. Commission member Moore seconded the motion.

4. Discussion Items

A. Update on the Regional Plan Open Space Chapter

Ms. Jones informed the Commission that the Regional Plan was adopted by City Council on January 14, 2014 and will go to the voters in May 2014. The Open Space Chapter included the edits proposed by Open Spaces Commission, which Ms. Jones sent out prior to the meeting.

Chair Miller informed Commissioners that they should review the Open Space Chapter as well as the definitions for 'open space' and 'conservation land system' in the glossary.

B. Long-Range Planning for Open Spaces Commission

Chair Miller explained that the Commission needs to determine a path forward for the next year or two. Based on past Commission conversations and the outcomes of the Regional Open Space Symposium, Ms. Jones proposed that items could include 1) open space land management discussions, 2) review of remaining City-owned parcels for open space retention, 3) work with the County and Trust for Public Land to determine next steps for a community value survey related to potential future open space acquisitions, and 4) a strategy for finalizing the concentration of open space values map so that an updated Open Space Master Plan can be completed.

Commission member Eberly wants to see an overarching management plan for all City open spaces. Chair Miller expressed a similar opinion. Ms. Jones stated that it makes sense to have a broad management plan with subsections that focus on individual parcels.

Chair Miller informed the Commission that County Supervisor Art Babbott and Norm Lowe, Chair of the Diablo Trust Board of Directors, were convening a meeting to discuss tools for conservation planning including the possibility of working with Trust for Public Land (TPL) to determine the community's willingness to support open space land acquisition. Chair Miller suggested that Ms. Jones contact Supervisor Babbott to engage in the discussion.

Commission member Hirst asked about levying taxes for operations and maintenance of open space. Ms. Jones acknowledged that past discussions included examining the possibility of funding open space maintenance through the BBB tax.

Commission member Burton asked if there is grant money available for operations and maintenance of open space. Ms. Jones stated that grants are primarily available for capital only, however staff members are always looking for additional grant funding.

Commission member Ives asked if it is possible to build an operations and maintenance position in the budget. Ms. Jones responded that City staff submitted a request in December to the Budget Committee for an Open Space Coordinator position; however it is unlikely that it will be funded in this budget cycle.

Based on their discussion, the Commission developed a list of priorities for open spaces planning. They are, in order:

1. Develop an overarching Open Space Master Plan.
 - a. Identify a vision for the open space system.
 - b. Identify funding for open spaces operations and maintenance.
 - c. Develop a method for analyzing parcels for future acquisition.
2. Re-examine the method for reviewing City-owned parcels and potential open space donations.
3. Evaluate the feasibility of conducting a community value survey regarding funding open space acquisition and maintenance .
4. Consider future open space funding mechanisms.

C. Update on Management of City-owned Open Space

Ms. Jones explained that with the acquisition of Observatory Mesa, the City now owns and manages approximately 2,750 acres of open space (20 acres at Thorpe, 480 acres at Picture Canyon, 2,250 acres at Observatory Mesa). As the Commission has discussed several times, with these acquisitions come clear maintenance and management issues including forest health, invasive weeds, educational signage, illegal dumping, and trail maintenance and construction. The City has currently budgeted \$10,000 per fiscal year for open space maintenance. Since 2012, these funds have been used in conjunction with \$30,000 in grant funding to complete the following projects:

- Thorpe: Removal of perimeter barbed wire fencing and regrade/revegetation of an illegal road.
- Picture Canyon: Welcome kiosk, stone work for both parking lots, trail mulching to define future FUTS trail, installation of perimeter signage, re-alignment of the Arizona Trail, scarification of unofficial roads.
- Observatory Mesa: No work completed.

Current management work underway:

1. Completed the Picture Canyon Annual Self-Certification Documentation for the conservation easement in January 2014.
2. Working on the Picture Canyon Management Plan and will have a draft for review by the Commission prior to the February meeting.
3. Setting up an Observatory Mesa Stakeholders Group meeting for February/March. Will send out a meeting announcement to interested community members in February. The goal will be to have a draft of the Observatory Mesa plan completed by early 2015.

Additional operational items:

- 1) Succeeded in relocated Picture Canyon on Google and Bing maps so that people will be directed to the main entrance, reducing impact on Rain Valley Road.
- 2) Created a Picture Canyon facebook page for community outreach.

- 3) Currently working with Commission member Bruce Fox on potential NAU class partnerships for surveying and data collection regarding use patterns on Observatory Mesa.

Dirk Pratley stated that the City needs to move more quickly regarding an Observatory Mesa Management Plan. He explained that vehicles are degrading the Mesa. Ellen Tibbetts agreed and added that Forest Service Road 515 is being used illegally. Commission member Hirst said the Commission should make a recommendation to the U.S. Forest Service regarding its road plan. Chair Miller agreed that this should be considered.

Ms. Jones explained that City Council passed a resolution on January 21, 2014 memorializing their discussion on the 17 city-owned parcels. Now staff will investigate how to most effectively permanently protect these parcels. Chair Miller would like David McIntire, City Real Estate Manager, to come to a Commission meeting to discuss City-owned parcels. Ms. Sayers stated that preserving Schultz Y and N. San Francisco parcels is a top priority for staff.

5. Information Items To and From Commissioners and Staff

- A. Commission member Gist inquired about a Walnut Canyon update. Ms. Jones stated that the Forest Service and Park Service would be providing an update on the Walnut Canyon Study to a joint meeting of City Council and the Coconino County Board of Supervisors on February 3, 2014 at 4 pm.
- B. Commission member Burton suggested that the City review of potential open space land donations should be re-evaluated. Chair Miller suggested that this would be covered during the development of an Open Space Master Plan over the next several months.

6. Agenda Items for Next Meeting – February 27, 2014, 4 pm

- A. Review of City-owned Parcels for Open Space Retention – Existing and Future Efforts
- B. Friends of the Rio Presentation on City-owned Parcels for Open Space Retention
- C. Open Space Master Plan Strategy and Vision
- D. Update on Picture Canyon Management Plan
- E. Update on Observatory Mesa Stakeholders Group Meeting

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:44 pm.