



MINUTES

City of Flagstaff

Open Spaces Commission

July 15th, 2019

4:00 pm – 6:00 pm

COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

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 928-213-2154. Notification at least 48 hours in advance will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements.

CALL TO ORDER

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Bryan Burton, Chair

Jackie Thomas, Vice-Chair

William Wilson

Stephen Hirst

Jim Burton

Vacant – 1

Vacant – 2

STAFF LIAISON:

Robert Wallace, Open Space Specialist

1. **Call to Order**

Chair Burton called the meeting to order at 4:22pm.

2. **Roll Call**

Chair Burton

Vice-Chair Thomas

Commissioner Wilson

Commissioner Burton

Commissioner Hirst

Commissioner (Vacant – 1)

Commissioner (Vacant – 2)

3. **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.

Mr. Nat White (no address provided) was unable to attend but commented via email on Observatory Mesa trail development. Mr. White outlined the following priorities for the area.

1. Preserve as much of the natural quality as possible, as the views, undisturbed land, and solitude make the land so valuable.
2. Provide access to the general public.
3. Determine the uses that are compatible with the first priority with the long term future in mind with community input.

4. Approval of June 3rd, 2019 Meeting Minutes

The date of the June meeting needed to be fixed both in the agenda for the July 15th meeting and in the June 3rd minutes. Commissioner Hirst also requested that his comment about segways and the response that they cannot be regulated like E-bicycles and E-scooters be included in the minutes.

Commissioner Hirst motioned to approve the June 3rd, 2019 minutes with the above corrections. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wilson. All voted in favor.

5. Business

A. Electric Bike and Electric Scooter Update (20 minutes) – Martin Ince, Requested Action: Informational

Martin Ince, Multimodal Transportation Planner with the Community Development Department, reported on the status of the E-bike and E-scooter code revisions. Currently, Class 1 and 2 E-bikes that have a maximum speed of 20 miles per hour are allowed on all sidewalks except downtown and the entire Flagstaff Urban Trail System (FUTS) except for the Nate Avery Trail and the Arizona Trail. Class 3 E-bikes, which can operate at a maximum of 28 miles per hour, are prohibited on all sidewalks and FUTS. E-scooters are permitted on paved FUTS trails including the paved sections of the Arizona Trail but not on sidewalks or unpaved FUTS. This code has been adopted by City Council, but additional exclusions can still be added in.

City Council requested input from other groups such as the Pedestrian and Bike Advisory Committees, Transportation Commission, and Open Space Commission on the list of excluded trails for both E-bikes and E-scooters. Further discussion is needed on new signage and education for trail etiquette (e.g., permitted trails, right-of-way for pedestrians) with these new modes of transportation.

Chair Burton asked whether there will be another opportunity for public input on trail exclusions. Mr. Ince responded that they were not planning on opening the debate up to the general public again, but will solicit opinions from representatives in commissions and committees to avoid continuing the broad discussions about E-bike regulations.

B. FTI Planning Unit Recommendations on Observatory Mesa (30 minutes) – Mark Loseth, Requested Action: Informational

Mark Loseth with American Conservation Experience and member of the Flagstaff Trails Initiative (FTI) core team and Planning and Data subcommittee presented on the status of recommendations for Observatory Mesa. FTI is a new collaborative, community-driven process for creating and implementing regional trail system in Flagstaff including many groups from federal agencies, City of Flagstaff, Coconino County, advocacy groups, conservation corps, and other members of the public. FTI's goal is to sustainably balance the current and future needs of trail users. FTI has gathered data from various map resources on the current status of trails and collected over 1,700 public survey comments on the desired future direction of trails on Observatory Mesa.

Of the trails that are already present on Observatory Mesa, only two miles of non-FUTS trail are authorized and there are 24.7 miles of unauthorized trails. Many of those are old Forest Service roads that are still being used by recreators. Unauthorized trails can be a good indicator of the need for trails in a particular area and give direction as to where properly built trails should be located.

FTI has made recommendations on the following:

- Improve FUTS trailhead and provide parking near Tunnel Springs.
- Improve signage, particularly for interpretation at wildlife viewing areas.
- Connect FUTS to Baderville and evaluate potential connections to other communities that do not have FUTS access yet.
- Explore the opportunity for adoption of social trails on Lowell Observatory lands.
- Create a shared use trail for an outer Observatory Mesa Loop.
- Avoid wildlife corridors in key areas on and around Observatory Mesa.
- Assess unauthorized trails concerning erosion and potential locations for neighborhood connections.

Chair Burton asked whether hunting or grazing were specifically considered in the planning process. Mr. Loseth explained that both were superficially discussed, but as FTI has not yet reached the point of talking about particular locations for trails so it has not been relevant yet.

Commissioner Burton agreed that the connectivity of trails between neighborhoods on the west side of town is important, particularly for access to schools in the area.

Commissioner Wilson asked if FTI knows about the potential threats to Observatory Mesa from the possible new bypass of Highway 180 by Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT). Mr. Loseth mentioned that there are currently not enough details about the proposed road to discuss those threats, but FTI is aware that it could become a threat.

Chair Burton expressed the importance of FTI and how valuable their expertise is in trails management. FTI has done educational trail walks with members of the public, and this could be useful for Open Space efforts in the future.

C. Subcommittee Updates and Next Steps (50 minutes) – All, Requested Action: Informational

The Finance Committee is currently working on finding funds to create a master plan for Observatory Mesa. One opportunity is to apply for a grant with the Recreational Trails Program by March 2020, which would require some additional surveys and paperwork. The committee will continue to work on this proposal.

The Planning Committee also worked on future planning efforts for Observatory Mesa, particularly with the central parcel and how it can be incorporated into a trail plan. Forest Service (USFS) representatives will attend the next Open Space Commission meeting to discuss this topic. This parcel already falls under the USFS “Flagstaff Neighbor Woods” program, so collaboration with the City would allow the USFS to engage in a community partnership and increase trail connectivity and access. The committee will review recent real estate work that was just completed, and City Real Estate will come to the next meeting to talk to the Commission.

The Education Committee discussed how to engage with community on what Open Space is doing and what will be happening in the future. One venue is through Cityscape in the August 26th edition, and Commissioners are welcome to submit articles.

The Commissioners discussed the importance of McMillan Mesa and the need to prioritize that area now that FTI has given more attention to Observatory Mesa. McMillan Mesa is very visible and could do a lot for the reputation of Open Space if it is managed well. Mr. Wallace explained that the management plan for McMillan Mesa is in progress; maps are being completed and the property is being rezoned but the plan will be taken to City Council in November. The draft plan will be given to the Commission before that for review. FTI is currently not involved in the McMillan Mesa planning, but Mr. Loseth said they can start looking at it and report back to the Commission. Chair Burton requested that Mr. Ince present his current plans for McMillan Mesa at the next meeting.

There are some upcoming events that would be good for outreach with the public, specifically related to McMillan Mesa. The area was pitched as a location for a community clean-up for Make a Difference Day in October. Arizona Trail Day on September 14th will also be at Buffalo Park, which would be a good opportunity to set up an Open Space table.

6. Reports and Updates

A. Open Space Management and Events and Outreach Report (5 Minutes) – Kaeli Wells, Requested Action: Informational

Kaeli Wells, Events and Outreach VISTA, gave an update on Open Space events. This year, Picture Canyon had a bumper crop of scotch thistle, so there have been 6 Weed Walks so far to remove it. Seven properties are being treated, and 78 volunteer hours have already been contributed. There will be three more Wednesday Weed Walks on July 24th, August 7th, and August 21st from 7-10 am.

The AWE-some Summer Series with the Arizona Watchable Wildlife Experience has been very successful with over 100 people in attendance at the last event.

Ms. Wells also gave an update on other Open Space programs. The 22 people who were trained as Open Space Stewards have already contributed 161 volunteer hours. In addition, Ian Torrance with American Conservation Experience did a class for the Open Space Stewards on how to identify invasive plants. FTI is currently applying for the Arizona Community Foundation Grant in order to have enough funding to achieve 501c3 status and become a non-profit organization. Also, the Indigenous Youth STEM Academy was awarded \$5,600 from the Kahtoola for the People grant and the coordinator position is currently open.

Ms. Wells is nearly done with her service term so will not be returning at the next Commission meeting. The Commissioners thanked her for her service to the City.

7. Information Items To and From (5 Minutes) – All

Commissioner Hirst asked about new Commissioners. Mr. Wallace said there were now enough applications for City Council to appoint two new Commissioners once they have the time to review.

8. Future Agenda Items (5 Minutes) - All

- Get an update on the McMillan Mesa management plan including community feedback and weed management (August 26th meeting)
- Set up plan for McMillan Mesa for the spring in the next few months

9. Adjournment

Chair Burton adjourned the meeting at 5:32pm.

CERTIFICATION OF POSTING OF NOTICE

The undersigned hereby certifies that a copy of the foregoing notice was duly posted at Flagstaff City Hall on _____, at ____ a.m./p.m. in accordance with the statement filed by the Disability Awareness Commission with the City Clerk.

Dated this _____ day of _____, 2019.



Robert Wallace, Staff Liaison