



# MINUTES

## City of Flagstaff Open Spaces Commission

August 26<sup>th</sup>, 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 4:01pm.

#### **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.

No public participation.

**4. Approval of July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Meeting Minutes**

Commissioner Burton motioned to approve the July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hirst. All voted in favor.

**5. Business**

**A. Council Committee on Parks and Recreation and Open Space Bond Measure**  
(25 minutes) – Shannon Anderson and Rick Tadder, Requested Action:  
Informational/Discussion

Shannon Anderson (Deputy City Manager) requested that the Commissioners participate in a Committee in conjunction with Parks and Recreation in order to prioritize how to spend funds collected by the secondary property tax rate. The Committee will start meetings at the end of September or beginning of October and continuing through February. The Committee Chair and staff liaison will be appointed by City staff. City staff will schedule the first meeting and coordinate presentations on background subjects including the Parks and Recreation master plan, the Open Space management plan, and current financial capacity. The Committee will present their recommendations for priority items to City Council, and Council will then decide which of those recommendations will become ballot initiatives in the 2020 general election.

Chair Burton expressed interest in being involved and appreciated that both Open Space and Parks and Recreation will be involved. Commissioner Wilson also expressed interest in participation. Ms. Anderson will contact the Commissioners with more information so that each Commissioner can respond if interested.

**B. Forest Service Plan Observatory Mesa.** (20 minutes) Kevin Lehto. Requested Action: Informational/Discussion

Kevin Lehto with the United States Forest Service (FS) shared the perspective of the FS on trail planning on Observatory Mesa. The FS owns a parcel of Observatory Mesa that is surrounded on all sides by City-owned land. The FS management plan for this parcel includes supporting trails systems and integrating the Flagstaff Urban Trail System (FUTS).

Before trail work can begin, documents for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) must be completed, but as trail work leads to less disturbance than other development the FS may be able to go through the process more quickly by getting a Categorical Exclusion (CE). The CE process would take approximately six months. Chair Burton asked whether the NEPA work for the FS could include the City property as well as the FS parcel on Observatory Mesa, and Mr. Lehto assured him that would be possible to coordinate.

As the trail plans continue, the FS is considering who will build and maintain the trails as well as which future activities might be taking place there such as logging or grazing. Currently, there are no plans for logging in the area. The Flagstaff Trails Initiative (FTI) is working towards an agreement between the City, County, and FS to share resources in order to build and maintain these trails. Mr. Lehto

assured Vice Chair Thomas that infrastructure such as parking lots are being considered alongside the trails themselves.

Commissioner Wilson inquired whether this FS parcel could potentially be integrated with the City-owned property on Observatory Mesa at some point in the future. Mr. Lehto explained that transferring ownership would be possible, but even if the parcel is still owned by the FS, the management would always be collaborative. Commissioner Hirst pointed out that the land is still under FS jurisdiction because of grazing permits. Once that permit expires, it might be a good time to revisit how the trails are managed, particularly in relation to fences and roads. For now, there will be some sort of cattle guard along trails to allow for bikes and pedestrians to pass through.

Chair Burton expressed his desire to make the trail system on Observatory Mesa consistent from City to FS lands and liked the idea of working together with FTI. The rest of the Commission agreed.

**C. McMillan Mesa Zoning Application Update.** (10 minutes) – Robert Wallace,  
Requested Action: Informational

Mr. Wallace walked through the rough draft of the McMillan Mesa Zoning Application, which includes a plan for citizen participation, maps, and a project narrative explaining why the project will be done and how it will meet City Council's goals. One of the requirements for the application is to have a cultural resource study on the area in question. The most recent study was completed in the 1980s and may need to be redone for around \$17,000 from potential grant funding. The only other application requirement that may cost money would be acquiring an updated title report, but as nothing has changed since the current report was issued, they might get a waiver.

Chair Burton asked whether there were any issues to be considered with drainage of the area. Mr. Wallace elaborated that there are a couple of areas where catch basins could potentially be built to prevent flooding and mudslides, and a map of the floodplains is included in the application.

For citizen participation, there will be an open house somewhere near Sunnyside; Chair Burton suggested using the Recreation Center. In addition to the open house, there will also be a presentation given for the Open Space Commission.

Commissioner Wilson was impressed by the detail and complexity of the process and suggested some minor edits to the document.

Commissioner Burton asked whether any new cultural information from the potential cultural resource study could be included in the interpretation of the trails. Mr. Wallace explained that some petroglyphs and an old wagon road have already been identified, so it would be easy to add more places to the interpretation.

**D. McMillan Mesa Management Plan Review.** (35 minutes) – All, Requested  
Action: Discussion

Mr. Wallace walked through the rough draft of the McMillan Mesa Management Plan that should be finalized this fall. The Commission gave edits and clarification suggestions.

Commissioner Hirst asked whether invasive plants will be addressed, as they are especially important to control along the margin of open areas. Mr. Wallace assured him that active mitigation work is included in the plan.

The Commission discussed the possibility of using an ephemeral pond or old retention tank at Buffalo Park to bring in wildlife.

Commissioner Burton appreciated the in-depth history of the area that was included in the management plan and suggested making that a focus to be parallel to the interpretation of Picture Canyon and give a different historical perspective. was very in-depth, ranger station was interesting

Vice Chair Thomas pointed out that there is currently no signage telling users to stay on the trails, and asked whether that was still going to be the case. Mr. Wallace assured her it was. Commissioner Hirst also noted that McMillan Mesa is a living laboratory for climate change as the pinyon pine and juniper are slowly replacing the ponderosas. Vice Chair Thomas suggested showing the succession using old and new maps in the new interpretation.

Mr. Wallace will send an updated version of the plan in September.

**E. Subcommittee Check-in.** (10 minutes) – All, Requested Action: Discussion

Mr. Wallace reported that the Subcommittees have met initially, but not regularly yet. The Financial Subcommittee needs recommendations for a grant narrative for both the Observatory Mesa Master Trail Plan and the possible cultural resource survey for McMillan Mesa. A good possible source of funding for the cultural survey would be the Southwest Intervention Fund, but the deadline for submitting that proposal is October 1. Vice Chair Thomas, as the only member of the Subcommittee, will prepare the proposal with narrative help from the other Commissioners.

The Education Subcommittee has been starting to work with Community Development in creating a system for Commissioners to give input on development review processes. The Committee has also been coordinating tabling at events such as the Coconino County Fair on Friday from 5-7 pm.

There was no update for the Planning Subcommittee.

Chair Burton requested that meeting dates be set further out as the current timeline of meetings is now outdated. Mr. Wallace will send out a poll to Commissioners to select meeting dates.

**6. Reports and Updates**

**A. Open Space Management and Events and Outreach Report (5 Minutes) –**  
Leila Husain, Requested Action: Informational

Leila Husain, Education and Outreach VISTA, gave a report on Open Space. Ms. Husain started in her position on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. Open Space gave a quarterly report to the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management. Willow Bend Environmental Education Center gave a community tour and Open Space created STEM lesson plans for local teachers. The Picture Canyon Working Group weed pull events have also been very successful, and an article was recently written about it in the Arizona Daily Sun.

The Open Spaces Stewards removed graffiti from benches at McMillan Mesa and from petroglyph panels in Picture Canyon. American Conservation Experience (ACE) corpsmembers also helped to stack burn piles at Observatory Mesa.

Lee Bryant gave a birding class for Open Space Stewards continuing education. Also, the new Indigenous Youth STEM Academy Coordinator was hired and will be funded by the Kahtoola for the People Grant.

The Commission was concerned about the presence of graffiti, particularly at Picture Canyon and gave suggestions for reducing it by setting up trail cameras.

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

Mr. Wallace suggested that the Commissioners draft an ordinance specific to protecting open spaces rather than parks in order to make recommendations. He will send the current ordinance to the Commission.

There should be new Commissioners at the next meeting as City Council will be voting on the nine applicants next week.

**8. Future Agenda Items (5 Minutes) - All**

- Next meeting: September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019
- Chair Burton will be gone October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019
- City Real Estate Story Map Review. (30 minutes) Charity Lee, Requested Action: Informational/Discussion

**9. Adjournment**

Chair Burton adjourned the meeting at 5:31pm.

**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