



MINUTES

City of Flagstaff Open Spaces Commission

October 28th, 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

Jim Burton

Jack Welch

Kate Stanley

Eric Nolan

STAFF LIAISON:

Robert Wallace, Open Space Specialist

1. Call to Order

Vice-Chair Thomas called the meeting to order at 4:02pm.

2. Roll Call

___ Chair Burton

X Vice-Chair Thomas

X Commissioner Wilson

___ Commissioner Burton

X Commissioner Welch

X Commissioner Stanley

X Commissioner Nolan

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 October 11th, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Wilson requested that the priority items be presented in the minutes in the order that was decided on.

Commissioner Wilson motioned to approve the October 11th, 2019 minutes with the above change. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Welch. All voted in favor.

5. Business

A. Viewshed Protection Update (10 minutes) – Nat White, Requested Action: Informational/Discussion

Mr. Nat White presented to the Open Spaces Commission earlier this year about viewshed protection, and gave an update on the effort. Currently, there is no formal protection for viewsheds in the City code, and it can be difficult to create one as viewsheds are so subjective. Protection decisions will have to be made based on judgement, so the sensitivity of the public and City staff is important. Mr. White has been communicating with the Open Spaces Commission as the quality of viewsheds is explicitly important to the value of Flagstaff's Open Spaces.

A simplified matrix is currently in production – in collaboration with the Conservation Forum – to synthesize all of the current codes and dangers related to viewsheds and to document Flagstaff's viewsheds as they were in the past as well as the current viewsheds. Mr. White requested that the Commissioners and the general public send pictures of our viewsheds with a brief description of location to his email (white@lowell.edu) to be incorporated into the matrix and help identify viewsheds that need to be protected.

Commissioner Stanley inquired whether there are models from other communities to follow. While City staff are aware of other communities that are trying to protect their viewsheds, Mr. White stressed the unique nature of Flagstaff due to the surrounding landscapes and recommended that the protection of viewsheds be tailored to Flagstaff.

Commissioner Nolan asked how viewshed protection connects to the regional plan. It directly connects as the regional plan mentions viewsheds as important, but it has been difficult to come up with a code. Increasing public and support will ultimately give City staff more support with enforcing what will be a subjective code.

In addition to presenting to the Open Spaces Commission, Mr. White has been working with the Conservation Forum. He is planning on presenting to the Planning and Zoning Commission and eventually City Council.

B. City Real Estate Story Map Review (30 minutes) Charity Lee and Tiffany Antol. Requested Action: Informational/Discussion

Charity Lee, City Real Estate Manager, introduced the City Real Estate website to the Commission, focusing on the relevant Open Space parcels. Kim Lyons, GIS Analyst, demonstrated how to navigate through the website. The website includes two different types of Open Space parcels:

1. Legally designated: These parcels are designated Open Space through deed-restriction, zoning, proposition or ordinance, or easement.
2. Dedicated: These parcels were received by plat, development agreement, or were acquired for Open Space but may not have the zoning protection of legally designated parcels.

This website will be open to the public after final revisions are complete. Commissioner Nolan asked whether there will be an easy link for the public to report issues at each parcel. Ms. Lyons explained that there will be links to other City pages on the website itself and there could be a specific reporting link, but it is not currently possible to embed that into the interactive map. Commissioner Wilson further inquired as to the specific protections dedicated parcels have. Tiffany Antol, Planning Director, elaborated that if the parcel is owned by the City it will have protections, but plat dedications are more complicated as the City does not own those parcels. Those properties could potentially be re-zoned as Open Space to give more protection, but it is a lengthy process.

The website also includes parcels that are considered to be sites with potential and undevelopable sites. The information is still being gathered for undevelopable sites.

The Commissioners discussed development through the lens of Open Space. Commissioner Nolan expressed concern about Northern Arizona University purchasing more properties that are designated as Open Space, but this is not a problem if the parcel also has a conservation easement. Vice-Chair Thomas expressed the desire to be proactive about development and potentially require Open Space considerations or offsets with new developments. While most developers will try to overlap resources that need to be preserved, there is nothing in the Regional Plan about Open Space requirements. The creation of those requirements would involve a discussion about what the highest values of Open Space are for the community, and prioritize different sections of property to be protected for Open Space.

C. Electric Bike and Electric Scooter Update. (5 minutes) – Martin Ince,
Requested Action: Informational/Discussion

Martin Ince, Multimodal Transportation Planner, gave a brief update on the electric bike (E-bike) and electric scooter (E-scooter) code. This code prohibits Class 3 E-bikes on FUTS trails and allows Class 1 and 2 E-bikes on all FUTS trails except for the Nate Avery Trail and the Arizona Trail through town. Input was gathered from various groups with the City and the community from June to September, and the proposed code was presented back to City Council in October. The two trail exclusions are still included in the code, with the addition that signage must be added to those trails. There will also be handouts to give to points

of sale and rental locations. This does not include E-scooters as the Bike Share program coming to Flagstaff will not have E-scooters to rent.

D. FUTS and Open Space. (30 minutes) – Martin Ince, Requested Action: Informational/Discussion

Mr. Ince reported on planning for Open Space relative to FUTS trails, as they are inextricably linked. The FUTS trails are used more frequently when they go through Open Space, and serve both recreation and transportation needs simultaneously. Currently, Open Space along FUTS trails is being inventoried to identify opportunities for more Open Space and allow for the planning of corridors with more development in order to strengthen connections between neighborhoods, natural areas, and FUTS trails.

The inventory only includes areas at least 40 feet in width adjacent to existing and planned FUTS trails in natural, landscaped, or disturbed areas with a variety of ownership. Private property is included in this inventory in the hopes that candidacy for Open Space would be a starting point for a larger conversation with the land owner. Other data has been collected on these areas by character, resources, proximate trail, and features. These Open Space areas have been labeled in the three following ways:

1. Existing: formally protected or designated parcel
2. Planned: candidate parcel
3. Informal: margins of parcels left over after development. These areas could be protected by conservation easements.

Planned parcels can be acquired in three different ways. First, the City can purchase or acquire directly. These are typically easements to provide a narrow corridor for FUTS trails. Second, parcels can be acquired through future developments (particularly offsets), and additional requirements could be considered such as minimum distances between trail and developed areas, minimum corridor width standards, or requiring portions of FUTS-adjacent sites to be left open. The final acquisition method is through future roadway or capital projects by incorporating landscape buffers on private land, locating open portions of each site along the FUTS, and establishing a minimum parkway width of 5 feet.

Commissioner Nolan expressed concern that developers would eventually use up their current informal Open Space for expansions, and Mr. Ince assured him that they will be working on a set of guidelines to mitigate this.

The inventory will be broadened to include the Open Space strategy outlined by the Commission, and the Commission will help to identify potential Open Space areas that were not included in the FUTS inventory. Parcels will be identified and prioritized for acquisition using the 2004 bond and a potential future bond. They will be working with Development Services to clarify the guidelines and requirements for development, discussing other acquisition and creation strategies and management options, and continuing with development of interactive mapping for planning.

Mr. Ince mentioned, by request of Commissioner Nolan, that there is currently a plan in development for an Open Space component in Southside after the Army Corps of Engineers project on the Rio de Flag is complete. He did not present on this topic tonight as it is not related to FUTS, but he will give more information later.

Vice-Chair Thomas asked about the expense of FUTS development on areas like hillsides that tend to be left over. Mr. Ince explained that while those areas are more challenging and expensive, it is easier to find them and the source of open areas is limited.

Councilmember Aslan inquired about whether minimum corridor widths for FUTS could be widened because of the need to accommodate a wider variety of transportation modes such as E-bikes. Currently, the standard is 10' wide for shared use trails and 15' in busy areas with separate adjacent bike and pedestrian trails. All new corridors would be wide enough to accommodate 15', but some areas would be constrained.

The Commission will have more future discussions on this topic.

E. Council Committee on Parks and Recreation and Open Space Bond Measure Questions and Comments. (15 minutes) – All, Requested Action: Discussion

Mr. Wallace provided Commissioners the opportunity to ask questions about the upcoming committee meeting with Open Space and Parks and Recreation. The meeting will be a preliminary financial discussion with a brief presentation on the Parks and Recreation master plan and a brief presentation on the Open Space plan. The Committee will then review the project list and set up future meetings.

6. Reports and Updates

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

In addition to the report sent to the Commission, Mr. Wallace gave some brief highlights about Open Space Management and Events and Outreach. Alpine Leadership Academy, American Conservation Experience, and Flagstaff Police Department did a 3-day trash cleanup and the Open Space Stewards removed graffiti on the basalt outcrop on McMillan Mesa. Natural Restorations also did a graffiti removal project on the base of Mt. Elden, so they will be partnering with Open Space on graffiti removal on McMillan Mesa.

Open Space has been partnering with NAU's Public Health capstone class to give a health presentation in Sunnyside on the health benefits of using Open Space. They will be running a walk/scavenger hunt at McMillan Mesa over Veteran's Day weekend on November 10 at 10am and will set up a table to talk with people.

The Indigenous Youth STEM Academy (IYSA) has been working with Killip Elementary School, and there have been three field trips so far starting at Thorpe Park and up onto Observatory Mesa in partnership with Lowell Observatory,

including tours of the telescopes. They are currently organizing a nighttime activity as a follow-up to the tours at Lowell. In addition to those field trips, IYSA did a Picture Canyon field trip with all of the 5th grade classes at Killip Elementary School, and students from Leupp Elementary School will be visiting Lowell Observatory as well. IYSA is mostly centered on outdoor-related STEM topics with a focus on indigenous youth and low income students.

On November 5, Mr. Wallace will be giving an update to City Council on the Schultz Creek public survey and asking for recommendations.

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

Commissioner Nolan is also a Commissioner on the Planning and Zoning Commission, and recommended that a lot of detail is given for any policy documents to better support City staff and developers and give more direction. In addition, if there are particular developments coming up, they can go through the Planning and Zoning Commission first if not asking for re-zoning. He urged having lots of discussion and a clear direction before presenting any plans.

Commissioner Welch asked whether the Commission could give any input on the height or other characteristics of the new Veterans Affairs building going up on McMillan Mesa. Mr. Wallace agreed to look in to it, but the building is already under construction so it may be too late.

The December meeting was originally scheduled for December 23rd, 2019. The Commission still wants to have a November and a December meeting, so the December meeting will be rescheduled to earlier in the month. Mr. Wallace will coordinate.

8. Future Agenda Items (5 Minutes) - All

- Next meeting: November 25th, 2019
- Subcommittee Updates
- Possible Economic Vitality presentation
- Possible Chamber of Commerce presentation
- Guidelines for development that would identify opportunities around Flagstaff, rank priorities, and capture vision for open space
 - Connectivity with viewshed protection and FUTS planning

9. Adjournment

Vice-Chair Thomas adjourned the meeting at 5:35pm.

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