



MINUTES

City of Flagstaff Open Spaces Commission

January 27th, 2020

4:00 pm – 5:00 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

Chair Burton called the meeting to order at 4:08pm.

2. Roll Call

Chair Burton

Vice-Chair Thomas

Commissioner Wilson

Commissioner Burton

Commissioner Welch

Commissioner Stanley

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 December 9th, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Vice-Chair Thomas motioned to approve the December 9th, 2019 minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wilson. All voted in favor.

5. Business

A. PROS Package: OS Cost Estimate Breakdown. (40 minutes) – Robert Wallace and Martin Ince, Requested Action: Informational/Discussion

Mr. Wallace presented the cost estimate for the Open Space priorities at the last PROS meeting. There was some confusion over those estimates, so they have been revised and there are options to bring the total cost down. Most of the changes are related to Priority 2, or land acquisitions to help create an integrated system of open space.

Nicole Antonopoulos, Sustainability Manager, reviewed the overarching goals of the Open Space Commission including restoring and preserving properties, educating the public about open space, and exploring opportunities to create an integrated system with open space. The opportunities for land acquisition selected for Priority 2 now being considered for the PROS bond measure were chosen based on many different criteria including community needs and benefits, existing plans, and the type of open space each potential parcel would provide.

Mr. Wallace showed the Commission a map of the existing open space natural preserves (Picture Canyon, Observatory Mesa, McMillan Mesa), and walked through the desired corridors to connect each area. Vice-Chair Thomas inquired about what those corridors would ultimately be, and Mr. Wallace clarified that it would include FUTS trails, washes, hillsides, and neighborwoods. Also proposed is a new natural preserve encompassing three parcels, currently owned by the state and separated by one US Forest Service parcel, in the Walnut Canyon area. The top priority for these acquisitions are the Walnut Canyon parcels, then moving out from that area with the connecting open spaces.

The Commissioners discussed the planned connections. Commissioner Nolan asked whether these connections follow the Rio de Flag and whether they might be affected by the Army Corps of Engineers flood control project, and Martin Ince (Multimodal Planner) clarified that most of the connections follow the existing FUTS trails so the Rio de Flag is adjacent for some of the time but the FUTS plan does not extend into the area covered by the flood control project.

Councilmember Aslan inquired about whether open space opportunities were considered in the vicinity of the planned John Wesley Powell extension through Pine Canyon. Mr. Ince explained that while the area has not yet been developed and there would be benefits to having open space there, the properties are privately owned so it is difficult to tell how much of it could be acquired. There is also already a section of FUTS planned for one side of the new road.

The cost for the proposed land acquisitions totaled about \$57 million, but an alternate option was to follow a reduced acquisition path for \$38 million and rely

on easements and new developments to provide some of the connecting spaces. Priority 1, focused on conserving and protecting existing open space, was reduced by about \$250,000 to only include one-time costs. No changes were made to Priority 3 (Observatory Mesa Trail Plan).

The Commission was asked to give input on what amount to allot for the land acquisitions. Ms. Antonopoulos explained further that the language in the bond measure can be general enough to allow for flexibility in acquiring specific parcels. Following a discussion among the Commissioners about potential outcomes, Chair Burton mentioned that connectivity between open space areas has been promised to the citizens of Flagstaff already and Ms. Antonopoulos also pointed out that the City passed resolutions to continue to protect Walnut Canyon in 2014. Chair Burton suggested focusing first on the Walnut Canyon parcel closest to the city which was also supported by Commissioner Wilson. Commissioner Nolan had reservations that the state land parcels not acquired could be sold to a different buyer before the City could try to purchase. Vice-Chair Thomas did not give an opinion due to a conflict of interest.

The Commission discussed other considerations for the connecting corridors. Commissioner Stanley wanted to know whether any of the connections overlap with what Parks and Recreation is trying to work on so that those areas could be prioritized over others, but Mr. Wallace did not have information on that. Chair Burton highlighted that there is no connection between Picture Canyon and Country Club, though Mr. Ince explained that while there are long-term FUTS plans in that area, there are few opportunities because of the golf course. Councilmember Aslan asked about overlap with the Flagstaff Loop Trail, and Mr. Ince elaborated that some sections are the same and some are not.

Commissioner Wilson suggested approving Priority 1 and 3 as-is and for Priority 2 focus on acquiring the closest Walnut Canyon parcel to the city and keep all connectors. Commissioner Welch and Vice-Chair Thomas agreed, and Commissioner Stanley also suggested dropping the inner city connector from McMillan Mesa to Walnut Canyon as it would be the most expensive and potentially redundant as there are already roads and sidewalks.

Commissioner Wilson motioned to agree on Priority 1 and 3 and discuss Priority 2 further. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Thomas. All voted in favor.

6. Reports and Updates

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

Mr. Wallace mentioned that the Flagstaff Fire Department (FFD) is working on a grant for tree thinning at Picture Canyon in coordination with Open Space. This potential grant will be presented to City Council on February 4th, 2020.

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

None

8. Future Agenda Items (5 Minutes) - All

- Next meeting: February 24th, 2020
- Legally Designated Open Space Management Plan update

9. Adjournment

Chair Burton adjourned the meeting at 5:06pm.

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