



MINUTES

City of Flagstaff Open Spaces Commission

July 27th, 2020
4:00 pm – 6:00 pm
VIRTUAL MEETING

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:

Andy Bessler
Jim Burton
Mark Loseth
Eric Nolan

Joseph Thomas
Jack Welch
William Wilson

STAFF LIAISON:

Robert Wallace, Open Space Specialist

1. Call to Order

Chair Wilson called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

2. Roll Call

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chair Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Nolan
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vice Chair Bessler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Thomas
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Burton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Welch
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Loseth	

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 June 22nd, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Nolan motioned to approve the June 22nd, 2020 minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Loseth. All voted in favor.

5. Business

A. Open Space VISTA Introduction (10 minutes) – All, Requested Action: Introductions

Sylvia Struss is the new Open Space VISTA. She introduced herself to the Commission, and the Commissioners introduced themselves.

B. Switzer Canyon Water Transmission Main Project (20 minutes) – Duke B. MacArthur, Requested Action: Discussion & Decision

At the request of the Open Spaces Commission at the June 22nd meeting, Trevor Henry (Capitol Improvements Project Manager) and Paul Turner (Turner Engineering) provided additional information on the proposed water transmission main replacement project including the specific vegetation restoration plans. The area currently being considered is all open space, though a small portion has been annexed to Buffalo Park so the Parks and Recreation Commission will also be reviewing the plan. The project team will continue to improve the project plan before bringing to City Council in late February or early March.

After concerns were expressed by Vice Chair Bessler and Chair Wilson, Mr. Turner explained that the current revegetation plan has been improved since the last phase of the project. Mr. Henry also explained that the revegetation for the previous phase did not work as well because of the unseasonably dry monsoon season that year. Chair Wilson also shared concerns that there is only a one-year warranty on the work, which does not allow for long-term maintenance of the vegetation at the site. Mr. Henry assured the Commission that arrangements have been made for other projects to hire local landscaping companies to help with the long-term maintenance of post-construction sites and mentioned that this could be an option for this project. The project team will work on incorporating the long-term maintenance component. Commissioner Loseth also mentioned the importance of timing and monitoring when seeding the construction area.

Mr. Henry explained that the final easements for the water mains will be 30 feet from the road, but there will be a need for an additional construction easement of 20 feet on each side. Chair Wilson asked what measure would be used to keep the construction within the allotted 70 feet, and Mr. Turner explained that they will be using temporary orange fencing.

The Commission was also interested in the community outreach that has been done for this project. Mr. Henry explained that the community has been informed of the project, and Mr. Turner assured the Commission that they have buy-in from all of the owners of adjacent properties to the project. Nat White, private citizen, asked whether there was any possibility of using the right-of-way from the water main as a FUTS trail in the future, but Mr. Turner said that these landowners are not open to that idea.

After a brief discussion over possible other options for the path of the new water main, the Commission generally agreed that the proposed path through open space property is necessary but that rigorous measure are needed to ensure the restoration of the area after construction.

Vice Chair Bessler motioned to approve the project pending the completion of a weed mitigation plan reviewed and approved by the Open Spaces Commission. Commissioner Loseth seconded. Four voted in favor, 2 opposed. Motion passed.

C. Arizona Department of Veteran Services McMillan Mesa Project Update (20 minutes) – James Boyer, Requested Action: Informational & Discussion

Mr. Boyer, Development Engineering Project Manager, gave a brief overview of the Arizona Department of Veteran Services (ADVS) project. The detention basins that have already been built on the state-owned property are not sufficient, so ADVS needs to expand into the surrounding open space area to mitigate erosion by installing rip rap on 750 square feet in the southeast corner of the property. The work will be completed in preparation for the winter.

Due to political pressures, there was not enough time to get approval from the Commission before moving forward, so the project has already been approved. Celia Barotz, private citizen, asked for more information on what the Commission was being asked to do and whether the language in the plan was consistent with the legal framework under Proposition 413. Mr. Wallace explained that the Commission requested an update on the project at the last meeting, and the Open Space program has already provided stipulations of weed mitigation on both the open space and ADVS properties. This agenda item was intended to provide more information to the Commission. Mr. Wallace also clarified that the project proposal was approved by Legal, and while he requested that any options that would move the project off open space be considered first, was told that there are no other options. Mr. Boyer explained that the only way for ADVS to meet Stormwater requirements within their property would be to increase the size of the detention basins, but this would take a lot of effort due to the basalt formations on McMillan Mesa.

Vice Chair Bessler echoed Ms. Barotz's concern about the legality of the project particularly if a similar issue comes up again from ADVS. Councilmember Aslan agreed and expressed that he will do what he can to help. Mr. Wallace explained that while no one from Legal was able to make it to this meeting, he can request that someone attend a future meeting to discuss the topic. Vice Chair Bessler strongly urged members of the public to reach out to Councilmembers about this topic.

D. Letter of Support Invasive Plant Grant Application (10 minutes) – All, Requested Action: Discussion & Decision

Mr. Wallace has been working with the Picture Canyon Working Group to get a second invasive plant grant to build on work done over the last year and include new areas along the Rio de Flag. The goal is to be able to expand beyond treating weeds to also reseeding with native plants. The request is for just under \$300,000.

To accompany the application, letters of support have been provided by the Arizona Plant Society, Museum of Northern Arizona, and Friends of the Rio de Flag. Additional letters have been requested of Coconino County, Picture Canyon Working Group, and the Open Spaces Commission. Matching funds have already been secured from Arizona Department of Transportation, Coconino County, and the Wildcat Treatment Facility.

The Commission briefly reviewed the letter of support that was sent through email.

Vice Chair Bessler motioned to approve sending the letter of support. Commissioner Nolan seconded. All voted in favor. Motion passed.

E. FY21 Commission Priorities (30 minutes) – All, Requested Action: Discussion

Robert sent out short poll to determine the Commission's priorities for the next year. The highest priority items were helping with the citizen participation plan for the McMillan Mesa rezone application and working on the Observatory Mesa Trail Plan. Other priorities were mentioned and will be a focus once the top priority items are completed.

Commissioner Nolan and Chair Wilson highlighted the importance of continuing the work that was done for the bond measure, even though the bond cannot be brought back up to Council for two years. Commissioner Nolan also suggested strategizing more closely with Housing to help with proposals before they go to Council.

The Commission will start work on the citizen participation plan for the McMillan Mesa rezone application first. Mr. Wallace asked the Commission to read through the rezone participation plan and the Observatory Mesa Trail Plan for the next meeting. Mr. Wallace will also send the full McMillan Mesa rezone application for reference.

F. Open Space Program Budget Update (10 minutes) – Robert Wallace, Requested Action: Informational

Robert reviewed the budget that has been approved by the Budget Team, including the planned 10% reduction. One large expense is the rezone application for McMillan Mesa and the associated cultural survey. There is a pending grant for the cultural survey, but Ms. Struss is also exploring options for cost savings by reaching out to volunteers to help with the survey.

Chair Wilson asked whether there was any indication of further budget cuts, but the plan is currently being reviewed by leadership and the determination is ultimately up to them.

6. Reports and Updates

A. Open Space Management and Events and Outreach Report (5 minutes), Requested Action: Informational

Mr. Wallace sent out a report to the Commission through email.

7. Information Items To and From (10 Minutes) – All

NONE

8. Future Agenda Items (5 Minutes) - All

- Next meeting: August 24th, 2020 (Virtual or Sustainability Office 419 N. Mogollon St.)
- Arizona Department of Veteran Services
 - Information from Legal about Prop 413, including the specific legal opinion on how Prop 413 was interpreted
 - Information about the path to here and how the project went through so many approvals before coming to the Commission
- Working groups

9. Adjournment

Chair Wilson adjourned the meeting at 6:02pm.

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 _____, 2020.



Robert Wallace, Staff Liaison