



MINUTES

City of Flagstaff Open Spaces Commission

August 24th, 2020
4:30 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 4:42pm.

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 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 July 27th, 2020 Meeting Minutes**

Commissioner Nolan motioned to approve the July 27th, 2020 minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Loseth. All voted in favor.

5. Business

A. ADVS Rip-rap Basin Solution Update (10 minutes) – Robert Wallace,
Requested Action: Informational/Discussion

Mr. Wallace gave an update on the rip-rap basin that was beginning to get installed on Open Space property adjacent to the ADVS facility on McMillan Mesa as an attempt to deal with drainage issues. The rip-rap basin has all been removed after concerns were raised by the Commission and the public. Due to the letter from the Commission sent to City Council outlining the importance of remediating the area, the soil has been left loose to promote revegetation and permeability for seeding and ADVS has avoided using vehicles on the property. The area will be revegetated with native seed this fall. An alternate option for mitigating the drainage issue was drafted with input from Stormwater and Open Space staff. To avoid potential issues like this in the future, new protocols will be established to ensure that future decisions are tracked and formally recorded.

Chair Wilson asked if there was any concern of erosion from the loose soil before revegetation can occur. Mr. Wallace explained that it is possible, and Stormwater addressed these concerns in the proposal to ADVS including the need for monitoring.

Vice Chair Bessler inquired about possible impacts to the Arizona Trail. Mr. Ince (Multimodal Transportation Planner) elaborated that he has followed up with Stormwater and Engineering to check for possible adverse impacts, but the edge of the rip-rap basin would have been 30 feet from the trail which leaves enough space to dissipate water before it hits the trail. A 50-foot buffer was intentionally planned in when the land was acquired by ADVS.

Councilmember Aslan expressed appreciation for the hard work of staff and how the situation was dealt with quickly and efficiently.

B. City Open Space Commitment (10 minutes) – Greg Clifton, Requested Action:
Informational/Discussion

Mr. Clifton, City Manager, reiterated City staff's commitment to Open Space goals and upholding the decisions and authority of the Commission. The response to the ADVS project was collaborative across City Divisions, and the importance of Open Space will be central to discussions related to these projects that are close to Open Space properties. Mr. Clifton shared that City staff are learning from these mistakes and invited a discussion with the Commission.

Vice Chair Bessler expressed appreciation, echoed by Chair Wilson, for Mr. Clifton's involvement as it is important for the City Manager to be a part of these kinds of processes.

C. Fire Management/Forest Health Planning (20 minutes) – Jerolyn Byrne,
Requested Action: Informational/Discussion

Ms. Byrne (Firewise Specialist, Wildland Fire Management) gave an overview of current and planned work by Wildland Fire Management. One main program is the Firewise program. Firewise is a national effort designed to help communities reduce the risk of wildfire around private properties. In addition to protecting properties, Firewise practices can also protect the forests and lead to fire adapted communities.

There are current cutting operations in both Picture Canyon (200 acres) and Observatory Mesa (154 acres) for forest thinning. Hand thinning is being used in Picture Canyon to reduce the amount of ground disturbance and potential for any damage at cultural sites. 30 acres of thinning have been completed so far at Picture Canyon. In the planning and implementation processes, they also consulted with cultural resource experts to ensure protection of cultural sites. At Observatory Mesa, one quarter of all hand thinning operations have been completed. This work will continue throughout the winter while the prescribed fire plan objectives, needs, and targets are determined.

Commissioner Burton expressed appreciation for the work that has been done on Observatory Mesa.

Commissioner Nolan asked how the Open Space budget impacts what Wildland Fire Management can do in the context of the Water Management Fee. Ms. Byrne mentioned that the Fire Chief would know the answer to that question, but it has been helpful to not need to rely on grants as much as in the past and has allowed for an increase in capacity.

D. FY21 Commission Priorities (20 minutes) – All, Requested Action: Discussion

Commissioners provided some comments to Mr. Wallace regarding the following priority items prior to the meeting.

McMillan Mesa Rezone Application Neighborhood Participation Plan

Mr. Wallace reviewed edits that were made to the Neighborhood Participation Plan based on comments from the Commission. Vice Chair Bessler has been directly helping Mr. Wallace with this effort. Chair Wilson requested that the revised document be sent out to the Commission for more deliberate comments and time to review.

Commissioner Nolan asked whether the goal for this priority item is to better structure citizen participation and involvement. Mr. Wallace explained that this is a required component to the rezone application and the intent is to address concerns and make appropriate changes to the application based on public input.

The Commission generally agreed on the updated plan. The plan will be finalized at the next meeting on September 28th and launched on September 29th. Most of the outreach language has already been drafted, but will be sent to the Commission for review.

Observatory Mesa Trail Plan

The Trail Plan was put together with help from American Conservation Experience, and Mr. Wallace has reached out for feedback from the US Forest Service.

Chair Wilson asked for more clarification on the general plan for trail accessibility in Open Space properties. Mr. Wallace explained that the best area on Observatory Mesa for accessible trails would be accessed through Lowell Observatory as there is a drastic elevation change in most other places on the property. There were also some possibilities for accessible trails at the Schultz Creek trailhead, and staff are currently considering the potential at other Open Space properties. Mr. Ince further clarified that he has been working with the Commission on Inclusion and Adaptive Living and has found that ADA-accessible trails have a very narrow definition. While those kinds of trails are needed, there is also a need for trails that are accessible to a greater percentage of the population with slightly less mobility limitations than those covered under ADA. Vice Chair Bessler and Commissioner Loeth mentioned a hardened soil material for trails that is ADA-compliant and currently being used at Walnut Canyon and Wupatki and could be a great option for Open Space.

Commissioner Nolan mentioned that now would be a good time to reconnect with Lowell Observatory about a possible partnership.

Commissioner Burton, Vice Chair Bessler, and Chair Wilson urged the importance of Tunnel Springs as a challenging trail option and because of its potential for restoration and interpretation

Open Space City Code Recommendations

Mr. Wallace sent a brief document to the Commission outlining this priority item. The first step is to research and collect ordinances that could be used to inform improvements to Open Space City Code. Chair Wilson has already researched some Colorado municipalities, and pointed out that all of them include extensive lists of prohibited acts on Open Space properties.

E. Open Space Program Budget Update (5 minutes) – Robert Wallace, Requested Action: Informational

Mr. Wallace mentioned that there are two pending grants for the Open Space Program: TreeCityUSA and the Southwest Intervention Fund.

6. Reports and Updates

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

Ms. Struss gave an update on the McMillan Mesa cultural survey. Teams of volunteers will be conducting the survey this weekend.

The TreeCityUSA grant is intended to remove invasive trees from McMillan Mesa. The area will be reseeded with grass and flowers as trees take too much water to establish, but the Open Space program will be working with Willow Bend to educate volunteers who are helping with the removal efforts as well as school and family groups.

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

NONE

8. Future Agenda Items (5 Minutes) - All

- Next meeting: September 28th, 2020 (Virtual or Sustainability Office 419 N. Mogollon St.)

9. Adjournment

Chair Wilson adjourned the meeting at 6:06pm.

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 _____, 2020.



Robert Wallace, Staff Liaison