



# MINUTES

## City of Flagstaff Open Spaces Commission

September 28<sup>th</sup>, 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 4:12pm.

#### 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 type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Burton	<input type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Welch
<input 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 August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Vice Chair Bessler motioned to approve the August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nolan. All voted in favor.

## 5. **Business**

### **A. Climate Emergency Declaration: Feedback and Presentation Opportunity** (15 minutes) – DC Alatorre, Requested Action: Informational/Discussion

Mr. Alatorre (Climate and Energy Coordinator) gave an overview of the City's Climate Emergency Declaration. The Climate Emergency Declaration, unanimously adopted by City Council in June of 2020, was a citizen initiative that started with gathered signatures during the Global Climate Strike in September 2019. The goals of the declaration are as follows:

1. Dramatic increase in ambition to combat climate change
2. Commit to city-wide transition and climate emergency mobilization effort
3. Commit to educating residents and especially youth
4. Underscores the need for full community participation
5. Commit to keeping vulnerable communities at the forefront of decision making
6. Join a nationwide call for mobilization
7. Advance goals of the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP)
8. Call on all governments to initiate a transition

The 2016 goal of the CAAP was to reduce our carbon footprint by 80% by 2050, but now the goal is to be carbon neutral by 2030. Mr. Alatorre explained that carbon neutrality does not mean that all emissions will be down to zero, but instead that any emissions added will be matched by the same amount removed in some way. Carbon sequestration or offsets would be required to compensate for those sectors that are unable to reduce their emissions.

The CAAP goals are currently being revised to reflect the new goals from the Climate Emergency Declaration. Both consultants and the Steering Committee have been reengaged to develop strategies and actions to achieve carbon neutrality goals.

Current efforts are focused on engaging the community include utilizing forums, creating a new webpage, providing materials in Spanish, and giving presentations to community groups, Commissions, and volunteers. There is also a survey out right now for the public and Commissioners to complete.

Chair Wilson asked how the emissions are tracked and measured to ensure that the goals are being achieved. Mr. Alatorre explained that a greenhouse gas inventory is completed each year, so this will continue following best practices. The 2019 inventory utilized the Clear Path platform and required a lot of outreach to companies and City sectors to gather the data.

Chair Wilson mentioned that the survey questions seemed to be geared mostly to homeowners and many questions did not apply to renters. Mr. Alatorre clarified that while many questions were necessarily targeted to homeowners, an effort was

made to include a variety of questions that would also be applicable to renters and others who are not homeowners.

Commissioner Nolan asked whether the Sustainability Section has developed a position or is seeking consultants to help with project development. Mr. Alatorre replied that they are not but are instead focusing on presenting to a wide variety of groups. He also assured the Commission that both new developments and retrofitting of existing buildings are being considered in the revisions.

Nolan: how it relates to new developments (codes), retrofitting

Commissioner Thomas highlighted the limited time to reach this new goal and asked whether the City will be on track by next year. Mr. Alatorre explained that the pathway to carbon neutrality may not be linear and it will be hard to say after one year if we are on track or not. It may also take a few years to see any concrete changes as COVID-19 impacts may also affect the data in the next greenhouse gas inventory.

## **B. Observatory Mesa Natural Area Flood Alert Rain Gauge Installation**

**Request** (20 minutes) – Edward Schenk, Requested Action:  
Informational/Discussion/Decision

Mr. Schenk (Stormwater Project Manager) gave a brief overview of the requested rain gauge installation on Observatory Mesa. Water Services operates and maintains a network of rain and flow ALERT gauges that are used for rapid public flooding alerts and to refine hydrology, climate, and drainage models. In 2019, Water Services received a grant from the State Emergency Council to fully monitor the watershed in the Flagstaff area, funding the installation of 10 additional gauges in under-served areas. While most of the new gauges have already been installed, the hope is to install one on Observatory Mesa as there is currently no way of monitoring the forested area there.

The gauge is a 2.5-foot diameter pipe and will require low impact installation as truck access is not necessary for the proposed location. The selected location is already disturbed by an old forest road, water tank, and a constructed berm, and does not overlap with any sensitive areas outlined in the cultural survey. Mr. Schenk shared photos of the proposed location.

Chair Wilson asked whether there would be other locations in Observatory Mesa that would be more advantageous, though perhaps a slightly higher impact to the Open Space. Mr. Schenk explained that the selected location is good as the central placement provides the most benefit to the community.

Chair Wilson asked if there are any gauges near or in Picture Canyon. Mr. Schenk described two gauges that are somewhat close by, but there are no gauges directly in the area. He mentioned that it would be interesting from a modeling perspective to install gauges there but would not necessarily be useful from a community perspective. This is something they will be pursuing if they receive more funding in the future.

Vice Chair Bessler motioned to approve the installation of a rain gauge on Observatory Mesa. The motion was seconded by Chair Wilson. All voted in favor.

**C. Arizona Game and Fish Department Agreement (15 minutes) – Robert Wallace, Requested Action: Informational/Discussion/Decision**

Mr. Wallace reviewed a presentation to be given to City Council on October 6 regarding a Cooperative Stewardship Agreement with the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) to obtain support from the Commission. The agreement pertains to recreational access to Observatory Mesa for archery hunting (firearms are not permitted) in exchange for \$40,000 to be spend on access management over the next 5 years.

Observatory Mesa sees approximately 8,500 wildlife viewers each year with about 11,000 additional recreationalists. AGFD gives out about 44 big game hunt permits for the entire game management unit, of which Observatory Mesa is only a portion. The property is protected by a conservation easement, but this agreement is not in violation of the easement if the parameters are outlined similarly to the previous agreement in 2015. Concerns related to the signing of this agreement include the safety of other recreationalists and it might create a conflict of interest with goals of preserving the Open Space. However, this agreement would provide for a mix of uses and the funding is useful.

Vice Chair Bessler asked whether AGFD has a cap on the number of permits issued. Mr. Wallace did not know, but he did point out that the game unit is much larger than Observatory Mesa. It was also not clear from AGFD if the 44 permits were issued over one year or cumulatively over the last 5 years. Chair Wilson requested a clarification on this.

Chair Wilson asked whether there have been any documented conflicts between hunters and recreators. Mr. Wallace replied that he is not aware of any. Questions do come in, but most people are not concerned any more once they hear it is only archery that is allowed.

Vice Chair Bessler asked whether there is any connection between unauthorized off-highway vehicle (OHV) use and hunter access. Mr. Wallace explained that motorized vehicles are not allowed in Observatory Mesa and there is ample signage indicating this. However, Open Space does work with the Police Department and the agreement will give AGFD access to the property for enforcement.

Commissioner Thomas asked when hunting season is. Ms. Struss clarified that archery season is generally mid-October to the end of November, but the exact timeframe is dependent on the type of game.

Vice Chair Bessler asked how important the \$40,000 is to Open Space operations on Observatory Mesa. Mr. Wallace explained that it has been really helpful to be able to install signage and gates, start drafting a trail plan, and conduct maintenance. These funds would be provided all at once, rather than meted out

over the 5 years of the agreement. At a question from Chair Wilson, Mr. Wallace explained that these funds are not necessarily only restricted to Observatory Mesa as the agreement is very general, but so far the funds have only been spent at Observatory Mesa and have not been allocated elsewhere. There was an opportunity to help staff a position for the Arizona Watchable Wildlife Experience by providing matching funds; this agreement has not been completed yet, but this could be a potential use of some of the funds soon.

Commissioner Nolan moved not to recommend signing the agreement and only provide an informational presentation to Council. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Bessler. Commissioner Nolan mentioned that there may be additional development activity near Observatory Mesa soon with uncertain impacts. All voted in favor.

**D. FY21 Commission Priorities** (40 minutes) – All, Requested Action: Discussion

*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 and from the organization that will be receiving the application. A lot of detail was added for specific locations and the specific meetings and agendas. The anticipated dates for the two virtual public meetings have been pushed back to allow for more time to plan; they are now planned for December 11<sup>th</sup> and January 15<sup>th</sup> with general agreement from the Commission.

Chair Wilson asked whether the community notification letter and press release will also need to be updated. Mr. Wallace explained that the process has been started and will now be completed with the final meeting dates decided.

Vice Chair Bessler requested a quick overview on the status of the McMillan Mesa boundary. The legal surveys still need to be updated to include the outer boundary of the collective Natural Area. Mr. Wallace has reached out for feedback and is working on selecting a company to move forward with. At a concern expressed by Vice Chair Bessler, Mr. Wallace explained that the public participation plan can move forward before the survey is completed.

Mr. Wallace will clean up the plan and incorporate all comments to resubmit the application.

*Observatory Mesa Trail Plan*

Mr. Wallace submitted the Commissioners' past comments to American Conservation Experience for edits to the Observatory Mesa Trail Plan. Mr. Wallace will be reaching out to other groups and partners including Lowell Observatory, Coconino County, and Indigenous Circle of Flagstaff for additional feedback before taking the plan to the public; Mr. Wallace reviewed what information will be included in these conversations or presentations. Chair Wilson suggested specifying archery hunting in the presentation for those who are less familiar with the Natural Area.

*Open Space City Code Recommendations*

Chair Wilson gave a brief update on the work he has been doing in researching Open Space City Codes. He has been investigating other municipalities and how their codes speak to Open Space and Parks as well as how Open Space is structured within the municipality. Some cities include “Open Space” within Parks while others distinguish between the two with separate codes and regulations. The Flagstaff code does not speak to Open Space specifically, only Parks. The next step of the process will be to sort through the research and determine what might make sense for Flagstaff.

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

The Open Space program has allocated or spent the following funds:

- \$3265 for the internal review of the McMillan Mesa rezone application
- \$8000 to remain with the AmeriCorps VISTA program
- \$3500 for Willow Bend programming in McMillan Mesa next spring, which was also used as matching funds for the Tree City USA grant

**6. Reports and Updates**

**A. Schultz Meadow Update** (Schultz parcel #11102001C: the triangle at Schultz Pass Road and Highway 180) (5 minutes) – Robert Wallace, Requested Action: Informational

On October 6<sup>th</sup>, the Schultz Meadow parcel will be brought back up to City Council. It is currently being considered for the development of affordable housing and the Commission has provided comment on this in the past. There was recent interest by the public in trying to get this issue listed on the ballot in November. They got the necessary signatures but chose not to put it on the ballot as there were not as many as they had hoped for. Councilmember Aslan explained that petitions must have a minimum amount of signatures, but City petitions are highly scrutinized and it is possible that it would not have been enough signatures if many of them were deemed invalid.

**B. Potential City Council Update** (5 minutes) – Robert Wallace, Requested Action: Informational/Discussion

City Council is looking for Commissions to provide updates including what projects have been completed, a report of current work, and insight into where support is needed. Chair Wilson and Vice Chair Bessler agreed that this is a good idea. Mr. Wallace asked for Commissioners to provide input on what should be included in the presentation.

**C. Open Space Management and Events and Outreach Report** (10 minutes) – Robert Wallace, Requested Action: Informational

Mr. Wallace sent a complete update through email. Highlights include the following:

- Applied for an invasive plant grant along the Rio de Flag in Picture Canyon with partners and many volunteers, but the grant was not awarded. They will be seeking other funding opportunities for this work.
- Applied for the Southwest Intervention Fund (\$5000 with \$5000 match) for the remaining work on the McMillan Mesa cultural survey.

Ms. Struss gave a brief overview of the events and outreach efforts. Highlights include the following:

- The physical work for the McMillan Mesa cultural survey was completed over three days utilizing 175 volunteer hours. They found mostly historic trash but also found a lithic site and several petroglyphs. This survey will be shared when it is completed.
- For the Festival of Science, a revised map of Picture Canyon was created with QR codes for a self-guided tour.
- Currently working on a Picture Canyon story map.
- Make a Difference Day will be taking place on October 31 from 8 am-12 pm. The work will be focused on McMillan Mesa and will involve the cleanup and restoration of abandoned unauthorized camps, putting up signage, cleaning up trash, and working on the FUTS trail to improve drainage. Volunteers are needed, but the hope is to get the Sunnyside community involved specifically.

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

Chair Wilson shared that he will not be available to run the October meeting, so Vice Chair Bessler will take over for that meeting.

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

- Next meeting: October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (Virtual or Sustainability Office 419 N. Mogollon St.)
- **Open Space Development Protocol Drafting.** Requested Action: Informational/Discussion.
- Lowell Observatory federal regulations?

#### **9. Adjournment**

Commissioner Nolan moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Chair Wilson. All voted in favor. Meeting adjourned 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.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert D. Wallace". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Robert Wallace, Staff Liaison