



OPEN SPACE COMMISSION  
Virtual Meeting – **Join Teams Meeting**

2/22/2021 4:00 p.m.



**Minutes**

**Members Present**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <u>  x  </u> Commissioner William Wilson (Chair)    | <u>  x  </u> Commissioner Eric Nolan    |
| <u>  x  </u> Commissioner Andy Bessler (Vice-chair) | <u>  x  </u> Commissioner Joseph Thomas |
| <u>      </u> Commissioner Jim Burton               | <u>      </u> Commissioner Jack Welch   |
| <u>  x  </u> Commissioner Mark Loeth                |   |

**Councilmember / Liaison to the City Council**

- x   Vice Mayor Becky Daggett

**Staff and Others Present**

- Andy Bertelsen – Public Works Director
- Cathy Guetschow – Administrative Specialist
- Rebecca Sayers – Parks & Recreation, and Open Space Director
- Sylvia Strauss – Open Space VISTA
- Robert Wallace – Open Space Specialist
- Dr. Diane Hope – public, joined video meeting at 4:15 p.m.

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

2. **ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Bessler, Loeth, Nolan, Thomas, and Wilson were present for roll call. Commissioners Burton and Welch were absent.

3. **APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 25, 2021 MEETING MINUTES**

A motion was made by Commissioner Nolan to approve the January 25, 2021 minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Loeth. Motion passed unanimously with five (5) yea votes.

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Staff received a comment from Dr. Diane Hope regarding the Observatory Mesa trail plan. She would like to clarify what trail access points are planned in partnership with Lowell Observatory to include a portion of the Lowell property section 17, and the Observatory Campus. She also asked how the public can contribute to drawing up plans for continued trail use for the Observatory Mesa Natural Area and Lowell Observatory.

5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

A. **Parks Recreation Open Space (PROS) Committee Review and Sustainable Funding Discussion**

A presentation was given to the Commissioner’s per their request to review the history of the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Committee discussion regarding sustainable funding options for the Open Space program. The following three open space priorities were presented to City Council by the Committee that pertained to the last ballot cycle for a potential bond measure:

- An integrate Open Space system to provide connections for the community and a 15-minute access walking time for all neighborhoods to an open space area.

- Conserve and protect existing Open Space areas. Currently there are 20 restoration, 10 preservation and 18 facility projects needed.
- Complete and implement the Observatory Mesa trail plan.

The Commission also reviewed the Parks and Recreation priorities that were included in the recommended bond measure and discussed how priorities of both commissions can be better related to strengthen a possible future recommendation and partnership.

Mr. Wallace explained that bond measures are best for onetime costs and not for reoccurring costs. Finance Director, Rick Tadder will attend next month's Commission meeting to address questions on how to best formulate a bond measure recommendation and to discuss other methods for funding programs. Commissioners will put together questions for Mr. Tadder and review goals that could be interconnected with the Parks and Recreation Commission.

#### B. Commission Update Drafting for City Council

The Commission reviewed the draft presentation that will be presented to City Council on March 23, 2021 and gave feedback on changes that they would like to see be made to the draft, such as:

- Reduce redundancy
- Condense talking points
- Make a connection to PBB, but remove slide 12
- Mention that the survey was a small handful of people who care about open space and that they will need more people to get a fair coverage of the city
- Include an introductory of what will be covered in the presentation
- Include potential economic data regarding the value of trails, data from the trail counters at Picture Canyon, and the future implications of connectors

Mr. Wallace will work on formatting the presentation to be informational that will give City Council more awareness of what the Commission has been working on and their priorities. Mr. Wallace and Commissioners Wilson and Bessler will conduct a timed dry run of the updated presentation and email a copy of it to the other Open Space Commissioners for their review and input.

#### C. FY21 Commission Priorities

Mr. Wallace gave an update on the McMillan Mesa Natural Area Rezone application stating that the public comment and neighborhood meetings have been completed. The next step in the process will be to complete a Record of Proceedings that will involve mailing the results to those who participated and should be completed by the end of March. A legal survey will need to be obtained and submitted for review along with a completed cultural survey to meet resubmittal requirements. Once the application is resubmitted and approved a Planning and Zoning public hearing will be scheduled to be followed by City Council's review and potential ordinance.

### 6. REPORTS AND UPDATES

#### A. Council Representative Report, Vice Mayor Becky Daggett

- Vice Mayor Daggett stated that there were no updates for this month and is looking forward to the Open Spaces Commission presentation to City Council.
- Regarding a future ballot measure recommendation, she would like to see the Open Space and Parks & Recreation Commissions work together to combine a project making it stronger to put on the ballot.

- On February 16, 2021, City Council approved to move from the Significant Stage of the Recession Plan to the Moderate Stage where they discussed implementing pay equity to staff as a top priority.

B. Open Space Management Report

- Staff held a graffiti cleanup at McMillan Mesa and are currently working on a Trails Grant to fix uprise trails at Picture Canyon. They also worked with the Arizona Watchful Wildlife Experience on their newsletter. On Saturday, February 27 at 10:00 a.m. the Arizona Watchful Wildlife will hold a virtual eagle event that can be watched on their website.
- The Parks Department has partnered with Sustainability to build a 120 square foot demonstration greenhouse to show different ways of how to create and use various energies, such as electricity, solar, and geothermal, for a successful greenhouse operation.

C. Open Space Program Budget Report

- Staff has been working on obtaining a contractor to complete the legal survey for the McMillan Mesa rezone application and have not yet signed a contract but are looking at paying \$5,000 for the survey. Following the completion of the survey, staff is looking into a lot combination which will cost \$1,200.
- No grants were received for supporting invasive weed management and will need to come out of the remaining budget.

7. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS TO AND FROM THE COMMISSIONERS AND STAFF

Commissioner Bessler reported that he witnessed vehicles on the FUTS trail on McMillan Mesa during the last snowstorm and asked what the laws/codes are regarding vehicles on the trail. Ms. Sayers stated that it is illegal and should be reported to the Police Department. Ms. Sayers and the Parks Department are working with Mr. Wallace on ways to block vehicle access. Mr. Wallace suggested if the Commission was interested that they could help document the areas where there is illegal traffic on the Mesa.

Mr. Wallace informed the Commission that staff is now able to post the Commission's Microsoft Teams recordings on the website and asked if they were interested in having the meetings posted on the web. Subject to be discussed at a future meeting.

8. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETING

- Open Space Easements – Bryce Doty
- Program Funding Options – Rick Tadder
- FY21 Commission Priorities
  - Observatory Mesa Trail Plan
  - McMillian Mesa Rezoning Amendment Application
  - City Code Review
- FY22 Commission Priorities

9. Adjournment

Commissioner Bessler moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nolan. All voted in favor. Meeting adjourned at 5:34 p.m.