



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

3/22/2021 4:00 p.m.



Minutes

Members Present

- Commissioner William Wilson (Chair)
- Commissioner Andy Bessler (Vice-chair)
- Commissioner Jim Burton
- Commissioner Mark Loeth

- Commissioner Eric Nolan
- Commissioner Joseph Thomas
- Commissioner Jack Welch

Councilmember / Liaison to the City Council

- Vice Mayor Becky Daggett

Staff and Others Present

- Andy Bertelsen – Public Works Director
- Cathy Guetschow – Administrative Specialist
- Martin Ince – Engineering Project Manager
- Rebecca Sayers – Parks & Recreation, and Open Space Director
- Sylvia Strauss – Open Space VISTA
- Rick Tadder – Purchasing Director
- Robert Wallace – Open Space Specialist
- Michele James - Guest

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

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

2. **ROLL CALL**

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

3. **APPROVAL OF THE FEBRUARY 22, 2021 MEETING MINUTES**

A motion was made by Commissioner Thomas to approve the February 22, 2021 minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bessler. Motion passed unanimously with five (5) yea votes.

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No public comments.

5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

A. **Program Funding Options**

Open Space Specialist, Robert Wallace announced that the Open Space program submitted two-line item requests to the Budget team for review and decision. One was for an ongoing increase to the annual budget in the amount of \$15,000 for the maintenance and management of designated open space properties. The other one was for a onetime request in the amount of \$19,000 for the cost of completing a trail concept for the Observatory Mesa natural area. The Budget team reviewed and approved the first request in the amount of \$15,000 as a onetime ongoing expense and the second

request in the amount of \$19,000 was approved as requested. Both items will be included in the City Manager's recommended budget that will be submitted to City Council for approval in April.

Purchasing Director, Rick Tadder provided a presentation to the Commissioners on funding measures, bond types, how bonds are best utilized, other potential funding measures, and the most appropriate funding types for different needs. It was reported that the City has over 50 different funds to segregate revenues and expenses to ensure compliance with restrictions and accounting standards with many having restrictions on how they can be spent.

The City of Flagstaff utilizes different types of funds such as:

- Enterprise Funds
 - These are services that are provided to the community that have self-supporting fees such as water, solid waste, airport, etc... The fees are self-supporting through user fees that have been adopted by City Council.
- Special Revenue Funds have specific taxes or earmarked revenue sources. These include:
 - Housing and Community Services (primarily community development block grants that are funded annually through the government).
 - Library (funded through secondary property taxes and can also utilize the general fund transfer to support local branches of the library).
 - Highway User Revenue Fund (designated through a gasoline tax and can only be used to support street programs).
 - Voter approved taxes.
 - The Bed Board and Beverage tax (BBB) is restricted for specific uses.
 - ParkFlag fees are required to be returned for the operation of the program and can be used for future parking expansion projects.
 - Water Resource and Infrastructure Protection fees help protect our water sources.
- Capital Project Funds are used for major capital acquisitions that are separate from ongoing operations and are restricted based on funding sources.
- Debt Service Funds are restricted to the payment of voter approved general obligation bond debt funds that are backed by a secondary property tax revenue.
- General Fund is the largest fund used to finance traditional services and municipal needs that are not accounted for in other funds. Open Space, Recreation, and Parks would fall into this category and compete annually with Fire, Police, Finance, and the City Manager's office for the similar needs of resources. The General Fund revenues sources come from:
 - 1% City Sales Tax – requires voter approval
 - Franchise Tax
 - Primary Property Tax – the City Council sets the primary tax. The secondary tax requires voter approval and is used primarily for capital projects
 - State Shared Revenue
 - Licenses and Permits – building and alcohol permits
 - Fines and Forfeitures – court related
 - User Fees – charges for services such as Community Development, Recreation, Police, Fire, and Cemetery

Mr. Tadder went on to explain to the Commission the different revenue and financing options that could be used for Open Space projects such as a sales tax that would need to be approved by voters, property taxes, licenses and permits, and user fees. Open Space projects can also be financed up to \$2.4 million dollars and would need to be paid back while a revenue bond wouldn't need voter approval. A certificate of participation is backed by an existing facility and needs a repayment resource, capital

lease/loans are used for financed equipment, green bonds would need a repayment resource, and general obligation bonds need voter approval and are used for onetime items such as equipment and facilities.

Mr. Tadder explained that the existing 2% BBB tax was grandfathered in before there were additional legislative changes made and is up for renewal in 2024. He stated if the BBB tax were to be increased, it would need to be reinvested in tourism related expenses.

Vice Mayor, Becky Daggett asked if it would be possible to give residents the option of designating a dollar amount to a project that they were interested in on their utility bill. Mr. Tadder was unsure if the current billing system could handle it but suggested that a donation page could be added onto the website.

Parks, Recreation and Open Space Director, Rebecca Sayers and Open Space Specialist, Robert Wallace continue to work with the budget team and through the budget process for the ongoing sustainable funding source for maintenance and reported seeing great movement. Mrs. Sayers stated that the Commission can be most helpful to City Council with its possible ballot questions, bond projects, and land acquisitions, stating that their input is essential.

B. Commission Update Drafting for City Council

Mr. Wallace presented the updated presentation to the Commissioners that will be presented to City Council on March 23, 2021. A few edits were made to shorten the text making it more presentable and an "Open Spaces Commission Authority" slide was added.

Mr. Wallace reported that there was a concern with slide 13, "Funding Thoughts," stating that the information was gathered from a quick survey with very little background. The presentation is clear in showing that the Commission did a preliminary check and that the information listed are the results received. Mr. Wallace stated that the Commission could help do additional outreach on items if the City Council was interested.

C. FY21 Commission Priorities

1. McMillan Mesa Rezone Application Update

Mr. Wallace gave an update on the McMillan Mesa rezone application stating that the record of proceedings requirement for the neighborhood meetings and the public comment period for the rezone application have been completed. There were few concerns related to the rezone application that were expressed by the attending public. The results of the meetings were summarized and will be included in the resubmittal when the other requirements are completed.

Feedback that was received from the community forum showed that 84% of the participants supported the McMillan Mesa rezone to public open space and 8% did not support it. Respondents also indicated that most preferred minimized or no development improvements and keeping the land in its natural state.

The next step will be to complete the legal survey. The purchase order for the survey was approved and staff is working with a contractor to complete it. They received a grant with a 50/50 match to complete the cultural survey and are working with an archeologist that staff has selected. When the two surveys are complete, staff will wrap up the resubmittal and resubmit for the final time.

2. Observatory Mesa Trail Plan

Mr. Wallace reported that he is currently working on a third revision of the trail plan and has upcoming meetings with partners, including Lowell to discuss how to include section 17 in a potential trail plan proposal. In a report from Lowell they stated that they are interested in taking public comment on what trails to keep and to what to restore in section 17. Mr. Wallace has reached out to Jeff Hall to let him know that staff would like a robust community comment period and review of the proposal which has led to a meeting in April to discuss how they might partner in developing a proposal that includes Lowell and a robust community comment period. Mr. Wallace will furnish the Commissioners with a copy of the revision once completed.

3. City Code Review

Commissioners received a report that showed what cities in different communities are doing within their City's code to help protect and ensure the preservation of open space. Currently the City of Flagstaff codes doesn't have language specific to open space and is more specific to parks. Mr. Wallace stated that there may be an opportunity to use the code form to make the language more specific to open space or to parks and open space. The next step would be to draft a proposed recommendation for a proposed amendment. Commissioner Wilson suggested that the Commissioners review the report and come back with suggestions and comments at the next meeting.

D. FY22 Commission Priorities

Mr. Wallace explained that the Open Spaces Commission Strategic Plan needs to be reviewed and was last updated April 2019. It has been the guide for the Commission in selecting their priorities to work on over the fiscal year. The next step will be to review goals, update the plan, and to choose new fiscal year priorities. Goals from 2019 included:

- Cultivate and support partnerships that result in new approaches and best practices for open space management.
- Promote the protection, restoration, and maintenance of lands and the natural, cultural, and scenic resources within.
- Promote equitable access to natural areas, parks, trails, greenways, and public lands.
- Foster discovery, learning, and stewardship through educational opportunities.
- Promote sustainable long-term financial security of the Open Space Program to meet operational needs, capital investment requirements, and desired programs and services.

Subject to be discussed in greater detail at a future meeting.

6. REPORTS AND UPDATES

A. Council Representative Report, Vice Mayor Becky Daggett

- Vice Mayor Daggett stated that there were no updates for this month.

B. Open Space Management Report

- Volunteers donated 75.75 hours in January 2021 and 76 hours in February 2021, cleaning up trash, graffiti, and refilling map boxes.
- The Open Spaces Commission recommendation regarding the Arizona Public Service (APS) easement adjustment is going before City Council on April 6, 2021.
- Commissioner Wilson's appointment is up for renewal in April and the Open Spaces Commission application review and appointment will be going before City Council on April 6, 2021.
- Staff held a graffiti cleanup at McMillan Mesa.

- The unauthorized access report for McMillan Mesa is almost complete. Poles have replaced the boulders that blocked vehicle traffic on the FUTS trail by the bridge.

C. Open Space Program Budget Report

- There were no updates for this month.
- Last month it was reported that most of the budget was allocated for the rest of the fiscal year and staff may have close to \$2,500 to contribute to weed management at Picture Canyon since they were not awarded a grant to manage weeds.

7. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS TO AND FROM THE COMMISSIONERS AND STAFF

- Open Space VISTA, Sylvia Strauss reported that the Wednesday weed pulls will be reinstated at Picture Canyon starting in May.
- Staff has begun planning the Festival of Science that is held the third week in September.
- Under the tree grant, staff will start the removal of invasive trees on April 7, 2021 on McMillan Mesa by the Veteran’s home and NACEPT. Staff is also working on an Arbor Day event to plant native trees in their places.
- Commissioner Wilson asked if he is not reappointed at the April 6, 2021 City Council meeting that Commissioner Bessler “Chair” the April 26, 2021 meeting. If appointed, he will be out of town and will attend the meeting via the phone and will still need Commissioner Bessler to “Chair” the meeting.

8. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETING

- Open Space Easements – Bryce Doty
- FY21 Commission Priorities
 - Observatory Mesa Trail Plan
 - McMillan Mesa Rezoning Amendment Application
 - City Code Review
- FY22 Commission Priorities – Strategic Plan
- Follow Up on City Council Presentation
- Update on the Schultz Creek Parcel

9. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Bessler moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Burton. All voted in favor. Meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.