



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

6/22/2021 4:00 p.m.



Minutes

Members Present

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| <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> </u> Commissioner Mark Loseth | |

Councilmember / Liaison to the City Council

 Vice Mayor Becky Daggett

Staff and Others Present

- Cathy Guetschow – Administrative Specialist
- Duke MacArthur - Guest
- Sylvia Struss – Open Space VISTA
- Robert Wallace – Open Space Specialist
- Nat White – Guest

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

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

2. **ROLL CALL**

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

3. **APPROVAL OF THE MAY 24, 2021 MEETING MINUTES**

A motion was made by Commissioner Nolan to approve the May 24, 2021 minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bessler. Motion passed unanimously with four (4) yea votes.

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No public comments.

5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

A. **Grant Support Letter Update**

Mr. Wallace, Open Space Specialist provided the Commissioners with an update to the grant support letter that had been mailed to them. Open Space staff completed an application for the Arizona State Parks and Trails for a Recreation Trail Program grant to eradicate 4.27 miles of unauthorized trails and closed roads at Picture Canyon. This will be addressed by blocking routes and conducting revegetation and stabilization which will be mostly completed by hand. Larger areas will be ripped with a mechanical device allowing decompaction for plant establishment, growth, and to allow new seeds to take root. Two trail segments would be rerouted to reduce impaction to cultural sites. One is a trail near the Locus D panel, the waterbird site in Picture Canyon and will help to concentrate use away from the petroglyphs. The other is a spur that leads to the petroglyph overlook. Modifying the spur by adding switchbacks will help reduce erosion and provide visitor safety.

Staff have consulted with an archaeologist for the development of the proposal and will need to hire an archaeologist to implement the project.

It was suggested that the Hopi and Navajo tribal preservation offices be copied on the project summary that will be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office and the City.

B. Open Space Integrated System Planning

Mr. Wallace reviewed the Open Spaces Conservation Criteria that supports the Commission's review of property to help evaluate areas for their Open Space value. The criteria were established to assist the Commission in reviewing property to determine if the property had value as protected open space. It was initially established to review City owned property, but in the last few years the Commission has been working on outlining a vision for an integrated open space system that provides ten-minute walking access time from any City residence, connectors, and complimentary open spaces.

The revised criteria include habitat type, scenic significance, cultural significance, recreational opportunity, underserved access, education, connectivity, buffer, and development pressure. It was updated to include a ranking system to allow both assessment of open space value and to also provide the ability to rank property to help develop priorities.

Mr. Wallace explained that the criteria tool should help with the process of decision making and it is not meant to be a restrictive. After discussion it was suggested that the matrix be incorporated into the process of planning and zoning so that it could be harmonious for the developer to design their product. Also, it was suggested spreading the values on the conservation criteria tool to create a broader spectrum by using a number range of 0-10 instead of the current 0-5.

Mr. Wallace reviewed the different property groupings with the Commissioners that included:

- Continental Park 1 Grouping: parcel provides connectivity from Picture Canyon to Continental Park. It could be valuable for providing additional trails. It is a 166-acre parcel.
- Continental Park 2 Grouping: could provide connectivity to Continental Park 1 Grouping and support park growth. It is a 35-acre parcel.
- Fort Tuthill 1 Grouping: would provide a buffer along the FUTS trail. Combined properties in the grouping are 16 acres.
- Fort Tuthill 2 Grouping: would provide a buffer along the FUTS trail. It is an 18-acre parcel.
- Townsend Winona Grouping: would provide connectivity and could expand the regional preserve. It is a 60-acre parcel.

After reviewing the grouping matrix it was suggested that the Commissioners review it on their own and at the July meeting go through as a group to identify what properties have open space value and rank them to provide City staff with direction on what properties to focus on.

C. Switzer Canyon Water Main Restoration Plan Review

Mr. Wallace reminded the Commissioners that the Water Services Department made a presentation at a previous Open Space Commission meeting regarding the Switzer Canyon Water Main Restoration project. The Commission gave permission for the water main to be installed at the edge of the property instead of utilizing the street saving the City money.

Mr. Wallace reviewed the afterwork of the project and pointed out the difference in vegetation from the Water Services Department's reseeding. He has been working with the Flagstaff Arboretum and the Museum of Northern Arizona to draft a restoration plan that would address seed bed preparation and

the restoration of the project. Mr. Wallace then reviewed the restoration plan with the Commissioners to see if they would like to make any revisions to it. It was suggested that the document serve as a basis for other city projects.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bessler to approve the Switzer Watermain Restoration Guidelines Phase III, IV, and V as written. Commissioner Nolan seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously with four (4) yea votes.

D. FY22 Open Space Program Budget Update and Discussion

Mr. Wallace reviewed the FY22 budget account line items with the Commissioners showing that the allocations total \$73,500 and is \$1,271.34 overbudget. Commissioners were asked if they had recommendations on what they would like to see reduced to make up for the overage.

E. Commission Strategic Plan Updates and FY22 Commission Priorities

Mr. Wallace reviewed the updated Strategic Plan with the Commissioners, reviewing the updates that were made to the Priority Action Items section. Mr. Wallace will make another change to the document and will bring back at a future meeting.

F. Boards and Commissions Newsletter Content

Mr. Wallace reported that the Open Space newsletter information was turned in to the City Clerk's office and asked if the Commissioners had thoughts or advice for the future newsletter.

G. Community Celebration for McMillan Mesa

Mr. Wallace provided an explanation on what the celebration would entail suggesting that it could be held at Buffalo Park where they could reserve the ramada for music, speech, and have guided walks around the McMillan Mesa. The Open Space program could help advertise and help coordinate meetings if the Commission would like to take on the meeting themselves. Mr. Wallace would assist in making sure the rezone is complete by November 2021.

Mr. Wallace explained that the Commission could create a sub-committee with up to three members. They would take notes on the meetings and submit them to Mr. Wallace so he could post them on the City's website. The meetings would need to be open to the public and they would need to publish an agenda and minutes. The other option would be to have a community committee to organize the event. Staff would post an Open Space Commission quorum notice if there were more than three Commissioners attending the community committee meeting. Minutes and an agenda would not need to be published and would not need to be open to the public.

Commissioner Bessler will check to see if there are any community partners that would be interested in helping and if not, he suggested going with a sub-committee. Mr. Wallace suggested that a citizens meeting could also work.

6. REPORTS AND UPDATES

A. Council Representative Report, Vice Mayor Becky Daggett

Vice Mayor Daggett was not present for the meeting.

B. Open Space Management Report

- Staff has partnered with the Northern Arizona Audubon Society and applied for and was granted a research permit to install up to twelve bluebird nesting boxes in Picture Canyon. The installation was completed and will allow monitoring of the bluebirds for the rest of the year.

- Weed pulls are held at Picture Canyon every other Wednesday.
- Staff are holding Family guided hikes on the McMillan Mesa. The next hike will be on August 7. An adult interpretive hike will be held on July 31. Information on the hikes can be found on the Parks and Recreation Facebook page.
- Staff partnered with the Hal Jensen Recreation Center to offer field trips to the children.
- Staff partnered with the Arizona Watchful Wildlife and offered a prairie dog event at Campbell Mesa on June 26.
- Staff completed and are ready to submit the grant application to Arizona State Parks for the unauthorized trails at Picture Canyon.

C. Open Space Program Budget Report

There was no additional information.

7. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS TO AND FROM THE COMMISSIONERS AND STAFF

- The City went into stage 4 fire restrictions on June 22 that included closures to Picture Canyon, Schultz Creek Natural Area and Trailhead, and the Observatory Mesa.
- It was reported that Nat White received the Viola reward.

8. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETING

Next meeting: July 26, 2021, 4-6 PM

- Accessory Dwelling Unit Update
- Hospital Development Plan Update
- Open Space Integrated System and Community Development Considerations
- Open Space Easements – Bryce Doty
- Schultz Creek Natural Area Continued Update
- Program Funding General Update
- 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 6:04 p.m.