



OPEN SPACE COMMISSION
Virtual Meeting – Join Teams Meeting

8/23/2021 4:00 p.m.



Draft Minutes

Members Present

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commissioner William Wilson (Chair) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Eric Nolan |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Andy Bessler (Vice-chair) | <input type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Joseph Thomas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Jim Burton | <input type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Jack Welch |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Mark Loseth | |

Councilmember / Liaison to the City Council

Vice Mayor Becky Daggett

Staff and Others Present

- Sara Dechter – Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Manager
- Cathy Guetschow – Administrative Specialist
- Martin Ince – Engineering and Capital Improvements Project Manager
- Michelle James - Guest
- Rebecca Sayers – Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces Director
- Sylvia Struss – Open Space VISTA
- Robert Wallace – Open Space Specialist

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

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

2. **ROLL CALL**

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

3. **APPROVAL OF THE JULY 26, 2021 MEETING MINUTES**

A motion was made by Commissioner Loseth to approve the July 26, 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. **John Wesley Powell/4th Street Planning Update and the Proposed AZ Trail Alignment**

Sara Dechter, Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Manager gave a presentation on the J.W. Powell Boulevard Specific Area Plan & Preliminary Roadway Design, a concept plan generated to develop the connectivity of the two roads and how the plan pertains to open space. She stated that they are specifically looking at public facilities and infrastructure throughout the area that they are calling the J.W. Powell corridor. The area is defined by the border of Lone Tree and S. 4th St. which encompasses activity centers, and both rural and suburban landscape. The study area consists of 2,165 acres with 1,825 acres of it being private land.

There are three phases to the plan, and she reported that they are currently working on phase one that consists of:

- Land Use Framework
 - Type 1 Urban Center
 - Serves a broad area
 - Pedestrian oriented
 - Type 2 Urban Center
 - Localized
 - Less dense and intense
- 30% Roadway and Utility Design
- Focused Public Involvement

Ms. Dechter also reported that they have looked at the open space value of the area such as the connectivity between land uses and districts, the Arizona (AZ) Trail and a possible realignment of the trail, bikeways, grade separated crossing (s), and wildlife crossing (s).

Martin Ince, Engineering and Capital Improvements Project Manager explained that the current easement of the AZ Trail is held by the City and that a new easement of the AZ Trail could possibly also be held by the City and would be built to a FUTS Trail standard.

Commissioner Bessler asked how the Open Space Commission could be of assistance. Ms. Dechter explained that the Commission could set aside some of the Bond funds for negotiation between staff and private property owners for a partial acquisition of certain resource areas instead of pursuing a whole parcel.

Robert Wallace, Open Space Specialist explained that in addition to the concept of the plan, staff has identified the area to the south as an important corridor to the open space system and that it would help connect the Rio de Flag flood plain to the Fisher Point area. It was also established that the area is an important wildlife and recreation corridor, would add connectivity from Walnut Canyon to Ft Tuthill, and could be a possible location of future space preservation. Mr. Ince reported that staff had identified two principal corridors, Bow and Arrow wash and the Rio de Flag as potential contenders as the result of development.

Mr. Wallace would like the Commission to consider if the area has open space value and if some of the 2004 Bond funds could be held for negotiations of the wildlife corridor.

The Commissioners ranked the property according to the Open Space matrix and came up with:

- Habitat Type – ranked 9
- Scenic Significance – ranked 8
- Cultural Significance – ranked 5
- Recreational Opportunity – ranked 8
- Underserved Access – ranked 5
- Education – ranked 6
- Connectivity – ranked 8
- Buffer – ranked 8
- Development Pressure – ranked 9
- Total Grouping ranking - 7.33

Commissioner Wilson made a motion as it relates to the topic of J.W. Powel Planning Area: “The Open Space Commission recognizes the connector/corridor within the J.W. Powel Planning Area as an important open space connector having open space value. The Commission recommends staff investigate the possibility of negotiating the preservation of this corridor as a top priority and recommends that funds from the 2004 Bond be reserved for negotiation purposes”. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bessler. Motion passed unanimously with four (4) yea votes.

B. McMillan Mesa Community Celebration

Commissioner Bessler reported that he and Michelle James have been starting the effort to Celebrate the Creation of the McMillan Mesa Open Space from proposition 413. They are planning to meet via Zoom on September 13 at 4:00 p.m. where all members of the public and the Commissioners are invited to join as they plan an event to Celebrate the Creation of the McMillan Mesa Open Space and the rezoning from Public Services to designated open space. Currently there is no date set for the event.

Mr. Wallace gave an update on the rezone progress stating that staff in Legal are reviewing a portion of the rezone and when it is complete it will be resubmitted for City review. The next step will be to schedule a Planning and Zone hearing after staff approval, then they will be able to schedule a hearing date with City Council.

C. Greater Observatory Mesa Trail Planning

Mr. Wallace reminded the Commissioners of the partnership with Lowell Observatory and how they are looking at including them in the Greater Observatory Mesa Trail plan. He did a quick review of the American Conservation Experience assessment and asked the Commissioners if they had any advice for the plan or comments that they should email him.

It was suggested that Tunnel Springs have an interpretation board to educate people about the importance of springs and the hydrology of the landscape.

6. REPORTS AND UPDATES

A. Council Representative Report, Vice Mayor Becky Daggett

No report given – Vice Mayor Daggett was absent.

B. Open Space Management Report

- The City Manager’s office is currently working on reorganizing the Public Works Division to create Parks, Recreation and Open Space as its own standalone Division. The recommendation will go before City Council on August 24, with an effective date before the end of the calendar year.
- There were eight volunteers for Arbor Day where they planted 13 Ponderosa pine trees on McMillan Mesa on the McMillan Mesa Loop Trail and between the Veterans home to create a buffer.
- Staff is currently holding an adopt-a-tree campaign for the 13 pine trees that were planted and reported that two of the trees have been adopted and will be cared for by their adopters.
- Staff continues to hold the Wednesday Weed Pull, with the next one being held on August 25, at Picture Canyon.
- The Strive Trips group of volunteers have been busy during the month of August by helping remove irrigation hose from the Rio de Flag in Picture Canyon, raked and loosened the soil in the canal behind the Hal Jensen Recreation Center, and removed Siberian Elm trees along Izabel Street.

- Staff partnered with Willow Bend to hold guided hikes on the McMillan Mesa this summer and are working on offering more hikes next summer which will also include Picture Canyon and potentially Observatory Mesa.
- Staff is working with a Cub Scout Troop to help seed the slope along N. Izabel St. on the eastside of McMillan Mesa.
- Staff has been working with Vista and a Master Gardener to organize the Evergreens Afterschool Club at Killip Elementary School that will teach them and hold activities related to environmental stewardship and sustainability. Since the Museum flood they will be holding meetings at Flagstaff Middle School.

7. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS TO AND FROM THE COMMISSIONERS AND STAFF

No information given.

8. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETING

Next meeting: September 27, 2021, 4-6 PM

- Hospital Development Plan Update
- Open Space Integrated System and Community Development Considerations
- Open Space Easements – Bryce Doty
- FY22 Commission Priorities
 - City Code Updates
 - Observatory Mesa Trail Plan

9. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Bessler moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Loeth. All voted in favor. Meeting adjourned at 6:04 p.m.