



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE
MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, September 9, 2021
Meeting held electronically**

PRESENT: Chairperson Cynthia Wenstrom, Vice-Chair Laurie LaPat-Polasko, Commissioners Steve Coluccio, Mark Hackbarth, Marsha Lipps (arrived at 5:08 p.m.), Kerry Olsson, and Jeffrey Smith

STAFF: Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director; Scott Hamilton, Senior Trails Planner

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Wenstrom called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members present as noted above.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Ekblaw noted that public comments were received regarding the 128th Street item.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of the Regular Meeting minutes of August 12, 2021

COMMISSIONER HACKBARTH MOVED TO APPROVE THE AUGUST 12, 2021 MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES. VICE-CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SIX (6) TO ZERO (0). CHAIR WENSTROM, VICE-CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, HACKBARTH, OLSSON, AND SMITH VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. COMMISSIONER LIPS WAS NOT PRESENT. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

5. MCDOWELL SONORAN CONSERVANCY UPDATE

Justin Owen highlighted significant September events as part of the 30th Anniversary celebration. Events included:

- 1998 - Valley Forward/Honeywell Environmental Excellence Award for Education Programs

- 2004 – Conservancy began giving free presentations at Scottsdale public libraries on Preserve geology, ecology and archeology
- 2005 - Award for Environmental Excellence for the Stewardship program and the President's Award for Achievements made since the founding of the Conservancy
- 2008 – Hon Kachina award given to Jane Rau in recognition of her lifetime volunteer work

The 30th Anniversary edition of Mountain Lines will celebrate the past 30 years and highlight where the Conservancy is heading in the future.

Mr. Owen noted that 17 tortoises have been tagged so far. Stewards are doing weekly visual monitoring instead of monthly, because there is currently a shortage of GPS systems.

The Conservancy is working with City staff to prioritize areas of invasive non-native plant growth resulting from this year's monsoon season.

Based on teacher feedback, Expedition Days for third graders is undergoing changes to include more interactive activities. The fourth grade will have its own program, based on state education standards.

The Conservancy has entered into a partnership with SUSD to help teachers weave conservation concepts into their teachings. There will be a teacher in service in the fall to teach fundamentals of STEAM concepts. The school district is providing substitute teachers for classrooms so that teachers can participate in the program.

The Conservancy's Family Passport program is being redesigned to include a multigenerational field guide so that all ages can experience the Preserve and be educated on the Sonoran Desert.

Limited Pathfinder activities have restarted and patrollers are still out on the trails. Construction and maintenance crews are working with City staff to lift saguaros that fell during monsoons.

A new steward class is scheduled for October. It will be offered as a hybrid model with a Zoom presentation in the morning and a socially distanced in-person in the afternoon.

Mr. Ekblaw said that staff will have a more detailed presentation regarding invasive plant mitigation and estimated costs at a future time.

6. LETTER FROM MSPC CHAIR TO TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Chair Wenstrom and Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, facilitated a discussion regarding issuing a letter to the Transportation Commission regarding consideration to amend the Streets Master Plan by redesignating a portion of 128th Street north of Ranch Gate Road to Jomax Road. Commissioners highlighted grammatical errors, commented on the content of the letter, and asked clarifying questions. It was suggested that a joint meeting between the McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission and the Transportation Commission be scheduled at the appropriate time.

Suggested amendments included:

- The addition of a statement to in paragraph two, stating that the 128th Street gooseneck is critical because it is the only remaining corridor for wildlife.
- The addition of a statement in paragraph three stating either that this is a key management objective or that this is one of three key management objectives.
- Under the fourth bullet, replace “utilize appropriate piping” with “utilize appropriate wildlife crossing structure to support wildlife movement.”

COMMISSIONER HACKBARTH MOVED TO FORWARD THE LETTER REGARDING CONSIDERATION TO AMEND THE STREETS MASTER PLAN BY REDESIGNATING A PORTION OF 128TH STREET NORTH OF RANCH GATE ROAD TO JOMAX ROAD AS AMENDED TO CITY COUNCIL. VICE-CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0). CHAIR WENSTROM, VICE-CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, HACKBARTH, LIPPS, OLSSON, AND SMITH VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

7. LAND ACQUISITION HISTORY PROCESS SUMMARY

Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, provided an overview of the Preserve’s land acquisition history and a summary of the process. His presentation included a presentation of the recommended study boundary and review of the 1995 0.20 cent land acquisition tax and the 2004 0.15 cent land acquisition and improvements tax, noting that both taxes require land to be within the recommended study boundary. Approval of voters would be required to put the funds towards other uses. He noted that the section of land south of Dynamite and east of 128th Street was not included in the recommended study boundary, in part because it was already developed and could have made it challenging to get the 2004 vote to pass.

Mr. Ekblaw said that he has been consulting with Jace McKeighan in reviewing areas both in the recommended study boundary and outside of the boundary to help in prioritizing the remaining land acquisition funds. A team to include citizens and a few Commissioners will further evaluate the priorities. He briefly reviewed the process that past Commissioners used in valuing land and setting priorities. He noted that the State Land Department will have expectations of up to \$400,000 per acre for areas that are not zoned as suitable for conservation.

Chair Wenstrom said that the purpose of asking for a presentation was to better understand how to pursue opportunities to assist the migration of wildlife between the north and south areas. The Commission has no desire to condemn anyone’s home or change roads, just to minimize impacts on wildlife.

Mr. Ekblaw confirmed that the 1998 amendment to the recommended study boundary had to be passed by a public vote.

8. POLICY PROCESS UPDATE

- A. Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, will provide an update of the Policy Summary Sheet to correlate with the City Council’s Strategic Objectives.

Mr. Ekblaw reviewed updates he made to the Policy Summary sheet, which include language changes to the sentence on funding, relabeling items 2a through 2f, adding a priority column, and started with ideas of matching fund opportunities. Commissioners were supportive of the changes. Mr. Ekblaw suggested that the Commission get through all of the topics before discussing prioritization. He said that the estimated numbers should be filled in within the next two-and-a-half months.

Commissioner Hackbarth noted that the State Parks and Trails and the State Historic Preservation Office has ongoing grant applications available starting this month. Mr. Hamilton said that he has been in communication with their office with the idea of submitting a grant application for an interpretive trail at Brown's Ranch. The grant program has no specific deadline, so he plans to start putting an application together by spring.

B. Scott Hamilton, Preserve Manager to provide summary and update to Daily Preserve Operations and Maintenance

Mr. Hamilton presented a breakdown of the FY 2021/22 daily preserve operations and maintenance budget. Extensive discussion ensued regarding facilities management costs, custodial services, and possible formats for calculating the budget.

Mr. Ekblaw explained that the numbers were determined based on factual information from the past. Different approaches can be taken to updating the worksheet. The goal is to cost estimate so that projections can be established for things such as maintenance of additional bathroom stalls. He confirmed that the finance department has reviewed the plan. Mr. Hamilton explained that the number of maintenance visits for restrooms is based on estimated usage. The goal during season is for maintenance crews to go through the entire route twice each day.

Mr. Ekblaw said that it is his understanding that the indirect cost for police and fire services are applied equally to each department city-wide.

Mr. Ekblaw noted that he plans to come forward with a request for an additional staff member to cover additional needs at Pima/Dynamite.

Chair Wenstrom requested that staff bring forward comparisons of the projected budget versus actuals for past years so that the Commission can have a better sense of what they need to be aware of.

9. STAFF REPORTS

Pima Dynamite Trailhead Update

Mr. Hamilton said that Pima Dynamite is nearing completion. Power equipment is expected for delivery next week. Signage has been completed and is in production.

Fraesfield Interpretive Trail

Mr. Hamilton said that the Camino Campana Interpretive Trail is nearing completion.

October Celebration Dates

- Mayor Ortega will make a proclamation for McDowell Sonoran Preserve month on September 28, 2021.
- Pima Dynamite Trailhead dedication is scheduled for October 16, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.
- The Camino Campana Interpretive Trail dedication will be held at Fraesfield Trailhead on October 31, 2021, at 10:30 a.m.

10. **UPCOMING MEETING DATES, LOCATIONS, AND AGENDA ITEMS**

All dates listed are tentative and subject to amendment:

- 2021 meetings thru November:

Regular meetings

October 14th – Policy Process
November 3rd – Policy Process

Special meetings

September 16th – Policy Process
October 21st – Policy Process
November 18th – Policy Process

Mr. Ekblaw noted that the next meeting will include special use permit requests and discussion on items 2b, 2d, and 2f.

11. **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

Commissioner Hackbarth announced that the Arizona Historic Preservation Conference is being held in Tempe as an in-person event on October 27, 2021.

12. **ADJOURNMENT**

COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER SMITH SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0). CHAIR WENSTROM, VICE-CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, HACKBARTH, LIPPS, OLSSON, AND SMITH VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

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