



**SUMMARIZED MINUTES**

**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE  
PROTECT AND PRESERVE SCOTTSDALE TASK FORCE  
REGULAR MEETING**

**Monday, July 31, 2023  
Florence Ely Nelson Park Room  
8950 E. Pinnacle Peak Road  
Scottsdale, Arizona 85255**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The regular meeting of the Scottsdale Protect and Preserve Task Force was called to order at 4:09 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT:** Cynthia Wenstrom, Chair  
Raoul Zubia, Vice Chair  
Carla  
James Eaneman  
Nicholas Hartmann  
Jace McKeighan  
Daniel Schweiker  
Mark Winkleman (MS Teams)  
John Zikias

**STAFF:** Nick Molinari, Parks and Recreation Director  
Karen Churchard, Tourism and Events Director  
Bill Murphy, Assistant City Manager  
Kroy Ekblaw, Executive Assistant Strategic Projects  
Thomas Shannon, Fire Chief  
Sherry Scott, City Attorney  
Scott Hamilton, Natural Resources Manager  
Sonia Andrews, City Treasurer/Chief Financial Officer  
Gina Kirklin, Finance Director  
Carol Banegas-Stankus, Administrative Staff

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Public comments were provided as follows:

David Smith stated that he had previously come before the Task Force in February, 2023 to urge that a portion of the Preserve sales tax be renewed to support arts and culture. He renewed the request, in light of the steady erosion of leadership for preservation of culture in the City, largely due to insufficient funding.

Jason Rose was present on behalf of Barrett-Jackson, Scottsdale Arabian Horse Show, Arizona Bike Week, Scottsdale Quarter Horse Show and M Culinary, all users of WestWorld. He distributed a list of requests, which was also provided to staff in July 2023.

Alan Naplan, Executive Producing Director of Arizona Music Festival, provided a brief overview of the organization. The organization utilizes Highland Church as its regular rented venue, as no other City location can accommodate the large concerts. He urged the City to increase its resources for support of the arts, through funding from the Protect and Preserve Scottsdale Task Force proposals.

## **1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Chair Wenstrom called for corrections to the minutes. One correction was made.

VICE CHAIR ZUBIA MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JUNE 26, 2023 AS AMENDED. MEMBER EANEMAN SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED 9-0 WITH CHAIR WENSTROM, VICE CHAIR ZUBIA AND MEMBERS CARLA, EANEMAN, HARTMANN, MCKEIGHAN, SCHWEIKER, WINKLEMAN AND ZIKIAS VOTING IN THE AFFIRMATIVE WITH NO DISSENTING VOTES.

## **2. ARTS AND CULTURAL UNFUNDED NEEDS**

Karen Churchard, Tourism and Events Director, provided an overview of arts and culture as it pertains to the City's identity and quality of life. The General Fund provides a significant portion of the arts and culture budget, including the City's management service agreement with Scottsdale Arts.

Scottsdale Arts' General Fund budget categories total \$5.6 million and include:

- Management and administration fee
- Arts education and outreach programs
- Community arts grant program
- Public art conservation
- Public art administration
- Specialty equipment

Special revenue funds are utilized for the Community Arts Trust as well as Canal Convergence. The Special Programs Fund includes lease payments and developer contributions. The Community Arts Trust has a current balance of \$142,439 and the Downtown Cultural Trust has a current balance of \$2.8 million. There is a \$51,000 supplemental amount for the Grants Program supporting arts and culture organizations. The zoning ordinance requires a cultural improvement program for certain developments that must include public art within developments. The Tourism

Development Fund is comprised of 5 percent of collected bed taxes by hotels in the City. The Tourism Development Fund provides 9 percent funding for tourism-related events and event development as well as 25 percent funding for tourism-related operating expenses, capital projects and/or operating impacts. A list of events that have received funding in fiscal years 2021 through 2023 was reviewed. Other commitments include funding for Scottsdale's Museum of the West and public art along Pima Freeway. The Public Art Ordinance requires the equivalent of 1 percent of capital improvement plan construction costs fund public art for any project that is publicly visible. For the fiscal year 2023/24 General Fund budget, \$0.3 million is to be used for the acquisition of public art, not inclusive of public art integrated within bond projects.

An overview of unfunded needs was provided:

- Public Art Restoration
- Community Arts Grant Program:
- Arts & Culture Program
- Arts & Culture Assessment

Member Carla encouraged the arts community to put together its own voter package for 2026. Thus far, all Task Force discussions with City departments have fit under the category of protect and preserve Scottsdale's open spaces, which is the charge tasked by City Council to the Task Force. Adding the arts category means adding a second question to the ballot. The more questions included on the ballot, the greater the probability that all will fail. With the four departments that have provided requests, the ballot request is approaching a 0.1 percent, which does not yet include the parks project list.

Vice Chair Zubia asked for clarification on the suggestion to revisit the tax in 2026. Member Carla stated that the current process involves the renewal of an expiring tax, which will likely also include an overall tax cut. The arts and culture community is free to follow a similar process by going to City Council and requesting formation of a Task Force to explore a ballot question which would provide arts funding via a new tax.

Member Winkleman concurred with Member Carla's concerns. It may be helpful to include a question about an acceptable tax rate of 1.1 percent or more on the upcoming planned survey.

Ms. Churchard answered questions regarding measuring program success and the decision-making process for programs.

Member McKeighan inquired which items are covered with the \$3.6 million Scottsdale Arts budget for management and administration. Ms. Churchard stated that the budget covers overall staffing for various departments. It is primarily used for the Center of Performing Arts, which puts on hundreds of performances annually as well as the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Civic Center. The budget also includes marketing and other items.

Member Hartmann cited Member Carla's comments regarding the Task Force's defined objectives, which involve open spaces and other needs. The items outlined in this presentation fall under the other needs category, which means that consideration is within the Task Force's purview. He added that anecdotally, Canal Convergence has consistently been a smash hit. Member Schweiker stated that he shares some of Member Carla's concerns, however he would not recommend closing the door on consideration of some of the arts needs presented today.

Open spaces and quality of life go hand in hand. He recommended keeping an open mind when considering these requests.

Vice Chair Zubia asked whether the Community Arts Trust budget of \$142,439 has been consistent over time. Ms. Churchard said the budget was \$1 million seven years ago. Over time, it was determined that the funds should be separated into two categories.

In response to a question from Vice Chair Zubia, Ms. Churchard stated that funding requests from the Event Development by organization are for a one-year allocation. Interested organizations must submit formal requests for funding each year.

Ms. Churchard provided an overview of the Public Arts Restoration category, which includes 155 pieces and a projected budget of \$1 million for one-time restoration. In addition, a dedicated funding source is needed for ongoing restoration costs. Vice Chair Zubia stated that the Task Force should give consideration for adding Arts items to the ballot question, particularly as the City itself was founded on the arts.

### **3. WESTWORLD UNFUNDED NEEDS**

Bill Murphy, Assistant City Manager, noted that WestWorld has been part of Community Services since 2019. A list of CIP projects, bond projects, and projects completed via facility staff was reviewed. A review of unfunded projects was provided. The master plan does not currently consist of firm numbers. Staff is working closely with the master planning team. To date, the master plan concept has not been provided to the producers and/or the public. WestWorld is a unique entity, existing on Bureau land, with the City owning a portion of the 400 acres. Staff is tasked with working with the Bureau on events programmed at the facility.

For fiscal year 2019/20, the overall budget was \$4.8 million. In 2021, at the height of the pandemic, the budget was \$4.6 million. For fiscal year 2021/22, the budget has been increased to \$5.4 million and then \$6.5 million in fiscal year 2022/23. For 2023, revenue included over \$1 million in feed and bedding alone. The most pressing budget needs relate to flooding and drainage issues. Many are contingent upon details included in, and completion of, the master plan. There are a total of 23 staff positions, with two currently vacant. This includes the General Manager and a lead maintenance position. An increase in staff costs reflects a transfer of part-time seasonal employees to full-time positions. An agreement is currently being developed with Scottsdale Community College to have its equestrian program activities at WestWorld.

Member Zikias asked for more specificity with regard to unfunded needs. Mr. Murphy estimated that much could be accomplished with additional funding of \$2.0 to \$2.5 million per year.

Member Schweiker commented that as one of the largest components of Parks and Recreation, WestWorld is a prime example for providing a high quality of life for Scottsdale residents. As such, the Task Force should have funds available in its recommendation to the Council to provide funding for some of WestWorld's unfunded needs. Member Carla said she was open to this consideration, citing the importance of the voting and donor base of individuals that participate in activities at WestWorld. As a park, WestWorld fits within the Protect and Preserve Scottsdale's open spaces initiative. She suggested that staff provide the Task Force with a narrowed down list of the top unfunded needs. Member Schweiker suggested that Mr. Rose assist Mr. Murphy in this process. Mr. Murphy commented that it would be prudent to wait on some items until

completion of the master plan, however, other items are appropriate for funding at this time. A more concise list can be provided to the Task Force.

In response to a question from Vice Chair Zubia regarding the tent roof, Mr. Murphy stated that funding for a permanent building has not been feasible.

#### **4. MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE UPDATED UNFUNDED NEEDS**

Kroy Ekblaw, Executive Assistant Strategic Projects, reviewed yearly cost that were presented to City Council in January 2022:

- Daily Preserve activities and operations: \$1,250,000
- Sonoran Desert preservation and education: \$400,000-\$800,000
- Habitat protection: \$420,000-\$650,000
- Cultural history protection: \$60,000-\$80,000
- Total: \$2,100,000-\$2,800,000

Since the presentation was provided to Council there has been an approximate 12 percent increase, with the total amount updated to a range of \$2.4 to \$3.1 million. Details on the increases for the specific categories were reviewed:

- Daily Preserve activities and operations: \$1,350,000
- Sonoran Desert preservation and education
  - Education: \$150,000-\$300,000
  - Preservation: \$350,000-\$550,000
- Habitat protection:
  - Invasive plant management: \$150,000-\$350,000
  - Wildland fire mitigation: \$200,000-\$350,000
  - Restoration projects: (not specified)
  - Monitoring assessment of progress for all three elements: \$100,000-\$150,000
- Cultural history protection: \$60,000-\$80,000
- Total: \$2,360,000-\$3,130,000

Mr. Ekblaw stated that the revised totals have been provided to the Preserve Commission and feedback has been received. While there was not a formal vote, there was a general consensus on agreement of the totals. A final recommendation will be solicited from the Commission in due time.

Chair Wenstrom asked how results for habitat protection will be assessed. Mr. Ekblaw stated that for treatment of invasive species, the assessments will vary. At times, multiple treatments are required for removal of invasive plants. Continual assessments are required to monitor the possibility of new growth.

Scott Hamilton, Natural Resources Manager, provided an overview of the City of Scottsdale's partnership with the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy. The relationship spans over 30 years. The City owns and operates the Preserve, with the Conservancy supporting the City in protecting, promoting and managing the Preserve. A joint contract formally defines the roles and responsibilities of the parties.

Services provided by the Conservancy include:

Comprehensive Stewardship program:

- Trailhead Ambassadors
- Roving trail patrollers
- Education programs for citizens and visitors
- Trail maintenance
- Special assignments - e.g. July 4th Fire Watch

2022/23 season stats are as follows:

- 68,474 hours
- 544 individual Stewards
- \$2.05 million (68,474 hours x \$29.95/hour, per the IRS)

Consideration provided by the City includes:

- Consider funding in the annual budget to support volunteer training, education, recognition, and print resources
- Donation collection boxes at trailheads
- Use of space at City facilities for functions that support the Preserve
- Donor recognition signage at trailheads
- Temporary sponsorships at trailheads

Member Carla stated that this year is the 25th anniversary of the Preserve Stewardship program. She suggested that the Task Force accept the presented budget in its final form as the funding recommendation. Member McKeighan questioned whether acceptance is required at this time. Chair Wenstrom concurred, noting that there are still a number of things to consider. Member Hartmann agreed that acceptance is premature at this time.

**5. PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT UPDATED UNFUNDED NEEDS - ADDITIONAL DETAILS**

Nick Molinari, Parks and Recreation Director, addressed the unfunded Parks & Recreation needs white paper. A presentation of all unfunded needs has been provided previously to the Task Force. This presentation proposed an alternative, which provides resources for ongoing, infrastructure and capital unfunded needs for the five Indian Bend Wash parks: Chapparal, Camelback, Indian School, Eldorado and Vista Del Camino. The recommendation aligns with shared community Council priorities, outlined in the Task Force Work Plan and totals \$1.5 million for ongoing funding and \$248 million over the life of the tax for park improvements, infrastructure improvements and master plan projects.

Member Carla stated that while she appreciates Mr. Molinari providing what the Task Force asked for, it would be a mistake to pare back the numbers to these levels. For example, cutting the maintenance by half will eliminate funding for central and north areas. Mr. Molinari stated that as the Parks & Recreation Director, he serves as steward of all parks in Scottsdale; all are his priority. The greatest unfunded needs in parks and open spaces are within the Indian Bend Wash. He recalled that at the last meeting, the Task Force voted that funding for parks would include ongoing maintenance as well as funding for master plan projects and park improvements, as

outlined in the Parks & Recreation Master Plan with priority for the Indian Bend Wash. This recommendation directly accomplishes this directive.

Member McKeighan thanked Mr. Molinari for an effective presentation, which informs the Task Force's discussions in terms of identifying priorities.

In response to a question from Member Schweiker, Mr. Molinari stated that the white paper includes the Department's baseline requests. There are obvious needs outside of the Indian Bend Wash and if a perpetual funding source is available, he certainly recommends funding for aging parks.

Member Zikias addressed the potential risks of deferred maintenance. Member Hartmann commented that if a higher tax percentage is recommended, the City would have an opportunity not only to avoid deferred maintenance, but to actually perform advance maintenance.

## **6. FIRE PREVENTION AND MITIGATION AND RESCUE SERVICES IN OPEN SPACES AND NEAR THE MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE**

Thomas Shannon, Fire Chief, presented a brief overview of the budget forecast:

- Personnel
  - General Fund expenses: \$1.5 million
  - Ongoing operating: \$1.3 million
  - One-time costs: \$241,8000
- Contractual services: Medical exams/Fuels abatement
  - General Fund expenses: \$304,302
  - Ongoing operating: 304,302
  - One-time: \$0.00
- Commodities: Supplies and uniforms
  - General Fund expenses: \$67,529
  - Ongoing operating: \$8,200
  - One-time costs: \$59,329
- Capital: Vehicles
  - General Fund expenses: \$389,792
  - Ongoing operating: \$213,644
  - One-time costs: \$176,148
- Total proposed fire support:
  - General Fund expenses: \$2.2 million
  - Ongoing operating: \$1.8 million
  - One-time costs: \$450,277

Member McKeighan thanked Chief Shannon for the clear and concise overview.

Member Carla noted that the original breakdown included a callout for public education and the Firewise Program. Chief Shannon stated that these are included under the job responsibilities of the Community Risk Reduction personnel.

Vice Chair Zubia asked for clarification on the personnel coverage for the brush control overtime budget of \$200,000. Chief Shannon stated that there is an average of three brush patrols, depending upon risk factors. Staff levels are adjusted according to need. The Airport will soon be retiring a Type 3 rescue and firefighting truck. The Fire Department proposes to purchase the vehicle and convert it to a Type 3 firefighting truck.

Chair Wenstrom asked for clarification on the (fire) fuels mitigation category. Chief Shannon stated that it is applicable citywide for fuel mitigation in open spaces. Grants and cash matches are included in the overall mitigation strategy. Chair Wenstrom asked about a strategic plan to ensure all departments work in sync with regard to fuels mitigation. Chief Shannon stated that there is a task force assembled through the Emergency Management Department, which works on prioritization of fuel management. However, the City can do better in terms of having an overall citywide fuels management and wildfire strategy. This can be accomplished with existing staff. Chair Wenstrom commented that the Diamond Fire was a wakeup call in terms of the vulnerability of the Preserve. Discussion ensued regarding details and events of the Diamond Fire. Chief Shannon noted that the size, scope and intensity of the fire could have been significantly worse, given the same weather conditions and time of day. It significantly reinforces the need for extensive fuel management. Member Zikias commented on challenges with invasive plant species and grasses.

## **7. IDENTIFICATION OF POSSIBLE FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

The following item was identified:

- Discussion regarding referring to the tax as a renewed tax, rather than a new tax

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved by Member McKeighan and seconded by Vice Chair Zubia, the meeting adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

AYES: Chair Wenstrom, Vice Chair Zubia, Members Carla, Eaneman, Hartmann, McKeighan Schweiker, Winkleman and Zikias.

NAYS: None

SUBMITTED BY:

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