



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE
MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING - MINUTES**

Thursday, November 2, 2023
Granite Reef Senior Center – Room 1
1700 N. Granite Reef Rd.
Scottsdale, AZ 85257

PRESENT: Vice-chair Marsha Lipps, Commissioners Steve Coluccio, Mark Hackbarth (MS Teams, arrived at 5:09 p.m., left at 6:30 p.m.), Kerry Olsson, Jeffrey Smith, and Savannah Engelking (MS Teams, arrived at 5:09 p.m.)

ABSENT Chairperson Laurie LaPat-Polasko

STAFF: Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director; Scott Hamilton, Preserve Manager

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Lipps called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members present as noted above.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no members of the public who wished to speak.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of the Regular Meeting minutes of October 5, 2023

COMMISSIONER OLSSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE OCTOBER 5, 2023 MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES AS AMENDED. COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED FOUR (4) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. VICE-CHAIR LIPPS, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, OLSSON, AND SMITH VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. COMMISSIONERS HACKBARTH AND ENGELKING NOT PRESENT. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

5. MCDOWELL SONORAN CONSERVANCY UPDATE

Brian Whitehead, Senior Program Manager, gave an update on McDowell Sonoran Conservancy activities. His presentation included a review of the steward and trailhead ambassador volunteer hours for the year; discussions had during the annual meeting between the Conservancy and the City of Scottsdale; guided bike and hike tours; the wildlife camera project; and the ongoing transition in leadership at the Conservancy.

6. PROTECT THE PRESERVE PROCESS UPDATE

Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, said that the Task Force will be working over the next few weeks to refine what recommendations they will bring forward to City Council in late February. Some of the information that is currently being discussed will only be relevant if Council decides to move forward with two questions on the ballot. Mr. Ekblaw anticipates that direction from the Task Force and updated calculations from the City Treasurer's office will be available by the end of the year. It may be necessary to call a special meeting in January to review the updated information as well as further discuss the ERP.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Ekblaw explained that staff in the City Treasurer's Office is evaluating information that may necessitate that two questions be on the ballot, one about the existing .02 percent tax and one about the .15 percent tax. It is possible that there will be only one question about the current expiring .02 percent tax, in part due to the limited space that is available on the presidential ballot. City Council is required to submit ballot language to the County before June 2024.

7. ONE TIME PRESERVE COSTS UPDATE

Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, provided a review of costs for possible future improvements to the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. The goal is to develop a detailed projection based on estimates of inflation and current increases in construction costs. He reviewed the list of recommended Preserve Trailhead Improvements provided by the working group, noting that cost projections range from \$40 million to \$60 million. The City Treasurer is continuing to refine the projections. Commissioner Hackbarth recommended that the City look for an archaeological site at Granite Mountain's trailhead.

8. ERP (ECOLOGICAL RESOURCE PLAN) UPDATE AND SCHEDULE

Scott Hamilton, Preserve Manager, provided an update for the upcoming process related to the ERP. As part of his presentation, he gave an overview of the recent meeting with Conservancy staff and talked about the upcoming meeting with Arizona Game and Fish Department. Staff will begin drafting the plan in the winter, incorporating information obtained through stakeholder input. Public input opportunities will begin in spring 2024. Both in-person and virtual opportunities will be made available.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Discussion ensued regarding tracking the impacts of the growing public usage on the natural environment.

9. STAFF REPORTS

- Rock Climbing Plan

Scott Hamilton, Preserve Manager, said that the ecological review of sites will be in November and December and the public input process will begin in January. The public input process will

include opportunities for people to review an online, interactive PowerPoint presentation.

- Brown's Ranch Homestead Trail

Mr. Hamilton gave an update on progress of developing a draft conceptual plan for the Brown's Ranch Homestead Trail. The theme of the trail will be "Modern Ranch in an Ancient Landscape" and the trail will include informational signs on a variety of relevant topics, including human history of the area and archeological information. The project is expected to be completed by late spring or early summer 2024.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Hamilton said that the trail will be built out of stabilized decomposed granite overlaid on landscape fabric, which is intended to separate and protect the natural soil for cultural purposes. Goldie's House will not be accessible from the trail and the location will not be identified.

- Wildland Fire Fuel Treatment Planning

Mr. Hamilton said that Scottsdale Fire Department was awarded a second Healthy Forest Initiatives Grant from the Department of Forestry and Fire Management. Funds from the grant will be used over the next six months to treat the areas of Granite Mountain Trailhead, Fraesfield Trailhead, Tom's Thumb Trailhead, 128th Street Gooseneck Corridor, an area of Jomax, and an area along the south side of Stagecoach Pass from Pima to Boulder View Drive.

10. UPCOMING MEETING DATES, LOCATIONS, AND AGENDA ITEMS

All dates listed are tentative and subject to amendment:

- ▣ Regular Meetings – February 1; March 7; April 4; May 2; June 6
- ▣ Possible Special Meeting – January 2024

11. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Coluccio suggested that an update on the Transportation Action Plan designation of the 128th Street closure be agendaized for a future meeting.

12. ADJOURNMENT

COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER OLSSON SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED FIVE (5) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. VICE-CHAIR LIPPS, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, OLSSON, ENGELKING, AND SMITH VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. COMMISSIONER HACKBARTH WAS NOT PRESENT. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

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