



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE
MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, March 3, 2022
Community Design Studio
7506 E. Indian School Rd
Scottsdale, AZ 85251**

PRESENT: Chairperson Laurie LaPat-Polasko, Vice-Chair Marsha Lipps, Commissioners Steve Coluccio, Mark Hackbarth, Jeffrey Smith, and Cynthia Wenstrom

ABSENT: Commissioner Kerry Olsson

STAFF: Scott Hamilton, Preserve Manager

GUESTS: Justin Owen, Executive Director, McDowell Sonoran Conservancy; Melanie Tluczek, Director of Science and Education, McDowell Sonoran Conservancy; Steve Waters, Flood Warning Program Manager, Maricopa County Flood Control District

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair LaPat-Polasko called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members present as noted above.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments submitted.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting minutes of February 17, 2022

Commissioner Coluccio suggested that the minutes be compared to the final minutes from the City Council meeting to make sure all elements match.

COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO MOVED TO APPROVE THE FEBRUARY 17, 2022 MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES. COMMISSIONER WENSTROM SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SIX (6) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, VICE-CHAIR LIPPS, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, HACKBARTH, SMITH, AND WENSTROM VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

5. MCDOWELL SONORAN CONSERVANCY UPDATE

Melanie Tluczek gave an update on the Conservancy's education program. She said that the most recent opportunity is a pilot program with seventh grade students. The program was developed through a partnership with seventh grade teachers, who selected the Conservancy's chronology project and developed their own curriculum that addresses gaps in learning over the past year due to COVID. Teachers selected this project because it most closely matches the seventh grade curriculum. Students are given an opportunity to come to Bajada Nature Trail and work in groups on a field guide. Ms. Tluczek said that she anticipates approximately 500 students will have participated in the program by the end of the season.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Owen said that over the past few years there has been discussion with the City about the possibility of incorporating the program into a summer camp. Eventually, he hopes that the program can be offered to K-12 students.

6. UPDATE – Maricopa County Flood Control District – Rain Gauge Data

Mr. Hamilton presented information on rain gauges in and near the preserve and reviewed the types of data collected from those systems how it is used. He explained that the towers are installed through a right of entry, which grants the County the right to place temporary equipment in certain locations. The information collected is useful for the Preserve and is also part of the flood warning system.

Steve Waters, hydrometeorologist and flood warning program manager for Maricopa County Flood Control District, reviewed the elements of a flood warning program, the responsibilities of the County Flood Control District, and ways in which they work with other County departments and agencies. He noted that the County Flood Control District reports to fire departments, law enforcement agencies, public works departments and other agencies throughout the County. It is the responsibility of the Weather Service to relay information to the general public. Data that is collected is shared in real time with the National Weather Service, Phoenix Weather Office, Colorado Basin River forecast center, and the National Severe Storms Laboratory. They partner with U.S. Geological Survey, Department of Water Resources and various land agencies who issue permits for gauges to be installed on their property. Mr. Waters reviewed how the FCDMC Alert System works, how locations are chosen, flood response plans and the inventory within Maricopa County. He noted that the next time the NOAA Atlas is produced there will be approximately 100 rain gauges collecting the required amount of data to be used in the publication.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Waters explained that Arizona Department of Water Resources is responsible for monitoring groundwater for the entire state and did monitor stormwater quality in the 1990's and 2000's, Since that time, the Arizona Department of Water Resources and USGS have been responsible for stormwater quality.

7. STAFF REPORTS

- Vegetation Management project – Invasive plants in the Brown's Mountain region

Mr. Hamilton said that he, Ms. Tluczek, and a steward who has been involved in mapping and treating invasive plants, have had several meetings about planning for the invasive plants

project in the area of Brown's Mountain. Treatment at Brown's Mountain will begin in spring of 2022.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Hamilton said that some of the grasses that are being seen looks like buffel grass, but is actually valerian. Stewards and Conservancy staff will spend time with the contractors to guide them in plant identification. Ms. Tluczek said it will take approximately three to five years to knock out the invasive plants in that area.

Mr. Hamilton said that the City maintains right-of-way areas along with some homeowners' associations, and they are responsible for removal of weeds. Education and advisement through the Firewise program would be the best way to encourage homeowners' associations to remove invasive plants from areas outside of the Preserve.

- Trail crossing at Rio Verde and 128th Street

Mr. Hamilton explained that a trail crossing at Rio Verde and 128th Street falls under the purview of the Transportation Department. They are guided by Federal standards and are required to collect specific data to determine the appropriate type of crossing for the area. A camera has been installed in the area along the gooseneck trail to collect data on the number of people crossing in that location. Counters will be installed on both sides next week, which will help in tracking the number of people crossing at the gooseneck. He showed photographs of "trail crossing" signs on Dynamite in the area.

Conversations with the Transportation Department about the disposition of the recreational crossing will continue, with the long-term goal of treatment of this section of Dynamite to address wildlife concerns.

- Summer heat messaging and coordination with valley communities

Mr. Hamilton gave a report on the City of Phoenix heat program statistics and their plans moving forward. The City of Phoenix has implemented a permanent program, closing Camelback Mountain and Piestewa from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on extreme heat days. Those locations were chosen because they make up approximately 20 percent of Phoenix' trails and approximately 50 percent of their mountain rescues are in those areas. He reviewed statistics within Scottsdale Preserve during extreme heat days, noting that they did not see a surge of people coming to the Preserve during times that Camelback and Piestewa were closed during the pilot period.

Mr. Hamilton reviewed Scottsdale's heat and safety messaging, including the permanent dog safety panels and slider panels. The updated messaging has made a difference in dog safety over the past few years and education efforts will be ongoing. He noted that staff has had conversations with the Conservancy about the idea of educating Pathfinders about heat dangers, so they can share the information directly with the public.

8. UPCOMING MEETING DATES, LOCATIONS, AND AGENDA ITEMS

April 7th;

- Az Game and Fish Update on Large Mammal Survey
- Public Safety in the Preserve – strategies, future costs, etc.

- Preserve Daily Operations costs update
- Possible Field Tour of Policy Items
- May 5th**
 - Preserve vegetation management cost update
 - Summer heat messaging coordination
- June 2nd**
 - Studies related to cooler paving options
 - Cultural resources protection cost update
 - Transportation update on Rio Verde Drive trail crossing

9. **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

Commissioner Wenstrom said that she had an opportunity to make public comment during the February 22, 2022 Transportation Commission meeting. She reviewed the topics that she spoke about, which included animal mortality, prohibition of motorists in the Preserve, and concerns of the public safety department.

10. **ADJOURNMENT**

COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. VICE-CHAIR LIPPS SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SIX (6) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, VICE-CHAIR LIPPS, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, HACKBARTH, SMITH, AND WENSTROM VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 6:12 p.m.

Recorded and transcribed by eScribers, LLC.