



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE  
MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION  
WORK STUDY SESSION MINUTES  
Wednesday, December 2, 2021**  
Community Development Conference Rooms 1, 2, and 3  
7447 E. Indian School Road  
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

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

**STAFF:** Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director; Scott Hamilton, Preserve Manager; Gina Kirklin, Enterprise and Finance Director

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Wenstrom called the meeting to order at 5:06 p.m.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Members present as noted above.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comments were submitted.

**4. POLICY PROCESS REFINEMENT**

Staff will provide an update of the following Policy process items:

Mr. Ekblaw recalled City Council's direction that the Commission prioritize potential additions to the Preserve, to determine acquisition options with available projected funds and to review Preserve maintenance needs and evaluate a perpetual maintenance fund and funding options. He reminded the Commission that final recommendations will be included as part of the citywide taxpayer funding discussion.

**A. Policy Item #1 – Land acquisition**

Mr. Ekblaw reviewed the cost projection worksheet. He noted that the presentation for Council will be more about cost range and learning which areas Council is interested in acquiring. Once Council input is received, the working group will put together a response tailored to the cost range they support in relation to the land they have expressed interest in acquiring.

Commissioner Olsson opined that using multiple plus signs (+++) following the cost breakdown could elicit an emotional response. He suggested that only one plus sign be used following cost estimates.

B. Policy Items 2.A-2.F. Maintenance and Operations; Education, Research, Corridor Protection, Invasive Plants, Wildland Fuels, Restoration, Trails, Trailheads, Cultural Resources Cost projections

2.A. Daily Preserve Operations and Maintenance

Mr. Ekblaw summarized the historic projected costs, volunteer support costs, and projected management cost, totaling an estimated \$1.225 to 1.250 million.

Mr. Owen said that the volunteer projected numbers are based on regular volunteer services to satisfy the master services agreement with the City. Mr. Ekblaw explained that the value of volunteer hours is calculated using a number issued annually by a federal agency. Mr. Owen added that if the Soden (phonetic) model were to be used, the amount of work and the number of hours available for volunteers would be expanded.

Commissioners were in support of the projections.

2.B. Sonoran Desert Research and Education

Mr. Ekblaw said that efforts are being made to summarize the research and education portion of the presentation for Council. He briefly reviewed areas of importance relating to research and education and highlighted the low, medium, and possible new funding source categories.

Vice-Chair LaPat-Polasko said that in talking with citizens, she has gotten the impression that the word “research” could push a hot button with some people. She suggested using the term “sustainability” or “gain understanding” or some similar term might be better.

Discussion ensued regarding the use of the term “research” in relation to tax dollars. Mr. Ekblaw said that staff can work with the Chair to consider language that will accurately explain that the research is aimed at assuring long-term sustainability for the Preserve. Mr. Owen noted that the term “sustainability” has become a hot button term too. He said that the Conservancy describes their work as scientific research and study to further the preservation of the Preserve. Commissioners expressed support for putting the category into two different areas, “research” and “preservation.”

Mr. Ekblaw noted that he is working with Assistant City Manager Bill Murphy to include the ERP update as part of the FY 2022/23 General Fund proposal.

Discussion continued, focusing on ensuring that the proposal is understandable and that citizens have an opportunity to further educate themselves on the topic if they wish.

Commissioners agreed that a footnote should be added reflecting that the proposed numbers assume a volunteer workforce.

2.C. Corridor Protection

Commissioners were in support of leaving the \$10 million as a placeholder.

2.D. Invasive Plants, Wildland Fire Mitigation, and Restoration Projects

Mr. Ekblaw said that he changed the range from \$168,000 to \$170,000 because it worked better than the low/medium/high concept. The restoration one-time cost for monitoring was changed to \$100,000 and \$150,000.

Commissioners were in support of the projections.

## 2.E. Trailhead and Trails Master Plans

Mr. Ekblaw reviewed the trailhead and trails master plans projections. The rough estimate was changed from \$10 million to \$12 million, based on Commissioners' input at the last meeting.

Commissioners were in support of the projections.

## 2.F. Cultural Master Plan

Mr. Ekblaw said that during the last meeting, a range of \$50,000 to \$70,000 was discussed with a projected one-time cost of \$200,000 to \$400,000 for Brown's Ranch.

Chair Wenstrom recalled that the Commission agreed to double the originally proposed \$30,000 to \$60,000. Based on information obtained from Commissioner Hackbarth since that time, she suggested that the number be changed to a range of \$60,000 to \$80,000.

Mr. Ekblaw said that information about enforcement will be part of the budget process. A presentation from the fire and police departments will be scheduled for the February or March meeting. He plans to include a line item indicating to Council that enforcement is an item that is being looked at and that the Commission will be seeing a more detailed presentation after the first of the year.

C. Preparation for Council Presentation - The Commission will discuss the City Council presentation to be made at a Work Study Session with the Council likely in January 2022.

Mr. Ekblaw said that he anticipates the presentation to Council will be on January 11, 2022. They could be called to give their presentation anytime between 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Staff as well as Justin Owen, Melanie Tluczek, and Jace McKeighan will be on hand for questions following the presentation. Direction from Council at the time of the presentation will determine whether the Commission has until fall of 2022 or fall of 2024 to complete research before going to a public vote.

## **5. ADJOURNMENT**

COMMISSIONER LAPAT-POLASKO MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.  
COMMISSIONER LIPPS SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. 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 6:06 p.m.

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