



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

Thursday, November 3, 2022
Scottsdale Stadium-West Press Box
7408 E. Osborn Road
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

PRESENT: Chairperson Laurie LaPat-Polasko, Vice-chair Marsha Lipps, Commissioners Steve Coluccio, Mark Hackbarth, Kerry Olsson, Jeffrey Smith, and Savannah Engelking

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair LaPat-Polasko called the meeting to order at 5:02 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 6, 2022

It was noted that on page six, second paragraph it should indicate that the Land Working Group is expected to begin meeting by the end of 2022 or beginning of 2023. The Trailhead Working group has already met. He also noted that on page 6, first paragraph instead of "one-time cost," it should say the "annual cost."

COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO MOVED TO APPROVE AS AMENDED THE OCTOBER 6, 2022 MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES. COMMISSIONER HACKBARTH SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, VICE-CHAIR LIPPS, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, ENGELKING, HACKBARTH, OLSSON, AND SMITH VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

5. MCDOWELL SONORAN CONSERVANCY UPDATE

Melanie Tluczek gave an update on Conservancy activities. In the coming year, the Conservancy plans to put a focus on education; messaging; working to engage people with nature through the three pillars: science, education, and stewardship; public outreach about

connections between the Preserve and other open space areas; and maintaining a healthy preserve. Her presentation included updates on the ongoing Expedition Days; Sonoran Fun Day events, which will begin on November 13th at 3:00 p.m. at Dynamite Trailhead; Canal Convergence; progress of the buffelgrass herbicide treatment project; and the Living Labs program with Saguaro High School students.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Ms. Tluczek said that approximately 1,500 acres have been mapped for buffelgrass and invasive plants so far. Contractors will work on the larger, more difficult to reach, areas and stewards will continue managing the smaller populations. Discussion ensued regarding herbicide applications and educating the public about the ramifications of planting buffelgrass and other invasive plants on their property.

Ms. Tluczek explained that students will be trained in the type of restoration needed for the selected plots and will be supervised by Conservancy staff and their teachers while working on the Living Lab project in the Preserve. Eventually, she hopes to organize a group of stewards to help mentor the students as well.

6. PROTECT THE PRESERVE PROCESS UPDATE

Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, provided an update on the process to review costs and programs to protect the McDowell Sonoran Preserve.

- Trailhead Working Group Update
- Daily Preserve Activities and Operations

Mr. Ekblaw said the trailhead working group has held four meetings and has been analyzing the status of areas in need of improvements at older trailheads. They will summarize their findings and provide them to Commissioners for comment. Once the list is completed they will come up with rough construction estimates. He noted that the estimated cost presented to Council in January was \$12 million. He anticipates that they will be ready to make a full presentation in February or March. The group has also talked about the two trailheads that are not in the approved master plan, Ringtail and 104th/Bell. The group will talk about access areas, including neighborhood access areas, and trailheads not located in the Preserve, including WestWorld Trailhead, Quartz Trailhead, and those in Tonto National Forest. Mr. Ekblaw reviewed estimates, noting that he has not reestimated numbers yet because of the volatility in the construction market. The \$900,000 is not expected to cover all costs; some things might be covered by the General Fund.

Mr. Hamilton reviewed the list of FY 2021/22 estimated costs, noting that personnel costs have increased in part because of cost of living increases, merit increases, and the addition of a part-time position. He said that the \$200,000 in the operating budget for this year as part of the Council approved Ecological Resource Plan is not expected to be repeated for next year. He reviewed the list of budget items, totaling \$1.3 million.

Commissioners asked clarifying questions throughout the presentation.

7. STAFF REPORTS

- o APS Maintenance work likely to occur in Spring and Fall 2023

Mr. Ekblaw said that he expects to meet with APS in the next few weeks to get a more detailed update on their plans. The project will include grading and trimming of vegetation that has encroached into the corridor and cranes will likely be brought in to support towers while workers replace crossmembers. Staff will update the Commission on plans for survey work and closures at Granite Mountain Trailhead and will work with APS to ensure that the public is notified about the work to be expected.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Ekblaw said that APS will not be working on all towers at once and will be progressing west to east with rolling closures, giving advance notice to trailhead users.

- Cultural Plan Update

Mr. Hamilton said that Council approved a contract extension with Logan Simpson in late September. Work is currently underway to analyze features of the site and determine areas for interpretation and discussing how to build a trail in a cultural site. He expects to have a presentation outlining graphics, concept alignments, and graphics for the panels ready for the February meeting.

8. UPCOMING MEETING DATES, LOCATIONS, AND AGENDA ITEMS

- Field Tour options – January - TBD
- 2023 meeting dates
 - February 2,
 - Tourism update – Experience Scottsdale
 - Protect The Preserve Process update
 - ERP
 - Land
 - Restoration
 - Cultural Plan
 - March 2, April 6, May 4, June 1

10. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

No additional comments were made by Commissioners.

11. ADJOURNMENT

COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER SMITH SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, VICE-CHAIR LIPPS, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, ENGELKING, HACKBARTH, 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 6:07 p.m.

Recorded and Transcribed by eScribers, LLC.