



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

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

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

STAFF: Scott Hamilton, Natural Resources Manager; Natural Resources Coordinators Dave Myers and John Loleit; Bill Murphy, Assistant City Manager; Tom Shannon, Scottsdale Fire Chief; Kristy Gagnon, Fire Marshall; Troy Lutrick, Emergency Manager

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 members of the public who wished to speak.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of the Regular Meeting minutes of April 6, 2023

It was noted that in the second paragraph of section 5, Chief Walther used the term "police officer", not "peace officer."

COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO MOVED TO APPROVE THE APRIL 6, 2023 MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES AS AMENDED. COMMISSIONER ENGELKING SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, VICE-CHAIR LIPPS, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, HACKBARTH, OLSSON, SMITH, AND ENGELKING VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSIDENTING VOTES.

Approval of the Regular Meeting minutes of May 4, 2023

The following corrections were suggested:

- Item 5, first paragraph, second sentence should indicate that Mr. Kelly McCullough was involved with the donor wall at Brown's Ranch. The statement "at the Conservancy" should be stricken.
- Under staff reports, it should be clarified that Site Stewards are not required to be a Conservancy Steward
- The reference to Sunrise Trail overflow parking should indicate 104th Street and Bell Road, instead of 104th Avenue and Bell Pass.

COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO MOVED TO APPROVE THE MAY 4, 2023 MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES AS AMENDED. COMMISSIONER OLSSON SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, VICE-CHAIR LIPPS, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, HACKBARTH, OLSSON, SMITH, AND ENGELKING VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

5. MCDOWELL SONORAN CONSERVANCY UPDATE

Melanie Tluczek, Conservancy Director of Science and Education, gave an end-of-season update on McDowell Sonoran Conservancy activities. Her presentation included updates on patrol and trailhead ambassador engagements; construction and maintenance projects; invasive plant efforts, including the recent efforts to address the increase in stinknet; guided hike, bike, and walk tours; trail usage and Steward public outreach; community events, including the virtual Parsons Field Institute Symposium held on May 17, 2023, which included a presentation from the Saguaro Living Labs students (symposium is available to watch on YouTube); Fourth of July fire watch; the Children's Learning and Play Festival, scheduled for June 24, 2023; community engagement activities, including library talks and lunch-and-learn; and final youth education participation statistics for the year.

Discussion ensued regarding efforts to mitigate the spread of stinknet in the Preserve and throughout the city. Ms. Tluczek said that the Conservancy will be working with the City of Scottsdale over the summer to review literature and develop a plan for identifying high-priority areas and educating the public. Mr. Hamilton suggested that a more in-depth conversation regarding mitigation of stinknet and other invasive species be agendized for later in the summer.

6. ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Officer Debra Groves, Wildlife Manager Region VI, provided the Commission with an update from the annual large mammal survey of the Preserve. She noted that the annual surveys of mule deer and javelina populations in the Preserve are conducted under an agreement between Arizona Game and Fish and the City of Scottsdale dating back to 2014. She explained the process of collecting raw data and reviewed the 2022 population estimates for each species. She said that more mule deer were counted from the helicopter this year, but the estimate went down as part of the statistical analysis between observation rates. Javelina are tricky to analyze because they congregate in groups within a small area. They have also started tracking coyote populations because they hunt mule deer fawns. The overall health of both the mule deer and javelina herds is good. She noted that one thing to consider is that increasing urban

development around the periphery of the Preserve could begin to impact the movement of the animals across the landscape.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Ms. Groves explained that urban development could create an island effect that could stop the flow of genetics over time. She said that the deer collaring project would be a better tool for analysis of herd movement. It was suggested that consideration be given to studying mountain lions in addition to coyotes. Brief discussion ensued regarding tracking roadkill statistics and the process of issuing archery permits. Hunters are now required to report any harvested animal within 48 hours and also encouraged to fill out a voluntary website questionnaire.

7. UPDATE FROM THE SCOTTSDALE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Tom Shannon, Fire Chief, Kristy Gagnon, Fire Marshal, and Troy Lutrick, Emergency Manager, gave an update on wildland fire fuel mitigation plans and emergency response in the Preserve.

Mr. Lutrick talked about Scottsdale Fire Department's emergency management and fuels management. As part of emergency management, consideration is given to the possibility of disasters beyond the everyday response for the fire department and/or the police department and fuels management throughout the City. He discussed the process of managing the Preserve and wildland urban interface (WUI) in detail. In recent years, Dave Ramirez, an expert in fuels management, has been brought in to manage the program addressing invasive fuels. Approximately \$400,000 in grants from the state and county emergency management has been received so far. Grant dollars can only be used towards treating each area one time, so funding for maintenance must come from different sources.

Ms. Gagnon gave a presentation about community risk reduction and prevention services, which is based on a nationally recognized model for approaching risk within a community. She reviewed in detail the elements of the process, which include education, engineering, enforcement, economic incentives, and emergency incentives. Chief Shannon noted that the majority of emergencies in the Preserve are trail-related injuries where the person is able to walk out on their own. There are very few technical rescues. The department currently has one technical rescue team, and it is a high priority in the five-year outlook to fund a second team in the Station 14 area.

Mr. Hamilton reviewed Preserve statistics related to excessive heat closures in Phoenix. The Preserve is generally seeing a 20- to 26-percent decrease in usage of the Preserve on Phoenix closure days, likely in part to the messaging related to those closures.

Commissioners asked clarifying questions throughout the presentation. Chief Shannon said that the City is hoping to do more unified data collection from people who call for rescue in the Preserve, to learn more about the types of rescues being made and the conditions under which the circumstances arose. Education can then be tailored based on the statistical results. Ms. Gagnon explained that the fire department sends crews out to neighborhoods in their specific areas starting in March to do evaluation and education in neighborhoods. The crews follow up in those areas 30 days later to evaluate whether their concerns were addressed by residents. Chief Shannon said that the goal is to make sure that the department's budget request as part of the protect the Preserve process complements efforts being made in the Preserve.

Commissioners requested that the budget chart be further outlined to show areas that were grant funded and that are unfunded. Mr. Hamilton noted that the special meetings being scheduled during the summer will focus on budget details.

8. PROTECT THE PRESERVE PROCESS UPDATE

Mr. Hamilton said that staff is currently working with contractors and the City's capital project division staff to evaluate current costs and update cost projections. Results will be presented to the Commission during the summer special meetings.

9. STAFF REPORTS

- Ecological Resource Plan

Mr. Hamilton said that the contractor, EnviroSystems, recently had their first meeting with City and Conservancy staff to begin the process of collecting data. The Commission can expect to see specific things that should be addressed in the ERP relating to cost projections, that will be presented as part of the Protect and Preserve Scottsdale Task Force presentation.

- Rock Climbing Management Plan

Mr. Hamilton said that the City is working with the Conservancy to schedule on-site ecological evaluations and preparing to issue a scope of work request to the City's cultural resource contractors. He explained that Cholla Mountain is currently included as a rock-climbing area, because the overall premise in climbing in the Preserve was that the historic climbing patterns would be respected. The Commission will have an opportunity to either include or not include Cholla Mountain as part of the recommendation to Council.

- APS Transmission Line Maintenance

Mr. Hamilton said that the APS project has not begun due to internal APS delays. Survey work has been completed, but trenching has not started. The project will begin near Pima Dynamite and they will work their way east.

- Sunrise overflow trailhead temporary closure

Mr. Hamilton gave an update on the Sunrise Trailhead project. He said it is hoped that the new splitter island will encourage people to drive counterclockwise through the parking lot.

10. UPCOMING MEETING DATES, LOCATIONS, AND AGENDA ITEMS

All dates listed are tentative and subject to amendment:

- Possible Special Meeting dates – June 29; Jul 13; Aug 10; Aug 17; Aug 24
- Regular Meetings – September 7; October 5; November 2

11. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Olsson suggested that the Commission take a field trip to tour some of the trailheads to help with making recommendations. Mr. Hamilton said that a tour could be considered for the fall.

Commissioner Engelking suggested that the Commission make recommendations on the initial Park Ranger training program. Mr. Hamilton agreed to schedule a future agenda item to discuss Park Ranger training recommendations and to hear an update from Chief Walther.

12. ADJOURNMENT

COMMISSIONER ENGELKING MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, VICE-CHAIR LIPPS, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, HACKBARTH, OLSSON, SMITH, AND ENGELKING VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

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