



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE  
McDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION  
And  
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
JOINT WORK STUDY SESSION**

**REGULAR MEETING**

**SUMMARIZED MINUTES**

**MARCH 30, 2015**

**Community Design Studio  
7506 E. Indian School Road  
Scottsdale, AZ 85251**

**PRESENT:** McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission:

Jim Heitel, Chairman  
Bob Frost, Vice-Chairman  
Fred Klein  
Con Englehorn  
Jace McKeighan  
Mike Milillo

**ABSENT:** Susan Wheeler

**PRESENT:** Tourism Development Commission:

David Scholefield, Chairperson  
Ren Hirose, Vice Chairperson  
Ace Bailey  
Tim Enders  
Carl Grupp  
Camille Hill  
Robert McCreary

**STAFF:** Bill Murphy  
Kroy Ekblaw  
Steve Geiogamah  
Brian Dygert

Joe Padilla  
Bill Hylan

**GUESTS:** Mike Nolan, MSC  
Rachel Sacco, SCVB  
Rachel Pearson, SCVB  
Neil Bosworth, TNF  
Rebecca Hoffman, TNF

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Heitel and Chair Scholefield called the meeting to order at 5:06 p.m.

2. **ROLL CALL**

Members present as noted above.

3. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS** (Discussion begins at 5:07; approximately 1 minute into the meeting)

Chairman Heitel thanked Preserve staff and the CVB for working to answer questions that were brought to light during the last joint meeting and bringing the information forward so the MSPC and the TDC can have a productive discussion.

Chairman Scholefield applauded the fact that the discussion topics during the first joint meeting were followed up in an expeditious manner and a second joint meeting was scheduled within the proposed timeline. He was hopeful that the Commissions working together will be able to educate citizens about opportunities available in the Preserve.

4. **UPDATE OF STRATEGIC AND DAY TO DAY MARKETING GOALS**  
(Discussion begins at 5:08; approximately 2 minutes into the meeting)

Scottsdale Convention and Visitor's Bureau (SCVB) President Rachel Sacco and McDowell Sonoran Conservancy (MSC) Executive Director Mike Nolan gave a presentation expanding on their collaborative marketing goals. Presented in November.

The concierge training program will give every concierge the opportunity to learn firsthand about the Preserve so they can share that information with their guests. Since the program's launch concierges from 43 resorts around the Valley have participated. Next fall the training program will be more aggressively marketed in hopes of getting concierges from every property in the Valley to participate.

Both the SCVB and MSC produce weekly newsletters that they are now sharing with each other in hopes of cross-promoting marketing efforts. SCVB Vice-President of Marketing Caroline Stockel will be joining the MSC's marketing committee, collaborating with the marketing department on promotional ideas and sharing information with the team at the SCVB.

The Scottsdale Convention and Visitor's Bureau is currently undergoing a rebranding process and reaching out to the entire community and the MSC to ensure that the Preserve is included as part of the new branding. Mr. Nolan noted that the MSC is considering rebranding as well and is consulting with Martz Parsons Agency about issues related to their brand and promotion.

In planning for next season, consideration is being given to holding destination training sessions for Pathfinders so they are able to educate the 35,000 visitors to the Preserve that they encounter each year about opportunities that are available throughout the city of Scottsdale in addition to the information they share about the Preserve.

As more scheduled hikes are offered through the MSC, the SCVB will offer those hikes to corporations and individuals and will promote the hikes through group sales efforts and on the SCVB website.

The SCVB and MSC will continue to build their relationship and work on their common goals and interests.

Commission members were given the opportunity to make comments and ask questions.

Chair Scholfield recalled that during the previous joint meeting there was discussion about promoting the concierges as more of an ambassador to the Preserve and offering a certification to the concierges for completing the program. Mr. Nolan said that concierge certification could be part of the marketing conversation over the summer.

Vice Chair Hirose commented that the Desert Discovery Guide is well put together and informative and is popular with guests.

Chairman Scholfield suggested that representatives from destination management companies be invited to participate in a hike as a promotional tool for the private hikes that will be offered in the Preserve.

5. **COMMERCIAL MOTORIZED TOURS** (Discussion begins at 5:17; approximately 11 minutes into the meeting)

Review of

- Tonto National Forest Request for Proposals
- Preserve Permit
- Review of Options for Next Steps
- Process to consider options and permanent solution recommendation to city Council
  - Separate Commission Meetings - Recommendations
  - Regular or Work Study Session with Council by mid-2015

## Forest RFP PROCESS

Mr. Ekblaw reviewed the background and history of the jeep tours and the conversations that have been ongoing between the City of Scottsdale and the Tonto National Forest. A temporary one-year process was implemented for the 2013/14 season and the permits were extended to the 2014/15 season to allow the operators time to solicit permits to operate in the Tonto National Forest (TNF). Council approved a \$30,000 expenditure from bed tax in order to expedite the process with the TNF.

Neil Bosworth and Rebecca Hoffman from the Tonto National Forest gave a presentation discussing the importance of partnerships and outlining the operator application process. A prospectus was issued forest-wide for outfitters who would be interested in operating in the Tonto National Forest.

Ms. Hoffman explained the RFP process, the process for determining "use days" and the number and types of outfitters that can be allowed.

Mr. Bosworth noted that the Forest Plan is 20 years old and is currently being revised. The City of Scottsdale's involvement is critical as partners in helping define the future of what the Tonto National Forest will look like.

The RFP was issued on February 26, 2015 and the application deadline is Friday, April 3, 2015. Ms. Hoffman and her team will review the applications and Mr. Bosworth will make final decisions within the next few weeks.

Ms. Hoffman gave an overview of the Tonto National Forest, describing the various areas and diverse terrain and recreational activities that are possible.

Mr. Bosworth talked about the importance of partnering with the City of Scottsdale. The City has an opportunity to participate with the TNF on what the partnership will look like, in part because typically forest services deal with rural communities and do not have experience with partners in a large metropolitan area. The TNF is hoping to take advantage of opportunities with the City for marketing and to engage and educate the public, especially youth, about our forests.

Vice Chair Hirose suggested offering an educational event to media, sales teams, and concierges.

Mr. Ekblaw noted that part of the conversation with the TNF, County Regional Park and Fountain Hills has been about mapping and producing a guide similar to the Desert Discovery Guide that shows interaction between all of the areas and possible recreational opportunities.

Commission members were given the opportunity to ask questions.

Ms. Hoffman explained that the permitting process requirements are based on the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Forest Plan, and special use guides. Permits are ten-year priority permits, which are issued for two years and at the end of

the two years if all conditions have been followed, the permits are extended for an additional eight years. Operators are required to submit financial capability information and a business plan with their applications and are required to obtain general liability insurance.

Mr. Ekblaw reviewed the commercial motorized guided tours summary of activities for the FY 2014/15 season, noting that one operator is no longer operating, which left three jeep tour operators. There were 1,100 user days last season and in the first two quarters of this season there have been approximately 609 user days, which is down from last year. Mr. Ekblaw explained that the reason for not continuing the last end of the trail loop for the FY 2014/15 season was that area has the Game and Fish water source. There were no objections from the operators to eliminating that half-mile of trail.

Mr. Ekblaw asked for input from the Commission on the best way to approach the jeep tours' use of the Preserve, noting that City Council was not interested in a temporary alternative. If the intent is to keep the Preserve Ordinance as it is, there will be no recommendation necessary and if jeep tour operators move to the Tonto National Forest there will be no need for an amendment.

Commissioner Frost said that the impact to the Preserve of jeep tours using the three-mile trail is not negative. Jeep tours offer people who might not have the ability to hike to see the Preserve. He opined that it would be beneficial to amend the Preserve Ordinance, designating the area for jeep tour operators to continue.

Commissioner Hill stressed the importance of delivering the Sonoran Desert experience to visitors with a minimum travel time. She felt that moving the starting point further away in the TNF could cause diminishing interest. Mr. Ekblaw noted that the City is working with the TNF to locate starting points in immediate proximity.

Commissioner Milillo felt that the City should take advantage of the opportunity to partner with the Tonto National Forest offering permits for motorized vehicles. He said that he could not support permanently allowing motorized vehicles in the Preserve, because the citizens of Scottsdale had a vision for the Preserve that precluded motorized vehicles.

Commissioner Bailey questioned whether there would be issues with jeep tours as long as the jeep tour operators are respecting the desert. Commissioner Milillo said that there was a concern about setting precedent for other motorized uses.

Commissioner Englehorn noted that the jeep trail has a high equestrian usage. Mr. Ekblaw said there has been no reported conflicts between jeep tours and equestrians. Whether or not jeep tours are in operation, the roads will continue to be designated as part of the emergency access plan with the Fire Department.

Commissioner Klein said that the Preserve is only the Preserve insofar as it acts like a preserve and the rules and "thou-shalt-nots" in the Ordinance are important to keeping the McDowell Sonoran Preserve special.

Vice Chair Hirose inquired whether or not the jeep tour operators were responsible for road maintenance. Mr. Ekblaw said that the City maintains the roads and the goal is to reduce maintenance needs by designing the roads to be sustainable.

Ms. Sacco talked about the importance of maintaining a Scottsdale jeep experience and expressed a desire by the tourism community to have more extensive discussion about how the Preserve and jeep tour experiences could coexist in Scottsdale. She suggested training could be given to the jeep operators similar to the concierge training program.

Commissioner Grupp commented that when the Preserve was first considered it was about telling the story of the Sonoran Desert and telling the full story would have to include the jeep component.

Chair Heitel noted that he supports the Preserve regulations, but understands the need for offering opportunity to people who might not otherwise be able to experience the Sonoran Desert. He implied that he would support further discussion once the City Attorney's office reports about opportunities that could be available without changing the Preserve Ordinance.

Chair Scholfield said he would like to find a way to continue a limited access for the jeep operators while maintaining the primary goal of protecting the Preserve.

Mr. Ekblaw said that In addition to the jeep tours, other ideas have been put forth that will need to be further discussed. He mentioned that staff received a request for cart with horse for private use, which the trails are not built for.

The City will meet with the operators to better understand their perspective. The current permitting period ends in May. All operators have been made aware of the opportunity in the TNF and, if selected, could be operating in the forest as soon as this summer.

Staff will continue to update the individual Commissions.

Vice Chair Hirose suggested asking the operators to invite Commission members to go on a tour before the end of the season as an opportunity for outreach.

## **6. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
A/V Tronics, Inc. DBA AVTranz.