



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

Thursday, May 4, 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, Savannah Engelking, Mark Hackbarth, Kerry Olsson, and Jeffrey Smith

**STAFF:** Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director; Scott Hamilton, Senior Trails Planner; Kerry Swick, Deputy Fire Chief

**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**

April 6, 2023

Mr. Ekblaw noted that he reviewed the audio recording and made clarifying refinements. It was noted that on page 2, second paragraph, line 5 it should state "police officer," not "peace officer."

A brief discussion ensued regarding continuing or tabling the April 6, 2023, minutes.

COMMISSIONER SMITH MOVED TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 6, 2023, AS AMENDED. COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH FAILED THREE (3) TO FOUR (4) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, VICE-CHAIR LIPPS, AND COMMISSIONER SMITH VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, ENGELKING, HACKBARTH, AND OLSSON DISSENTED.

The April 6, 2023, minutes will be presented for reconsideration during a future meeting.

April 13, 2023

It was noted that on page 3, second paragraph, third sentence, the .02 percent seemed odd. Mr. Hamilton clarified the .02 should be .20 percent.

COMMISSIONER HACKBARTH MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 13, 2023, SPECIAL MEETING AS AMENDED. COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO 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**

Kelly McCullough, Interim CEO at the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy, provided the Commission with his personal, employment, and community involvement background. He began working with Mr. Hamilton 15 months ago on fundraising projects prior to being asked to serve as the interim CEO while the successor plans are implemented. He expressed appreciation for the passionate members of the community.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Ekblaw stated the Conservancy is working with the City to renew their contract and will keep the Commission advised of progress. Mr. McCullough stated the budget is tight as they near the end of this fiscal year. He has been charged with reducing some expense and costs, and ramping up fundraising. The Board is looking at new fundraising opportunities. The Conservancy's prospects for the next fiscal year look promising.

Melanie Tluczek, Conservancy Director, updated the Commission on recent activities of the Conservancy. Her presentation included updates on Steward activities, which included the annual Steward Recognition Dinner, Earth Day events, and the City of Scottsdale's Green Expo; the Parsons Field Institute virtual Symposium scheduled for May 17, 2023, from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m.; the Children's Learning and Play Festival, scheduled for June 24, 2023; Earth Day events in partnership with both the City of Scottsdale and Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community; joint invasive plant efforts; Safety Day at the trailheads; Trailhead Ambassador's eco-tourism survey; and Living Labs activities. The Conservancy continues focus on the new Community Engagement program. Ms. Tluczek shared a storyboard representing efforts of the Saguaro High School Living Labs program.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Ms. Tluczek stated the Parsons Field Institute Symposium will be recorded and distributed in segments. The results of the Eco-Tourism survey should be available in a month and will be accessible to the Commission.

## **6. PROTECT THE PRESERVE PROCESS UPDATE**

- Council and Task Force Process update

Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, said that the presentation to the Protect and Preserve Scottsdale Task Force included a review of the history of the Preserve and what its future looks like, emphasizing that the primary focus is on the annual costs of Preserve maintenance. Staff's recommendation is to deconstruct, simplify, and rebuild the yearly cost chart. The summary

slide which was presented to City Council in January 2022, would be split into three separate charts.

The column showing one-time costs would become one chart focusing on the 2034 tax, land acquisition, and the one-time costs. A parallel chart would focus on potential new revenue sources. Annual costs for Preserve operations would be shown in the third chart. This would enable the information presented to the Task Force to match the time frame that the Task Force is looking at. Police, Fire, and Public Safety elements will be removed and handled separately on the revenue source and the Commission will be apprised of any presentations. Staff said there may be a need to hold some special meetings during the summer to review and update the Task Force presentation in time for the September Task Force presentation.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Hamilton stated that matching grant funding opportunities and amounts vary. Grant fund amounts are driven by the state of the economy. Mr. Ekblaw noted some of the grant funding rolls over from year to year. Staff is zealous in pursuing all possible funding sources.

Mr. Ekblaw responded to questions related to negative comments about the City's existing bond, which may make voters hesitate to vote for a bond issuance in the fall of 2024. He noted the Task Force will survey the community. This will be an ongoing discussion that will evolve over a couple of meetings with the Task Force. He noted challenges within the larger state economy affecting budgets and supplies. What the Task Force receives for feedback is crucial to what goes forward to City Council.

Commissioners expressed a desire to keep the Commission's working documents together. It is easier to have all the information on one chart for cross-reference. Mr. Ekblaw agreed to have the chart show everything for the Commission and to separate yearly and one-time costs for the Task Force.

Mr. Ekblaw stated they will be prepared to come back to the Commission this summer with numbers and talk about what the Commission can do to help with one-time costs. He will survey Commissioners about summer special meeting dates.

## **7. STAFF REPORTS**

- Ecological Resource Plan Process

Mr. Hamilton provided an update on the goals and objectives of the ecological resource plan, noting it is being reviewed by Risk Management. There will be a kickoff meeting to get the plan together and staff will report back to the Commission. Climbing Plan Process Status

Mr. Hamilton gave an update on the conceptual rock-climbing project for Granite Mountain and Cholla Mountain, noting a meeting was held with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to lay out the objectives. Staff will continue to update the Commission and eventually the Commission will make recommendations to City Council.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Hamilton explained SHPO's roles and responsibilities within this project. The City of Scottsdale is committed to making sure the actions taken are the best they can be and sensitive to the resource. Mr. Ekblaw noted SHPO and the Arizona State Museum will review survey reports and they both have the ultimate

control.

Mr. Hamilton explained, upon purchasing the land from the State Land Department several surveys had to be completed by certified SHPO contractors to uncover and identify what is on the land. Anything that was previously uncovered is recorded with SHPO and stored at the Arizona State Museum. The City uses a GIS database to track reports of other findings. The City has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Arizona State Parks, which sponsors the recently established Site Steward Program. A Site Steward does not have to be a Conservancy Steward.

- Power Utility Update

APS Transmission Line Project is expected to continue through September in the Pima-Dynamite area, moving west to east along the corridor. The target area is around Brown's Ranch, Upper Ranch, and Latigo Crossing trailheads. Later this summer access to the Granite Mountain Trailhead will be restricted as work is done along the south edge of the trail and parking lot.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Hamilton said that material removed from the trenches will be replaced. Mr. Ekblaw added that if they hit bedrock, it could get broken down into smaller granules from the equipment used, but staff can revisit that with APS if that issue arises. APS does have a high appreciation for the sensitivities and the habitat. APS has a thorough emergency plan in place for fire prevention, fire suppression, and emergency response.

- Wildland Fire Fuel Management

Mr. Hamilton said work on Lost Dog Wash Trail funded by the Department of Forestry and Fire Management's Healthy Forest Initiative (HFI) has been completed, clearing space around critical infrastructure. The next round of HFI grants will be used on the Granite Mountain, Tom's Thumb, and Pima-Dynamite trailheads.

Sunrise Trailhead overflow parking will be closed beginning next week to allow for upgrades and improvements. Only two trailheads remain without upgraded counters: 104<sup>th</sup> and Bell has an old infrared counter and Ringtrail does not have a counter. Closure updates will be posted at the trailheads and on social media.

Mr. Hamilton gave an overview of the City of Phoenix heat closures pilot program, noting that they only close during "extreme heat" days, which are triggered by the National Weather Service heat warning program. Phoenix plans to extend summer trailhead gate hours to 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Ekblaw stated they would pass questions along to the Fire Department so they can be prepared to address rescue data at the next meeting. Kerry Swick, Deputy Fire Chief, stated the data shows people think if the Phoenix trails are closed then Scottsdale trails are also closed.

Mr. Hamilton said that the number of rescues trended down from 2020 to 2022. The Fire Department is putting together data related to the number of rescues by site, type, and heat. Anecdotally, many of the heat rescues occur in April and October as the heat catches people off guard. A brief discussion ensued.

## **8. UPCOMING MEETING DATES, LOCATIONS, AND AGENDA ITEMS**

All dates listed are tentative and subject to amendment:

- Regular Meeting - June 1<sup>st</sup>
  - Arizona Game and Fish
  - Scottsdale Fire Department
  - Survey for Special Meetings will go out
- Next regular meeting is September 7<sup>th</sup>

## **9. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

Commissioner Coluccio asked that staff make sure that Ms. Kirklin's PowerPoint presentation on finances from the April 13th meeting is added to the marked agenda on the City's website.

Commissioner Hackbarth stated he had a strange encounter with someone who was upset that they saw someone in the Preserve wearing military, camo clothing and wearing a weapon and they called the police to report the person. He asked what kind of response he should have given this person. Mr. Ekblaw and Mr. Hamilton explained that state law does not restrict the ability to carry a weapon or what people are wearing. If someone is off trail, brandishing and/ or discharging a weapon, or anything against the law they would involve the police.

## **10. ADJOURNMENT**

COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. VICE CHAIR LIPPS 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 6:38 p.m.

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