



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE
MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, August 12, 2021**

Meeting held electronically

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

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Wenstrom called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members present as noted above.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments received.

Mr. Ekblaw noted that one public comment had been received from Randell Ford, regarding e-bikes. The comment will be posted as part of the public record.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of the Regular Meeting minutes of June 3, 2021

Commissioners noted that the word "minutes" was misspelled in document title.

VICE-CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO MOVED TO APPROVE THE JUNE 3, 2021 MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES AS AMENDED. 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 DISSIDENTING VOTES.

5. APPROVAL OF COMMISSION BY-LAWS

Mr. Ekblaw recalled that the by-laws were previously reviewed by the Commission.

COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO MOVED TO APPROVE THE 2021 BYLAWS. COMMISSIONER HACKBARTH 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.

6. PRESERVE POLICY PROCESS

- A. Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, will provide an update on the Policy process and integration with recently approved City Council Strategic Objectives process
- B. Review elements for review and cost evaluation
- C. Review Fall meeting timeline and public process

Mr. Ekblaw gave an update on the policy process and the seven elements being considered by the Commission. He explained that City Council recently organized their FY 2021/22 Strategic Plan, which speaks to additional land acquisition within the Preserve, future maintenance of the Preserve, and exploring funding options. In order to stay in line with the Council process, he recommended that the Commission postpone recommendations on “comprehensive funding review and recommendations” section and concentrate on the other sections between now and November, with a goal of making a recommendation to Council by December. He recommended that the Commission address Council’s priorities by looking at the opportunity for matching grant dollars or other funding sources as well as categorizing priorities. He anticipates that Council will offer feedback during a work study session in December and the Commission can have a final recommendation prepared by spring/summer of 2022. The funding process would then be included as part of a holistic City budget overview.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions and make comments. Mr. Ekblaw explained that the goal in postponing the comprehensive funding review is to be able to identify costs and funding options before presenting the recommendations to Council for feedback. Mr. Ekblaw reviewed past discussions by the Commission regarding possible funding sources for Preserve maintenance, which included consideration of utilizing remaining funds from the two existing Preserve taxes to generate funds.

Chair Wenstrom requested that staff prepare a presentation outlining the remaining tax dollars, so the Commission can consider the most appropriate way to allocate those funds.

7. 128TH STREET STATUS IN STREETS MASTER PLAN

Mr. Ekblaw reviewed the history of the area from 128th Street Corridor, south of Dynamite to Tom’s Thumb Trailhead. He highlighted areas of construction activity and road construction, noting that road construction south of Ranch Gate Road into Tom’s Thumb is expected to be completed within the year. There are currently no plans for construction in the area north of Ranch Gate Road. In 2015, the McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission made a recommendation to that the Transportation Commission and City Council that they redesignate

the portion of 128th Street through the Preserve from a minor collector to an emergency access and public path trail. At that time, due to a number of considerations including zoning issues and input from police/fire, the request was tabled. The MSPC made the recommendation again in 2019, but no Council action was taken.

Mr. Ekblaw said that there is a new opportunity to recommend redesignating 128th Street from a minor collector to an emergency access and public path trail as part of the Transportation Commission's review of the Transportation Master Plan.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Ekblaw explained that since 2015, street improvements have been completed. There are no plans in the five-year CIP to improve roadways north of Ranch Gate Road or Jomax. The street from Ranch Gate Road to Tom's Thumb Trailhead is a minor collector. Recent improvements in the area are being done by developers.

Mr. Ekblaw explained that the recommendation to wait until late 2021 to make a recommendation to the Transportation Commission and ultimately City Council is so that the recommendation can be included as part of the Transportation Master Plan public process.

Discussion ensued regarding the Commission's interest in moving forward with a recommendation at this time, rather than waiting to take part in the Transportation Master Plan process. Commissioners requested that consideration of forwarding a possible recommendation be agendaized for the next meeting. Mr. Ekblaw reiterated his opinion that the recommendation should be parallel with the Transportation Master Plan review and a recommendation considered for the late October/early November meeting. He explained that if a recommendation is brought forward to the City Attorney's Office, it would be met with the response that the recommendation is out of sequence. At this time the Commission has the option of directing the Chair to draft a letter to the Transportation Commission regarding the 128th Street designation.

Mr. Ekblaw noted that the square mile of land south of Rio Verde near 136th Street and 128th Street is not within the recommended study boundary. This land belongs to many different owners. Commissioners requested that staff present information regarding the ownership of the area, as well as information on what the process would be for the City to acquire that land.

Mr. Ekblaw said that there are areas in the Preserve Master Plan that reference a land bridge or some sort of connection near Rio Verde. Staff will agendaize a presentation regarding what a land bridge might look like.

Chair Wenstrom requested that a discussion of the possibility of gating access to the gooseneck at 128th Street be agendaized. Mr. Ekblaw will contact the City Attorneys office regarding the Commission's authority to make a recommendation to install an emergency gate.

8. STAFF REPORTS

Mr. Hamilton presented photographs of the effects of the recent rain episodes on the wash area at Lost Dog Wash. City staff, stewards, and the construction crew are taking advantage of the opportunity to observe the flow of the water through that area.

He gave an update on the construction progress at Pima/Dynamite Trailhead. His presentation included photographs of draft signage, which will include interpretive information, orientation information, maps, and route suggestions. He anticipates a soft opening of the building sometime in September. The dedication ceremony is planned for October 16, 2021.

Mr. Hamilton gave an update on the progress of the Camino Campana Interpretive Trail, named for Former Mayor Sam Campana, at Fraesfield Trailhead.

Upcoming Preserve events include:

- September 28th: Mayor's proclamation for McDowell Sonoran Preserve Month
- October 16th: Pima/Dynamite trailhead dedication
- October 31: Camino Campana Interpretive Trail dedication

Mr. Hamilton talked about the City of Phoenix pilot program, focused on closing access to Camelback Mountain and Piestewa Peak on excessive heat days. He presented information on the efforts the City of Scottsdale has made in the Preserve at this time to address educating the public about the dangers of both humans and dogs being on the trails when there is excessive heat through the use of signage at the trails. Excessive heat dangers education signs can be switched to "If it rains, refrain" signs during times of excessive rain. Signs warning of possible bee swarms are posted during the spring.

Mr. Ekblaw noted that discussions are ongoing with public relations staff, the fire department and other Valley cities regarding developing excessive heat day campaigns.

Commissioners requested that staff agendize presentation of statistics regarding heat-related rescues both in Phoenix and the Preserve.

Mr. Hamilton noted that the City has recently purchased barricades, "Preserve closed" signs, and closure tape in anticipation of any future emergency closure situations. Consideration is being given to installing locking swing arms for entry gates.

9. UPCOMING MEETING DATES, LOCATIONS, AND AGENDA ITEMS

All dates listed are tentative and subject to amendment:

2021 meetings thru November:

Regular meetings

September 2nd – Policy Process

October 7th – Policy Process

November 4th – Policy Process

Special meetings

September 16th – Policy Process

October 21st – Policy Process

November 18th – Policy Process

Mr. Ekblaw suggested that due to the Labor Day holiday, the September 2 meeting be rescheduled. He will survey the Commission about possible alternate dates.

Possible future agenda items include:

- Land acquisition process
- Consideration of drafting a letter to the Transportation Commission regarding 128th Street
- Trail density and the effect on wild life

- A review of the worksheet numbers
- Maricopa County Flood Control District rain statistics

10. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Chair Wenstrom asked if there has been any progress on creating a tool for stewards to reference when addressing people about e-bike restrictions. Mr. Hamilton said that the City is in discussions with other agencies who are considering how to address e-bikes. The Preserve prohibits motorized vehicles, but many other agencies have no provisions and are allowing e-bikes in the interim until a determination can be made for how to address their use.

11. ADJOURNMENT

COMMISSIONER OLSSON MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO 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 6:40 p.m.

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