



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

Thursday, July 13, 2023
Florence Ely Nelson Desert Park
8950 E. Pinnacle Peak Road
Scottsdale, AZ 85255

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, Senior Trails Planner; Natural Resources Coordinator Dave Myers; Bill Murphy, Assistant City Manager; Tom Shannon, Scottsdale Fire Chief; Troy Lutrick, Emergency Manager; Kerry Swick, Deputy Fire Chief

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Lipps 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 June 29, 2023

CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO MOVED TO APPROVE THE JUNE 29, 2023 MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES. COMMISSIONER SMITH SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SIX (6) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, VICE-CHAIR LIPPS, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, HACKBARTH, SMITH, AND ENGELKING VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

5. PROTECT THE PRESERVE PROCESS UPDATE

Staff provided an update on the process to review costs and programs to protect the McDowell Sonoran Preserve.

- Council and Task Force Process update

Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, said that the process time frame is still estimated to be March through August with the Task Force planning for the first study session with Council in September.

- Updates to cost projections

Mr. Ekblaw reviewed details of the updates made to the four key categories, focusing on annual costs. The four key categories include: Daily Preserve Activities and Operations, Sonoran Desert Preservation and Education, Habitat Protection, and Cultural History Protection. The presentation included a review of one-time Commission cost projections; focus on the tax expiring in 2034; strategic opportunities with the expiring tax; construction cost estimates; and the Preserve Commission cost projection worksheet, five-year program for the Preserve.

Commissioners asked clarifying questions about cost estimates presented during the presentation. Mr. Ekblaw noted that the Land and Improvements section of the worksheet will not be part of the presentation to the Task Force and will be brought to the Commission for review at a later date.

Commissioners expressed support for the summary of cost projections as presented.

6. STAFF REPORTS

- Diamond Fire update

Fire Chief Tom Shannon, Emergency Manager Troy Lutrick, and Deputy Fire Chief Kerry Swick gave an update on the Diamond Fire. Chief Shannon said that it was a four alarm fire and they had the most optimal conditions they could have possibly had to manage the fire due to weather and terrain conditions as well as the fact that brush truck spot checks have been increased and forest service teams were stationed near Tom's Thumb and witnessed the fire start. Countless state and federal assets, firefighters, aircraft, and light vehicles were active within an hour-and-a-half of the start of the fire. Chief Shannon said that thanks to the 'Bump and Run' technique, crews were able to keep the fire away from populated areas in the meantime, while waiting for air crews to arrive. The presentation included an explanation of how fire could spread on different terrains, with examples given regarding areas around various trailheads.

Mr. Lutwick described the details of how the fire evacuations were managed utilizing the Maricopa County Emergency Management Wireless Emergency Alert system (WEA). He noted that once the State Forestry Type 3 Team took over, Scottsdale Fire was able to return to its normal duties.

Chief Swick said that the majority of fires are started at construction sites. He talked in detail about the new process that has been integrated into the City's inspection program that enables inspectors to conduct surprise inspections on new construction sites and track the findings with

the help of a GIS system on their portable devices. He talked about the importance of fuel management and said that the fire department continues to work closely with Preserve staff and the Public Works department to address fuel vulnerabilities. He noted that entering monsoon season poses increased threat of naturally occurring fires. Funding for mitigation projects comes from grants, General Fund dollars, or the fire department's regular budget.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Chief Swick explained that construction crews are required to comply to a checklist of safety protocols. Chief Shannon confirmed that the Diamond Fire was preventable, citations have been issued, and details about how it started have been forwarded to prosecutors.

- Mountain rescue data

Chief Shannon explained that between data sources and the fact that the data analyst left the city, he is unable to give detailed data on technical rescues. He noted that assumptions can be made based on total call volume and call type. Mountain Rescue technical rescue callouts (TRT) are sometimes walkouts and sometimes flyouts. Approximately 40 percent of calls are heat-related walk-outs, some of which result in a fall. Technical elements equate to approximately 1/3 of calls. Gateway, Brown's Ranch, and Pinnacle Peak are the top areas for calls for service. He said that as soon as a new data analyst is in place, work will begin on developing more precise data relating to location and type of incidents. It is his hope that data can be used to communicate with Preserve staff and make suggestions for signage, education, or trail work that will address areas of concern.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Chief Shannon agreed that data concerning trouble areas on trails could be communicated to stewards so they can increase patrol in those areas.

- Ecological Resource Plan

Mr. Hamilton said that they are continuing to work on the projects schedule and will have more details for the September meeting.

- Rock Climbing Management Plan

Mr. Hamilton said that a scope of work request has gone out to archeological firms on contract with the City. More details will be available at future meetings.

- APS Transmission Line Project

Mr. Hamilton gave an update on the APS transmission line project, highlighting the before and after of the trench being dug to install the fiber optic lines. It was noted that the contractors are held to a high standard and a water truck stays with the workers at every step of the project.

Mr. Hamilton gave an update on the July 4th Preserve closure and fire watch, thanking Stewards and volunteers who participated.

Commissioners inquired about the next steps for the area affected by the Diamond Fire. Mr. Hamilton said the City is working with Conservancy staff and the County park to put together a plan for the area to promote growth of native plants and prevent growth of invasive plants in

the disturbed area. Mr. Myers described the damage along the trails that were affected. The area is reopened to the public and signs cautioning that a burned area is being approached have been installed.

7. UPCOMING MEETING DATES, LOCATIONS, AND AGENDA ITEMS

All dates listed are tentative and subject to amendment:

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

Mr. Ekblaw said that he is scheduled to give his presentation to the Protect and Preserve Task Force on July 31st. Since the Commission unanimously supported the cost projections, there should be no need for additional special meetings this summer. The next meeting will be held September 7, 2023.

8. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

There were no Commissioner comments.

9. ADJOURNMENT

COMMISSIONER HACKBARTH MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER SMITH SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SIX (6) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, VICE-CHAIR LIPPS, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, HACKBARTH, 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 6:17 p.m.

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