



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

Thursday, October 5, 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 (attended virtually), Kerry Olsson, Jeffrey Smith, and Savannah Engelking (arrived at 5:14 p.m., attended virtually)

ABSENT: Commissioner Jeffrey Smith

STAFF: Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, Scott Hamilton, Preserve 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 September 7, 2023.

COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO MOVED TO APPROVE THE SEPTEMBER 7, 2023 MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES. COMMISSIONER OLSSON SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED FIVE (5) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, VICE-CHAIR LIPPS, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, HACKBARTH, AND OLSSON VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES. COMMISSIONER ENGELKING WAS NOT YET PRESENT.

5. MCDOWELL SONORAN CONSERVANCY UPDATE

Kelly McCullough, Interim CEO of the Conservancy, provided the update. Steward programs are ramping up for the season, including launching of the S101 training as well as guided hike and bikes. There is commemoration for the stewards' 25th year anniversary. The Conservancy

website is in need of updates and is currently being revamped to become more user-friendly, particularly in terms of trail map access. An information card has been developed which includes a scannable QR code for access to the Conservancy website and information about becoming a steward. The other side of the card provides information on the photo contest, which is intended to increase and enhance engagement. The City is relaunching its Tour De Scottsdale cycling event on April 13, 2024 with the title sponsor being HonorHealth. A preeminent nonprofit cycling event producer has been engaged. The issue of tortoises being removed from the Preserve by individuals without authorization was discussed.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. There was discussion on posting signage prohibiting removal of tortoises, other wildlife and artifacts from the Preserve. There are plans to increase communications on this issue via e-news and other avenues. While the number of hike and bike groups participating in a hike can be as many as 50 or 60, according to the guidelines, they must break themselves down into groups of 10 to 20 at a time and go in different directions.

6. PROTECT THE PRESERVE PROCESS UPDATE

Kroy Ekblaw, Contactor, presented the summarized data sheet of recommendations that went to the Task Force and the revised format that has evolved with the Task Force's work thus far. The total of \$3.5 million is higher than originally anticipated, as the facilities budget of \$382,000 had been unintentionally dropped. Staffing needs, contractual needs and commodities are all included in the categories presented previously. The budget was presented to the Task Force a couple of weeks ago and there was no opposition to the figures included.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Ekblaw confirmed that the budget for staffing needs, both existing and projected, has always been included. Scott Hamilton, Preserve Manager, noted that the terminology, such as staffing, contractual services and commodities comes from the General Fund operating budgets. The financial services department is starting to put the terms into, "General Fund language," which provides ease of understanding for the City Council. Mr. Ekblaw stated that he would bring the update back next month to break out the budget categories. In the future, the goal will be to have yearly discussions on five-year master plans that include invasive plant and fire mitigation. The process seems promising at this time and conservative estimates suggest the possibility of 30 years of ongoing care and protection of the Preserve. The Task Force is working on developing ballot language for the extension of the 0.2 percent tax in its current form or with a reduction.

7. ONE TIME PRESERVE COSTS UPDATE

Kroy Ekblaw, Contractor, provided a brief update on the core areas. A major issue for Sunrise Trailhead is the potential to add a restroom at the lower lot and update the parking surface. The cost projection is \$1.1 to 1.5 million. For Lost Dog Trailhead, there are ideas for providing shade at the gathering and exhibition space with enhance volunteer space. The cost projection is \$1.1 to 1.5 million. The Gateway Trailhead proposal is for resurfacing of parking and equestrian stalls, updating of toilets and sinks. The cost projection is \$3.1 to \$4.5 million. Tom's Thumb Trailhead involves a water conversion, signage, restroom lighting, updates to toilets and sinks and resurfacing of the equestrian lot. The cost range is \$3.3 to \$4 million. Brown's Ranch Trailhead improvements include upgrading toilets and sinks, upgrades to lighting in volunteer space and restrooms, drainage improvements and trail patio, resurfacing parking stalls and equestrian lot. The cost projection is \$1 to \$1.4 million. Combining the three northern locations includes signage updates to Fraesfield and Granite Mountain, restroom lighting and interpretive

trail. The cost projection is \$2.5 to \$3.5 million. The Ringtail and 104th and Bell improvements are intended to provide standardization with other trailheads. The cost projection is \$4 to \$6 million. The total for all trailheads is between \$16 to \$18.5 million. There is a ten-year range time projection for the wildlife crossing. Approximately 12 miles of fencing need replacement or revision. A range for all projects combined is \$43 to \$62 million.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Future discussions can include cooler pavement options, however, this is subject to maintenance requirements. The move away from stabilized DG in parking areas is due to lack of longevity and significant maintenance costs. Asphalt is more practical for the heavy uses on trailheads. In equestrian areas, they have been utilizing stabilized AB. This has also been used at Fraesfield and Granite car parking areas. An evaluation of ongoing conditions will be made. Based on Commissioner input, Mr. Ekblaw stated that a review of the prioritization process and determinations would be a good topic to bring back for further discussion.

8. ERP (ECOLOGICAL RESOURCE PLAN) UPDATE AND SCHEDULE

Scott Hamilton, Preserve Manager provided the update, including a meeting with the Conservancy last week. This was essentially a stakeholder input meeting, including review of the skeletal outline. Next steps include buildout of the outline toward completion of the document itself. The discussion led to the realization that there are two tiers of indicators: Crucial and general species indicators. This will assist in prioritization as well as the annual budgeting process based on the master plan. Study methods and frequency were addressed. A follow-up discussion will involve utilization of all information and data towards management of the Preserve. Once all the stakeholder input has been analyzed and incorporated where feasible and the plan has been drafted, public outreach will occur. The finalized plan will move through the approval process, including a recommendation from the Preserve Commission to City Council.

9. STAFF REPORTS

Scott Hamilton, Preserve Manager, stated that the Rock Climbing Plan is currently in the cultural review stage. There have been several field dates with the archeologist. The official summary reports are due back in a couple of weeks. In the meantime, there are discussions with the Conservancy to schedule dates in November and December. Staff will continue to update the Preserve Commission and seek its input prior to calls for public input. It is anticipated that the plan will be finalized this winter with implementation planned for the spring. Signage is the main implementation element. Earlier this week, there was installation of a step gate closure arm prototype. The prototype pivots and can hold signage as needed. The APS underground fiber project is winding down. The project has received public comment. Phase 2 of the Brown's Ranch Trailhead sign project is completed. This includes the biographical sign for Senator Carolyn Allen. Also at Brown's Ranch, there is now a hike route sign and separate bike route sign.

10. UPCOMING MEETING DATES, LOCATIONS AND AGENDA ITEMS

All Dates listed are tentative and subject to amendment:

- Regular Meetings –
 - 2023 - November 2
 - 2024 - February 1, March 7, and April 4

11. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Olsson commented about seeing an increase in the use of tent signs and suggested exploring a better quality material.

12. ADJOURNMENT

CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SIX (6) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, VICE-CHAIR LIPPS, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, ENGELKING, HACKBARTH AND OLSSON VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 6:26 p.m.

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