



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE  
MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
Wednesday, April 1, 2021  
Meeting held electronically**

**PRESENT:** Chairperson Cynthia Wenstrom, Vice-Chair Laurie LaPat-Polasko, Commissioners Steve Coluccio, Steve Dodd, Mark Hackbarth, Marsha Lipps, and Tawana Parker

**STAFF:** Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director; Scott Hamilton, Senior Trails Planner

**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**

Mr. Ekblaw read a comment from Carla into the record, as follows.

"I am coming to you as a Preserve pioneer to ask you, the current guardians of Scottsdale's national treasure to remember and to learn from our Preserve history.

Some 30 years ago we reached out to and learned from some of the best zoning attorneys in Arizona. One of the most important lessons was once we have a voter approved preserve boundary, do not waver on it. If you do, we attorneys will fight you on every single purchase with the following argument: You adjusted the boundary there, so why not over here? Acre by acre, your Preserve vision and the reasons for it will fail.

I say this because the same approach and argument apply to uses in our Preserve. Yes, and I'm talking about E-bikes and the like – if you open the door, you will not be able to close it. Off roaders were early Preserve opponents. They were tied to the national OHV (off highway vehicles) lobby. They were very well funded with the best attorneys. Anytime they sense a weakness, they will be back in one form or another.

If you let the proverbial camel's nose under the tent, little by little, the Preserve mission, so clearly layed out in chapter 21, will disappear. Decades from now one-third of our City will not be this natural treasure, nor will it be the way in which we preserve our past, our national environment, and mitigate the pressures of urban life – it will become a large park.

I am asking you to please join me and think about the impact every single Preserve decision will have 50 years from now. We must continue to honor the Preserve ordinance. We must put protecting our natural resources first and appropriate public access second.

Attorneys and their opinions come and go. If we continue to support access for other uses in both our municipal parks and neighboring regional parks, then we have continued to demonstrate fairness for all. As long as there is access on some land, there doesn't have to be all access on our Preserve land – think national parks and wilderness areas.

We have entrusted the McDowell Sonoran Preserve to you. Please be vigilant and protect it and all the natural treasures it holds for future generations.

Thank you for your time and consideration – Carla, Preserve pioneer

#### **4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Approval of the Regular Meeting minutes of March 18, 2021

COMMISSIONER HACKBARTH MOVED TO APPROVE THE MARCH 18, 2021 MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES. COMMISSIONER PARKER SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR WENSTROM, VICE-CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, DODD, HACKBARTH, LIPPS, AND PARKER VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

#### **5. CONSERVANCY UPDATE**

Justin Owen announced 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events scheduled for the month of April. Activities include celebration of City Council officially honoring the Conservancy Stewardship program in April of 1999; the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy induction into the Scottsdale Hall of Fame in 2010; the celebration of three early Preserve champions, Jane Rau, Carla, and Chet Andrews; and the geological map of the McDowell Mountains, prepared by citizen stewards, which was accepted by the State of Arizona as the official map of record.

Expedition Days online program has approximately 60 classes with over 1,500 students signed up to participate. The Mesa school district is partnering with the Conservancy to provide feedback on improving the program. Scottsdale Unified School District is expected to join in the effort. Online programming will continue to be offered once in-person programs restart.

Mr. Owen said that fieldwork at Brown's Ranch is ongoing. He noted that last week the citizen science and staff crews were snowed out. Scientists and steward leads recently trained with Desert Tortoise specialists in preparation for the Desert Tortoise telemetry program.

The Conservancy is collaborating with Intel to create an artificial intelligence program that will analyze aerial footage of the preserve to identify plant species by identifying color signatures to each of the species within the Preserve.

Stewards have begun FireWise training with the Fire Department, which will continue for the coming weeks. Mr. Owen thanked Commissioner Coluccio for coordinating with the fire department on behalf of the Conservancy.

Pathfinders completed an initial pilot study at Brown's Ranch to assess whether trailhead ambassador services could recommence. Visitors were welcoming to the pathfinders. Phase two of the pilot study will include three-day programs at Brown's Ranch and Lost Dog Wash.

As part of the Earth Day celebration, the Conservancy will sponsor litter pickup along Dynamite and Rio Verde.

## **6. PIMA DYNAMITE AREA TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS UPDATE**

Mr. Hamilton gave an update on Pima/Dynamite trail improvements. He reviewed the map, highlighting completed trails and trail connections and progress in Area K. As the work progresses, staff will revisit with the Phase 3 group to identify alignment refinements. Flex posts were installed to mark the beginning of each trail. Multiple signs were posted in areas where staff felt an additional reminder was needed to encourage people to follow official routes. Installation of trail directional signs and fencing will continue over the next few weeks.

## **7. POLICY PROCESS UPDATE**

- A. Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, provided an update on the policy process, timeline, and future cost estimating of policy ideas.

As part of his presentation, Mr. Ekblaw summarized items presented during the last meeting.

- B. Review cost estimates for Wildland Fire Mitigation

Mr. Ekblaw reviewed the plan for wildland fire mitigation. The plan is to thin high threat areas and maintain a reduction in regrowth in those areas by using a pre-emergent two times per year, just before the rainy seasons.

He outlined the cost for each mitigation as follows:

- Peripheral areas - Pre-emergent, approximately \$20,000 per year
- Peripheral areas - Thinning on a five-year cycle, approximately \$30,000 per year
- Interior accessways – Pre-emergent treatment two times per year, approximately \$100,000 per year
- Trailheads – Pre-emergent two times per year, approximately \$11,000 per year and thinning over a five-year cycle

Total cost for mitigation is estimated at approximately \$168,000 per year.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Ekblaw said that the City is working with Scottsdale Fire Department and Tonto National Forest to reach out to agencies, including the power companies, Tonto National Forest, County Regional Park, and others, who would benefit from partnering in the mitigation efforts. Grant funding opportunities are available. Work will be done primarily by contractors and also by Preserve staff.

- C. Review cost estimates for Cultural Master Plan

Mr. Hamilton reviewed the estimated costs for the Cultural Master Plan. The plan includes a list of all of the things in the 2015 cultural resource master plan. The list includes items with both associated costs and no associated costs.

He outlined the cost for items with an associated cost as follows:

- Class 3 surveys – approximately \$12,000 to \$15,000 per year over a 30-year period
- Cultural landscape inventory – approximately \$15,000 per topic, with six topics, estimated at approximately \$3,000 per year.
- Providing targeted educational venues – approximately \$7,500 per year
- Implementing treatment for sites – approximately \$7,500 per year
- Brown’s Ranch historic component – estimated at a total project cost between \$200,000 and \$400,000

Mr. Ekblaw said that he anticipates that for the April 15 meeting, staff will be prepared to present estimates on corridor protection and trailhead and master plans. He anticipates that the process will be completed in time to be presented during a Council work study session in late summer/early fall of 2022 and will be ready to go to a public vote in November of 2022.

## **8. STAFF REPORTS**

There were no staff reports.

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

All dates listed are tentative and subject to amendment:

- April 15<sup>th</sup> –
  - Policy Process
    - Review Cost estimates for Corridor Protection
    - Review Cost estimates for Trails and Trailheads
  
- 2021 thru June:

<b><u>Regular meetings</u></b>	<b><u>Special meetings</u></b>
May 6 <sup>th</sup>	May 20 <sup>th</sup>
June 3 <sup>rd</sup>	June 17 <sup>th</sup>
- Possible Tour - Date TBD

Mr. Ekblaw said that there are no specific plans for another tour at this time. Chair Wenstrom suggested that Commissioners take a tour of the Pima/Dynamite trailhead before the soft opening in July.

## **10. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

Commissioner Coluccio said he received an email regarding when City Boards and Commissions would be able to return to in-person meetings. Mr. Ekblaw said that initially in-person meetings will only include staff and commissioners and will require televising the meetings. Kiva/City Hall is the only location that has the video equipment to accommodate public viewing, so opportunities will be limited.

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

COMMISSIONER LIPPS 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, DODD, HACKBARTH, LIPPS, AND PARKER VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 5:58 p.m.

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