



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

**Wednesday, May 5, 2022**  
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, Cynthia Wenstrom

**STAFF:** Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director; Scott Hamilton, Preserve Manager; Natural Resources Coordinator John Loleit, Recreation Leader Sr. Madison Barasha; Chief of Police Jeff Walther, Deputy Fire Chief Kerry Swick, and Bill Murphy, Assistant City 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 April 7, 2022

COMMISSIONER OLSSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE APRIL 7, 2022 MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES. COMMISSIONER WENSTROM SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, VICE-CHAIR LIPPS, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, HACKBARTH, OLSSON, SMITH, AND WENSTROM VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

**5. MCDOWELL SONORAN CONSERVANCY UPDATE**

Melanie Tluczek gave an update on the end of the 2022 season. Her presentation included information about Steward programs, the Citizen Science program, the invasive species

management plan and mapping of degraded lands. The tortoise telemetry program is continuing and the wildlife camera tracking project has begun. Expedition Days is scheduled for Fall and will include third and fourth graders as well as a day for the public. SUSD is interested in expanding the seventh grade Citizen Science program to all seventh grades as well as possibly high school students in the coming years. Ms. Tluczek reviewed participation information for the guided hike and bike programs, nature guides, the Site Stewardship program, Trailhead Ambassadors (formerly Pathfinders), and the Firewise program.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Ms. Tluczek explained that the site restoration program is a pilot project to test a variety of things, including growing bio crust in greenhouse conditions for use in testing for seed growth and erosion. Degraded lands mapping is the use of aerial mapping of areas for use with regional partners prioritizing areas in need of restoration.

## **6. PUBLIC SAFETY IN THE PRESERVE**

Jeff Walther, Scottsdale Chief of Police, talked about the three-year game plan he has for the police department. He highlighted the Park Ranger program, which will be launched this fiscal year and will include three sworn park rangers, who will be sworn officers. Park Rangers will be supported by the Foothills District patrol staff and will be responsible for the Preserve, as well as the 40 Scottsdale parks and the greenbelt area throughout the city. They will be connected with the mounted unit and will primarily travel by foot, horseback, bicycle, or pickup trucks. Both the Park Ranger program and the Short-term Rental Squad are funded with Prop 207 dollars.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Chief Walther said that rangers will be a fully tactical tech unit and will have access to drones, just the same as other areas of the police department. Park Rangers will be assigned to various areas throughout the city based on "directive activity," which will determine where they are most needed.

## **7. SUMMER HEAT MESSAGING COORDINATION – Scottsdale Fire**

Kerry Swick, Deputy Fire Chief, reviewed the six steps to Community Risk Reduction (CRR) and Protecting the Preserve, which include identifying risks, prioritizing those risks, developing strategies and tactics, creating a community risk reduction plan, implementing the risk reduction plan, and monitoring and evaluating the results. Steps currently being taken to address wildland season and hiker safety include collaborating with the Conservancy in their education and signage programs, communicating through social media, and providing educational materials to Scottsdale resorts. Deputy Chief Swick briefly talked about the Firewise program, noting mitigation specialist Dave Ramirez secured grants that have enabled the mitigation process to move forward. Risk reduction evaluations have shown that primary fire risks come from construction sites and fireworks.

Kristi Gagnon, Scottsdale Fire Marshal, said that the City works to collaborate with fireworks partners and be a good steward for residents by offering a fillable application form on the Fire Department website.

Deputy Chief Swick gave an overview of the Community Risk Reduction Captains responsibilities. The three captains operate out of Car 6030, providing 24-hour coverage. He explained that the Automatic Aid program connects departments throughout the Valley by using satellite location to send the nearest truck to an emergency location.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Brief discussion took place regarding mountain rescues and Firewise training.

## **8. STAFF REPORTS**

- Rio Verde Trail Crossing

Mr. Ekblaw reported that in response to the inquiry about the Rio Verde Trail Crossing, the transportation department has indicated that it does not qualify for anything beyond what is currently at that location. Field counters have been installed in the area and data can be reevaluated over the coming years.

Mr. Ekblaw said that council strategic objectives related to the Preserve, and future funding has been rescheduled until May 17th. He hopes to have more information in time for the June Commission meeting.

- Working Group process startup for May-August

Mr. Ekblaw said staff will be sending out invitations to Commissioners over the next five to ten days regarding participating in the working groups.

Mr. Ekblaw announced that City Council recently approved the Transportation Access Plan, which includes clarification of graphics and verbiage, identifying 128th Street as gated emergency access only. The gated access has not been identified on the five-year plan and funding is not currently available. Contractual agreements for construction access are still in place with some communities.

APS has indicated that transmission line corridor maintenance will begin in fall of 2022, focusing primarily on the towers and poles. Staff will meet with APS in the next week to learn more about the types of equipment that will be needed.

Mr. Hamilton presented photographs of the new Fire Danger signs. He said that there are 20 large signs and 50 small signs that will be installed at access points throughout the Preserve. He presented the new Granite Mountain directional sign, which is installed facing westbound Rio Verde traffic.

Mr. Hamilton said that Arizona Highways recently filmed a piece highlighting the Gateway Trailhead. Staff interviews included information regarding hikes, plants, and wildlife in the Preserve and the City's relationship with the Conservancy.

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

- June 2<sup>nd</sup> – Scottsdale Stadium - possible tour
  - Studies related to cooler paving options
  - Update of:
    - Preserve numbers/activity from 21/22 season
    - ERP process for 22/23
    - Cultural activity and Site Steward program
- Field Tour options – Fall - TBD
- Fall meeting dates – September 1, October 6, November 3

Commissioner Olsson requested that discussion about the process of building a land bridge over Rio Verde be agendaized for a future meeting.

**10. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

Chair LaPat-Polasko announced that this is Commissioner Wenstrom's last meeting, thanking her for her years of dedication to the Commission and the Preserve.

Commissioner Wenstrom spoke about her time on the Commission.

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER OLSSON SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, VICE-CHAIR LIPPS, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, HACKBARTH, OLSSON, SMITH, AND WENSTROM VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 6:43 p.m.

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