



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE
MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, September 1, 2022
Florence Ely Nelson Desert Park
8950 E. Pinnacle Peak Rd.
Scottsdale, AZ 85260**

PRESENT: Chairperson Laurie LaPat-Polasko, Vice-chair Marsha Lipps, Commissioners Steve Coluccio, Mark Hackbarth, Jeffrey Smith, Savannah Engelking

ABSENT: Commissioner Kerry Olsson

STAFF: Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director; Scott Hamilton, Senior Trails Planner; Dave Myers, Natural Resource Supervisor; Yvonne Massman, Natural Resource Coordinator

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 June 2, 2022

COMMISSIONER SMITH MOVED TO APPROVE THE JUNE 2, 2022 MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES. COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO 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. MCDOWELL SONORAN CONSERVANCY UPDATE

Melanie Tluczek gave an update on Conservancy programs. Her presentation included information about Jane Rau's 100th birthday party; development of the invasive plant multiyear

plan and application for approximately \$200,000 in grant funding; Steward and Trail Ambassador program activities; the site stewardship program; increased opportunities to attend the library lecture series; the Conservancy's partnership with the Arizona Herpetological Society; and upcoming events. Upcoming events include the Steward kickoff; Zoom Lunch and Learn Series; Stewardship 101; and Tour de Scottsdale in partnership with the DC Ranch community. She noted that Expedition Days will be November 1st through 5th and February 28th through March 4th.

Commissioner Coluccio encouraged everyone to attend a Zoom presentation about the Site Steward Program scheduled for September 27th at 5:30 p.m.

6. SPECIAL USE PERMIT REQUESTS

A. November 2022 – Equestrian Distance Ride

Scott Hamilton, Senior Trails Planner, presented the Equestrian Distance Ride event request. The event is an endurance horse ride sanctioned by the American Endurance Ride Conference, scheduled for November 12, 2022. He said the event will be staged within County Regional Park, with the exception of a watering station that will be located in the parking area at Tom's Thumb trailhead. Various distances will include 100 mile, 75 mile and 50 mile and they anticipate 30 riders will participate. A \$5 commercial rate will apply per person. He noted that the event is supported by the Conservancy and that an identical permit was issued in 2021.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. An event representative said that using this section of trail instead of the Dixie Mine trail is safer and eliminates congestion on the trail. She said riders are either walking or trotting depending on the terrain. Mr. Hamilton said that the City puts up signs warning trail users that a special event is under way.

COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO MOVED TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL USE PERMIT FOR THE EQUESTRIAN DISTANCE RIDE ON NOVEMBER 12, 2022. VICE-CHAIR LIPPS 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.

B. December 2022 – Distance Running Event

Mr. Hamilton reviewed the 11th annual McDowell Mountain Frenzy event request. The event is scheduled for Saturday, December 3, 2022. Participants in the 50-mile route and the 50-kilometer route will come through the Preserve. A \$5 commercial rate will apply per person. He noted that the Conservancy is in support of the event. Past events have received no negative input from stewards or trail users.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. An event representative explained that water stations will be available for the runners at approximately every five-to-eight-mile marks. He noted that in past years there have been no major medical issues related to the event.

COMMISSIONER SMITH MOVED TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL USE PERMIT FOR THE MCDOWELL MOUNTAIN FRENZY TRAIL RUN IN DECEMBER 2022. COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO 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.

7. LAND BRIDGE PROCESS UPDATE

Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, gave an update on the land bridge process. As part of his presentation, he reviewed the identified location, future steps, an estimated time frame, and ongoing studies that will be beneficial during the design process. He stressed that development of the land bridge at Dynamite and Rio Verde frontage is dependent upon when the City of Scottsdale Citizens Council and the Transportation Department identify a need for road widening in the area, which is likely a minimum of eight to 15 years away. Bridge design and drainage considerations will be dependent upon the specifics of the road widening project. Once a road widening project is identified, the cost estimate will be reevaluated and will likely be significantly higher than the current \$10 million estimate.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Ms. Tluczek said that the 2011 animal mortality rate study has not been duplicated. Mr. Ekblaw explained that the road has not been substantially altered since the 2011 study with the exception of adding bike lanes, but there has been substantial development in the area, which has increased traffic. He noted that Arizona Game and Fish might have a better understanding of the current mortality numbers. Mr. Hamilton described the study process, noting that the original study showed mostly snakes and lizards and smaller animals, very few deer and coyote. It was noted that the study included a scenario for installing drainage culverts or small pipes and fencing that would allow smaller animals to cross safely.

Ms. Tluczek said that it is hoped that the land bridge would encourage more female mule deer to cross the road. Game and fish will recommend a design that will maximize the likelihood that the animals will use the crossing.

Mr. Ekblaw explained that the wildlife crossing has already been identified in both the Transportation Master Plan and the Preserve Master Plan. Once the project is ready to move forward, grant opportunities will be considered. The most likely source will be from MAG roadway dollars. With the increase in popularity of wildland crossings, opportunity for federal dollars may become available by the time the project is ready to move forward. The language in Prop 420 will need to be reviewed to confirm whether excess funds can be earmarked for the land bridge.

8. STAFF REPORTS

- Protecting the Preserve Process

Mr. Ekblaw said that the protecting the Preserve process is expected to go back to City Council for input in September. The process of trailhead and facility improvements will begin in September and the land process will begin a little later, based on the council process. He anticipates that request for tax funding will be defined in time to go to voters in fall of 2024.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Ekblaw explained that a tax force committee will be formed and will be evaluating citywide needs, including the Preserve protection process.

- ERP Process Update

Mr. Ekblaw gave a brief update on the ERP process. More detailed updates will be available in the coming months.

- Invasive Plant and Wildland Fire mitigation work

Mr. Hamilton gave an update on invasive plant and wildlife fire mitigation. He said that vegetation thinning has been completed at Lost Dog Wash Trailhead and work at Gateway Trailhead, Thompson Peak Parkway frontage, and Bell Road frontage will begin in the near future. Stewards have been actively working to address areas of concern and are doing a lot of work following the monsoon season. Stewards recently trained City staff on how to use the GIS field apps map. On September 21st, water containers will be helicoptered in to various areas of the Preserve for use in mixing the herbicides.

Staff is still waiting for an outcome on the grant application jointly submitted in July by the City of Scottsdale and the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management. If successful, the grant dollars will be used to pay contractors to supplement the mitigation done by stewards by working on the larger and more difficult to reach areas.

Mr. Hamilton noted that the second five-year block of the trail construction and maintenance contract just ended and a new request for proposals will be going out soon. The scope of the request has been broadened to include items such as trail maintenance and construction line item, trail signs, metal fences, and vegetation management. Specialized contractors will be targeted and encouraged to apply. Mr. Hamilton reiterated that APS provided the City with dollars that are in a special revenue account to be used for invasive plants.

Chair LaPat-Polasko suggested that staff look into the Board of Regents grants.

9. UPCOMING MEETING DATES, LOCATIONS, AND AGENDA ITEMS

- Field Tour options – Fall - TBD
- Fall meeting dates –October 6, November 3
 - Tourism update
 - Cultural Plan activity
 - Community Risk Reduction Process

Mr. Ekblaw noted that each Commissioner will be receiving an invitation to schedule a one-on-one meeting with Mr. Hamilton and himself.

10. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

There were no additional comments made by Commissioners.

11. ADJOURNMENT

COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. VICE-CHAIR LIPPS 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 6:10 p.m.

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