Approved May 1, 2025

CITY OF SCOTTSDALE
McDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING – MINUTES
Thursday, April 10, 2025
Granite Reef Senior Center - Room 1
1700 N. Granite Reef Road
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

PRESENT: Chairperson Steve Coluccio, Vice-Chair Savannah Engelking, Commissioners Robert Hallagan, Susan Hirschman (arrived at 5:35 p.m.), Pruitt Layton, and Kerry Olsson

ABSENT: Commissioner Ryan Rybarczyk

STAFF: Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director; Scott Hamilton, Preserve Manager; Nick Molinari, Senior Director Parks Recreation and Preserve

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Coluccio called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members present as listed above.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

No members of the public wished to speak.

Chair Coluccio announced that Scott Hamilton is retiring and this will be his last meeting. On behalf of the Commission, he thanked Mr. Hamilton for his years of commitment to the City and the Preserve.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of the minutes of – Regular Meeting March 6, 2025

COMMISSIONER HIRSHMAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MARCH 6, 2025, MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES. COMMISSIONER HALLAGAN SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SIX (6) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR COLUCCIO, VICE-CHAIR ENGELKING, COMMISSIONERS HALLAGAN, HIRSHMAN, LAYTON, AND OLSSON, VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

5. McDOWELL SONORAN CONSERVANCY UPDATE

Brian Whitehead, Conservancy Senior Program Manager, gave an update on McDowell Sonoran Conservancy activities. His presentation included a review of the Conservancy's relationship with the City of Scottsdale, Steward volunteer and Trailhead Ambassador statistics, trail maintenance, public events, and educational activities.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Whitehead explained that the Conservancy has decided to refocus education efforts starting next fall. Conservancy management will determine where education funding will be focused during meetings over the summer. City partnership funding primarily supports the volunteer program and does not directly support Conservancy education programs.

Brief discussion ensued regarding the City prioritizing education programs. Mr. Ekblaw noted that Chapter 21 of the Ordinance speaks to education. He said that there doesn't need to be a specific document outlining what the education efforts will be. Focus of educational programs can vary over time based on need. He suggested that further discussion on City education programs be agendized for a future meeting.

Mr. Whitehead thanked the City of Scottsdale for providing the Scottsdale Stadium Field House for their Steward Recognition celebration.

6. ARIZONA GAME AND FISH – YEARLY UPDATE

This item was rescheduled to May.

7. PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATES

This item was rescheduled to May.

8. STAFF REPORTS

- Carefree Fault Research Project

Mr. Hamilton gave an update on the Arizona Geologic Survey. He gave a detailed explanation of what the researchers are looking for in their investigation. He noted that the Bureau of Reclamation did an environmental assessment as part of the federally required National Environmental Policy Act process. He showed photographs of the trench, pointed out areas where the fault line could be seen, and explained the various types of tests that will be run and the technical steps that are being taken to test the samples. The City has been assured that the project will be completed and the area restored expeditiously.

- Budget Process Update

Mr. Ekblaw gave an update on the budget process. He said that he presented on-time costs and Mr. Molinari presented the operational budget to the Budget Review Commission (BRC) earlier today. The largest point of discussion related to the Preserve will be the wildlife crossing. The BRC will be considering a proposal for options to pursue a feasibility study and to determine a more refined estimate of potential costs as part of their budget review. The BRC is scheduled to meet Friday, April 11th at 1:00 p.m. to discuss their recommendations, which will be forwarded to the City Council on April 22nd. The McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission's (MSPC's) recommendations regarding the wildlife crossing, the operational side of the 490 funds, and one-time costs will be included in the recommendations to the City Council.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Ekblaw said that the MSPC's recommendations will go forward to the City Council as it is, regardless of what the BRC recommends. He assured Commissioners that they have the opportunity at any time to make amendments to their recommendations. If approved, the wildlife crossing feasibility study results would come before the Commission for review and additional recommendations, possibly as part of the next year's budget process. Mr. Molinari explained that staff has the wildlife crossing in years three through five of the five-year plan, and there is currently $250,000 in the proposed FY 2025/26 budget allocated towards that project.

9. UPCOMING MEETING DATES, LOCATIONS AND AGENDA ITEMS

All Dates listed are Tentative and subject to amendment:

- Regular Meetings – May 1st; June 5th

Upcoming agenda items include:

- Arizona Game and Fish – Yearly Update
- Public Safety Updates

10. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioners expressed interest in more information about how the current political environment might affect the City's budget and anticipated sales tax revenue. Mr. Ekblaw said that the Budget Process update will be a staff updates item. It was noted that the City Treasurer gave an update on the FY 2025/26 budget revenues, which continue to be strong. If there is a shift that could affect tax revenues, and the Commission might want to weigh in, an actionable item can be agendized.

Commissioners Olsson and Hallagan expressed interest in having a discussion about future projects.

11. ADJOURNMENT

VICE-CHAIR ENGELKING MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER OLSSON SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SIX (6) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR COLUCCIO, VICE-CHAIR ENGELKING, COMMISSIONERS HALLAGAN, HIRSHMAN, LAYTON, 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 6:37 p.m.

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