



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE
McDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING – MINUTES**

Thursday, November 6, 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, Pruitt Layton, Kerry Olsson (arrived at 5:04 p.m.), and Ryan Rybarczyk

STAFF: Director Jenna Kohl; Senior Director Nick Molinari; Acting Preserve Manager Madison Barasha-Tang; Natural Resource Coordinator Yvonne Massman; Kroy Ekblaw

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Coluccio called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members present as listed above.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no members of the public who wished to speak.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of the minutes of - Work Study Session October 16, 2025

Chair Coluccio noted that at the bottom of page 2, "enterprise resource planning" should be "ecological resource plan projects". The Ordinance mentioned on page 3 should be 3426 instead of 2426.

COMMISSIONER HIRSCHMAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE OCTOBER 16, 2025, MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES AS AMENDED. VICE-CHAIR ENGELKING SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO

ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR COLUCCIO, VICE-CHAIR ENGELKING, COMMISSIONERS HALLAGAN, HIRSHMAN, LAYTON, OLSSON, AND RYBARCZYK VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

5. MCDOWELL SONORAN CONSERVANCY UPDATE

Melanie Tluczek, Director of Science and Education for the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy, updated the Commission on recent Conservancy activities and issues.

Her presentation included an overview of the Parsons Field Institute mission and vision, Conservancy programs, and science and conservation efforts striving to maintain the wellbeing of the Preserve. She highlighted Biodiversity monitoring of the Preserve ecosystem, efforts to remove invasive species, thus preventing fire and protecting the habitat, and ongoing restoration efforts to repair areas damaged by fire and human misuse.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Ms. Tluczek explained that the work currently being done under the Conservancy's contract with the City is based on the 2016 version of the ERP. The new ERP will be integrated into the work plan over the next couple of years. Staff will work with partners who are conducting the research and will evaluate what needs to be accomplished. Items relating to 490 funding and the budget will be brought to the Commission for discussion. Recommended project scopes will be tied to one of the key categories, and the Commission will be provided with information tying actions to one of the categories.

6. CAREFREE FAULT RESEARCH PROJECT UPDATE

Dr. Jeri Young Ben-Horin provided an update on the trench study in the Preserve. Her presentation included the following: an overview of her background; description of seismicity and the three types of faults; the location and level of study that has been done on quaternary faults found in Arizona; and methods for studying faults, including geologic and geomorphic mapping, geophysical methods, and excavations. She outlined the various features of the Carefree fault, details relating to the trench that was dug, and findings that were exposed in studying the faulted sediment, soils, and bedrock. She explained that she was able to interpret past depositional environments as well as the number of earthquakes that were recorded in the sediment, and she was able to collect samples for dating and for pollen assemblages. She provided photographs of the trench and examples of many of the findings.

Ms. Young Ben-Horin summarized the preliminary results, noting that additional determinations could be made with the optically stimulated luminescence and infrared stimulated luminescence dating results. The primary goal for digging the trench was to determine if it is an active fault so that the dam structure can be designed accordingly. Ms. Young Ben-Horin said she anticipates having an updated presentation prepared for the Commission's February meeting.

Commissioners asked clarifying questions throughout the presentation.

7. **STAFF REPORTS**

- Preserve Projects
 - Preserve project tracking: Jenna Kohl, Director, presented a draft project tracking report for Preserve Prop 490 projects and capital projects. She indicated that the Commission will be getting periodic reports on projects moving forward. Commissioners made suggestions and expressed support for the design of the document.
 - Fire fuel mitigation: Madison Barasha-Tang, Acting Preserve Manager, gave an update on the status of the Tom's Thumb and Sunrise Trailheads fire fuel mitigation projects. She indicated that for the safety of the public, the parking lots at sunrise will be closed from Monday, November 10 through Thursday, November 13. Tom's Thumb parking areas will be closed on Monday, November 17 for approximately two days. Yvonne Massman, Natural Resource Coordinator, said that in addition to regular notifications, a fire fuel mitigation notification sign and barricades will be placed in the area. Ms. Barasha-Tang said she will request that park rangers or the police monitor the area while the project is ongoing.
 - Invasive fine fuel breaks: Ms. Barasha-Tang gave an update on the invasive fine fuel break project. She said that the grant is for a two-year timeline, starting with the fall of 2025 portion, which is scheduled from November 5 through the 12th. Work will continue in the spring or summer of 2026, fall of 2026, and spring or summer of 2027. Approximately 63.2 acres will be completed during the fall 2025 portion at a projected cost of \$42,167.36. She explained that there are currently no plans to use fire retardants in the area.
 - Sunrise trail remediation: Ms. Barasha-Tang gave an overview of the upcoming sunrise trail remediation project. The trail builder will do an assessment and remediation of approximately 4.6 miles of trail in mid-November. Staff will be sure to point out areas of concern, including a large boulder that has fallen into the trail and another unstable boulder nearby.
 - Wildlife Corridor Feasibility Study: Ms. Kohl gave an update on the progress of the Wildlife Corridor Feasibility Study. She noted that the purpose of the study is to determine how to allow wildlife to have safe passage between fragmented habitats near Rio Verde Drive. Kimley-Horn will evaluate needs and undertake the design and detailed cost estimates. The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy and Arizona Game and Fish Department will produce biological findings and data analysis. The study is expected to be completed by August of 2026.
 - Brown's Ranch Trailhead Improvements: Ms. Kohl gave an update on the scope of work for Brown's Ranch Trailhead improvements and the timeline for each element of the project development. Construction is anticipated to start in summer of 2026.
- 128th Street

Ms. Kohl gave an update on the status of 128th Street. She said that signage is being installed to notify the public that the road is restricted Preserve land and is available only to authorized vehicles. Gates will be installed limiting access to emergency and authorized city vehicles once Storyrock has completed their development. There is no timeline for the completion of the Storyrock development.

Commissioners expressed concern about the timeline for completion of Storyrock and the potential for the City to change restrictions. Ms. Kohl indicated that staff is limited on what can be done and that they will look into wildlife crossing opportunities in the area if there is an opportunity. Kroy Ekblaw explained that the agreement with Storyrock to use 128th Street access is a stipulation that is part of the original construction approval, and there are no other developments with similar agreements.

8. 2026-2027 BUDGET PROCESS UPDATE

Ms. Kohl presented a tentative budget review timeline. She presented a working budget template that will be used to present changes that are implemented. She proposed that a special meeting be scheduled for January 8, 2026, to discuss the budget, rates, and fees.

9. UPCOMING MEETING DATES, LOCATIONS, AND AGENDA ITEMS

All dates listed are tentative and subject to amendment:

- Special Meeting – January 8, 2026 – Budget Discussion
- Winter Break – December through January – no meetings
- 2026 Regular Meetings:
 - ☐ February 5
 - ☐ March 5
 - ☐ April 2
 - ☐ May 7
 - ☐ June 4

10. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Olsson expressed appreciation for receiving the presentations in advance of the meeting.

11. ADJOURNMENT

VICE-CHAIR ENGELKING MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER LAYTON SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR COLUCCIO, VICE-CHAIR ENGELKING, COMMISSIONERS HALLAGAN, HIRSHMAN, LAYTON, OLSSON, AND RYBARCZYK VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

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