Approved March 5, 2026

CITY OF SCOTTSDALE
McDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING – MINUTES
Thursday, February 5, 2026
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, and Ryan Rybarczyk

ABSENT: Commissioner Kerry Olsson

STAFF: Director Jenna Kohl, Senior Director Nick Molinari, Preserve Manager Kelsey Lamper, Natural Resources Supervisor Madison Barasha-Tang, City Treasurer Sonia Andrews

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Coluccio called the meeting to order at 5:01 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 Regular Meeting minutes of November 6, 2025

VICE-CHAIR ENGELKING MOVED TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 6, 2025 AS PRESENTED. 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 RYBARCZYK VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

Approval of the Special Meeting minutes of January 8, 2026

Commissioner Layton questioned whether it should say “Preserve staff” instead of “Preservation staff” on page 3, item 5. It was noted that internally staff is referred to as preservation staff, and the term was used throughout the presentation in that section. It was the consensus of Commissioners to change the reference to Preserve staff and use that term moving forward.

COMMISSIONER HIRSHMAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 8, 2026, AS AMENDED. COMMISSIONER LAYTON SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SIX (6) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR COLUCCIO, VICE-CHAIR ENGELKING, COMMISSIONERS HALLAGAN, HIRSHMAN, LAYTON, AND RYBARCZYK VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

5. Q & A REGARDING OPERATING AND CAPITAL BUDGET

Sonia Andrews, City Treasurer, made herself available to answer the Commission’s questions regarding the the operating and capital budgets. Topics of discussion included the following:

- Budget timeline: The meeting scheduled with the Budget Review Commission on February 23, 2026; release of projected revenues for the next five years in March; release of proposed operating and capital budgets in April; the BRC will have three days to review the operating budget and present recommendations; the BRC’s recommendations and proposed budget will be presented to the City Council during the first week in May; the Council will adopt the tentative budget the third week of May and the final budget the first week of June 2026.
- The FY 2025/26 Preservation Fund five-year financial forecast.
- Park and Preserve Tax Fund-Preserve Maintenance five-year financial forecast.
- Possible early sunsetting of the 2004 .15 sales tax. Extensive discussion ensued. Ms. Andrews gave an overview of the history leading up to the City Council’s direction to staff to look into the debt service and possible steps for sunsetting the tax. She explained that the Council’s consensus direction was based on the anticipated need as it was currently understood. Commissioners expressed interest in holding a session to discuss strategic acquisitions, potential projects, what would qualify under the 2004 tax for improvement, and additional possible future needs that could arise before expiration of the tax in 2034. Ms. Kohl noted that discussion on land acquisition is agendized for the March meeting. The Commission was encouraged to contact Councilmembers directly with their concerns about sunsetting the tax.

6. SPECIAL USE PERMIT REQUEST

The application for a special use permit for the TPK Endurance Run event on March 27 and 28, 2026, was withdrawn.

7. STAFF REPORT

- Preserve Team Updates

Kelsey Lamper, Preserve Manager, introduced herself and reviewed her background. She noted that the new Natural Resource Supervisor, Hudson Keffer, will begin work on February 9. The first round of interviews for a new maintenance worker II position have been completed, and applications for the project coordinator position are under review. Ms. Lamper said staff recently held a planning day in the Preserve where strategic goals were the focus.

- Proposed Rates and Fees Update

Madison Barasha-Tang, Natural Resources Supervisor, presented the changes to Preserve-related fines and fees that were approved by the Commission during its January meeting. She explained that the highlighted items, which include professional photography and annual guiding permit fees, will not be brought forward to the City Council at this time. She anticipated that staff will be prepared to move forward with the highlighted portion of the proposed rates and fees next budget season.

- Vegetation Management

Ms. Barasha-Tang gave an update on fire fuel mitigation efforts. She said that the Dove Valley Trail mechanical thinning project will begin on Tuesday, February 10 and is expected to take approximately a month to complete. She explained that the pre-emergent applications will continue as scheduled and that the mechanical thinning is an additional precaution in critical locations. Ms. Lamper noted that signage will be put up at the Dove Valley Trailhead as well as at access points. Commissioners recommended putting signage up at Brown's Ranch Trailhead and Pima/Dynamite as well. Ms. Lamper noted that mechanical thinning has been completed at 136th Street and Rio Verde Drive.

- 128th Street Signage

Ms. Barasha-Tang said that installation of the access restricted signage at 128th Street has been completed. She shared photographs comparing the language on the old signage with the new signs.

8. CONSIDERATION OF BYLAWS

The Commission reviewed the current bylaws.

Chair Coluccio recommended changing the language related to the election of the Commission chair and vice-chair positions to state that "Elections shall be held annually at the first **regular** meeting in the calendar year". The current language states that "Elections shall be held annually at the first meeting in the calendar year". The McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission typically holds its first regular meeting of the year in February and this year had a special meeting in January, which put them in the position of holding elections during the special meeting.

COMMISSIONER RYBARCZYK MOVED TO AMEND THE MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION BYLAWS TO STATE THAT THE ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR ARE TO BE HELD DURING THE FIRST REGULAR MEETING EACH YEAR. 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 RYBARCZYK VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

Ms. Kohl said that proposed changes are required to be submitted in writing in advance of the public meeting. She will include an item to ratify the bylaw amendment on the March meeting agenda.

9. COMMISSIONER COMMENT

Commissioner Hallagan expressed thanks for the get-well cards that he received.

Chair Coluccio expressed appreciation for the water bottles staff presented to Commissioners.

10. UPCOMING MEETING DATES, LOCATIONS, AND AGENDA ITEMS

All dates listed are tentative and subject to amendment:
Regular Meetings: March 5 | April 2 | May 7 | June 4

Commissioners reviewed and discussed the list of potential meeting locations presented by staff.

It was pointed out that board and commission meeting locations are required by law to be accessible by public transportation. Nick Molinari, Senior Director, said staff will research what the Open Meeting Law says in regard to public transportation.

Commissioners expressed interest in rotating meeting locations. They noted that Mustang Library and Via Linda Senior Center are centrally located and have public transportation available.

10. ADJOURNMENT

COMMISSIONER HIRSHMAN MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER LAYTON SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SIX (6) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR COLUCCIO, VICE-CHAIR ENGELKING, COMMISSIONERS HALLAGAN, HIRSHMAN, LAYTON, 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 6:16 p.m.

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