Approved as Amended April 2, 2026

CITY OF SCOTTSDALE
McDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING – MINUTES
Thursday, March 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 and Pruitt Layton

ABSENT: Commissioners Susan Hirschmann and Ryan Rybarczyk

STAFF: Director Jenna Kohl; Senior Director Nick Molinari; Preserve Manager Kelsey Lamper; Rich Slavin, Assistant Police Chief; Hudson Keffer, Natural Resources Supervisor

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Coluccio called the meeting to order at 5:00 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 February 5, 2026.

VICE-CHAIR ENGELKING MOVED TO APPROVE THE FEBRUARY 5, 2026, MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES AS PRESENTED. COMMISSIONER LAYTON SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED FOUR (4) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR COLUCCIO, VICE-CHAIR ENGELKING, COMMISSIONERS HALLAGAN AND LAYTON VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

5. PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT

Rich Slavin, Assistant Police Chief, gave an update on the Park Rangers Unit accomplishments to date and on the expansion of the unit. As part of his presentation, he discussed the types of calls that the unit responds to and the percentage of their time that is spent in the Preserve, highlighting their focus on addressing issues with e-bikes both inside and outside of the Preserve. Chief Slavin gave an overview of the three new park ranger positions and the sergeant that has been assigned to the Park Ranger Unit. The additional officers will enable the unit to provide a higher level of service in all areas of the city.

Chief Slavin mentioned that the Park Ranger Unit is taking part in a new program initiated by the fire department to partner in search and rescue operations. As part of that program, four search-and-rescue trained K-9s have been acquired, one of which will be part of the Park Ranger Unit.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Chief Slavin said that the new positions have been approved and are funded. The sergeant's position will be filled right away, and the three ranger positions will be filled through an application process that is open to current Scottsdale police officers. The ranger positions are not open to outside entities. Chief Slavin explained that the crime technician position has been filled as part of the Realtime Crime Center Unit. Park rangers are currently working out of the South Corp Yard and a satellite office located at WestWorld.

Chief Slavin said that in an effort to curb parking lot crime at trailheads, license plate reader cameras have been installed and five beat officers are assigned to spend time at trailhead parking lots.

6. MCDOWELL SONORAN CONSERVANCY (MSC) ANNUAL REPORT

Angy Shearer, Chief Executive Officer, presented the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy Annual Report. Her presentation included review of the MSC mission and vision statements; strategies and priorities that will further their vision; an update on Parsons Field Institute's efforts in monitoring invasive species, restoration, wildlife monitoring and habitat connectivity; and statistics related to steward volunteers, trailhead ambassadors, mobile patrol, construction and maintenance, and education efforts and opportunities.

7. STAFF REPORT

- Personnel Updates

Kelsey Lamper, Preserve Manager, introduced Natural Resources Supervisor Hudson Keffer, noting that he will be responsible for the areas of Pima/Dynamite and Tom's Thumb. Matt Vasquez, Maintenance Worker II will start in the Preserve on Tuesday of next week. The first week of interviews for the Project Coordinator position has been completed, and second interviews are being scheduled.

- 104th and Bell Rd

Ms. Lamper noted that a “Trailhead Closed” sign that has been installed at 104th Street and Bell Road, and park rangers will provide increased monitoring in the area. In response to a question, Jenna Kohl, Preserve Director, said that there is a plan to evaluate Ringtail and 104th Street and Bell Road trailheads according to the five-year capital plan.

- Project Tracking

Ms. Lamper presented a document outlining Preserve Projects scheduled from September 2025 through Spring of 2026, including the status of the programs, project cost, project timeframe, and projected completion date.

- Fire Fuel Mitigation Project

Ms. Lamper gave an update on the status of the fire fuel mitigation project that was completed at Tom’s Thumb and Sunrise Trail in November of 2025 at a cost of approximately $51,000.

- Invasive Fine Fuel Breaks

Ms. Lamper gave an update on the status of the invasive fine fuel break project that started in October of 2025 and is anticipated to be completed in summer of 2027. The project cost is estimated to be $188,500.

- Dove Valley Trail Fire Fuel Mitigation

Ms. Lamper gave an update on the fire fuel mitigation that will be completed on March 10, 2026. The projected cost is approximately $88,000. Staff will provide photographs of the area during the Commission’s April meeting. Chair Coluccio commented that care was taken not to overdo trimming in this area.

- Sunrise Trail Remediation

Ms. Lamper said that the Sunrise Trail remediation project was completed in January 2026. The large bolder was relocated, and the contractor installed berms for waterflow.

Ms. Kohl gave an overview of steps that are being taken to prepare for the warm weather and wildfire season. She said that efforts are ongoing to create fire fuel breaks, remove stinknet, and collaborate with Tonto National Forest partners to address concerns about wildfires. She highlighted partnerships, education projects, and the upcoming restoration study. Chair Coluccio suggested that a rattlesnake education program be developed for Preserve visitors.

- Wildlife Corridor Feasibility Study

Ms. Kohl gave an update on the wildlife corridor feasibility study, which is expected to be completed by September 2026.

- Brown’s Ranch Trailhead Improvements

Ms. Kohl gave an update on the Brown's Ranch Trailhead improvements, including the scope of work to be done and the scheduled dates for each step.

- Gateway Parking Lot Erosion Repair

Ms. Lamper gave an overview of the erosion repair being done at Gateway Trailhead. The project is expected to last approximately one month and comes at an approximate cost of $80,000. The contractor will be repairing identified spaces with AVC, and one section is being reinforced with concrete. This solution should be effective until a future Gateway renovation project is considered in approximately two years.

- Rates and Fees

Ms. Kohl gave an update on City Council's approval of the rates and fees. The Council kept fees for guiding groups at $5 instead of raising them to $7 and eliminated the annual photo fee for commercial photographers. Commissioners suggested that commercial photographers be required to take part in a permitting process so they can be educated on the rules that need to be observed in the Preserve.

- Commissioner Vacancy Process

Ms. Kohl said applications were considered by City Council on March 3, and Council members nominated two applicants for the open position. Candidates will be given an opportunity to speak during the March 24 City Council meeting, and an appointment will be made at that time. Staff anticipates that the new Commissioner will be able to attend the April meeting.

8. DISCUSS APPROACH TO CAPITAL AND/OR LAND ACQUISITION PLANNING

Jenna Kohl, Preserve Director, confirmed that assessing capital needs for the Preserve falls under the purview of the Commission, and she provided options for how future capital needs could be assessed. She provided background on projects currently in progress or being studied, potential future initiatives, and exceptions where the Commission is permitted to make alterations without a public vote. She listed permitted uses for the 2004 Preservation Tax and related revenues.

Discussion ensued regarding objectives and an approach to identifying, assessing, and proposing future capital projects and land acquisition projects, and establishing the scope of the initiative. It was the consensus of the Commissioners present to direct staff to enlist expert advice regarding strategic acquisitions and potential new trails. Mr. Molinari commented that staff will return with a framework for what it will accomplish and solicit input from Commissioners before moving forward.

9. FINAL VOTE ON AMENDED BYLAWS

Chair Coluccio recalled the discussion from the February 5 meeting regarding 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." He noted that the Commission needed to have a formal vote to ratify the amendment.

COMMISSIONER HALLAGAN MOVED TO AMEND THE BYLAWS, SECTION 101- ELECTIONS AS FOLLOWS: THE CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR SHALL BE ELECTED ANNUALLY AT THE FIRST REGULAR MEETING OF THE CALENDAR YEAR. VICE-CHAIR ENGELKING SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED FOUR (4) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR COLUCCIO, VICE-CHAIR ENGELKING, COMMISSIONERS HALLAGAN AND LAYTON VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

10. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

There were no Commissioner comments.

11. UPCOMING MEETING DATES, LOCATIONS, AND AGENDA ITEMS

Dates listed are tentative and subject to amendment:
Regular Meetings: April 2 (at Via Linda Senior Center) | May 7 | June 4

Topics for future meetings could include:
- Tourism and events update
- Arizona game and fish update
- Update on findings of the inquiry regarding strategic acquisitions
- City Treasurer (May/June)

12. ADJOURNMENT

COMMISSIONER LAYTON MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. VICE-CHAIR ENGELKING SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED FOUR (4) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR COLUCCIO, VICE-CHAIR ENGELKING, COMMISSIONERS HALLAGAN AND LAYTON VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 6:27 p.m.

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