



APPROVED SUMMARIZED MINUTES

**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE
PROTECT AND PRESERVE SCOTTSDALE TASK FORCE
REGULAR MEETING**

**Wednesday, May 10, 2023
McDowell Mountain Ranch Aquatic Center
15525 N. Thompson Peak Parkway
Scottsdale, Arizona 85260
4:00 p.m.**

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Scottsdale Protect and Preserve Task Force was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Raoul Zubia, Vice Chair
Carla
James Eaneman
Nicholas Hartmann
Jace McKeighan
Daniel Schweiker
Mark Winkleman
John Zikias

ABSENT: Cynthia Wenstrom, Chair

STAFF: Kroy Ekblaw, Executive Assistant Strategic Projects
Thomas Shannon, Fire Chief
Kelly Corsette, Communications and Public Affairs Director
Troy Lutrick, City Emergency Manager
David Ramirez, Fuel Manager
Joy Racine, Community Involvement Manager
Brent Stockwell, Assistant City Manager
Sonia Andrews, City Treasurer/Chief Financial Officer
Carol Banegas-Stankus, Admin Assistant Senior
Joe Padilla, Deputy City Attorney

Vice Chair Zubia read a statement from the Communications Department regarding the Office of

Communications recommendations to publicize upcoming meetings and encourage public participation via news release and social media.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Request approval of minutes of the April 26, 2023 Regular Task Force Meeting.

Task Force Action: Discussion and action

Vice Chair Zubia called for corrections to the minutes. Member Carla noted that at the last meeting, the recorder was having difficulty hearing some speakers. This being said, she requested to add to the minutes a comment she made on page 5, end of the second paragraph: "Member Carla stated that the land bridge is critical for the long-term biological sustainability of the Preserve."

MEMBER ZIKIAS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF APRIL 26, 2023 AS AMENDED. MEMBER SCHWEIKER SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED 8-0 WITH VICE CHAIR ZUBIA AND MEMBERS CARLA, EANEMAN, HARTMANN, MCKEIGHAN, SCHWEIKER, WINKLEMAN AND ZIKIAS VOTING IN THE AFFIRMATIVE WITH NO DISSENTING VOTES.

2. MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE UNFUNDED NEEDS

Kroy Ekblaw, Executive Assistant Strategic Projects, with the assistance of other city staff, will respond to any questions from members of the Task Force related to any funding of Preserve operations presented at the April 26th meeting.

Task Force Action: Information and discussion, and possible recommendations to staff

Kroy Ekblaw, Executive Assistant Strategic Projects, was present to answer questions regarding this agenda item.

In response to a question from Member Zikias, Mr. Ekblaw stated that it is staff's intention to work with the Task Force to update the numbers presented at the last meeting, with updates prepared by mid to late summer.

Member Zikias asked if the Ecological Resource Plan will also be completed at that time. Mr. Ekblaw said that the plan in its entirety will not be fully complete at that time, however the category of preservation of \$250,000 to \$500,000 will include additional qualifying detail in the same time frame. A procurement overview can also be provided.

3. FIRE DEPARTMENT MITIGATION AND RESPONSE EFFORTS IN THE WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE

Thomas Shannon, Fire Chief, with the assistance of other city staff, will provide an overview of the fire department, mitigation, and response efforts in the wildland urban interface, including without limitation, details on historical and recent efforts and unfunded needs for such operations. The presentation will provide an opportunity for the members of the Task Force to ask questions about the unfunded fire mitigation and response priorities and other questions related to wildland urban interface needs.

Task Force Action: Information and discussion, and possible recommendations to staff

Thomas Shannon, Fire Chief, introduced staff, including Troy Lutrick, City Emergency Manager and David Ramirez, Fuel Manager. Mr. Lutrick gave an overview of his function within the City and the responsibilities of his office. Mr. Ramirez discussed fire risks in the City and particularly within the Preserve, referencing dry or dead foliage and other materials as fire fuel.

Member Hartmann asked for specific details in terms of treatment and prevention. Mr. Ramirez stated that grants are acquired and contract labor is used to remove heavily flammable growth from under trees. This helps to prevent crown fire potential. During right-of-way treatments, the City will also remove this fire fuel and heavy brush beneath vegetation. This breaks up the potential for fire continuity, which may limit brush fires from becoming walls of fire. There are various types of treatments, including treatment and mitigation of invasive plants and weeds.

Member Carla noted that the Task Force is charged with addressing protection of open space and she asked for a breakdown of mitigation efforts in the Preserve versus outside of the Preserve. The Task Force will need to address requested cost increases based on need in particular areas. Mr. Ramirez noted the significant size of the Preserve at over 30,000 acres. There are also a number of State land segments, not only in northern Scottsdale, but also adjacent, within the City of Phoenix. Treatments and on off Preserve land are very similar. In the City, one of the focuses is removal of fire fuel along roadways. Chief Shannon stated that the Task Force will be provided with an overview of the funding strategy for these efforts. There is coordination of work between several City departments.

Member Zikias referred to mitigation of fire fuel along roadways, which includes herbicides and a number of physical removal efforts. He asked whether the work thus far has been mostly manual in nature, which is why there is the potential need for increased maintenance funds. Chief Shannon stated that line trimmers are typically used to decrease materials around critical infrastructure along roadways. Work outside the Preserve has not included use of chemicals. Member Zikias noted that a group of volunteers has been working on herbicide applications for invasive plants for the past three years, with manual removal for approximately ten years. Chief Shannon commented that these efforts have been very successful. Tapping into state funding of invasive weed grants should open the door to perform more of this critical work.

Member McKeighan asked how the Fire Wise program coordinates with these efforts and whether there are any incentives. Chief Shannon stated that Fire Wise comprises a whole leg of the City's overall program, with a focus on treatment in communities that are on the edge of open space. In 2019 and 2020, a significant number of fires started as a result of construction work; much of this was occurring on the edge of the Preserve. In 2020, prevention efforts ramped up in terms of new construction and ensuring that there was onsite access to water and fire prevention tools. This year is anticipated to be a big grass year. Construction permits also include significant volumes of information on fire prevention requirements.

Member Eaneman offered a brief advocacy statement, asking Task Force members to listen closely to what is being said and that when the time comes, they should, in effect, dig deeply into their pockets. He referenced the Oakland Hills fire from October 20th, 1991. At that time, he ran the response for the utility. There were 4,800 burned homes and he knew several of the victims. The tragedy was as a result of a lack of coordination, integration and resources. The cost at the time was \$4.8 billion.

Member Carla asked for clarification on the lack of use of chemical application outside the Preserve. Chief Shannon stated that the grants used for this work do not include funding for multiple applications of treatment. The best course of action is a mechanical treatment to break up fire fuel continuity. This initial treatment should be followed by pre-emergent. However, this is not allowed by the grants.

Member Carla posed a scenario whereby the City had annual funding from a future tax and asked whether safe chemicals would be used outside the Preserve and around the perimeter on the roadways. She asked whether it was likely that there would be public or City Council outcry. Chief Shannon stated that there would be opinions regarding efficacy and health risks. However, it would be helpful to have a conversation about this under such scenario. The City's job is to minimize risk and they do so as safely as possible using the most economically efficient methods. Mr. Ramirez stated that the benefit of preemergent is that it prevents grass seeds from germinating.

Chief Shannon reviewed the contents of the booklet provided to Task Force members. Vice Chair Zubia asked whether there has been discussion regarding limiting dogs on trails when temperatures reach a particular level. Chief Shannon stated that there is warning signage, however, there has not been formal consideration for limiting pets under certain conditions. This would be a good policy conversation. A review of costs for various items was provided.

Member Schweiker cited the \$1.21 million one-time cost for pedal bikes and motorized vehicles that will assist personnel in reaching injured people or burn sites as soon as possible and inquired how long the equipment lasts. Chief Shannon stated if the vehicle is a truck, these are typically purchased with a ten-year replacement plan, which would then have ongoing costs. Two-wheel motorized vehicles will have comparable costs.

Member Winkleman asked for clarification on whether the items in the booklet are being done now, as part of existing efforts and programs. Chief Shannon stated that the items listed in the booklet represent new items and investments.

Member Carla stated that those who become injured in the Preserve have entered at their own risk. She expressed concern regarding utilization of motorized vehicles into the Preserve to reach injured individuals. Under the current ordinance, no motorized vehicles are allowed. Chief Shannon stated that they are already utilizing motorized vehicles into the Preserve, as it is within his authority to do so within the context of the cited ordinance. Two-wheeled motorized vehicles will pose less threat of damage than the Gators currently being used. Vehicles will continue to be used if required in a rescue situation. Member Carla stressed the need for appropriate staff training in the protection of the natural assets of the Preserve. Chief Shannon assured that training is utilized with regard to any activity in the Preserve. Member Hartmann commented that a philosophical balance must be struck between preserving the Preserve and preserving the life and safety of the people utilizing the property. The best way to protect the Preserve is to close access, however, this is not an option.

Member Zikias asked about the potential for needed funding to address NAOS land in terms of invasive growth. Mr. Ramirez stated that he has worked with the Planning Department in this regard. When performing its treatments, the City must follow the same rules as the general public. The City is permitted to treat invasive growth on NAOS land. Kroy Ekblaw, Executive Assistant Strategic Projects, added that this is an evolving issue in the Planning Department in terms of understanding the threats.

Member Schweiker commented on the cost projections and requests for funding, noting that a dollar spent today is not equivalent to a dollar spent in 2050. As such, the numbers provided should reflect the cost of inflation.

4. UPDATE ON POSSIBLE CITIZEN SURVEY IDENTIFIED IN APPROVED WORK PLAN

Kelly Corsette, Communications and Public Affairs Director, with the assistance of other city staff, will provide an update on staff's continuing work to prepare for a possible citizen survey as identified in the City Council adopted work plan, including information on similar surveys conducted in other jurisdictions and the results from prior city sales tax elections.

Task Force Action: Information, discussion, and possible recommendations to staff

Joy Racine, Community Involvement Manager, stated that staff have reached out to number of survey companies with expertise in research and survey development.

Factors included in selecting a company include:

- Margin of error
- Demographics to be collected
- Overall timeline
- Proposed budget
- Methodology used to select recipients and gather data
- Experience with municipalities and/or financial implications

Three companies responded to the RFP, as did Polco, the company who completed the National Community Survey. An overview of the proposed matrix and time frame was provided.

In response to a question from Member Hartmann, Ms. Racine stated that there are approximately 120,000 households in Scottsdale.

Member Zikias asked whether the sample size represents guaranteed responses or total number of cards mailed. Ms. Racine stated that it is indicative of the total number of mailed surveys. All companies have identified an expected return rate and margin of error.

Kelly Corsette, Communications and Public Affairs Director, provided an overview of the City ballots since 1989 that have contained a sales tax question:

- 1989: Question 12: Dedicated Transportation sales tax without sunset: Approved
- 1995: Prop 400 0.2 percent sales tax for 30 years: Acquire lands for the Preserve: Approved
- 1997: Prop 1: Dedicated 0.5 percent Transportation tax: Not approved
- 2004: Question 1: Preserve tax for acquiring land and constructing improvements: 30 year sunset: Approved
- 2004: Question 3: 0.10 percent sales tax for public safety services and capital needs: Approved
- 2018: Question 1: 0.10 percent sales tax for ten years dedicated to Transportation improvement projects: Approved

In response to a question from Member Carla, Sonia Andrews, City Treasurer/Chief Financial Officer, confirmed that due to changes in state law, the City may no longer hold special elections in May. Tax measures must be included in even years and on general election ballots.

5. IDENTIFICATION OF POSSIBLE FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The Task Force may request proposed topics for future agendas, but the Task Force may not discuss, deliberate, or take legal action on any matter in the “Identification of Possible Future Agenda Items” unless the specific matter is properly noticed for legal action. Additionally, the following previously requested items may be placed on a future agenda:

- Discussion related to funding operations and unfunded needs of the Indian Bend Wash Greenbelt and other parks (Tentatively June 26th)
- Presentation from Public Safety on the activities and concerns of police and park rangers within the parks and the McDowell Sonoran Preserve (Tentatively May 31st)
- Information on Human Services’ current efforts to address homelessness in the city’s parks and the role of park rangers (Tentatively May 31st)
- Brainstorming session on areas and topics to survey community opinions (Tentatively June 14th)
- Sales tax revenue projections

Task Force Action: Information, discussion, and possible action

The following agenda item was identified:

- Experience Scottsdale presentation regarding its recent survey, which included responses to use of City parks and the Preserve
- Presentation from the Conservancy

Member Carla expressed concerns about having a private nonprofit come and present their needs when the Task Force is looking a City tax for City departments. Mr. Ekblaw stated that the numbers presented to the Task Force thus far include extensive input from the Commission and the Conservancy. Member Zikias agreed with Member Carla. It may be helpful for the Task Force to be presented with the ten key programs that the Conservancy works on.

6. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved by McKeighan and seconded by Member Eaneman, the meeting adjourned at 5:43 p.m.

AYES: Vice Chair Zubia, Members Carla, Eaneman, Hartmann, McKeighan, Schweiker, Winkleman and Zikias.

NAYS: None

SUBMITTED BY:

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