



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE  
MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION**

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
Wednesday, June 2, 2022  
Scottsdale Stadium – Banyan Room  
7408 E. Osborn Rd.  
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

**PRESENT:** Chairperson Laurie LaPat-Polasko, Vice-chair Marsha Lipps, Commissioners Steve Coluccio, Savannah Engelking, Mark Hackbarth, Kerry Olsson, Jeffrey Smith

**STAFF:** Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director; Scott Hamilton, Preserve Manager; Natural Resource Coordinators John Loleit and Yvonne Massman

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair LaPat-Polasko called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Members present as noted 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 May 5, 2022

COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO MOVED TO APPROVE THE MAY 5, 2022 MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES. COMMISSIONER HACKBARTH SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, VICE-CHAIR LIPPS, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, ENGELKING, HACKBARTH, OLSSON AND SMITH VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

**5. MCDOWELL SONORAN CONSERVANCY UPDATE**

Melanie Tluczek gave an update on Conservancy programs. Her presentation included information about the new Community Engagement program; the Conservancy's work with Bird Ability and Ability 360 to make the Preserve more accessible; development of the invasive plant

management plan for 2023 and 2024; patrol program and construction and maintenance programs; Past Finder activities at Brown's Ranch and working on Expedition Days on the Road; the trailhead ambassador program; the adult education program; guided hike and bike nature guides; work on the pilot STEAM program for K-12 students; and the new seventh grade Bajada Explorers program. She mentioned that the Parsons Field Institute hosted a symposium on May 25, 2022, via Zoom, that offered an opportunity for participants to hear about the research being done and priorities for the coming year. The symposium was recorded and is available for viewing on YouTube and the Conservancy's website.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Ms. Tluczek explained that the connection with Bird Ability involved the Preserve being included on their interpretive trails map. Ability 360 is consulting with the Conservancy on ways to make the hike, bike, and walk program more accessible. Mr. Ekblaw said that staff can prepare for a more specific discussion about what qualifies as required mobility under the ADA, as this is somewhat complicated.

Ms. Tluczek explained that the Bajada Explorers program will include teaching the students how to collect data, with the idea that once they are in high school, they can have the opportunity to be involved in more in-depth data collection.

## **6. STUDIES RELATED TO COOLER PAVING OPTIONS**

Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, gave a presentation on a 2020/2021 cool paving study conducted by the City of Phoenix and ASU. He gave an overview of the study process, the initial results of the ten-month study, and the study findings. Based on the findings, it was recommended to continue the study. Phoenix is continuing to do further analysis of surface and subsurface temperatures. Phoenix has recommended more precision assessments of air temperature changes and associated energy, water, and health impacts, as well as looking at further guidelines to address how higher reflection could affect drivers and pedestrians. The Scottsdale Transportation Department will continue observing the Phoenix study and provide updates as they become available, possibly in the fall. Mr. Ekblaw will present an update to the Commission once it is received.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Ekblaw said that he will inquire about what other cooling options are being identified in studies being done in other parts of the world.

## **7. UPDATE – PRESERVE NUMBERS/ACTIVITY FOR THE 2021/22 SEASON**

Scott Hamilton, Preserve Manager, gave an update on activities and attendance numbers in the Preserve for the 2021/22 season. He presented charts both based on the fiscal year and the calendar year, outlining preserve visitors, statistics for guided commercial outfitters, and season totals comparisons dating from 2020 through March of 2022. Because the Preserve is an open space, usage showed a significant increase during COVID, and the Steward and Pathfinders programs were able to continue operation during that time.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Hamilton said that he suspects that the numbers declined this season, because people are returning to normal activities now that COVID restrictions have been lifted. Mr. Ekblaw commented that another possible factor for decline in usage is that the Valley offers a variety of outdoor opportunities that people are discovering.

Mr. Hamilton noted that eight new driveway counters that provide highly accurate remote access and track in and out counts have been installed at trailheads. Additional counters will be installed at Tom's Thumb and Sunrise trailheads this summer.

Yvonne Massman, Natural Resource Coordinator, said that they have received 31 commercial guide applications, including four new operators, and three who did not renew. The application cost is \$150 plus a \$10 admin fee and \$5 per client and is prepaid based on an estimated count. Funds received for commercial operations go into the City's General Fund.

## **8. ECOLOGICAL RESOURCE PLAN (ERP) PROCESS FOR 2022/23**

Mr. Ekblaw said that City Council is expected to vote on the FY 2022/23 budget next week. Once ERP funding is approved, an RFP will be issued with the goal of having a consultant on board by fall 2022.

## **9. CULTURAL ACTIVITY AND SITE STEWARD PROGRAM**

Mr. Hamilton gave an update on activity at Brown's Ranch Homestead Trail and the possibility of building an interpretive trail in the homestead itself. He said that because Brown's Ranch is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, the City is going through the process of hiring a cultural consultant to guide staff on how to physically build a trail on a site that's eligible for the Register and what areas to interpret, what areas might not be appropriate for interpretation, and on acquiring the different permitting that will be required for the project. Mr. Hamilton said that he anticipates that the Brown's Ranch Homestead Trail will be completed by late 2023.

Mr. Hamilton reported that 18 Conservancy Stewards have been certified through the Arizona State Site Steward Program to be site monitors. There are currently six sites, including two near Brown's Ranch.

Mr. Hamilton said that the cultural records project is underway, and boxes of records are being sorted with the help of a group of Past Finders. Records include cultural surveys, photographs, handwritten records, and GIS information. They are hoping to collect missing information and put together an organized system of records. Information that has been gathered is being put into site kits for the site steward program.

## **10. STAFF REPORTS**

Mr. Hamilton shared before and after photographs of the wildland fire fuel thinning areas near Brown's Ranch trailhead. The next areas scheduled for thinning will be Gateway trailhead, Thompson Peak Parkway and Bell Road frontage, and Lost Dog Wash trailhead. Mr. Ekblaw noted that estimated cost projections will be updated as projects are completed through fall and next spring. Fire mitigation work currently under way is being done in conjunction with Scottsdale Fire and thanks to a Healthy Forests Initiative Grant from the Department of Forestry and Fire Management.

Mr. Hamilton said that the Saguaro Measuring Stick has been installed at the Camino Campana Interpretive Trail. He explained that the markings on the measuring stick indicate the age of the saguaro at various heights and include a historical timeline for each listed year.

Brief discussion ensued regarding reflectors and reflective tape that have recently been discovered in the Preserve. Mr. Hamilton said that people are being asked to document the location of the reflectors as they are found so that a possible trend can be identified.

**11. UPCOMING MEETING DATES, LOCATIONS AND AGENDA ITEMS**

- Field Tour options – Fall - TBD
- Fall meeting dates – September 1, October 6, November 3
  - Land bridge process update

**12. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

Commissioner Hackbarth suggested that hotels be provided with a sheet listing educational information such as maps and locations of saguaros and information about the Preserve. He distributed a sample sheet to Commissioners and staff.

**13. ADJOURNMENT**

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

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 6:23 p.m.

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