



Minutes Desert Conservation Commission December 5, 2023

Minutes of the Desert Conservation Commission meeting held on December 5, 2023, 3:30 p.m., Hybrid Meeting- Tempe Public Library, 2nd Floor Board Room, 3500 South Rural Road, Tempe, AZ. and virtually through Microsoft Teams

Members Present:

Kimberly Gaffney-Loza – Chair
Laura Stewart – Vice Chair
Donald Burt
Kelli Cholieu
Shereen Lerner
Jane Neuheisel

Members Absent:

Hassan Elsaad
Ricardo Juan Leonard
Elba Quintero

City Staff Present:

Alex Jovanovic, Staff Liaison- Deputy Community Services Director – Parks
Alex Cortese, Community Services Manager
Bobbi Lloyd, Management Assistant II
Gabriel Sabori, Community Services Supervisor- Maintenance/Operations

Upon the establishment of a quorum, meeting was called to order at 3:31 p.m. by Chair Kimberly Gaffney-Loza.

Agenda Item 1 – Public Appearances

Cameron Espinoza spoke regarding agenda item 6- Preserves Management Plan Public Outreach Update & 7- Operational Items- Projects: Management Plan Ideas. Cameron is with Papago Trail Builders Association and expressed interest in working with both the Desert Conservation Commission and Park Rangers in the preserves.

Agenda Item 2 – Approval of Meeting Minutes

October 3, 2023

Motion by Donald Burt to approve the meeting minutes of October 3, 2023 as submitted; seconded by Jane Neuheisel. Motion passed on an 5-0 vote.

Ayes: Chair Kimberly Gaffney-Loza, Vice-Chair Laura Stewart and commission members, Donald Burt, Kelli Cholieu and Jane Neuheisel.

Absent: Hassan Elsaad, Ricardo Juan Leonard, Shereen Lerner and Elba Quintero.

Agenda Item 3 – Outgoing Commission Members

Thank you to Hassan Elsaad for his service on the commission.

Agenda Item 4 – 2024 Calendar & Officers

Motion by current Chair Kimberly Gaffney-Loza to recommend current Vice-Chair Laura Stewart for Chair and Kelli Cholieu for Vice-Chair for 2024; seconded by Shereen Lerner. Motion passed on a 6-0 vote.

Ayes: Chair Kimberly Gaffney-Loza, Vice-Chair Laura Stewart and commission members, Donald Burt, Kelli Cholieu, Shereen Lerner and Jane Neuheisel.

Absent: Hassan Elsaad, Ricardo Juan Leonard and Elba Quintero.

Motion by Vice-Chair Laura Stewart to recommend approval of existing meeting schedule, first Tuesday every other month starting in February with additions as needed for 2024; seconded by Shereen Lerner. Motion passed on a 6-0 vote.

Ayes: Chair Kimberly Gaffney-Loza, Vice-Chair Laura Stewart and commission members, Donald Burt, Kelli Cholieu, Shereen Lerner and Jane Neuheisel.

Absent: Hassan Elsaad, Ricardo Juan Leonard and Elba Quintero.

Agenda Item 5 – Annual Report

Motion by Donald Burt to approve the 2023 Annual Report with additions as noted; seconded by Shereen Lerner. Motion passed on a 6-0 vote.

Ayes: Chair Kimberly Gaffney-Loza, Vice-Chair Laura Stewart and commission members, Donald Burt, Kelli Cholieu, Shereen Lerner and Jane Neuheisel.

Absent: Hassan Elsaad, Ricardo Juan Leonard and Elba Quintero.

Agenda Item 6 – Preserves Management Plan Public Outreach Update

Alex Jovanovic provided an update on the Preserves Management Plan Public Outreach which included the following:

- Preserve Management Plan Workshop
 - Workshop #1; held November 13, 2023
 - Question/Comment themes
 - Homelessness
 - Criminal/enforcement
 - Staff training
 - Bike area
 - Current projects
 - Future budget
 - McCain Library
 - Development nearby
- Preserve Management Plan Survey
 - Public Survey; November 13-27, 2023
 - 241 responses
 - 69% visit Hayden Butte; 30% 1-5 times
 - 94% visit Papago; 32% weekly
 - Hayden Butte use; 116 walk/hiking, 35 biking, climbing 19
 - Hayden Butte needs; 28 trails, 27 sign/markings, 12 water fountains, 11 maintenance, 10 shade
 - Papago; over half use both equally
 - North has more use than South
 - Over half want additional signage
 - Papago use; 158 hike/walk, 101 bike, 26 climb

- Papago needs; 52 trail, 44 sign/markings, 20 maintenance, 18 jumps, 16 climb

A survey summary is being compiled. Once completed staff will provide to the commission.

Agenda Item 7 – Operational Items

Alex Jovanovic asked for input by the Commission and the following comments were made:

- Projects: Management Plan Ideas
 - Education
 - Outreach to school children
 - Development of education plans w/objectives
 - Educational book
 - How to treat a preserve area
 - Conservation
 - Stewardship programs
 - Trail stewards
 - Event planning
 - Tempe Jams to bring in various groups
 - Arizona Mountain guides
 - Trail Builders
 - Tutorial with bike clinics
 - Event/festival w/booths
 - Guided bird walk
 - Open house
 - Signage
 - Trail markers
 - Rules/policies/programs
 - QR codes
 - Maintenance
 - Help to keep off non trails
 - Partnerships
 - Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission
 - Tempe Cares Group
 - Clean Up Papago
 - Rio Reimagined
 - Art component/art project
- Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities
 - Create list of upcoming opportunities- possibly with some of the following
 - Keep Tempe Beautiful
 - Urban Wildlife Conservation Day
 - Desert Botanical Gardens
 - Existing upcoming opportunities
 - 12/16 Bike Savers Holiday Food Drive 9am-11am with specialized kid bikes
 - 12/16 Keep Tempe Beautiful at Hayden Butte 8am-11am

Agenda Item 8 – 2024 Commission Goals & Priorities

Alex Jovanovic provided the existing 2023 goals to see if the commission wants to move them over as the 2024 goals. Goals included the following:

Goal #1- Identify & establish partnerships

1. Volunteer & service organizations
2. Government organizations
3. Other Commissions
4. Organizations proximate or within preserves
5. Ecological organizations
6. Recreation community
7. Tempe Organizations
8. Other groups

Goal #2- Increase awareness through education

1. Education, cultural historical & recreational organizations
2. Information center, signage & maps (on signage or online)
3. City sources
4. Data
5. Service organizations

Goal #3- Participate in planning & design efforts

1. Planning efforts (within & outside preserves)
2. Budget
3. Design projects (within preserves)
4. City & regional outreach, events & meetings

Goal #4- Identify appropriate uses & prioritize needs in alignment with the Commission's mission

1. Protect, restore and enhance existing assets (cultural, natural, historical, etc.)
2. Promote native biodiversity and abundance, for example, through quality habitat
3. Promote use of native plants and removal of invasive species
4. Encourage cultural use and understanding of native plants and wildlife
5. Comprehensively map preserves, as needed, for appropriate internal and external uses
6. Encourage and support appropriate community volunteer activities
7. Add, maintain and update inclusive signage

Commission members asked questions and made comments regarding the following:

- Goals are solid as they are right now
- We can do more ambassadorship
- May need agreed upon list of topics to talk about/consider materials
- Maybe come up with 5-6 things to talk about
- Tangible with number of events
- Quarter page to hand out/map of preserve with history
- What tools do we need?
- QR codes/website
- Top 3 plants
- Toolbox large map for events
- Digital toolbox
- Commission members email staff before February meeting what to be in toolbox

Agenda Item 9 – Future Agenda Items

- Name change
- Different user groups to present for educational purposes

Agenda Item 10 – Upcoming Park Public Meeting Notices & Announcements

- Vacant position to be filled at 12/21/23 Council Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 5:01 p.m.

Prepared by: Bobbi Lloyd, Management Assistant II, (480) 350-8352

Reviewed by: Alex Jovanovic, Deputy Community Services Director – Parks, (480) 350-5811