

Open Space and Habitat Commission Minutes
Monday, October 3, 2022
Remote Audio and Video Meeting Participation, 6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Lindsay Correa, Patricia Price, Carrie Shaw (Chair), Emma Torbert, Marc Vayssieres (Vice Chair), and Sara Geonczy (Alternate)

Vacant Positions: None

Commissioners Absent: Ramiro Cabanillas-Ledesma, Patrick Huber

Assigned Staff: Tracie Reynolds, Manager, Open Space Program (Present)

Council Liaison: Will Arnold (Regular) (Absent), Lucas Frerichs (Alternate) (Absent)

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

Commissioner Shaw opened the meeting after a quorum was achieved and called roll call.

2. Approval of Agenda

On a motion by Commissioner Vayssieres, which was seconded by Commissioner Correa, the Commission voted 6-0-2-0 to approve the October 2022 meeting agenda (Ayes – Correa, Geonczy, Price, Shaw, Torbert, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Huber; Abstentions – None).

3. Brief Announcements from Staff, Commissioners, and City Council Liaisons

Commissioner Shaw said that her term on the Commission ends on December 31 and that she doesn't plan to continue serving on the Commission after that date. She did say if her tenure was extended for a few months she would continue serving until her term extension was over. She said Commissioners should think about who could serve as Chair of the Commission in 2023.

4. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

5. Consent Calendar

There was one item on the consent calendar: approval of the September 12, 2022 regular meeting minutes. On a motion by Commissioner Vayssieres, which was seconded by Commissioner Price, the Commission voted 5-0-2-1 to approve the consent calendar (Ayes – Geonczy, Price, Shaw, Torbert, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Huber; Abstentions – Correa).

6. Regular Items

Action Item – Recommend that the Planning Commission uphold the requirement in the Conditions of Approval for the Bretton Woods development (“Project”) to have the Project’s two culverts include one or more ledges to allow for below-grade passage of various species during flooding events

Tracie Reynolds, staff liaison to the Commission, gave the Commission a short summary of recent discussions she had had with the City’s Wildlife Resource Specialist about whether ledges were necessary in the culvert in the northern drainage channel, since there would not be any vehicular traffic in that area. She said those discussions led staff to slightly revise its staff recommendation. She said staff was now recommending that the developer provide an above-ground connection for wildlife between the drainage channel and the eastern detention basin, instead of ledges within the

culvert. She said the developer's proposed solution -- a wildlife-friendly gap in the fence that encircles the detention basin -- was a good one and staff was supportive of this solution.

Commissioner Price summarized the conclusions of the Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Subcommittee which visited the two places where the future culverts will be located. She said the Subcommittee recommended wildlife ledges on both sides of both culverts and an above-ground wildlife connection in the culvert in the northern drainage channel, but would defer to the City's Wildlife Resources Specialist on this matter. Ms. Reynolds then read a statement from the absent Commissioner Huber, who is also on the Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Subcommittee, which echoed Commissioner Price's summary recommendations.

John McNerney, the City's Wildlife Resources Specialist, said he liked the Subcommittee's recommendations and strongly agreed that wildlife ledges should be on both sides of the culvert in the Covell Boulevard channel. He said however that he had changed his mind about the usefulness of wildlife ledges in the culvert in the northern drainage channel, based on a fuller understanding of the culvert's location. He said there were no cars in this area and wildlife will just go up and over the road. He said he appreciates the desire to help different species but he said he didn't think the ledges would be useful in this location. He said the above-ground gap in the fence around the eastern detention basin would allow animals to continue to move through the area during heavy rain.

David Taormino, the former Bretton Woods developer and the applicant for the requested changes to the Project's Conditions of Approval, said he supports staff's revised recommendation but still believed it was not physically possible to provide a wildlife ledge on the southern bank of the culvert in the Covell Boulevard channel, due to a concrete retaining wall that is required for that location. Mr. McNerney said he was willing to work with the engineering team to see if a wildlife ledge at this location was physically feasible.

Commissioner Shaw then asked if Commissioners had any clarifying questions. Commissioners asked for clarification on (1) what's staff's revised recommendation was, and (2) how wide the wildlife ledges needed to be. Commissioner Shaw then took public comment. There was no public comment. Commissioner Shaw then closed public comment and the Commission briefly discussed this item. Commissioner Vayssieres said he was happy all parties came to a compromise.

On a motion by Commissioner Price, which was seconded by Commissioner Vayssieres, the Commission voted 6-0-2-0 to approve the following motion (Ayes – Correa, Geonczy, Price, Shaw, Torbert, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Huber; Abstentions – None): *“The Open Space and Habitat Commission recommends that the Planning Commission (i) retain the language in Condition of Approval 6.A.5 requiring wildlife ledges and (ii) replace the language in Condition of Approval 30.C.8 requiring wildlife ledges with language requiring a gap in the fence around the eastern detention basin as the culvert's wildlife connectivity element, and that this element be reviewed and approved by the City's Wildlife Resource Specialist.”*

Action Item – Approve Commission comments on the draft Climate Action and Adaptation Plan Update

Commissioner Price provided a brief summary of her memorandum to the Commission on this topic. She said she supported the action item in the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (“CAAP”) Update that focused on carbon farm plans on City-owned agricultural land, with certain changes and reservations. She said the City's open space parcel tax, or Measure O, should only be used on

agricultural land that was purchased with Measure O or for open space purposes. She also said the City would need to hire additional staff to implement multiple carbon farm plans. She also recommended changes to this action item's implementation milestones and metrics.

Commissioner Shaw then asked if Commissioners had any clarifying questions. Commissioners asked for clarification on the additional staff that might be required. Commissioner Shaw then took public comment. There was no public comment. Commissioner Shaw then closed public comment and the Commission discussed this item. Topics discussed included (1) the difficulties farmers face trying to implement farming techniques recommended by carbon farm plans, such as planting cover crops and reducing tillage, (2) the need for additional staffing to implement multiple carbon farm plans on City-owned agricultural land, and (3) why the Natural Resources Commission wanted to eliminate this action item from the CAAP Update.

Commissioner Price then made a motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Torbert, which detailed the Commission's comments on the CAAP Update. That motion was approved by the Commission by a vote of 6-0-2-0 (Ayes – Correa, Geonczy, Price, Shaw, Torbert, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Huber; Abstentions – None) and read as follows:

"The City of Davis leases approximately 1,200 acres of farmland to local producers who produce a variety of commodity crops on that land. The United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Division describes carbon farm planning as a process aimed at identifying opportunities to conserve and sequester carbon within soil and crop plants on a defined agricultural property. While the climate mitigation seems small when compared to other sectors, as noted in the draft Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP), carbon farm planning offers not only the opportunity to reduce carbon emissions, but also an opportunity to collaborate, demonstrate climate leadership, and educate the public.

Therefore, the Open Space and Habitat Commission (OSHC) supports Action D.8 as included in the CAAP Implementation Roadmap (Appendix A) with the following reservations and changes.

- Measure O funds will only be used to implement the actions described on agricultural land that was purchased with open space monies.*
- Additional staffing would certainly be required to initiate, implement, and manage a carbon farm plan program within the Open Space Program. Current staff are at capacity, and the additional burden of initiating the carbon farm plan process with outside agencies, identifying funding opportunities and applying for funding, and implementing and managing the resulting plans is too great for existing staff.*
- We can't reliably predict what the recommendations of any particular carbon farm plan will be, so the CAAP implementation milestones should be changed to 1) Completed Carbon Farm Plans for leased agricultural properties controlled by the Open Space Program.*
- For the same reason, the CAAP implementation metrics should be changed to 1) Percent of City-owned (or Open Space Program-controlled, if control of the properties is not realigned) agricultural land for which a carbon farm plan has been developed; 2) Number of grant applications submitted; 3) Implementation milestones and metrics resulting from Carbon Farm Plans have been met."*

Ms. Reynolds said she would submit these comments to the CAAP project managers before the deadline for comments.

Action Item – Recommend that the City Council authorize the City Manager to sign a non-binding Letter of Intent with UC Davis related to a habitat/public access improvement project on UC Davis land (“Project”) that provides a statement of shared goals, outlines the intended process for completing the Project’s preconstruction phase, and lists the anticipated commitments of each party during the preconstruction phase

Ms. Reynolds said City staff and representatives from UC Davis worked over the summer to finalize the Letter of Intent (“LOI”) which outlines how the two parties will work together on the Project which is located on 32 acres of land owned by the Regents of the University of California. She said the two parties were going to self-fund the predevelopment work and jointly apply for an implementation grant from the State of California. She said the LOI includes a temporary access easement so the City’s design/engineering consultant can do the predevelopment work on UC Davis’s land.

Andrew Fulks, the Director of the UC Davis Putah Creek Riparian Reserve, said UC Davis would pay for all the environmental and permitting work, estimated to cost at least \$150,000. The City would pay for the design/engineering work, estimated to cost up to \$500,000, he said. Ms. Reynolds said that money would come from open space parcel taxes (Measure O) and/or open space development impact fees. She said the overall contribution of both parties is roughly equal because UC Davis is also contributing the land for the project, giving the City a perpetual public access easement at no cost to the City, and will be responsible for maintaining all the habitat improvements in the future.

Commissioner Shaw then asked if Commissioners had any clarifying questions. Commissioners asked for clarification on (1) the overall financial and in-kind contributions of both parties, and (2) whether the Project was already covered by an environmental impact report. Commissioner Shaw then took public comment. There was no public comment. Commissioner Shaw then closed public comment and the Commission discussed this item. Commissioner Vayssieres said he thought the LOI looked good and he was happy the parties were taking this step.

On a motion by Commissioner Vayssieres, which was seconded by Commissioner Correa, the Commission voted 6-0-2-0 to approve the following motion (Ayes – Correa, Geonczy, Price, Shaw, Torbert, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Huber; Abstentions – None): *“The Open Space and Habitat Commission recommends that the City Council authorize the City Manager to sign a non-binding Letter of Intent with UC Davis related to a habitat/public access improvement project on UC Davis land (“Project”) that provides a statement of shared goals, outlines the intended process for completing the Project’s preconstruction phase, and lists the anticipated commitments of each party during the preconstruction phase.”*

7. Commission and Staff Communications

Upcoming Meeting Date, Time, Items

The next regularly scheduled meeting is Monday, November 7. Possible agenda items discussed included a discussion of (1) an update on the Open Space Program budget, (2) a preliminary acquisition report for a possible agricultural conservation easement on 217 acres located near the intersection of Hamel Lane and Slayback Ranch Lane on the City’s southern border, and (3) success stories for alternative easement strategies presented by Commissioner Torbert.

Upcoming Events

There were no upcoming events.

Subcommittee Reports

1. *Acquisitions*. No reports were given.
2. *Habitat Restoration and Enhancement*. No reports were given.
3. *Land and Resource Management*. No reports were given.
4. *Public Access and Recreation*. No reports were given.
5. *Financial and Program Accountability*. No reports were given.
6. *Public Engagement and Partnerships*. No reports were given.
7. *Ad-Hoc Subcommittee to Improve Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the City's Open Space Program*. No reports were given.

Reports on Meetings Attended

There were no reports on meetings attended.

Climate Action and Adaptation Plan ("CAAP") Update

The CAAP Update was discussed during Regular Items.

Urban Forest Management Plan

Commissioner Geonczy said the last meeting of the Tree Commission during which this topic was discussed occurred a couple of weeks ago. She said the meeting focused on the goals and vision for the update to the 2002 Urban Forest Management Plan. She said there was an excellent presentation on climate-ready trees which will inform the plan update as well. She again asked Commissioners to reach out to her if there was anything they wanted to convey to the Tree Commission on this topic.

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:50 p.m.