

**Open Space and Habitat Commission Minutes**  
**Monday, December 2, 2019**  
**Community Chambers, 23 Russell Boulevard, 6:30 p.m.**

Commissioners Present: Patrick Huber (Chair), Joy Klineberg, Roberta Millstein, Carrie Shaw (Vice Chair), Marc Vayssieres, Garrett Allen (Alternate)

Vacant Positions: None

Commissioners Absent: Erin Gooch, Stephanie Holstege

Assigned Staff: Tracie Reynolds, Manager, Open Space Program

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

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**1. Call to Order & Roll Call**

Commissioner Huber opened the meeting after a quorum was achieved. Commissioner Klineberg arrived during Regular Items.

**2. Approval of Agenda**

On a motion by Commissioner Allen, seconded by Commissioner Millstein, the Commission voted 5-0-3-0 to approve the December 2019 agenda. (Ayes – Allen, Huber, Millstein, Shaw, Vayssieres; Noes – none; Absent – Gooch, Holstege, Klineberg; Abstentions – none).

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

Tracie Reynolds, staff to the Commission, updated the Commission on the progress achieved restoring the habitat and building new trails at the North Davis Upland Habitat Area at the corner of F Street and Anderson Road. She also mentioned that she visited South Fork Preserve on a Saturday in late November and the parking lot was full, which indicated that the public was using the site. She said a Girl Scout troop and a Boy Scout troop were visiting the site that morning. Finally, she mentioned that she intended to ask the City Council on December 17 for permission to negotiate a possible agricultural conservation easement with the property owner of farmland less than a mile from the city limits, northeast of the Wildhorse residential development.

Commissioner Shaw said that she was disappointed that she was unable to attend any of the volunteer trail-building events at the North Davis Upland Habitat Area but would appreciate being notified of future events. She also said that she really enjoyed a December 10<sup>th</sup> event at South Fork Preserve, which was led by a Putah Creek Council docent, during which attendees made objects out of tule reeds. She said it would be nice to have an annual signature event at South Fork Preserve. She also said she would be serving as the Streamkeeper for Putah Creek for a few months until the Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee (“LPCCC”) can find a permanent replacement for Rich Marovich who is retiring at the end of the year. Commissioner Huber, who serves on the governing board of the LPCCC for the City of Davis, thanked Commissioner Shaw for serving as the creek’s Streamkeeper on a temporary basis. He said the LPCCC hoped to hire a new permanent Streamkeeper in three to four months.

**4. Public Comment**

Catherine Portman, President of the Burrowing Owl Preservation Society, discussed two letters she submitted to the Commission in 2017 and 2018 in which she encouraged the City to adopt certain protections and conservation measures for burrowing owls. These protections and conservation measures were addressed by staff in a staff report and discussed at the Commission’s November 2018 meeting. She said that when Chris Gardner, the City’s Open Space Lands Manager, was hired several years ago, she was told that Mr. Gardner would be developing a habitat management plan for the Wildhorse agricultural buffer, but she said that plan had not yet been developed. She also asked that the City mow the Wildhorse agricultural buffer in the near future because she said the vegetation was too high for burrowing owls to see predators and forage efficiently. Ms. Reynolds said she would discuss Ms. Portman’s comments with Mr. Gardner.

**5. Consent Calendar**

There was only one item on the consent calendar: approval of the November 4, 2019 regular meeting minutes. On a motion by Commissioner Millstein, seconded by Commissioner Allen, the Commission voted 4-0-3-1 to approve the November 4, 2019 regular meeting minutes. (Ayes – Allen, Huber, Millstein, Vayssieres; Noes – none; Absent – Gooch, Holstege, Klineberg; Abstentions – Shaw).

## 6. Regular Items

### **Discussion Item -- Discuss ideas for interpretive panels and site identity concepts for the City's 110-acre South Fork Preserve, located along the South Fork of Putah Creek at County Road 104**

Ms. Reynolds continued the discussion with the Commission about possible interpretive panel subjects for South Fork Preserve. Draft ideas discussed included (1) how humans and nature have partnered to create the beauty in the preserve, (2) how the Patwin of Putah-toi tended the land and managed it for abundance, (3) how the preserve was transformed over time from farmland to habitat, (4) how a messy natural landscape can provide wonderful riparian habitat, (5) why the Putah Creek Accord was necessary and what it did, (6) how and why salmon are once again traveling up Putah Creek, (7) why poison oak provides great habitat and nutrition for animals, (8) why oak galls are formed and what they look like, (9) how the preserve fits into the City's open space network and how Measure O helps to pay for its upkeep, (10) how the creek serves to connect animal and plant habitats upstream and downstream, (11) how local native plant species were historically made into various products, and (12) how invasive species differ from non-native and native species.

Commissioner Huber suggested a "what is natural" theme for the interpretive panels. He also offered to work on panel #10 above. Commissioner Shaw offered to work on panels #5 and #6 above. Commissioner Allen offered to work on panel #12 above. Commissioner Vayssieres offered to help with panel design.

### **Discussion Item -- Discuss the City's agricultural land mitigation ordinance (Article 40A.03 Farmland Preservation)**

The Commission discussed the City's agricultural land mitigation requirement, which is part of the City's Right to Farm and Farmland Preservation Ordinance, passed by the City Council in 1995. Under the City's agricultural land mitigation requirement, developers must permanently protect at least two acres of agricultural land somewhere within the Davis Planning Area to "mitigate" for every acre of agricultural land they convert to urban uses (i.e., the 2:1 requirement). Permanently protecting the land means either buying it outright or buying a conservation easement on the land. Developers must first preserve the land directly adjacent to their project. If this adjacent land is not enough to satisfy the 2:1 agricultural land mitigation requirement, then the developer must look elsewhere within the Davis Planning Area.

## 7. Commission and Staff Communications

### **Commission Work Plan**

The work plan was not discussed.

### **Upcoming Meeting Date, Time, Items**

The Commission's next meeting is January 6. Possible agenda items discussed include (1) a discussion of how development projects go through the City's approval process, and how the Commission can be better informed, (2) a discussion of agricultural issues with Yolo County Supervisor Jim Provenza, and (3) the agricultural mitigation proposal for the Bretton Woods development project.

### **Upcoming Events**

Commissioner Millstein mentioned the public scoping meeting for the environmental review of the Aggie Research Campus development proposal that had begun just prior to tonight's Commission meeting. She said all comments are due Monday, December 9, 2019 at 5:00 p.m.

### **Working Groups**

1. *Acquisitions*. No updates were reported.
2. *Habitat Restoration and Enhancement*. No updates were reported.
3. *Land and Resource Management*. No updates were reported.
4. *Public Access and Recreation*. No updates were reported.
5. *Financial and Program Accountability*. No updates were reported.
6. *Public Engagement and Partnerships*. No updates were reported.

## 8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:08 p.m.