

**Open Space and Habitat Commission Minutes**  
**Monday, December 6, 2021**  
**Remote Audio and Video Meeting Participation, 6:30 p.m.**

Commissioners Present: Ramiro Cabanillas-Ledesma, Lindsay Correa, Patrick Huber, Patricia Price, Emma Torbert, Marc Vayssieres (Vice Chair), and Sara Geonczy (Alternate)

Vacant Positions: None

Commissioners Absent: Carrie Shaw (Chair)

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

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

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

Commissioner Vayssieres opened the meeting after a quorum was achieved and called roll call. Commissioner Torbert arrived during Brief Announcements from Staff, Commissioners, and City Council Liaisons. Commissioner Price arrived during Regular Items.

**2. Approval of Agenda**

On a motion by Commissioner Huber, which was seconded by Commissioner Correa, the Commission voted 5-0-3-0 to approve the December 2021 regular meeting agenda (Ayes – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Correa, Geonczy, Huber, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Price, Shaw, Torbert; Abstentions – None).

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

Tracie Reynolds, staff to the Commission, said the on-line survey seeking input from the community on the Open Space Program closed on November 19, after being available on-line for four weeks. She said the City received 288 responses. She said she would summarize the results for the Commission at a future meeting and also post them on the City's website.

She also said a ribbon-cutting ceremony tentatively planned for the South Fork Preserve public accessibility improvements in early December would need to be postponed due to supply-chain issues. She said the interpretative panels had arrived but hadn't been installed yet. She said the ceremony would be rescheduled for February/March. She said staff would be working on finishing touches during the coming months.

Ms. Reynolds also mentioned two new potential development projects that will likely be coming to the Commission soon for input: (1) Palomino Place, on land known as Wild Horse Ranch, adjacent to the Wildhorse neighborhood, and (2) a project east of the Wildhorse neighborhood on land known as the Shriners property. She said the latter project was adjacent to the City's newest agricultural conservation easement, known as the Gill orchard property. Information about both projects could be found on the City's website, she said.

She also mentioned that she had recently completed a complete reorganization of the open space pages on the City's website. She said she organized the pages according to the subject areas in the Strategic Plan for the Open Space Program and added a lot of new content and photos. She thanked former Commissioner Marc Hoshovsky for providing many of the photos. She said the next step was to upgrade the interactive map.

Finally, she mentioned that the Addendum to the Environmental Impact Report for the Davis Innovation and Sustainability Campus 2.0 (“DiSC Addendum”) was now on the City’s website. She said she had sent the Commission an email with the link to the DiSC Addendum. She said the Commission could discuss whether it wanted to agendaize the DiSC Addendum later in the meeting during the agenda-setting discussion for the next meeting.

#### **4. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

#### **5. Consent Calendar**

There was one item on the consent calendar: approval of the November 1, 2021 regular meeting minutes. On a motion by Commissioner Cabanillas-Ledesma, which was seconded by Commissioner Correa, the Commission voted 6-0-2-0 to approve the November 2021 meeting minutes (Ayes – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Correa, Geonczy, Huber, Torbert, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Price, Shaw; Abstentions – None).

#### **6. Regular Items**

##### **Action Item – Recommend that the City Council approve the proposed lease agreement with Fiery Ginger Farm for the use and operation of the Cannery Farm**

Ms. Reynolds briefly summarized the information contained in the staff report on this topic. She briefly summarized the key terms in the draft lease, including the term, rent, organic farming practices, community-event obligations, maintenance obligations, utility payments, security, and pest management. She also mentioned that she intended to recommend extending the three existing licenses with Leaf and Lark Farm, the Beecharmers, and the Bike Campaign to the end of February 2022 to give Fiery Ginger Farm enough time to enter into new subleases with these three entities. She said she planned to bring the lease to the City Council for approval on December 14.

Commissioner Vayssieres asked if Commissioners had any clarifying questions. Commissioner Torbert noted an inconsistency in the lease related to the use of certain rodenticides in the eastern hedgerow to control the ground squirrel population. Ms. Reynolds said she would correct that inconsistency before the lease goes before the City Council for approval.

Commissioner Vayssieres then took public comment. There was no public comment. Commissioner Vayssieres then closed public comment and the Commission discussed this item. Commissioner Vayssieres asked Fiery Ginger Farm to comment. Hope Sippola and Shayne Zurilgen of Fiery Ginger Farm said they appreciated the opportunity to manage the farm and were excited to make the farm a center for learning about regenerative agriculture. They also said they were excited about opening up new markets for smaller family farms and creating synergy between their farming operations and the work of their three subtenants.

On a motion by Commissioner Huber, which was seconded by Commissioner Cabanillas-Ledesma, the Commission voted 6-0-1-1 to recommend that the City Council approve the proposed lease agreement with Fiery Ginger Farm for the use and operation of the Cannery Farm (Ayes – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Correa, Geonczy, Huber, Torbert, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Shaw; Abstentions – Price).

**Discussion Item – Receive a presentation from staff and discuss the impact of encampments on the wildlife habitat within the City’s open space areas**

Chris Gardner, the City’s Open Space Lands Manager, gave the Commission a presentation about the impact of encampments on the wildlife habitat within the City’s open space areas, particularly the Putah Creek Parkway. He talked about where most encampments are concentrated along the parkway and the process the City follows when an encampment is discovered. He said the encampments do create damage and hazards (i.e., trash piles, trampled vegetation, hazardous waste, fire damage) but these impacts are temporary. Staff is able to clean up these encampments, he said, and restore the habitat. He said the more lasting negative impacts to the wildlife habitat come from other sources. He said off-trail hiking and off-leash dogs caused the most damage to the City’s wildlife habitat areas.

Commissioner Vayssieres asked if Commissioners had any clarifying questions. Commissioners asked for clarification on (1) how long it takes to clean up an encampment, (2) how long it takes for an encampment to return, (3) whether the City can relocate campers, and (4) what kind of fire abatement the City was doing within its open space areas.

Commissioner Shaw then took public comment. Tracy DeWit, a South Davis resident who lives near the Putah Creek Parkway, said she appreciated staff’s efforts to clean up the encampments, but she said the problem has grown over the years due to the parkway’s proximity to freeways, the downtown, and the university. She said there needed to be more collaboration to keep on top of the problem. Karen Munoz, another South Davis resident who lives near the Putah Creek Parkway, said the number of encampments had increased over the last 20 years and she found it hard to believe that these “mini landfills” didn’t cause a lasting impact to the wildlife habitat along the parkway. Bruce de Terra, a volunteer with the Friends of North Davis Channel, which helps the City maintain the channel, said volunteers recently worked with the City to remove trash from the channel. He said there was still a need to remove a large amount of trash from a culvert upstream at Highway 113.

Commissioner Shaw then closed public comment and the Commission discussed this item. Topics discussed included (1) the challenges of maintaining open space near an urban area, (2) whether additional signage might help solve the problem, (3) whether the City could establish a permanent camping area, (4) how the City could better publicize the on-line system for residents to report encampments, and (5) whether the City was doing any erosion control. No action was taken.

**7. Commission and Staff Communications**

**Commission Work Plan**

The Commission work plan was not discussed.

**Upcoming Meeting Date, Time, Items**

Ms. Reynolds said the next regularly scheduled meeting was Monday, January 3. She said there was nothing pressing for the January meeting unless the Commission wished to make formal recommendations about the DiSC Addendum. She said the DiSC 2.0 project was scheduled to go before the Planning Commission on January 12 and the City Council on February 1. If the Commission didn’t want to agendaize the DiSC Addendum, Ms. Reynolds said she recommends cancelling the meeting. Commissioner Huber said he believed the Commission had already reviewed the Environmental Impact Report for the previous DiSC project and didn’t think it was necessary to agendaize the DiSC Addendum. Commissioner Torbert recommended that Commission working

groups meet instead in January. Commissioner Correa agreed with Commissioners Huber and Torbert. Ms. Reynolds said she would be happy to review the workplan, provide remarks on the status of each action item, and suggest assignments for each working group. The Commission agreed to cancel the January meeting and organize working group meetings instead.

Possible agenda items discussed for the Commission's February meeting included (1) electing a new chair and vice chair, (2) discussing the results of the open space survey, and (3) discussing a possible collaborative habitat restoration project with UC Davis.

### **Upcoming Events**

No upcoming events were mentioned.

### **Working Groups**

1. *Acquisitions*. No updates were reported.
2. *Habitat Restoration and Enhancement*. Commissioner Huber said he had learned of an unfortunate large salmon kill on Putah Creek at a recent meeting of the Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee. He said last year the salmon run was hindered by a problem with the check dam and this year the salmon run was hindered by an oxygen deprivation event that is being investigated. He said this was the second year in a row that most of the salmon have been lost. He said this news was very disappointing after several years of building up the fish population along Putah Creek.
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.
7. *Ad-Hoc Working Group to Improve Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the City's Open Space Program*. Commissioner Price said this ad-hoc working group had met a couple of times in recent weeks and planned to meet with Ms. Reynolds next week.

### **Update on Cannery Farm**

The Cannery Farm was discussed during Regular Items.

### **Update on Climate Action and Adaptation Plan ("CAAP") Update**

Ms. Reynolds said that staff will be discussing the draft CAAP priority action items with the City Council tomorrow night (December 7, 2021). She said the staff report and meeting materials could be found on the City's website. She said she also sent the Commission the staff report in a separate email. She said staff was looking for City Council feedback on the draft priority action items.

### **8. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:28 p.m.