

Open Space and Habitat Commission Minutes
Monday, September 14, 2015
Redwood Park Community Building, Anderson Road 6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Greg House, Patrick Huber, Helena Chung, Roberta Millstein, Jason Bone (Alternate), Marc Hoshovsky

Commissioners Absent: Rachel Aptekar, Colleen Rossier

Commission Liaisons: Recreation and Parks (TBD), Planning (Rob Hofmann)

Assigned Staff: Tracie Reynolds

Council Liaison: Lucas Frerichs

1. Approval of Agenda

On a motion by Commissioner House, seconded by Commissioner Huber, the Commission voted 6-0 to approve the agenda.

2. Approval of Minutes

August 17, 2015 minutes. On a motion by Commissioner Huber, seconded by Commissioner Millstein, the Commission voted 6-0 to approve the August 17, 2015 minutes.

3. Public Communications

None.

4. Discussion and Possible Approval of Consolidated Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (“EIR”) for the Proposed Mace Ranch Innovation Center

The Commission reviewed its consolidated comments to date on the draft EIR for the proposed Mace Ranch Innovation Center (“MRIC”), which was part of the meeting materials for the September 14 meeting. Each comment was summarized by the commenter and reviewed for clarity. At the end of discussion of each comment, Commissioners were given the opportunity to object to the content of the comment. Commissioners did not voice any objections to any comments, but they did request that some commenters clarify their comments and resubmit them to staff. The Commission agreed to review an updated set of comments at its next regular meeting in October (October 5). Comments are due on November 12, so the Commission will vote on final consolidated comments at its regularly scheduled November meeting (November 2). This schedule means that final comments are due to staff (Tracie Reynolds) by Thursday, October 22, or Friday, October 23 at the latest.

5. Discussion -- Measure O Revenues and Expenditures

Commissioner Hoshovsky led a discussion of recent public concerns about the City’s Open Space Program (See Attachment 1). The primary concerns had to do with (1) the Measure O budget and historic personnel costs, (2) the proposed agreement with the Yolo Habitat Conservancy about Measure O funding for the implementation of the Yolo Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan (“HCP/NCCP”), (3) public access on open spaces in and around Davis, and (4) what Measure O funds have been spent on since the election of 2000. Commissioner Hoshovsky presented his observations and thoughts about these concerns (See Attachment 1). He said that City staff and the Commission’s public forum working group would be working with the consultant hired by the City (i.e., Jeff Loux from the U.C. Davis Extension Collaboration Center) to address these concerns before the upcoming public forum to discuss Measure O expenditures in the future.

Tracie Reynolds, staff to the Commission, said that she would share a detailed spreadsheet of Measure O revenues and expenditures prepared by the City’s finance staff at the October meeting. The spreadsheet summarizes all revenues and expenditures flowing in and out of the Measure O special tax fund over the last 15 years. She said she looked at Measure O staffing costs as a percent of the parcel tax over time. She said the numbers seemed to suggest three phases: (1) a start-up phase (i.e., the first five years, where personnel expenses

as a % of the parcel tax went from 1% to 19%), (2) a stabilized period (i.e., the next seven years, where personnel expenses as a % of the parcel tax went from 19% to 30%), and (3) a recession-impact period (i.e., the last two years, where personnel expenses as a % of the parcel tax went from 30% to 46%). She said City staff have been in discussions about how to lower that percentage back to the stabilized period range (i.e., about 33% or a third of the parcel tax) for future years.

Ms. Reynolds explained that other than her position, all of the positions in the Open Space Program are located in the Parks and Community Services Department because that department has the mowing equipment and all the other heavy equipment needed for open space management (See Attachment 2). She said that the City funds nine positions related to open space, and they are funded by several different sources in addition to Measure O (i.e., General Fund money, fees, lease revenues, etc.). Five of the nine positions are primarily funded by other sources, meaning that the Measure O contribution is minimal. Two of the positions are 85% paid by Measure O. One position is 67% paid by Measure O, and one position is 25% paid by Measure O (See Attachment 2). She also discussed all the properties the open space staff maintains, and the variety of tasks they do on these properties (See Attachment 2).

She said the recent increases in Measure O staffing costs were due to the recession, when the City's General Fund was unable to pay its share of the open space staffing costs. In an effort to avoid further layoffs and keep the two open space maintenance positions, the City increased Measure O's share of the open space staffing costs. Now that the City's General Fund has recovered, the City is investigating ways to reduce Measure O's share of the open space staffing costs in the future. Some ideas being considered are consolidating the two open space maintenance positions into one position (given that both people currently in those positions are retiring at the end of the year), and using more contracted labor. Ms. Reynolds said the City is confident it can reduce open space staffing costs to at or under a third of the parcel tax (i.e., 33%) in future years. She said she could discuss the detailed spreadsheet prepared by the City's finance staff at the October meeting.

6. Working Group Updates

- *Evaluation Criteria for Restoration Projects.* Commissioner Hoshovsky, head of the working group on this subject, said the working group has developed a draft of the evaluation criteria for restoration projects, based on the City's evaluation criteria for teen services. He said the working group will be ready to share this draft with the Commission at an upcoming meeting.
- *Community Farms.* Commissioner House, head of the working group on this subject, said this working group has been focused on a proposal from a group of U.C. Davis students studying sustainable agriculture to lease 25 acres of City-owned land along Mace Boulevard.
- *Native Pollinators.* Commissioner Huber, head of the working group on this subject, said there was nothing to report.
- *Public Forum.* Commissioner Hoshovsky, head of the working group on this subject, said the working group and City staff had interviewed all three firms who submitted proposals in response to the City's request for qualifications/proposals for a meeting facilitator and outreach specialist for the public forum on open space. All three firms were evaluated on their written proposal and interview, and given a quantitative score. The U.C. Davis Extension Collaboration Center, led by Jeff Loux and Tara Zagofsky (the "Collaboration Center"), scored the highest on the selection criteria and was selected as the City's consultant for this assignment. City staff is currently working with the Collaboration Center to get a professional services contract executed. He said given the need to address some of the community's concerns about Measure O expenditures, the working group was recommending that the public forum be postponed until late January/early February. He said the working group and City staff intends to work with the Collaboration Center to conduct a public outreach campaign, including possibly doing targeted one-on-one meetings with community members, in the fall.

- *Open Space Website.* Commissioner Millstein, head of the working group on this subject, said there was nothing to report.
- *Open Space Signage.* Tracie Reynolds, assigned staff to the Commission, said there was nothing to report.

7. Project/Program Updates

- *Yolo Natural Heritage Plan.* Staff reported that draft terms for City funding of the implementation of the Yolo Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan (“HCP/NCCP”) would be discussed at the October Commission meeting. Staff also reported that the state and federal wildlife agencies have agreed to count future habitat easements in Solano County (e.g., along the southern bank of Putah Creek, for example) towards Yolo County’s habitat reserve. Staff also reported that the Yolo Habitat Conservancy is investigating whether it can separate conservation funding from mitigation funding.
- *North Davis Riparian Greenbelt.* Staff reported that there was an all-hands maintenance meeting in August to discuss maintenance needs along the corridor and how best the various parties (i.e., the City, the Putah Creek Council, and the Yolo Resource Conservation District) can work together to do the maintenance work in the future. Staff also reported that there will be a community meeting on September 15 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at Bird Entry Park to discuss the use of a small restoration grant that the Putah Creek Council received to do further work along one section of the corridor.
- *Nishi Project Environmental Impact Report.* Staff reported that the review and comment period for the Nishi Gateway Project Environmental Impact Report (“EIR”) began on September 10 and will run through October 26. Staff reported that the City was asking the Commission to evaluate the EIR for its consistency with the City Council-adopted guiding principles for innovation centers. Toward that end, City staff would be giving the Commission a presentation on the Nishi Gateway Project on November 2. Commissioner Millstein summarized the Commission’s action at its August meeting. She said the Commission had decided at its August meeting to formally comment on the EIR and not just review the EIR for its consistency with the City Council-adopted guiding principles for innovation centers. As a result, the Commission directed staff to organize a special meeting in late October to approve consolidated comments on the EIR.

8. Staff/Commission Communications

- *Commission Liaison Reports*
 - Recreation & Parks/Planning. No reports were given.
 - City Council. No reports were given.
- *Staff Report.* No report was given.
- *Next Meeting.* October 5, 2015.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:40 p.m.

Attachments:

- Attachment 1: Hoshovsky’s Summary – Public Concerns About Open Space Program
- Attachment 2: City Measure O Handouts