

Open Space and Habitat Commission Minutes

Monday, December 5, 2016

Community Chambers Conference Room, 23 Russell Boulevard, 6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Patrick Huber (Chair), Greg House (Vice Chair), Roberta Millstein, Rachel Aptekar

Vacant Positions: Two (One Regular, One Alternate)

Commissioners Absent: Marc Hoshovsky, Jason Bone

Commission Liaisons: Liaison to the Recreation and Park Commission (Vacant)

Assigned Staff: Tracie Reynolds

Council Liaison: Lucas Frerichs

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

Commissioner Huber opened the meeting and attendees introduced themselves.

2. Approval of Agenda

On a motion by Commissioner Aptekar, seconded by Commissioner House, the Commission voted 4-0-2-0 to approve the agenda (Ayes -- Huber, Aptekar, Millstein, House; Noes – None; Absent – Hoshovsky, Bone; Abstentions – None).

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

Tracie Reynolds, staff to the Commission, said the City Council subcommittee had finished interviewing 11 of the 12 people who had applied for the five open positions on the Commission. She said the City Council was scheduled to appoint the new members at its meeting on December 20. The new members will begin serving their terms on January 1, 2017. She said the Commission would also elect a new chair and vice chair at its January meeting. She also briefly updated the Commission on the status of the pending acquisition of a 9.5-acre property west of South Fork Preserve.

Commissioner Aptekar also mentioned the upcoming forum on pesticide use in Davis on December 7 from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Davis Senior Center. The forum, hosted by the City of Davis and the Natural Resources Commission, will discuss current herbicide and insecticide use by the City in public parks, greenbelts, City-owned open spaces and farm lands, City facilities, streets, and sidewalks as well as providing information on why pesticides are used and alternatives to reduce or eliminate continued pesticide use.

4. Public Comment

Matt Williams inquired about the status of the Measure O background report and the other reports resulting from the open space workshop in March 2016. Tracie Reynolds said those reports were in draft form and she hoped to finalize them early next year. Taryn Cadena, a conservation associate with the Yolo Land Trust (“YLT”), announced that she would be leaving for the Peace Corps at the end of the year and will no longer be attending Commission meetings. As part of the transition, she introduced Tiffany Loveridge, an advancement officer for the YLT, who may be attending future Commission meetings in her place.

5. Consent Calendar

The only item on the consent calendar was to approve the Commission’s November 7, 2016 minutes. Commissioner Aptekar requested an edit to the minutes. On a motion by Commissioner House, seconded by Commissioner Aptekar, the Commission voted 4-0-2-0 to approve the November 7, 2016 minutes, as amended (Ayes -- Huber, Millstein, Aptekar, House; Noes – None; Absent – Hoshovsky, Bone; Abstentions – None).

6. Regular Items

Presentation and Discussion – Possible burrowing owl protection and conservation measures presented by the Burrowing Owl Preservation Society

The Commission heard a presentation by Catherine Portman, president of the Burrowing Owl Preservation Society (“BOPS”), about possible protection and conservation measures for the species. Ms. Portman discussed possible measures the City could require of developers who find burrowing owls nesting on the property about to be developed. These measures include requiring developers to (1) ensure (through the project’s environmental documents) that alternative burrows are available before existing burrows are closed; (2) hire “qualified and experienced” burrowing owl biologists to conduct the species surveys; (3) state how they will implement mitigation measures recommended by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, including how they will mitigate for the loss of burrowing owl habitat; and (4) replicate California native prairie habitat in the project’s required agricultural buffer. On City property, she said she would like the City to manage vegetation to enhance the habitat where the burrowing owl is present, and install artificial burrows where there is suitable habitat and natural burrows are absent or unavailable. She said she would also like the City to enter into an agreement with state wildlife officials to collect burrowing owl mitigation fees to purchase burrowing owl conservation easements through the Yolo Habitat Conservancy, when it is permitted.

Commissioner Huber said that burrowing owl protection was frequently cited during the open space workshop in March 2016. He recommended that a working group be established to work with the City and BOPS over the next six months to develop recommendations for burrowing owl protection and conservation, based on scientific data.

Presentation and Discussion – Possible long-term uses for the wetlands, overland flow area, and reclaimed water associated with the City of Davis’s former wastewater treatment plant presented by City Public Works staff

The Commission heard a presentation by a City consultant (West Yost) about the possible long-term uses for the wetlands, overland flow area, and reclaimed water associated with the City’s former wastewater treatment plant. With the City’s new wastewater treatment plant coming online in 2017, the wetlands area and overland flow area are no longer needed for wastewater treatment and can be used for other purposes, including possibly habitat and open space. In addition, newly available reclaimed water can be used for other purposes. The Commission heard the various options and ranked its preferences for the long-term uses for the wetlands, overland flow area, and reclaimed water. Stan Gryczko, the City’s assistant director of public works, said that he planned to discuss these options (and the Commission’s preferences) with the City Council in early 2017.

7. Commission and Staff Communications

Commission Work Plan

There was nothing to report. The Commission has decided to defer updating its work plan until early next year, when new Commissioners have been appointed.

Upcoming Meeting Date, Time, Items

The next meeting is January 9, 2016. Possible agenda items include welcome and introductions of new members, the election of a new chair and vice chair, the election of a new liaison to the Finance and Budget Commission, and a review of the Commission’s work plan and working groups.

Upcoming Events

There were no upcoming events to report other than the one mentioned in Brief Announcements.

Working Groups

- *Grant Guidelines – Restoration Projects.* There was nothing to report.
- *Community Farms.* There was nothing to report.
- *Native Pollinators.* There was nothing to report.
- *Public Forum.* There was nothing to report.
- *Open Space Website.* There was nothing to report.

- *Open Space Signage.* Tracie Reynolds, staff to the Commission, said she would set up a meeting with the working group to discuss some ideas that came up during a recent brainstorming session.

Commission Liaison Reports

- *Recreation and Parks.* Currently, the Commission does not have a liaison from this commission.
- *Finance and Budget.* Currently, the Commission does not have a liaison to this commission.

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:25 p.m.