

Open Space and Habitat Commission Minutes

Monday, April 2, 2018

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

Commissioners Present: Patrick Huber (Chair), Marc Hoshovsky, Joy Klineberg, Roberta Millstein

Vacant Positions: One (Alternate)

Commissioners Absent: Rachel Aptekar, Jason Bone (Vice Chair), Lon Payne

Assigned Staff: Tracie Reynolds, Manager of Leases and Open Space

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

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

Commissioner Huber opened the meeting after a quorum was achieved.

2. Approval of Agenda

On a motion by Commissioner Millstein, seconded by Commissioner Hoshovsky, the Commission voted 4-0-3-0 to approve the April 2018 agenda (Ayes – Hoshovsky, Huber, Klineberg, Millstein; Noes – None; Absent – Aptekar, Bone, Payne; Abstentions – None).

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

Commissioners Huber and Millstein said they attended a follow-up site visit of Grasslands Regional Park hosted by Yolo County staff, who oversee and manage the 323-acre park off County Road 104. The purpose of the follow-up site visit was to solicit additional feedback from the Commission about a proposed trail near the park's vernal pools. Commissioner Millstein said she and Commissioner Huber had no issues with the proposed trail other than Yolo County's proposed use of pesticides to clear the pathway for the proposed trail. She said she would follow-up with Yolo County staff to discuss alternative less-toxic methods for clearing the pathway for the proposed trail.

The new 1.25-mile trail will be paid for in part by a \$107,000 grant from the California Department of Parks and Recreation, Habitat Conservation Fund Program (Trails). The grant is also helping to fund a concrete path from the park's parking lot to a new trail head, a 35-acre dog park, two shade structures, new picnic tables and benches, new interpretive signage, and improvements to the parking lot. The improvements are expected to be completed by April 2019.

4. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

5. Consent Calendar

There was only one item on the consent calendar: approval of the March 5, 2018 regular meeting minutes. On a motion by Commissioner Hoshovsky, seconded by Commissioner Klineberg, the Commission voted 4-0-3-0 to approve the March 2018 meeting minutes (Ayes – Hoshovsky, Huber, Klineberg, Millstein; Noes – None; Absent – Aptekar, Bone, Payne; Abstentions – None).

6. Regular Items

Action Item – Recommend to the City Council the preferred short-term and long-term use(s) for the recycled water from the City's new wastewater treatment plant

The Commission heard a presentation by West Yost Associates, an engineering firm that has been hired by the City to assist with the City's transition to a new wastewater treatment plant. Representatives from the City's public works department also were present at the meeting. The focus of the discussion was the short-term and long-term options for using all the recycled water that will be generated by the City's new wastewater treatment plant. The main short-term and long-term options are (1) using the water to irrigate turf grass in the City's parks, greenbelts and golf courses, (2) using the water to irrigate agricultural crops on the City's agricultural land and other nearby privately owned agricultural land, and (3) selling the water.

Several Commissioners expressed their disapproval for spending millions of dollars to pipe the recycled water back to the City when it could only be used to water grass at the City's parks and greenbelts and golf courses. They expressed disappointment that the recycled water could not be used for habitat purposes in the City's stormwater detention basins, such as North and West Davis ponds, due to state regulations governing recycled water. For this reason, the Commission preferred the options that used the water to help habitat and open space, such as using it to help the aquatic habitat in the Yolo Bypass and using it on agricultural land the City owns.

After much discussion, the Commission voted 4-0-3-0 (Ayes – Hoshovsky, Huber, Klineberg, Millstein; Noes – None; Absent – Aptekar, Bone, Payne; Abstentions – None) to approve the following motion:

1. The Commission's first priority would be to discharge the recycled water to the Yolo Bypass through a "water market" agreement with a user that includes mutually agreeable provisions for the City to retain future rights to the recycled water so that the City still has the option to use the recycled water at some point in the future.
2. If #1 above is not a viable option, the Commission's second priority would be to use the recycled water for agricultural purposes on nearby City-owned agricultural land (i.e., the former Howatt Ranch property), or on other privately owned agricultural land located south of Willow Slough Bypass. The use of the recycled water for agricultural purposes on the former Howatt Ranch property must not preclude the City's ability to move forward with habitat restoration on this land at a future date.
3. The City should encourage water use reduction in the City as much as possible through the conversion of turf areas to native habitat.

Action Item – Establish new working groups

The Commission formed draft working groups for the rest of this calendar year that are based on the subject areas in the newly approved Strategic Plan for the City's Open Space Program, approved by the Commission and the City Council in March. The subject areas in the Strategic Plan are (1) Acquisitions, (2) Habitat Restoration and Enhancement, (3) Land and Resource Management, (4) Public Access and Recreation, (5) Financial and Program Accountability, and (6) Public Engagement and Partnerships. The draft working groups for the rest of this calendar year are:

1. Acquisitions: Commissioners Aptekar, Huber and Klineberg
2. Habitat Restoration and Enhancement: Commissioners Hoshovsky, Huber and Millstein
3. Land and Resource Management: Commissioners Aptekar, Bone, and Millstein
4. Public Access and Recreation: Commissioners Bone and Hoshovsky
5. Financial and Program Accountability: Commissioners Bone and Klineberg
6. Public Engagement and Partnerships: Commissioners Hoshovsky, Huber and Millstein

The Commission hopes to approve the working groups at its May meeting.

Discussion Item – Discuss next steps for developing the Commission's five-year implementation plan and annual work plan

The Commission discussed the next steps for developing its annual work plan and first five-year implementation plan, based on the action items in the Strategic Plan for the City's Open Space Program, approved by the Commission and the City Council in March. After the working groups are finalized, each working group will meet and decide which action items it intends to focus on for the rest of this calendar year and over the next five years. The Commission hopes to approve its annual work plan and five-year implementation plan at its June meeting.

7. Commission and Staff Communications

Commission Work Plan

The work plan was discussed above during Item #6, Regular Items.

Upcoming Meeting Date, Time, Items

The next meeting is May 7, 2018. Possible agenda items discussed include (1) the Commission’s final working groups for the remainder of this calendar year, (2) the Commission’s annual work plan and five-year implementation plan, (3) a proposed “no feeding” ordinance for wild turkeys within the city limits, and (4) the draft guidelines for grants (using Measure O funds) for habitat restoration projects.

Commissioner Huber also mentioned that he agreed the appropriate time for the Commission to discuss the plant palette for the proposed Nishi Housing Development Project was in the fall. He also said students – doing research as part of a class project at the University of California at Davis – were mapping pollinator plantings in the City’s Willowbank neighborhood. He said the results of the class project might be available to present to the Commission in June.

Upcoming Events

No upcoming events were discussed.

Working Groups

No working group updates were discussed.

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:35 p.m.