

Open Space and Habitat Commission Minutes
Monday, May 6, 2019
Community Chambers Conference Room, 23 Russell Boulevard, 6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Stephanie Holstege, Patrick Huber (Chair), Joy Klineberg, Carrie Shaw, Marc Vayssieres, Garrett Allen (Alternate)

Vacant Positions: None

Commissioners Absent: Erin Gooch, Roberta Millstein

Assigned Staff: Tracie Reynolds, Manager, Open Space Program

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

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

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

2. Approval of Agenda

On a motion by Commissioner Vayssieres, seconded by Commissioner Holstege, the Commission voted 4-0-3-0 to approve the May 2019 agenda. (Ayes – Holstege, Huber, Shaw, Vayssieres; Noes – none; Absent – Gooch, Klineberg, Millstein; Abstentions – none).

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

Chris Gardner, the City's Open Space Lands Manager, announced that he would be running the meeting this evening for Tracie Reynolds who was out of town. He said the Commission's field trip to South Fork Preserve West needed to be postponed to June 1 or June 8, and the Commission's joint discussion with the City Council needed to be postponed to June 4. He said staff would follow-up with the Commission to confirm these new dates.

Commissioner Shaw asked staff who from the City of Davis was going to serve on the advisory committee for the Yolo Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Communities Conservation Plan. John McNerney, the City's wildlife biologist, said he has been serving as the City's liaison to the advisory committee for the last several years. He said he would find out if the City intended for him to continue serving in this capacity. He also said he would find out if a Commissioner could serve on the advisory committee instead of staff. If so, Commissioner Shaw said she would be interested in serving. She also mentioned that she has information about the status of the western monarch butterfly population from a workshop she attended at U.C. Davis in February that she would share with anyone who is interested.

4. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

5. Consent Calendar

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

6. Regular Items

Action Item -- Approve final designs for habitat restoration project on three acres of City-owned open space at the corner of F Street and Anderson Road (aka North Davis Uplands)

The Commission discussed final designs for a habitat restoration project, funded in part by Measure O, the City's open space parcel tax, on three acres of City-owned open space at the corner of F Street and Anderson Road. The City's consultant, Olga Garzon of Melton Design Group, presented the final designs which will include pedestrian pathways and native tree, shrub and grass plantings. She said the City agreed to make a number of changes to the draft design in response to comments from the Commission and the public:

1. The wheelchair-accessible gates or “switchbacks” proposed to control bike traffic on the site have been eliminated due to concerns they were too big and would take up too much space on the small site. Instead, staff is proposing to install small wooden posts, or bollards, inscribed with the words “Walk Your Bike,” at each entrance to the new open space to control bike traffic. Bike racks also will be installed at each entrance.
2. The existing bench will remain on the site due to concerns that there will not be enough places for elderly walkers to sit down. Mr. Gardner said the City’s open space areas do not include benches but that the City was willing to leave the existing bench in place. He also said there will be multiple types of seating available on the site, such as tree rounds and large rocks.
3. The overlook area at the corner of F Street and Anderson Road has been eliminated due to concerns that it would be too noisy and exposed to the street.

There was also some concern that existing elderberry bushes would be blocking people’s view of the pond at the proposed overlook locations. Mr. Gardner said that the bushes could be managed to mitigate this concern.

Staff is proposing to use a cellular confinement system (i.e., geocells) for the trails to make the pathways accessible year-round to people in wheelchairs, and to minimize maintenance costs and site impacts. The City is proposing to use tan-colored geocells with tan gravel so that it will blend in with the landscape. Mr. Gardner explained why the alternatives (i.e., packed dirt or decomposed granite) either were more costly to maintain or were not appropriate for a habitat area.

At the end of the discussion, the Commission approved the final landscape designs. On a motion by Commissioner Shaw, seconded by Commissioner Holstege, the Commission voted 5-0-2-0 to approve the final landscape designs. (Ayes – Holstege, Huber, Klineberg, Shaw, Vayssieres; Noes – none; Absent – Gooch, Millstein; Abstentions – none).

Discussion Item -- Discuss land management practices/plans and integrated pest management techniques used by City Open Space staff

Chris Gardner, the City’s Open Space Lands Manager, gave the Commission a brief overview of how the City manages its open space areas, including which integrated pest management (“IPM”) techniques the City uses to control invasive species. He said that the Open Space Program focuses its management on promoting biodiversity and working to support the highest number of native species, flora and fauna. The City works to support the health of native grasses, forbs, trees and shrubs on all the City’s open space areas as a way to provide robust, dynamic habitat for wildlife. For example, the City closely monitors the existence of native wildflowers, marks them, and protects them from weed control efforts as a passive way to expand their populations, he said. In rare cases, he said the City tailors management to support a single known listed and/or special status species (i.e., the burrowing owl “reserve” in the Wildhorse Agricultural Buffer).

He said the City relies almost exclusively on non-chemical methods to control and/or eliminate invasive weeds on the City’s open space areas. Even things like washing trucks and equipment after use to prevent the spread of seeds are part of this daily effort to control invasive weeds, he said.

Mr. Gardner also spoke about the program’s goal and efforts to work with the community to manage the City’s open space areas. He described the relationship the program has with local service organizations like Tree Davis and Putah Creek Council, who are able to mobilize volunteers. He also reported on the first cohort of volunteer docents for South Fork Preserve. This group of volunteers is already holding public educational events and tours of the preserve, he said.

Commissioners discussed these practices/techniques and asked how the City could document them to better communicate them to the public. Mr. Gardner said he intended to document these practices/techniques in the land management plans for each open space area. These will be posted on the City’s website when completed, he said.

7. Commission and Staff Communications

Commission Work Plan

The Commission work plan was discussed as part of the working group reports.

Upcoming Meeting Date, Time, Items

The Commission's next meeting is June 3. Possible agenda items discussed include a review of the 2019-2020 Open Space Program budget.

Upcoming Events

No upcoming events were discussed.

Working Groups

1. *Acquisitions.* The working group met with the Yolo Land Trust to discuss possible acquisition opportunities.
2. *Habitat Restoration and Enhancement.* The working group met with Greg House to discuss installing more hedgerows on City-owned farmland.
3. *Land and Resource Management.* The working group received draft templates of the land management plans to review.
4. *Public Access and Recreation.* Staff mentioned that the City's environmental consultant is finishing the biological assessment that is required as part of the City's encroachment permit application to the Central Valley Flood Protection District. The encroachment permit is needed for the public accessibility improvements the City wants to install at South Fork Preserve. The improvements are being funded by a state grant, Measure O funds, and open space development impact fees.
5. *Financial and Program Accountability.* The working group met and discussed possible grants the City could apply for to access money to help achieve open space goals and objectives.
6. *Public Engagement and Partnerships.* No updates were given.

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30 p.m.