

Open Space and Habitat Commission Minutes
Monday, February 3, 2020
Community Chambers, 23 Russell Boulevard, 6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Patrick Huber (Vice Chair), Joy Klineberg, Roberta Millstein (Chair), Carrie Shaw, Marc Vayssieres

Vacant Positions: Two (Regular and Alternate)

Commissioners Absent: Garrett Allen

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

Council Liaison: Brett Lee (Regular) (Absent), Lucas Frerichs (Alternate) (Absent)

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

Commissioner Millstein opened the meeting after a quorum was achieved. Commissioner Vayssieres arrived during the Consent Calendar.

2. Approval of Agenda

On a motion by Commissioner Huber, seconded by Commissioner Shaw, the Commission voted 4-0-2-0 to approve the February 2020 agenda (Ayes – Huber, Klineberg, Millstein, Shaw; Noes – none; Absent – Allen, Vayssieres; Abstentions – none).

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

Tracie Reynolds, staff to the Commission, said that Mayor Brett Lee was now the City Council’s regular liaison to the Commission, with City Councilmember Lucas Frerichs continuing on as the alternate liaison. She also said that Commissioner Stephanie Holstege unfortunately had to resign from the Commission so the Commission currently has two vacant positions. The City Clerk’s Office will begin recruiting for replacements as soon as possible, she said.

4. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

5. Consent Calendar

There was only one item on the consent calendar: approval of the January 6, 2020 regular meeting minutes. Commissioner Millstein requested one edit to the draft minutes. On a motion by Commissioner Huber, seconded by Commissioner Klineberg, the Commission voted 5-0-1-0 to approve the January 6, 2020 regular meeting minutes, as amended. (Ayes – Huber, Klineberg, Millstein, Shaw, Vayssieres; Noes – none; Absent – Allen; Abstentions – none).

6. Regular Items

Discussion Item – Continue discussion about the City’s development approvals process and how the Commission can be more engaged in that process and better informed about when development projects are seeking approvals at different stages in that process

The Commission continued its discussion of how development projects get designed, advertised, finalized, approved, and implemented. At the Commission’s January meeting, several ideas were discussed that might help the Commission be more engaged in the planning process and better informed about when development projects are seeking approvals and getting implemented. The Commission discussed and reviewed each of these ideas. After much discussion, the Commission took an action. On a motion by Commissioner Huber, seconded by Commissioner Vayssieres, the Commission voted 5-0-1-0 to approve the following motion (Ayes – Huber, Klineberg, Millstein, Shaw, Vayssieres; Noes – none; Absent – Allen; Abstentions – none):

“Our Commission has noted that there have been gaps in the Commissions’ engagement in the development approvals and implementation process. To ensure Commissions are adequately representing the community (especially in light of upcoming development projects) in all stages of the development process, the Open Space and Habitat Commission

recommends the following improvements to the process for City Commissions engaging with and commenting on development projects:

- a. Post a list of projects on the City’s website which have completed the application process;
- b. Send out a short announcement through normal City communication channels stating when a project has completed the application process and include a link to the application;
- c. Use a standardized format (e.g., a matrix) for responding to Commissioner comments and explaining in staff reports which comments were incorporated into projects and which comments were not and why;
- d. Allow Commissioners who are making a statement on behalf of an entire Commission five minutes during public comment periods before the Planning Commission and the City Council;
- e. Ask developers, when they are “pitching” a project in a community meeting, to direct community members to the appropriate Commissions if they have concerns or questions about the project;
- f. Expand the radius to a quarter-mile for notifications around major projects so that more people are made aware that a particular project is being proposed in their neighborhood;
- g. Send 10-day email notifications of a project’s upcoming public hearing before the Planning Commission and City Council to the Commissions who commented on the project. This way, Commissioners know in advance when the public hearing is happening and when the staff report will be available for review so that Commissioners can determine if their recommendations were accurately transcribed into the project’s proposed approval documents;
- h. Ensure that relevant Commissions are given an opportunity to comment during the comment period for California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) documents;
- i. Require developers to return to relevant Commissions for review of project plans when more of the project details have been determined (including, but not limited to, the implementation phase); and
- j. Require City project-implementation staff to verify before relevant Commissions that the project is being implemented according to the approved project documents (e.g., baseline project features and the development agreement).”

The Commission recommended that staff send this approved motion to the staff liaisons of the City’s other commissions after it is approved. The Commission also recommended that staff send this approved motion to the City Council.

Discussion Item – Continue discussion about interpretive panel ideas for South Fork Preserve and the next steps required to get the panels designed and fabricated

The Commission continued its discussion about possible interpretive panel ideas for South Fork Preserve. Commissioner Shaw introduced Mark Deamer, a local graphic designer and illustrator, who helped design several interpretive panels for the Capay Open Space Park. Ms. Reynolds then presented 10 draft panel concepts based on the Commission’s discussion in December 2019. These 10 draft panel concepts focused on:

1. How humans and nature have partnered to create the beauty in the preserve
2. How the Patwin of Putah-toi tended the land and managed it for abundance
3. How the preserve was transformed over time from farmland to habitat
4. How a messy natural landscape can provide wonderful riparian habitat
5. Why the Putah Creek Accord was necessary and what it did
6. How and why salmon are once again traveling up Putah Creek
7. Why poison oak provides great habitat and nutrition for animals
8. Why oak galls are formed and what they look like
9. How the preserve fits into the City’s open space network and how Measure O helps to pay for its upkeep
10. How invasive species differ from non-native and native species

The Commission discussed each draft panel and provided input. Mr. Deamer provided input as well. Ms. Reynolds said she would like to issue a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) for a graphic designer from the City’s landscape architecture

panel to design and finalize these 10 concepts. The Commission agreed with this approach. Ms. Reynolds said she would issue the RFP as soon as possible.

7. Commission and Staff Communications

Commission Work Plan

The work plan was not discussed.

Upcoming Meeting Date, Time, Items

The Commission's next meeting is March 2. Possible agenda items discussed include (1) land management techniques and practices in the northeast quadrant of the Wildhorse agricultural buffer that might help to encourage burrowing owl habitat, (2) the tentative map and proposed agricultural buffer design for the Bretton Woods project, and (3) the agricultural land mitigation proposal associated with the Bretton Woods project.

Upcoming Events

Ms. Reynolds mentioned two upcoming volunteer planting events at the North Davis Upland Habitat Area, a habitat restoration project at F Street and Anderson Road, on February 13 and 22. Commissioner Shaw also mentioned an upcoming tour of South Fork Preserve that will be held on February 22 as part of the California Duck Days festival. The tour will be led by former Commissioner Marc Hoshovsky, who is a docent for the Putah Creek Council.

Working Groups

1. *Acquisitions*. No updates were reported.
2. *Habitat Restoration and Enhancement*. Commissioner Millstein reported on a meeting the working group had with City staff on January 27 at the northeast quadrant of the Wildhorse agricultural buffer to discuss burrowing owl habitat conditions. Attending this meeting were Commissioners Millstein and Huber; Tracie Reynolds, the City's Open Space Program Manager; Chris Gardner, the City's Open Space Land Manager; and John McNerney, the City's Wildlife Biologist. She said the group discussed the "effective height" of the grass, which means calculating not just the height of the grass but the density. On the day of the meeting, the grass's effective height was low, she said. She said the group also discussed the habitat value of small patches of tall native grasses, which provide foraging habitat for the owls. She said she thought Catherine Portman, president of the Burrowing Owl Preservation Society, was trying to be proactive about the height of the grass and wanted mowing to occur before the grass got too high. But she said, after seeing the height of the grass, she didn't think that mowing was necessary. She said she liked the idea of taking regular measurements of the grass to make sure it didn't get too high. Commissioner Huber summarized the results by saying the group agreed to short-, medium-, and long-term land management plans. The short-term plan was to regularly measure the grass and make sure it did not exceed six inches effective height. The medium-term plan was to finalize the land management plan for the Wildhorse agricultural buffer. The long-term plan was to expand the number of sites suitable for burrowing owl habitat.
3. *Land and Resource Management*. No updates were reported.
4. *Public Access and Recreation*. Ms. Reynolds provided a brief update on progress getting an encroachment permit from the Central Valley Flood Protection Board which is necessary to install public accessibility improvements at South Fork Preserve.
5. *Financial and Program Accountability*. No updates were reported.
6. *Public Engagement and Partnerships*. Ms. Reynolds mentioned that one of the action items in the Strategic Plan for the Open Space Program was to have a community input meeting every five years. The last community input meeting occurred in 2016, so the next one should occur sometime in 2021.

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:55 p.m.