

**Open Space and Habitat Commission Minutes**  
**Monday, March 2, 2020**  
**Community Chambers, 23 Russell Boulevard, 6:30 p.m.**

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

Vacant Positions: Two (Regular and Alternate)

Commissioners Absent: None

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

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

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**1. Call to Order & Roll Call**

Commissioner Millstein opened the meeting after a quorum was achieved. Commissioner Vayssieres arrived during Regular Items.

**2. Approval of Agenda**

On a motion by Commissioner Allen, seconded by Commissioner Huber, the Commission voted 5-0-1-0 to approve the March 2020 agenda (Ayes – Allen, Huber, Klineberg, Millstein, Shaw; Noes – none; Absent – Vayssieres; Abstentions – none).

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

Tracie Reynolds, staff to the Commission, said that she had sent the Commission links to sign up for email notifications for upcoming public hearings and meetings of the Planning Commission. She said these notifications are an easy way for Commissioners to stay informed about projects of interest. She also said the City is accepting nominations for the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Environmental Recognition Awards. She said the deadline to submit nominations was March 12, 2020.

**4. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**5. Consent Calendar**

There was only one item on the consent calendar: approval of the February 3, 2020 regular meeting minutes. Commissioner Millstein requested one edit to the draft minutes. On a motion by Commissioner Huber, seconded by Commissioner Shaw, the Commission voted 4-0-1-1 to approve the February 3, 2020 regular meeting minutes, as amended. (Ayes – Huber, Klineberg, Millstein, Shaw; Noes – none; Absent – Vayssieres; Abstentions – Allen).

**6. Regular Items**

**Discussion Item – Discuss the section(s) of the draft land management plan for the Wildhorse Agricultural Buffer that focus on maintaining suitable burrowing owl habitat conditions**

Chris Gardner, the City’s Open Space Land Manager, and John McNerney, the City’s Wildlife Biologist, gave the Commission a presentation on land management techniques they will employ to maintain suitable burrowing owl habitat conditions in the northeast corner of the Wildhorse Agricultural Buffer. These land management techniques will be included in the draft land management plan for the Wildhorse Agricultural Buffer, which staff hopes to discuss with the Commission in greater detail at the next meeting. Staff said they will periodically (depending on the weather) measure the “effective height” of the grass in this section of the buffer during the high-growth months. The “effective height” of the grass is measuring both the height and density of the grass. They said they would not allow the grass to exceed an “effective height” of six inches. They also said they will allow patches of higher density native grasses to grow for foraging purposes. They said they are trying to balance creating good habitat for the burrowing owls without harming the habitat for other plant and animal species. They also said that changes on and around the site over time have lessened the quality of the burrowing owl habitat on the buffer. For example, the new orchard that has been planted to the north of the buffer isn’t high-quality foraging habitat, compared to the row-crop farmland that existed before. In addition, some

orchard growers use rodenticides which are harmful to the owls. Also, over time, trees and shrubs have grown and this density of vegetation makes the site less desirable for owls. Also, people (and their dogs) use the site more than in the past and this use can also be a stressor for the owls. Nevertheless, the City is committed to maintaining suitable burrowing owl habitat on the northeast section of the Wildhorse Agricultural Buffer, they said. But it also would be a good idea to start looking for other sites that could provide better burrowing owl habitat, they said. Other sites discussed included the City's old landfill site along Pole Line Road, the City's agricultural land south of the municipal golf course, and the City-owned 25 acres off Mace Boulevard. They said they would aim to provide the Commission with a draft of the land management plan for the Wildhorse Agricultural Buffer by the next meeting.

**Discussion Item – Receive an update from staff about a possible agricultural conservation easement located less than a mile from the city limits, northeast of the Wildhorse residential development (APN 042-120-022)**

Staff updated the Commission on how conservation easement negotiations are going with the property owner of 153 acres of farmland less than a mile from the city limits, northeast of the Wildhorse residential development. Staff said the property owner now was only offering 80 acres for the conservation easement. In addition, the property owner was offering a public access easement, but that easement was contingent on public access being established on the land to the west of the property owner's land. The Commission expressed disappointment and indicated it was less interested in this offer. The Commission recommended that staff try to negotiate better terms for the public access easement.

**Discussion Item – Discuss an update to the Commission's annual work plan**

Staff informed the Commission that the annual work plan is out of date and needs to be updated. Due to the two vacancies on the Commission, the working groups and working group leaders were updated. Staff asked the new working group leaders to assemble the working groups over the next several weeks and decide on new action items for the annual work plan. The action items could be new items or ones from the Strategic Plan for the Open Space Program.

**7. Commission and Staff Communications**

**Commission Work Plan**

The work plan was discussed during Regular Items.

**Upcoming Meeting Date, Time, Items**

The Commission's next meeting is April 6. Possible agenda items discussed include (1) the draft land management plan for the Wildhorse Agricultural Buffer, (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**

Commissioner Shaw mentioned two upcoming events organized by the Prutah Creek Council: an upcoming wildlife corridor event and a planting event at the North Davis Upland Habitat Area. She also mentioned that a docent-led tour of South Fork Preserve that occurred as part of Duck Days was well attended (20 people).

**Working Groups**

1. *Acquisitions*. No updates were reported.
2. *Habitat Restoration and Enhancement*. No updates were reported.
3. *Land and Resource Management*. No updates were reported.
4. *Public Access and Recreation*. No updates were reported.
5. *Financial and Program Accountability*. No updates were reported.
6. *Public Engagement and Partnerships*. No updates were reported.

**8. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:25 p.m.