

Open Space and Habitat Commission Minutes
Monday, March 1, 2021
Remote Audio and Video Meeting Participation, 6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Lindsay Correa, Patrick Huber, Sherman McFarland, Carrie Shaw (Chair), Emma Torbert, Marc Vayssieres (Vice Chair), and *Patricia Price (Alternate)*

Vacant Positions: None

Commissioners Absent: Ramiro Cabanillas-Ledesma

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

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

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

Commissioner Shaw opened the meeting after a quorum was achieved and called roll call.

2. Approval of Agenda

On a motion by Commissioner Vayssieres, seconded by Commissioner Huber, the Commission voted 6-0-1-0 to approve the March 2021 regular meeting agenda (Ayes – Correa, Huber, McFarland, Shaw, Torbert, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Cabanillas-Ledesma; Abstentions – None).

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

Tracie Reynolds, staff to the Commission, said that the City started working with the selected landscape architecture firm, Helix Environmental Planning, to design and manufacture 10 interpretive panels at South Fork Preserve. She said Helix was targeting the Commission’s May or June meeting to bring draft designs to the Commission for review.

Ms. Reynolds also said staff had hired Morrow Surveying to do the survey for the Gill Orchard easement, an agricultural conservation easement on 124 acres of farmland east of Wildhorse, about a half mile from the city limits. This easement is related to a \$701,000 grant award from the California Department of Conservation through the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program, or SALC. She also said the City’s partner in this acquisition, the Yolo Land Trust, had started working on the actual conservation easement document for a targeted closing before the end of the year.

She also said the City Council had initiated the process to adopt its 2021-2022 goals and priorities. A goal-setting session will be held on March 23, 2021, she said, and the City Council will consider an updated goals document on April 6, 2021. She said the City Council has requested commission workplans be provided to inform its discussion on March 23. Staff will coordinate providing the workplans to the City Council, which are due on March 15, she said. She also mentioned a joint meeting between the City Council and the Commission on May 18, 2021.

4. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

5. Consent Calendar

There was one item on the consent calendar: approval of the February 1, 2021 regular meeting minutes. On a motion by Commissioner Huber, seconded by Commissioner Vayssieres, the Commission voted 6-0-1-0 to approve the February 2021 meeting minutes (Ayes – Correa, Huber, McFarland, Shaw, Torbert, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Cabanillas-Ledesma; Abstentions – None).

6. Regular Items

Discussion Item – Receive a presentation from John McNerney, the City’s Wildlife Resource Specialist, about the City’s draft wildlife no-feeding ordinance

John McNerney, the City’s Wildlife Resource Specialist, gave the Commission an informational report on (i) the development of an ordinance prohibiting the feeding of certain wildlife, and (ii) associated outreach and education

activities conducted by City staff. He said that that the ordinance stemmed from the City's Wild Turkey Management Plan that the City Council approved in 2016. Since problems associated with the feeding of wildlife are not limited to wild turkeys, he said the ordinance sought to prohibit the feeding of multiple potentially nuisance wildlife species, including coyotes, wild turkeys, foxes, skunks, raccoons, opossums, squirrels, ducks, geese, crows, and gulls.

Violations of the draft ordinance were proposed to be handled first with verbal and written outreach in an effort to educate and correct the behavior, he said, followed by monetary penalties in line with other City environmental code penalties.

He also talked about the public scoping process that had occurred in previous years, including outreach to the Commission, the Yolo Audubon Society, and the community at large. Reoccurring concerns included (1) the potential for impacts to backyard bird feeding and feral cat feeding, and (2) a general concern that the draft ordinance was too harsh or not necessary. In light of community opposition to the draft ordinance, staff decided in 2018 to not move forward with it, he said. Since that time, staff has implemented a robust outreach program that includes distributing written materials, messaging on social media, distributing targeted advisory notices, building a new webpage, producing a video, and organizing community workshops. These efforts are ongoing, he said.

Commissioner Shaw asked if Commissioners had any clarifying questions. Commissioners asked for clarification on (1) why rats and mice were not included in the definition of wildlife, (2) what the law is regarding feeding feral cats, (3) whether feeding ducks leads to any biological consequences, and (4) who is reporting people who are feeding wildlife.

Commissioner Shaw then took public comment. There was no public comment. Commissioner Shaw then closed public comment and opened the Commission discussion. Topics discussed included (1) whether the ordinance would help reduce the number of people feeding wildlife, (2) what metrics could be used to measure progress, (3) whether other cities that have passed similar ordinances have data that could be used to establish metrics, and (4) whether there was a need for such an ordinance at the present time. No action was taken on this item.

Action Item – Approve the Commission's annual work plan for 2021

The Commission discussed the action items each working group selected from the Strategic Plan for the City's Open Space Program that the working group would like to work on over the coming year or so. There was no public comment. Commissioner Correa said she thought it was important not to lose the momentum that has been built over the last several years to complete some of the previous action items in the Strategic Plan. Commissioner Huber said it would be helpful if staff specifically asked Commissioners to help with action items that required a heavy commitment of time and effort.

After some discussion, on a motion by Commissioner Huber, seconded by Commissioner Torbert, the Commission voted 6-0-1-0 to approve the work plan as discussed at the meeting (Ayes – Correa, Huber, McFarland, Shaw, Torbert, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Cabanillas-Ledesma; Abstentions – None).

7. Commission and Staff Communications

Commission Work Plan

The Commission work plan was discussed during Regular Items.

Upcoming Meeting Date, Time, Items

The next regularly scheduled meeting is Monday, April 5. Possible topics discussed included (1) hearing a presentation from Rich Marovich, the Streamkeeper at the Solano County Water Agency, about possible habitat improvements along Putah Creek, (2) hearing a presentation from Bob Clarke, the City's Public Works Director (Transportation and Engineering) about Yolo County's four alternatives for realigning and relocating the railroad crossing at County Road 32A adjacent to the City's property known as Howat Ranch, and (3) discussing adding action items to the work plan that are not from the Strategic Plan for the City's Open Space Program.

Upcoming Events

Commissioner Huber mentioned that a series of upcoming meetings would likely be held as the Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee ("LPCCC") enters a new strategic planning phase. He said the LPCCC would be coordinating

this strategic planning process with the Putah Creek Council, the City, and the Commission to clarify roles, build on synergies, and engage with stakeholders.

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.

Update on Cannery Farm

Ms. Reynolds and Commissioners Shaw and Vayssieres gave the Commission the following brief update on the Cannery Farm: The Cannery Farm subcommittee of the Cannery Homeowners' Association ("HOA") met with representatives from the City, the Commission, and the Parks and Recreation Commission on Thursday, February 4. The main purpose of the meeting was to figure out the steps required to recommend a land use plan for the Cannery Farm to the City Council. The group reviewed the results of a recent community survey that asked people what uses they would prefer to see at the Cannery Farm. Based on the survey results, the most popular uses were community gardens, fruit/nut orchards, horticulture, and farming of some kind. The Cannery HOA subcommittee also presented a preliminary vision of how the farm area could provide multiple desirable uses, including a concept to use a portion of the land as a farm that grows produce for residents to pick themselves and for "community supported agriculture" boxes that people could pay to receive on a regular basis. Commissioner Shaw also mentioned that Commissioner Torbert was going to take her place on the subcommittee since Commissioner Torbert has valuable agriculture expertise.

Ms. Reynolds said next steps were (1) the City will develop a diagrammatic map and visuals that the working group can share with the broader HOA community and the two Commissions, (2) the HOA subcommittee will collect feedback on the map/visuals from the broader HOA community, including, with the City's assistance, from the residents of the Bartlett Apartments, and (3) City staff then will take the map/visuals and the HOA feedback to the Commission and the Parks and Recreation Commission for further feedback. City staff will then bring recommendations for the Cannery Farm, and a summary of the discussions that occurred with the HOA subcommittee and City commissions, to the City Council for consideration at a public meeting with notification to the Cannery neighborhood and other stakeholders, she said.

Update on Climate Action and Adaptation Plan Update

Ms. Reynolds recapped a staff report on the 2020 Climate Action and Adaptation Plan Update ("CAAP") that was sent to the Commission on February 18. She said she would provide the Commission with regular updates about the CAAP process and with information about public input opportunities. She said the first on-line survey should be available in March and the first community workshop is scheduled for April. She noted that the Natural Resources Commission ("NRC") will be the primary Commission receiving regular quarterly CAAP updates from the project management team, because the CAAP project management team cannot provide regular in-person updates to all the City's Commissions due to time and budget constraints. However, she said members of the Open Space and Habitat Commission will have several opportunities to provide input into the CAAP, such as: (1) it can appoint a Commission liaison to the NRC and that liaison can provide additional updates at regularly scheduled meetings, (2) it can agendaize the CAAP as a regular agenda item and discuss recommendations that can be sent to the CAAP project management team; and (3) members can comment as individuals through the CAAP webpage and/or at any of the community workshops and/or on-line surveys.

Ms. Reynolds asked whether one of the Commissioners was willing to serve as the liaison to the NRC. Commissioners asked for more time to think about it. Ms. Reynolds asked that if anyone was willing to serve as the liaison to the NRC then he/she should step forward at the April meeting.

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:21 p.m.