

Open Space and Habitat Commission Minutes
Monday, June 5, 2023
Community Chambers, 23 Russell Boulevard, 6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Ramiro Cabanillas-Ledesma, Lindsay Correa, Patrick Huber (Chair), Patricia Price, Carrie Shaw, Emma Torbert, and Marc Vayssieres (Vice Chair)

Vacant Positions: None

Commissioners Absent: Sara Geonczy (Alternate)

Assigned Staff: Tracie Reynolds, Manager, Open Space Program

Council Liaison: Josh Chapman (Regular), Bapu Vaitla (Alternate)

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

Commissioner Huber opened the meeting after a quorum was achieved and called roll call. Commissioner Vayssieres arrived during Item 3: Brief Announcements from Staff, Commissioners, and Council Liaisons.

2. Approval of Agenda

On a motion by Commissioner Cabanillas-Ledesma, that was seconded by Commissioner Torbert, the Commission voted 6-0-1-0 to approve the June 2023 meeting agenda (Ayes – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Correa, Huber, Price, Shaw, Torbert; Noes – None; Absent – Vayssieres; Abstentions – None).

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

Tracie Reynolds, staff liaison to the Commission, said there were two articles about the City's Open Space Program in the current print edition of the California Aggie. She said one of the articles talked about the sheep grazing at South Fork Preserve and the other talked about the implementation of the carbon farm plan on the City's Howat Ranch property.

She also said that the City recently hosted a third-grade class from Korematsu Elementary School at South Fork Preserve. She said the students had fun walking along the new trails, viewing the creek from the new creek overlook, learning about the preserve, and sprinkling native grass seeds along the trail. Marc Hoshovsky, a preserve docent for the Putah Creek Council, helped staff teach the children about the preserve, she said. Commissioner Correa mentioned that she had also visited the preserve recently on a school field trip, hosted by the Yolo Basin Foundation.

Ms. Reynolds also said that the City Clerk's Office was currently soliciting replacements for Commissioners Shaw and Price who are leaving the Commission this month. She said two City Council subcommittees -- one comprised of City Councilmembers Chapman and Vaitla and the other comprised of City Councilmembers Arnold and Partida -- were interviewing commission applicants and would be recommending appointments to the full City Council on June 20. She said a separate City Council subcommittee -- comprised of City Councilmembers Chapman and Vaitla was working on evaluating commission structures and would be making recommendations to the full City Council at a later date.

4. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

5. Consent Calendar

There was one item on the consent calendar: approval of the May 1, 2023 regular meeting minutes. On a motion by Commissioner Shaw, that was seconded by Commissioner Vayssieres, the Commission voted 7-0-0-0 to approve the May 2023 meeting minutes (Ayes – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Correa, Huber, Price, Shaw, Torbert, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – None; Abstentions – None).

6. Regular Items

Discussion Item - Discuss the draft 2023-2024 Open Space Program budget

The Commission received its annual presentation on this topic from staff. Ms. Reynolds discussed the budget and accomplishments from the last fiscal year, and the budget and goals for the next fiscal year. She said the program's 2023-24 budget is about \$3.85 million. Of those funds, about 7% comes from the City's General Fund, about 20% comes from the City's special open space protection parcel tax fund (Measure O), about 47% comes from open space development impact fees, and about 26% comes from other sources, such as ag lease revenue and grants, she said. That money will be spent on: personnel, including outside contractors (8%), maintenance, operating, supplies and equipment (2%), allocated overhead (2%), capital improvements (29%), and acquisitions (59%), she said. Capital improvements scheduled for this year include \$570,000 for a design/engineering contract related to a wetlands habitat restoration project the City is working on with UC Davis and \$300,000 for new open space signage, she said. In addition, about \$72,000 is budgeted for a new hedgerow on the City's Howat Ranch property and about \$34,500 is budgeted for trail improvements at the Wildhorse agricultural buffer, a new water meter for the Cannery hedgerow, and a new portable water tank, she said. Acquisitions scheduled for this year include \$1.26 million for a 120-acre conservation easement northeast of the city limits and \$1.0 million for a 217-acre conservation easement south of the city limits. She also discussed \$9.2 million in restricted fund balances that are available for open space acquisitions, maintenance, and capital improvements.

She concluded her presentation by giving the Commission a detailed look at the revenues and expenses projected to flow into and out of the Measure O parcel tax fund (Fund 135) for the upcoming fiscal year and beyond. She said 30% of expenses from the Measure O fund during the 2023-24 fiscal year is budgeted to be spent on maintenance, including staff.

Commissioner Huber then asked if Commissioners had any clarifying questions. Commissioners asked for clarification on (1) how the baseline budget has changed over time, (2) how much the General Fund has contributed to the program budget over time, and (3) how the amount of development impact fees fluctuates over time. Commissioner Huber then took public comment. There was no public comment. Commissioner Huber then closed public comment and the Commission briefly discussed this item. Topics discussed included (1) ways the City could better advertise how Measure O funds are being used to maintain the City's open spaces, (2) a pilot grant program for community-initiated habitat restoration projects that was discussed but not implemented several years ago, (3) the need to add a goal for fiscal year 2023-24 focusing on diversity, equity and inclusion, and (4) the Strategic Plan for the City's Open Space Program and the need to document which of the plan's action items have been completed and which still need to be completed. No action was taken.

Action Item - Discuss the number and scope of Commission subcommittees and consider dissolving subcommittees that have completed assignment

Ms. Reynolds referred to the paragraphs discussing subcommittees contained in the Commission Handbook. She said per the Commission Handbook, subcommittees must have a clearly defined scope and purpose, not last longer than one year, and must report findings to the full Commission, who can either refine the subcommittee's scope and purpose or dissolve the subcommittee. She said the Commission's current subcommittees have completed their assignments and should be dissolved. New subcommittees can be formed when specific issues need to be addressed, she said.

Commissioner Huber then asked if Commissioners had any clarifying questions. There were no clarifying questions. Commissioner Huber then took public comment. There was no public comment. Commissioner Huber then closed public comment and the Commission briefly discussed this item. Commissioner Correa agreed with other Commissioners that the current subcommittees should be dissolved and added that new subcommittees could focus on the remaining action items in the Strategic Plan for the City's Open Space Program that still need to be completed.

Commissioner Vayssieres then made the following motion: "*The Open Space and Habitat Commission hereby dissolves the Commission's existing subcommittees and going forward the Commission create subcommittees on an as-needed basis.*" Commissioner Huber then offered the following friendly amendment to the motion on the table: "*Acquisitions subcommittees, when formed, will include the chair of the Open Space and Habitat Commission.*" Commissioner Vayssieres accepted Commissioner Huber's friendly amendment. The amended motion was seconded by Commissioner Correa. The amended motion passed by a vote of 7-0-0-0 (Ayes – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Correa, Huber, Price, Shaw, Torbert, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – None; Abstentions – None).

Discussion Item - Discuss and appreciate three Commissioners for their service to the Open Space and Habitat Commission

Ms. Reynolds acknowledged a memorandum from the Tree Commission thanking Commissioner Geonczy for her participation in the consideration and review of the City's draft Urban Forest Management Plan. She also presented Commissioners Shaw and Price with certificates of appreciation for their service to the Commission. Their terms end on June 30, 2023. She said Commissioner Shaw's knowledge and expertise about Putah Creek in particular greatly improved the quality of new interpretive panels at South Fork Preserve that discussed the complicated history and novel habitat of the South Fork of Putah Creek. Commissioner Shaw also provided critical support for the purchase of several conservation easements, she said. She also thanked Commissioner Price for her service as the Commission's dedicated representative for input into the City's 2023 Climate Action and Adaptation Plan Update. Commissioner Price also provided valuable input on issues related to climate change, diversity, equity and inclusion, habitat restoration, carbon farm plans, and open space land management, she said.

Commissioner Huber then asked if Commissioners had any clarifying questions. There were no clarifying questions. Commissioner Huber then took public comment. There was no public comment. Commissioner Huber then closed public comment and the Commission briefly discussed this item. Commissioners all thanked Commissioners Geonczy, Shaw and Price for their service and contributions to the work of the Commission. No action was taken.

7. Subcommittee and Liaison Assignment Updates

a. Subcommittees

- 1) *Acquisitions*. No reports were given.

- 2) *Habitat Restoration and Enhancement*. No reports were given.
- 3) *Land and Resource Management*. No reports were given.
- 4) *Public Access and Recreation*. No reports were given.
- 5) *Financial and Program Accountability*. No reports were given.
- 6) *Public Engagement and Partnerships*. No reports were given.
- 7) *Ad-Hoc Subcommittee to Improve Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the City's Open Space Program*. Commissioner Torbert mentioned a meeting she had with City Councilmember Vaitla and staff from the Center for Land-Based Learning ("CLBL"). She said the group was interested in exploring whether the City's 25 acres of farmland west of the golf course could be used to support beginning farmers after they graduate from CLBL's beginning farmer training program.

b. Liaison Assignments

- 1) Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee. Commissioner Huber reported on efforts by the Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee to improve the flow of water at key points along the South Fork of Putah Creek.

8. Long Range Calendar: Upcoming Meeting Dates and/or Potential Agenda Items

The next regularly scheduled meeting is the second Monday in September (September 11), since the first Monday of the month (September 4) is a holiday. The location for the meeting has not yet been decided. Possible agenda items discussed included (1) a discussion of the various development proposals currently in the pipeline, (2) a discussion of habitat improvements for the City's Howat-Clayton Ranch property, (3) a discussion of the open space and habitat features of Palomino Place, (4) a discussion of the outstanding action items in the City's Strategic Plan for the Open Space Program, (5) an update on the consultant study on the Davis Wetlands, and (6) an update on the City's communications strategy for the Open Space Program.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:39 p.m.