

**Open Space and Habitat Commission Minutes**  
**Monday, September 11, 2023**  
**Activity Room, Davis Senior Center, 646 A Street, 6:30 p.m.**

Commissioners Present:	Lindsay Correa, Sara Geonczy, Patrick Huber (Chair), and Marc Vayssieres (Vice Chair)
Vacant Positions:	One Regular Member, One Alternate Member
Commissioners Absent:	Ramiro Cabanillas-Ledesma, Emma Torbert
Assigned Staff:	Tracie Reynolds, Manager, Open Space Program
Council Liaison:	Josh Chapman (Regular), Bapu Vaitla (Alternate)

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

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

**2. Approval of Agenda**

On a motion by Commissioner Vayssieres, that was seconded by Commissioner Correa, the Commission voted 4-0-2-0 to approve the September 2023 meeting agenda (Ayes – Correa, Huber, Geonczy, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Torbert; Abstentions – None).

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

There were no brief announcements.

**4. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**5. Consent Calendar**

There was one item on the consent calendar: approval of the June 5, 2023 regular meeting minutes. On a motion by Commissioner Correa, that was seconded by Commissioner Vayssieres, the Commission voted 4-0-2-0 to approve the June 2023 meeting minutes (Ayes – Correa, Huber, Geonczy, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Torbert; Abstentions – None).

**6. Regular Items**

**Discussion Item - Discuss and provide input on the habitat- and open space-related evaluation criteria in the draft “peripheral growth rubric,” created by a City Council subcommittee to provide a tool for the City Council to evaluate competing development projects**

Ms. Reynolds, staff liaison to the Commission, summarized the purpose of the rubric and what kind of feedback the City Council was looking for from the Commission. Commissioner Huber then asked if Commissioners had any clarifying questions. Commissioners asked for clarification on (1) what the rubric would be used for and why it was necessary, (2) how the point system was determined, and (3) whether the rubric would replace the City’s evaluation process or supplement it.

Commissioner Huber then took public comment. There was no public comment. Commissioner Huber then closed public comment and the Commission briefly discussed this item. No action was taken, but after a brief discussion, the Commission summarized its consensus feedback as follows:

The Open Space and Habitat Commission recommended that the rubric come with an introductory paragraph explaining to developers and the community: (1) how the rubric provides the City with an

objective way to compare multiple projects, (2) how the point-weighting system was determined and how the scores will be used to compare projects, and (3) that the rubric does not replace the City's existing project evaluation process but supplements it. In addition, the Commission recommended that each subject area have a brief introduction summarizing the City's overall goals for that particular subject area. For the "ecosystems and open space" subject area, the Commission recommended that the summary state that the City is specifically looking for projects that provide a net gain of open space and habitat features, not projects that just offset/mitigate for the loss of open space and habitat features. In addition, the Commission recommended that the rubric include the following additional line items in the "ecosystems and open space" subject area:

1. Does the project provide connectivity between the proposed on-site open space/habitat features with existing or proposed off-site open space/habitat features, so that natural areas and public access areas are connected?
2. Does the project applicant commit, by including the commitment in the Baseline Project Features, to installing predominantly native plant species throughout the project?

**Action Item - Recommend approval/disapproval of the developer's proposed agricultural land mitigation plan for the 47-acre Nishi Student Apartments development project**

Staff summarized the key points from the staff report, including what the City's agricultural land mitigation requirements were, how many mitigation acres were required, and whether the 94 acres owned by the Tauzer family satisfied the City's agricultural mitigation land requirements. She briefly discussed the Tauzer property's size, location, shape, soil quality, water availability, water quality, and title issues. Staff recommended that the Commission recommend that the City Council accept the 94 acres owned by the Tauzer family as the agricultural mitigation land for the Nishi Student Apartments development with certain general conditions outlined in the staff report.

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.

On a motion by Commissioner Correa, that was seconded by Commissioner Vayssieres, the Commission voted 4-0-2-0 to approve the following motion (Ayes – Correa, Huber, Geonczy, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Torbert; Abstentions – None): *"The Open Space and Habitat Commission recommends that the City Council accept 94 acres owned by the Tauzer family as the agricultural mitigation land for the Nishi Student Apartments development with the following general conditions:*

1. *All of the ag mitigation land must be land that is currently actively farmed, and cannot include any buildings or developed areas of any kind whatsoever;*
2. *The property owners must be willing to accept a conservation easement on only a portion of the property;*
3. *The Yolo Land Trust must be a co-owner of the conservation easement and be the party responsible for monitoring and enforcing it; and*
4. *Any title issues need to be resolved."*

**Discussion Item - Receive update from staff on the work that has been done on various open space projects over the summer**

Ms. Reynolds provided brief updates on the work that had been done over the summer on several open space projects. She said the 120-acre conservation easement on the Gill family's property northeast of Davis was nearing completion, after resolving the location of Yolo County's right of way. The 217-acre conservation easement on El Molino Farm south of Davis was also nearing completion, she said, but the parties were still discussing the possibility of future public access and habitat restoration on a portion of the property. She said the 80-acre conservation easement on Billie's Farm northeast of Davis was on hold while the property owner discussed future uses of the property with her family. She also said the possible acquisition of a portion of the Paschoal property was on hold until after the walnut harvest this fall.

In other projects, she said two signage projects -- new interpretive signs at the North Davis Upland Habitat Area and new signs for all the City's open space areas -- were underway. She also said she had written 12 social media announcements that will be released once a month over the coming year, which informed people about the Open Space Program and Measure O and encouraged them to visit the City's open space areas. Finally, she said the wetlands habitat restoration project the City is working on with UC Davis was moving along, with the design consultant working on draft designs for upcoming community meetings. She also said legislation allowing the City to consider putting habitat easements on its property along the South Fork of Putah Creek had been passed by the State Legislature and was on the Governor's desk for signature. The legislation would also allow the City to consider participating in a carbon capture project in the Putah Sink area, 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. No action was taken.

## **7. Subcommittee and Liaison Assignment Updates**

### **A. Liaison Assignments**

- 1) Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee ("LPCCC"). Commissioner Huber said the LPCCC was developing a water management plan to better coordinate and manage water diversions by farmers and property owners along lower Putah Creek. He said the LPCCC was holding a series of public meetings to reach out to stakeholders to discuss the water diversion limits in the Putah Creek Accord and include them in the planning process. He also updated the Commission on the LPCCC's work related to the Los Rios check dam and the restoration of the Nishikawa property along the creek.
- 2) Yolo Habitat Conservancy ("YHC"). Commissioner Huber said nothing much was happening with the YHC's implementation committee.

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

The next regularly scheduled meeting is Monday, October 2. Possible agenda items discussed included (1) an update on the discing of the vernal pool on the proposed Village Farms property, (2) a discussion of habitat improvements for the City's Howat-Clayton Ranch property, and (3) a discussion of the outstanding action items in the City's Strategic Plan for the Open Space Program. Ms. Reynolds said she had jury duty and would possibly have to cancel the October meeting.

## **9. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:03 p.m.