

**Open Space and Habitat Commission Minutes**  
**Monday, December 4, 2023**  
**Community Chambers Conference Room, 23 Russell Boulevard, 6:30 p.m.**

Commissioners Present:	Ramiro Cabanillas-Ledesma, Lindsay Correa, Sara Geonczy, Patrick Huber (Chair), Emma Torbert, and Marc Vayssieres, (Vice Chair)
Vacant Positions:	One Regular Member, One Alternate Member
Commissioners Absent:	None
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.

**2. Approval of Agenda**

Commissioner Cabanillas-Ledesma made a motion to approve the agenda and it was seconded by Commissioner Vayssieres. The Commission voted 6-0-0-0 to approve the motion (Ayes – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Correa, Huber, Geonczy, Torbert, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – None; Abstentions – None).

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

Tracie Reynolds, staff liaison to the Commission, said the 120-acre conservation easement on the Gill family's property northeast of Davis was expected to close in January. She also said negotiations over the possible acquisition of a portion of the Paschoal property had resumed now that the harvest season was over and the property owner had lowered the purchase price for the property. She also said that the wetlands habitat restoration project the City is working on with UC Davis was moving along, with the design consultant finalizing draft designs for upcoming community meetings, which were expected to take place in March. She said the Commission would have the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft designs in February. Finally, she said she did not have any news about when the two vacancies on the Commission would be filled.

**4. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**5. Consent Calendar**

Approval of the September 2023 meeting minutes was on the consent calendar. Commissioner Vayssieres made a motion to approve the consent calendar and it was seconded by Commissioner Correa. The Commission voted 6-0-0-0 to approve the motion (Ayes – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Correa, Huber, Geonczy, Torbert, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – None; Abstentions – None).

**6. Regular Items**

**Discussion Item - Provide feedback on draft interpretive signs for the North Davis Upland Habitat Area**

Ms. Reynolds said she had spent the last several months working with the Friends of North Davis Ponds developing the eight draft interpretive signs. She said first she had met with the group at the North Davis Upland Habitat Area to brainstorm themes for the panels. She then developed the draft

signs and met with the group to solicit input on the drafts, she said. They provided all of the photos of the birds, she said, which were taken on site. She then modified the drafts based on that feedback, and met with the group again to solicit additional input, she said. The drafts being discussed by the Commission today were the result of that effort, she said. The draft panels focus on seven themes, she said: (1) two panels discuss the birds one can see at the North Davis Upland Habitat Area, (2) one discusses the network of bird boxes on-site, (3) one discusses the City's pump station and its link to the regional drainage system, (4) one discusses the work of the Friends of North Davis Ponds and their effort to keep the site open space, (5) one discusses all the plants that were planted to help pollinators, (6) one discusses the habitat benefits of dead trees, and (7) one discusses the City's network of open space areas and Measure O, the City's open space parcel tax.

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. The Commission then discussed the draft panels and provided feedback. Ms. Reynolds said she would discuss the Commission's feedback with the Friends of North Davis Ponds. No action was taken.

**Discussion Item - Provide feedback on three draft prototypes for a new sign to identify the City's open space areas as open space**

Ms. Reynolds said she had spent the last several months working with the City's design consultant, Helix Environmental, developing the three draft prototypes. She said the signs must use the City's official colors and include the City's logo. Initially, a number of draft prototypes were prepared by the consultant, she said. In recent weeks, the number was narrowed down to the three most preferred by the City Manager and the City's communications team and those were the ones being discussed by the Commission today, she said. One is blue-and-white and features a white silhouette of a lupin flower, one is more colorful and features a lupin flower and a local species of butterfly, and one features an oak tree and a hawk, she said. The City doesn't solicit broad community input into its official signage, she said. Instead, Ms. Reynolds said she could gather input by asking people who visit the City's open space areas to select their preferred sign design.

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. The Commission then discussed the draft prototypes and provided feedback. Commissioner Correa said that the Public Engagement and Partnerships subcommittee had recommended that the City solicit input on the draft sign designs through an online survey as a way to increase public engagement. Ms. Reynolds said that was true but she had since found out the City does not solicit broad community input into its official signage, and she believed it would be difficult for people to vote on the draft designs without more context and background information. Ms. Reynolds said she would discuss the Commission's feedback with the City's communications team and the City's design consultant. No action was taken.

**Discussion Item - Discuss possible future open space and habitat uses for the City's Howat/Clayton Ranch properties**

Ms. Reynolds said this item was on the agenda at the request of Commissioner Huber, who wanted to start a discussion of other possible open space and habitat uses for these properties. To start the discussion, Ms. Reynolds reminded Commissioners that the Howat/Clayton Ranch properties, which are farmed, are not part of the City's Open Space Program because they were purchased with sewer/stormwater funds to solve area drainage issues. She briefly summarized the history of these

properties and recent efforts by City staff and the Yolo County Resource Conservation District to install additional hedgerows on the Howat Ranch property. Commissioner Huber said he was interested in starting a discussion about converting the Clayton Ranch property to a wetland habitat. Ms. Reynolds noted that the Yolo Habitat Conservancy had recently expressed an interest in partnering with the City to convert Clayton Ranch to a wetland. Commissioner Huber also said he was interested in discussing alternative agricultural models for the Howat Ranch property, similar to the ones that Commissioner Torbert has discussed with the Commission in the past.

Commissioner Huber then asked if Commissioners had any clarifying questions. Commissioners asked for additional information about the City's plan for recycled water from the Wastewater Treatment Plant and Yolo County's plan to realign the County Road 32A crossing over the railroad tracks. Ms. Reynolds said she could provide this additional information to the Commission at a later date. 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) possible planning grants the City could apply for, (2) whether using recycled water on farmland impeded organic certification, and (3) whether the Howat Ranch property was appropriate for smaller-scale farming, given its lack of water.

Commissioner Huber said he would like the Commission to make a recommendation to the City Council at some point. Ms. Reynolds said the Commission could discuss this topic again in February as part of a discussion about the Davis wetlands. She also said she would continue the discussions with the Yolo Habitat Conservancy about possibly converting the Clayton Ranch property to wetlands. 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 encouraged by the successful salmon run this year. He said this year creek managers removed the Los Rios check dam twice which allowed more salmon to enter Putah Creek and make their way to spawning grounds near Winters. A more permanent solution, like a new waterway or fish ladder, was still being developed, he said. He also said the creek's easternmost end had gone totally dry this year, which violated the Putah Creek Accord ("Accord"). That was why, he said, the LPCCC and the Solano County Water Agency were holding a series of public meetings to educate landowners along the creek about the Accord's water diversion limits.
- 2) Yolo Habitat Conservancy ("YHC"). Commissioner Huber said there was nothing to report about the YHC's implementation committee.

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

The next regularly scheduled meeting is Monday, February 5, 2024, since the first Monday in January 2024 is a holiday. Possible agenda items discussed included (1) a discussion of the draft designs for the wetlands habitat restoration project the City is working on with UC Davis, and (2) a discussion of the City's consultant report investigating options for the long-term management of the Davis wetlands.

## **9. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:23 p.m.