

Open Space and Habitat Commission Minutes
Monday, September 9, 2024
Community Chambers Conference Room, 23 Russell Boulevard, 6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Lindsay Correa, Sara Geonczy, Steve Greco,
Patrick Huber (Chair), Marc Vayssieres (Vice Chair),
Christopher Alberts (Alternate)

Vacant Positions: None

Commissioners Absent: Ramiro Cabanillas-Ledesma, Christina Harrington

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

Tracie Reynolds, staff liaison to the Commission, said that Item 6C might have to be discussed later in the agenda due to scheduling conflicts. Commissioner Vayssieres made a motion to approve the agenda. It was seconded by Commissioner Geonczy. The Commission voted 6-0-2-0 to approve the motion (Ayes – Alberts, Correa, Geonczy, Greco, Huber, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Harrington; Abstentions – None).

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

Ms. Reynolds said she had no announcements. Commissioner Correa said that she had connected staff to a planner in California's Office of Planning and Research who was collecting information about Senate Bill 1425. The bill requires local open space plans to be updated to address the issues of equitable access, climate resilience, and rewilding, she said.

4. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

5. Consent Calendar

Approval of the May 2024 meeting minutes was on the consent calendar. Commissioner Correa made a motion to approve the minutes. It was seconded by Commissioner Vayssieres. The Commission voted 6-0-2-0 to approve the motion (Ayes – Alberts, Correa, Geonczy, Greco, Huber, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Harrington; Abstentions – None).

6. Regular Items

Discussion Item – Complete oaths of office for new Commissioners and receive introductions from new Commissioners

Staff completed the oaths of office with Commissioners Greco and Alberts before the meeting started. Commissioners Greco and Alberts introduced themselves and summarized their professional backgrounds and interests. The rest of the Commission also introduced themselves. Ms. Reynolds also read an introductory statement from Commissioner Harrington who was absent. There was no public comment and no action was taken.

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

Ms. Reynolds provided the Commission with an update on the work that had been done on various open space projects over the summer, including four possible conservation easements, two possible land acquisitions, a wetlands habitat restoration project, and two open space signage projects. She also updated the Commission on the research effort to determine available long-term options for the maintenance and ownership of the Davis wetlands. Finally, she outlined the next steps for the City's General Plan update. There was no public comment and no action was taken.

Action Item – Receive staff report and decide whether staff should prepare a preliminary acquisition report for a potential agricultural conservation easement on 80 acres owned by the Beoshanz family located near the intersection of County Roads 31 and 96 (APN 037-010-035)

This item was discussed next on the agenda. Ms. Reynolds summarized the information contained in the staff report. She said the subject property included about one acre of habitat along Dry Slough, and is adjacent to the City's 86-acre Mclsaac Farms conservation easement along Dry Slough. She said the subject's site's location and characteristics satisfied three, possibly four, priority acquisition areas: "biological and natural resources," "scenic resources," "agriculture," and possibly "public access and recreation." She said the subject site provides an opportunity to possibly extend the City's limited public access rights along Dry Slough. The adjacent Mclsaac Farms conservation easement includes a provision that allows the City to offer one guided tour per year along Dry Slough, limited to 20 people, she said. A similar provision could perhaps be included in the Beoshanz conservation easement, she said. She asked the Commission if it would like staff to prepare a formal preliminary acquisition report for further discussion. She said pre-applications for acquisition grants are due January 31, 2025 to the State of California.

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 discussed this item. Commissioner Vayssieres made a motion to ask staff to prepare a full preliminary acquisition report on this possible conservation easement. It was seconded by Commissioner Geonczy. The Commission voted 6-0-2-0 to approve the motion (Ayes – Alberts, Correa, Geonczy, Greco, Huber, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Harrington; Abstentions – None).

Discussion Item – Consider Council Subcommittee on Commissions' proposed process to place tasks/items on commission agendas

This item was delayed and heard later in the agenda. Zoe Mirabile, the City's City Clerk, said that the City Council's Subcommittee on Commissions ("Subcommittee") was asking for feedback from all commissions related to the process to place items on commission agendas, specifically Commission-initiated items. She discussed the flow chart in the staff report, which showed the proposed process for placing items on a commission agenda. She said the Subcommittee is proposing that any Commission-initiated items be first reviewed and approved by staff and the Commission's City Council liaison. The staff liaison would then work with the Commission chair, either to add the item to a future agenda (if recommended) or to explain to the Commission why the item could not be on a future agenda (if not recommended). If not recommended, the Commission could then decide whether to modify their proposal or send it to the full City Council for consideration.

Commissioner Huber then asked if Commissioners had any clarifying questions. Commissioners asked for clarification on (1) how this proposed process was different from the existing process, and

(2) the proposed appeals process in the event a City Council liaison does not recommend that a Commission's proposal be placed on a future agenda. In general, the Commission supported the Subcommittee's proposed review process, but recommended that more safeguards be put in place to prevent a City Council liaison from having too much power over the Commission's agenda. Ms. Mirabile said she would consolidate all the commissions' comments and present them before the full City Council for consideration. There was no public comment and no action was taken.

Action Item – Receive staff report and decide whether staff should prepare a preliminary acquisition report for a potential agricultural conservation easement on 320 acres owned by Dhir Capital located next to Grasslands Regional Park, on County Road 35 (APN 033-130-011)

Ms. Reynolds summarized the information contained in the staff report. She said the subject property was adjacent to Yolo County's Grasslands Regional Park and the Yolo Land Trust's 160-acre Schmid Family Trust conservation easement. She said the subject's site's location and characteristics satisfied two priority acquisition areas: "agriculture" and "scenic resources." She said the property owner was also willing to sell the City a conservation easement on an additional 320 acres to the south of the subject site. However, those 320 acres are just outside the Davis Planning Area, and staff is unsure whether open space parcel taxes could be used to purchase a conservation easement outside the Davis Planning Area, she said. All 640 acres were recently planted in pistachio and almond trees, she said. She asked the Commission if it would like staff to prepare a formal preliminary acquisition report for further discussion. She said pre-applications for acquisition grants are due January 31, 2025 to the State of California.

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 discussed this item. Commissioner Vayssieres made a motion to ask staff to prepare a full preliminary acquisition report on this possible conservation easement. It was seconded by Commissioner Geonczy. The Commission voted 6-0-2-0 to approve the motion (Ayes – Alberts, Correa, Geonczy, Greco, Huber, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Harrington; Abstentions – None).

7. Subcommittee and Liaison Assignment Updates

A. Liaison Assignments

- (1) *Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee ("LPCCC")*. Commissioner Huber said there was nothing to report from the LPCCC standing monthly meeting.
- (2) *Yolo Habitat Conservancy ("YHC")*. Commissioner Huber said there was nothing to report from 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 7, 2024. Possible agenda items discussed included (1) a discussion of a preliminary acquisition report on the Beoshanz family property, (2) a discussion of a preliminary acquisition report on the Dhir Capital property, (3) a discussion of a possible land acquisition along the South Fork of Putah Creek, and (4) a discussion of the final draft design for the wetlands habitat restoration project the City is working on with UC Davis.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:50 p.m.