

Open Space and Habitat Commission Minutes
Monday, June 2, 2025
Community Chambers Conference Room, 23 Russell Boulevard, 6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Lindsay Correa, Sara Geonczy, Steve Greco, Christina Harrington, Patrick Huber (Chair), Marc Vayssieres (Vice Chair)

Vacant Positions: None

Commissioners Absent: Ramiro Cabanillas-Ledesma, Christopher Alberts (Alternate)

Assigned Staff: Tracie Reynolds, Open Space Program Manager

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 took roll call.

2. Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Vayssieres made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Correa. The Commission voted 6-0-1-0 to approve the motion (Ayes – Correa, Geonczy, Greco, Harrington, Huber, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Cabanillas-Ledesma; Abstentions – None).

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

Ms. Reynolds, staff to the Commission, reminded the Commission that it may be asked to hold a special meeting on Wednesday, July 16, to discuss the open space and habitat features of the Village Farms Davis development proposal. She also updated the Commission on the status of two grant applications for the purchase of two possible agricultural conservation easements (Beoshanz and Nishikawa), and said the City Council had approved the donation of a habitat conservation easement to the Yolo Habitat Conservancy on the City's Los Rios parcels along the South Fork of Putah Creek.

City Councilmember Chapman noted that the City's budget was scheduled to be approved by the full City Council on June 17. He also thanked the Commission for attending the April kick-off meeting for all participating commissions for the General Plan Update.

4. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

5. Consent Calendar

On consent was the approval of the May 2025 meeting minutes. Commissioner Vayssieres made a motion to approve the draft minutes. It was seconded by Commissioner Geonczy. The Commission voted 6-0-1-0 to approve the draft minutes (Ayes – Correa, Geonczy, Greco, Harrington, Huber, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Cabanillas-Ledesma; Abstentions – None).

6. Regular Items

Discussion Item – At the Commission's request, receive a presentation from community members about the open space conservation easement held by the City of Davis on the privately owned Wildhorse golf course, including community concerns about possible future development on the golf course and easement amendments

Ms. Reynolds, staff to the Commission, said the Commission approved a motion at its May meeting to invite a group of community members to the Commission's June meeting to give an informational presentation about their research into the City's conservation easement on the privately owned Wildhorse golf course and the community members' concerns about possible development and potential amendments. This presentation, and the information contained in it, was collected and prepared by the community members and reviewed for accuracy by staff, she said.

She said this was a discussion item and not an action item. She also reminded the Commission that (1) there is currently no development proposal on the golf course property; (2) the Commission and the current City Council cannot take an action that ties the hands of a future City Council; (3) staff does not typically spend time on projects until there is an agreement with the developer to reimburse the City for staff time, including City Attorney time, spent on the project; and (4) the property owner is entitled to a fair hearing if a development proposal is submitted to the City in the future.

Marjorie Longo, a resident of the Wildhorse neighborhood, then gave a presentation about the history of the open space conservation easement on the Wildhorse golf course. She spoke about the history of the Wildhorse residential neighborhood and how the conservation easement was part of the project approvals. She also spoke about a 1995 ballot measure approved by Davis voters which upheld the development agreement for the Wildhorse residential neighborhood, including the conservation easement. She also spoke about the habitat-friendly design of the golf course and the two past development proposals on portions of the golf course, among other things. She concluded by saying that the Wildhorse community is concerned that the property owner intends to submit a third development proposal that would convert part of the golf course to housing, thereby removing a portion of the golf course from the conservation easement. She said an action such as this could negatively impact the City's other conservation easements.

Commissioner Huber then asked if Commissioners had any clarifying questions. The Commission did not have any clarifying questions. Commissioner Huber then took public comment.

- Eileen Samitz, a Davis resident, said she was one of the neighborhood negotiators involved in the planning of the Wildhorse residential development. She said the City got so much out of the developer, including the conservation easement. She said she did not think the City would want to be known for overturning one of its conservation easements. She said the golf course is doing well, and there are interested buyers, so there is no need to convert part of the golf course to housing. She urged the Commission to protect the conservation easement.
- Brad Sutton, a Davis resident, said the Davis General Plan states that the City must consider feasible alternatives before a park is converted to urban uses. In this case, he said the golf course was mitigation for the development of all the areas around the gold course. The golf course serves as an overflow area for stormwater runoff from the urban areas. He said the open space not only benefits wildlife, as habitat, but it also benefits people, as flood control.
- Sharon Montooth, a Davis resident, said Davis voters voted in favor of the conservation easement and that vote should be respected. If that vote isn't respected, she said there was a danger of other votes not being respected either. She said the voters approved the conservation easement and that vote should be respected.

Commissioner Huber then closed public comment and opened discussion on this item. Topics discussed included (1) the legal implications of extinguishing a portion of the conservation easement, and (2) whether the community group has reached out to the property owner to discuss possible solutions. The chair thanked the community members for their time and presentation and said that he felt the Commission was better informed on this topic. No action was taken.

Discussion Item – Thank Commissioner Correa for her service on the Commission

Ms. Reynolds presented Commissioner Correa with a certificate of appreciation for her service to the Commission from January 2021 to June 2025. She said Commissioner Correa in particular provided valuable input on issues related to community engagement and outreach, citizen science efforts, community partnerships, public access and recreation, performance standards, statewide environmental initiatives, and community-driven monitoring. The Commission thanked Commissioner Correa for her hard work and dedication to improving the City's Open Space Program over the last four years. 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 looking into possible solutions for the homeless encampment problem along the South Fork of Putah Creek, which was negatively impacting the riparian habitat and the water quality in the creek. He said the problem is complicated without easy solutions, but the LPCCC was still looking into ways to improve the situation.
- (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

Ms. Reynolds said the Commission may be asked to hold a special meeting during summer recess on Wednesday, July 16, to discuss the open space and habitat features of the Village Farms Davis development proposal. She said she will update the Commission as information is available.

The next regularly scheduled meeting is Monday, September 8, 2025, which is the second Monday of the month due to the Labor Day holiday. Possible agenda items discussed included (1) a discussion of the open space and habitat features of the Village Farms Davis development proposal, (2) a discussion of the Open Space Program budget, and (3) a review of the draft interpretive panels for the North Davis Upland Habitat Area.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:05 p.m.