

Open Space and Habitat Commission Minutes
Monday, December 1, 2025
Community Chambers Conference Room, 23 Russell Boulevard, 6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Ramiro Cabanillas-Ledesma, Steve Greco, Christina Harrington (Vice Chair), Patrick Huber (Chair), Marc Vayssieres

Vacant Positions: *Alternate*

Commissioners Absent: Sara Geonczy, Eric Newman

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 Harrington made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Greco. The Commission voted 5-0-2-0 to approve the motion (Ayes – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Greco, Harrington, Huber, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Geonczy, Newman; Abstentions – None).

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

Ms. Reynolds, staff to the Commission, reminded the Commission about two draft Environmental Impact Reports (“EIRs”) that are currently available for public comment. One document is the draft EIR for the proposed Willowgrove development project and the other document is revised portions of the draft EIR for the proposed Village Farms development project, she said. The revisions to the Village Farms draft EIR were required to reflect new information about the capacity of the City’s wastewater treatment system, she said. She said the Commission will not be able to comment as a group on these documents, but all commissioners are encouraged to submit comments as individuals. She said comments on both documents are due by January 2, 2026.

4. Public Comment

There was no general public comment.

5. Consent Calendar

On consent was the approval of the November 2025 meeting minutes. Commissioners Greco and Harrington suggested some edits to the draft minutes. Commissioner Harrington made a motion to approve the draft minutes, as amended. It was seconded by Commissioner Greco. The Commission voted 5-0-2-0 to approve the motion (Ayes – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Greco, Harrington, Huber, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Geonczy, Newman; Abstentions – None).

6. Regular Items

Action Item – Receive preliminary acquisition report about a potential agricultural conservation easement on 120 acres located near the intersection of County Roads 104A and 30, owned by the Gill Family Trust (APNs 033-650-003 and 042-130-003)

Ms. Reynolds summarized the information contained in the preliminary acquisition report. She said the Commission supported the pursuit of this conservation easement in October 2024 and staff

prepared a preliminary acquisition report for the Commission to consider in November 2024. She said the Commission's Ad-hoc Acquisitions Working Group (Commissioners Geonczy, Huber, and Vayssieres) visited the subject property on October 4, 2024. At that time, the Commission decided to table discussion of this item because the Gill Family had decided not to purchase the subject parcel, she said. Earlier this month, the Gill Family was able to purchase the subject parcel, she said, and as a result, staff is bringing the preliminary acquisition report back to the Commission for discussion.

This possible acquisition still involves buying a conservation easement on about 120 acres of land located near the intersection of County Roads 104A and 30, she said. The 120 acres is comprised of two separate legal parcels now both owned by the Gill Family, she said. One parcel is about 35 acres and is already planted in almond trees, she said. It also includes a farmhouse and a large ag warehouse. The second parcel is about 85 acres and the Gill family intends to plant nut trees on it in 2026, she said. Both have very good soils, she said. The parcels are also located within two priority acquisition areas, and are adjacent to other protected farmland, she said. Protecting these parcels from development would further define the City's northeastern edge, she said.

Staff recommend pursuing this easement acquisition, she said. The California Department of Conservation, which manages the Sustainable Agricultural Land Conservation Program, changed the process for submitting grant applications this year, she said. Applications are now being accepted at two different times, in January 2026 and in June 2026, she said. Staff intends to submit an initial pre-proposal in March 2026 and a final pre-proposal by the deadline of May 14, 2026, she said. The full application will be due on June 17, 2026 and awards are expected in October 2026, she said.

Commissioner Huber then asked if Commissioners had any clarifying questions. The Commission did not have any 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. Discussion topics included whether habitat improvements, such as hedgerows, could be included in the easement.

Commissioner Cabanillas-Ledesma then made the following motion: *"The Open Space and Habitat Commission recommends that the City Council direct staff to submit a grant application to help fund the purchase of this conservation easement, which will include a commitment of matching funds from the City's open space parcel tax fund (Measure O), with the additional request that the southwest corner of the northern parcel be managed to maximize its habitat value."* The motion was seconded by Commissioner Vayssieres. The Commission voted 5-0-2-0 to approve the above motion (Ayes – Cabanillas-Ledesma, Greco, Harrington, Huber, Vayssieres; Noes – None; Absent – Geonczy, Newman; Abstentions – None).

Discussion Item – Receive a presentation from the City Council-Requested Subcommittee (High-Priority Open Space Peripheral Parcels) and provide feedback on work to date

Commissioner Huber, chair of the subcommittee, said the subcommittee was reviewing background information and determining which data sets the subcommittee needed to do its analysis. Once the data sets were determined, the subcommittee would be working with City staff in charge of the City's Geographic Information System ("GIS") data, he said. Subcommittee members indicated that their goal was to create a "green print" of the Davis Planning Area on which other land uses can be placed. Commissioner Huber said the subcommittee would be refining this "conservation vision" in coming months and would bring draft maps to the Commission for review when they were ready.

Commissioner Huber then asked if Commissioners had any clarifying questions. The Commission did not have any 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 about 2,000 salmon had been counted in the creek this year, a huge improvement over the numbers seen in the creek over the last several years.

(2) *Yolo Habitat Conservancy ("YHC")*. Commissioner Huber said there was nothing to report from the YHC's implementation committee.

B. City Council-Requested Subcommittee (High-Priority Open Space Peripheral Parcels). This item was discussed during Regular Items.

C. General Plan Committee (General Plan Update). Commissioner Huber said he and Commissioner Greco were waiting to hear next steps from City staff.

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

The Commission agreed with staff to cancel the January 2026 meeting. The next regularly scheduled meeting would then be February 2, 2026. Possible agenda items discussed included a discussion of the open space and habitat features of the proposed Willowgrove development project.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:27 p.m.