

MINUTES

**OPEN SPACE COMMISSION
MONDAY
SEPTEMBER 25, 2023**

**HYBRID MEETING
FLAGSTAFF AQUAPLEX
AND MICROSOFT TEAMS
1702 N FOURTH STREET
4:00 P.M.**

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Wilson at 4:03 pm.

2. Roll Call

NOTE: One or more Commissioner may be in attendance through other technological means.

PRESENT

Chair William Wilson
Commissioner Mary Norton (P&Z Liaison)
Commissioner Bruce Fox
Commissioner Jacqueline Thomas
Commissioner Lina Wallen
Commissioner Nat White

NOT PRESENT

Vice-Chair Bruce Applin
Councilmember Deborah Harris

STAFF & OTHERS

Rebecca Sayers - PROSE Director
Robert Wallace - Open Space Supervisor
Sylvia Struss - Open Space Coordinator
Sarah Holditch - Open Space Coordinator
Koren Brown - Admin Specialist
Mark Loseth - SDR

3. Land Acknowledgment

The Flagstaff Open Space Commission humbly acknowledges the ancestral homelands of this area's Indigenous nations and original stewards. These lands, still inhabited by Native descendants, border mountains sacred to Indigenous peoples. We honor them, their legacies, their traditions, and their continued contributions. We celebrate their past, present, and future generations who will forever know this place as home.

4. Approval of Minutes

It was requested to revise minutes to not attribute comments to individuals. Minutes were motioned to approve by Commissioner White, seconded by Commissioner Thomas. Commissioner Thomas abstained due to absence. Vote to approve minutes as amended was unanimous.

A. August Minutes**5. Public Comment**

At this time, any member of the public may address the Commission on any subject that is not scheduled before the Commission on this day. The Arizona Open Meeting Law prohibits the Commission from discussing or taking action on an item which is not listed on the prepared agenda. Commission members may, however, respond to criticism made by those addressing the Commission, ask staff to review a matter, or ask that a matter be placed on a future

agenda. To address the Commission on an item that is on the agenda, please wait for the Chair to call for Public Comment at the time the item is heard.

No public comment.

6. Business Items

- A. Open Space Terminology Text Amendment Update.** Robert Wallace. Requested Action: Informational, Discussion.

Objective to revise Open Space terminology as defined by Community Development to distinguish between City Open Space and Community Development spaces. The terminology has previously been: "Common Open Space, Outdoor Open Space, and Private Open Space". The revisions are intended to clarify and further contextualize planning.

There will be upcoming public hearing dates:

- Oct 11th – P&Z Commission Work Session
- Oct 25th – P&Z Commission Public Hearing
- Nov 21st – Council Public Hearing – first read
- Dec 5th – Council Public Hearing – second read

The Commission recommends adding a definition for legally designated open space in the text.

- B. Water Services Reliability Roundtable Update.** All. Requested Action: Informational, Discussion.

This was an informational, one-hour session to discuss water interests and gather feedback from the community to shape an outreach plan as the city undergoes a rate study for water, wastewater, and reclaimed water services. Recapped strategic plan, future challenges with infrastructure, work force, and climate change and potential strategies to address.

- C. November/December Combined Meeting Planning.** All. Requested Action: Informational, Discussion.

Upcoming meeting date changes

- Next meeting October 23, 2023, 2:30 PM – 5:30 p.m. on site at Public Works
- Cancelled Monday, November 27 meeting.
- Cancelled Monday, December 25 meeting.
- New meeting date Monday, December 11, 4-6 pm (this will take the place of the Nov/Dec meetings)

- D. Prioritization Multi-year Project Planning.** Rebecca Sayers, PROSE Director. Requested Action: Informational, Discussion.

This item was selected to be moved to a future agenda to provide additional time for the other agenda items.

- E. Council Update Planning.** All. Requested Action: Informational, Discussion, Decision.

The annual update from the Commission to City Council is scheduled for October 31, 2023. The Commission reviewed the draft presentation and talking points. Commissioners provided recommended changes and asked staff to update the documents for their review and approval at their next meeting.

- F. Observatory Mesa Trail Planning.** Mark Loseth (SDR) and City staff. Requested Action: Informational, Discussion, Decision.
- Public Input Synthesis
 - Single-use vs. multi-use
 - Directional trails

The Commission reviewed the Public Feedback Synthesis for the Observatory Mesa Trail Plan and the draft Trail Plan for the Greater Observatory Mesa area.

The Commission provided some feedback on the organization of the Public Feedback Synthesis. There was also thought, and concern expressed that the community feedback does not provide sufficient data for making important decisions related to the draft Trail Plan. Staff provided clarification that the Public Feedback Synthesis is meant to be a summary of public feedback that identifies the themes that are important to the public so that we can consider what was heard from the community and help base plan decisions to make sure the Trail Plan is representative of the community.

The Commission shared some comments on ensuring that the Trail Plan upholds the original intent for the Bond Fund that voters approved. PROSE Director, Rebecca Sayers, shared that the 2004 funds for Observatory Mesa were for acquisition. The bond also has some language about the intended use being “permanent natural open spaces for public use,” and for “wildlife habitat protection and conservation of observatory viewing quality.” The Open Space Section believes that the Trail Plan is in line with those goals as it emphasizes protecting wildlife, reducing the number of trails and restoring many of them to a natural state, and providing signage and access to the public. Staff will send the publicity pamphlet for the 2004 bond fund to commissioners for their review.

Commissioners discussed several features of the Trail Plan, focusing on elements that they find concerning. Topics included:

- Concern that the plan is more weighted towards bike use rather than walkers/hikers or other users.
- The need to ensure that the plan preserves space for wildlife and enhanced experience.
- Ensuring parking for better access to allow access for users, especially walkers/hikers.
- Single use vs multi use, specifically thoughts that single use caters towards bikes and may not benefit other users.
- Directional Trails and how they would reduce the non-bike user’s ability to make short out and back trips.
- The lack of easily accessible shorter loops that are important for walkers/hikers.
- E-bike appropriateness.

7. Reports and Updates

- A. Council Representative Report.** Council Representative Deborah Harris

Council Representative Deborah Harris was not present.

- B. Planning and Zoning Commission Representative Report.** P & Z Representative Mary Norton

There were no reports.

C. Open Space Management Report. Robert Wallace and Sylvia Struss

This item was omitted for time.

8. Informational Items To and From Commissioners and Staff

No items to report.

A. PROSE NEWSLETTER

9. Potential Future Agenda Items

There were no new items to add.

Commissioners requested that the next meeting be a field visit to the Observatory Mesa Natural Area so that they could see the focus area of the draft Trail Plan. Staff will work to identify and schedule the field trip.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:04 pm.