

DRAFT
OPEN SPACE COMMISSION MEETING

OPEN SPACE COMMISSION
MONDAY
OCTOBER 28, 2024
4:00 P.M.

HYBRID MEETING
FLAGSTAFF AQUAPLEX
AND [MICROSOFT TEAMS](#)
1702 N FOURTH STREET

1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:00pm (recording of the meeting did not start until 4:42pm).

2. **Roll Call**

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

Present:

Chair Bruce Applin
Vice Chair Jacqueline Thomas
Commissioner Bruce Fox
Commissioner Lina Wallen
City Council Liaison Deborah Harris

Absent:

Commissioner Mary Norton
Commissioner Nat White

Staff and Other Present:

Robert Wallace
Rebecca Sayers
Sylvia Struss
Ashlee Fliney
Annie Ridgell
William Michael Wilson
Michele James
Diana Henry
Rick Ruess
Duane Koyawena
Jane Jackson
Sandy Carrigg
Karen Malis-Clark
Shannon Clark
Susan Clampith
Kathy Flaccus
Elsa Erling (City staff)
Sara Dechter (City staff)
Martin Ince (City staff)

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 the September 23, 2024 Minutes**

Commissioner Wallen motioned to approve the September 23, 2024 Minutes, Commissioner Applin seconded and all voted in favor.

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.

Robert Wallace introduced Annie Ridgell, PROSE's new Administrative Specialist, who will be taking Minutes in the future.

6. **Business Items**

A. **Jack Welch Picture Canyon Memorial Bridge Proposal**

Jane Jackson presented on the renaming of the Picture Canyon footbridge to be the Jack Welch Memorial Bridge. She recounted the history of Jack Welch educating the public about Picture Canyon's attributes and obstacles in his JWalker hikes and at City Council, and his incredible advocacy for its protection. The JWalker group raised funds for a memorial bench at Frances Short Pond, and they proposed a plaque for the bridge, along the lines of the plaque at the Cosmic Ray tunnel, with footprints to memorialize his love and leadership of hiking. Ms. Jackson mentioned that JWalker members would check on and maintain the plaque. A petition with more than 50 signatures was accepted by City Council and sent to the Open Spaces Commission.

Diana Henry presented on having artwork accompany the plaque. She talked about Dine and Hopi ancestry at Picture Canyon, which is why she and others want Hopi artist Duane Koyawena's artwork to accompany the plaque. She will be submitting an Arts & Beautification grant application in early 2025, with numerous supporters, and she requested a Letter of Support from the Commission for that grant application. Mr. Koyawena presented himself and his proposed artwork representing Jack Welch's passing.

Vice Chair Thomas asked for public comment. Karen Malis-Clark acknowledged the Friends of the Rio de Flag, Willow Bend Environmental Education Center, and all the folks who signed the petition in support of naming the Memorial Bridge. She liked the idea of the bridge (being a connection), as well as memorializing him upstream at Frances Short Pond and downstream at Picture Canyon.

Mr. Wallace indicated the presenters were looking for a "head nod" to move forward and can bring it back to the commission for a formal recommendation to City Council. After a short discussion, the commission was in favor of seeing the memorial project plaque and artwork move forward. The commission asked that this be placed on a future agenda.

B. **Flagstaff Regional Plan 2045 Update**

Elsa Erling, Associate Planner in Comprehensive Planning with the City presented the Regional Plan update. She noted that Senior Planner Sara Dechter was online for questions, and Melissa Shaw was involved with Coconino County. The plan is now available for public input, and everyone is encouraged to look at a hard copy (available at City Hall and the Library), or online. The different phases have been:

1. Gain an understanding of how the current plan is working.
2. What's Possible/What's the Vision?
3. Plan Creation (the plan is presently in this phase to review the draft, looking toward getting it on next year's ballot).
4. Plan Adoption.

The Regional Plan Committee met 15 times over 9 months, and videos of those meetings are available on the City's website. A 60-day public review started October 20, 2024, and ends December 19, 2024. There will be four workshops:

- November 13, 2024 evening at Public Works Yard on Rt 66, focused on transportation,
- November 14, 2024 evening at the Aquaplex, focused on Parks, Open Space & Recreation, Resource Stewardship & Resilience,
- November 16, 2024 midday at Flagstaff HS midday, focused on Growth and Land Use, and
- November 18, 2024 evening at Cromer Elementary, focused on water, energy, public safety, and infrastructure.

There will also be a December 4, 2024 closing webinar to review everything. There are also office hours Fridays 11am-2pm (except November 29th) at City Hall, and presentations to commissions and boards. Plan comments are hosted on Konveio, which is the platform the County uses. Commissions may create a committee to submit comments on behalf of the Commission, and/or individual comments are welcome.

After December 19, 2024, staff will analyze and incorporate public comments; if any complex issues are raised with lots of feedback, staff may elect to revise the plan. This will be followed by a final legal review, and in Spring 2025, it will be sent to City Council and County Supervisors for review, looking to have it on the November 2025 ballot.

Overall, the focus of the Plan includes five priorities:

1. Create more housing attainability,
2. Create mixed-use, denser neighborhoods that support different housing types and active transportation,
3. Reduce community-generated climate pollution/protect air quality,
4. Protect the region's significant natural & cultural resources, and
5. Expand the region's preparedness & resilience to hazards and climate change.

The Goals, Policies and Land Use categories, Implementation Guidelines, and Action Items are important to review. There are several maps, including Future Growth Illustration (note that desired private and state land cannot be shown), Future Regional Parks & Open Space Needs map, and Significant Natural Resources Map.

With regard to Parks, Recreation & Open Space, the overall goal is a regional system of parks, open spaces and community centers that support the regional public and environmental health, and provides diverse recreation needs, are accessible, and are interconnected by trails and greenways between Flagstaff, regional open space & other county communities. There are 6 PROS policies to review. Action Items related to Open Space are: Leverage available funding to purchase lands for Parks and Open Space; Consider a City and/or County bond; Engage with AZ State Land Department to create opportunities for future development; and Open Space preservation.

There are other guidelines, goals and action items that affect Open Space, such as cultural and natural resources, and wildlife corridors.

Commissioner Norton sent a note that this would be the Open Space Commission's only opportunity for the Commission to comment on the plan. There could be a committee (no more than 3 Commissioners) to review the 200-page document and present potential comments to the Commission. Ms. Dechter indicated the Commission could request an extension beyond December 19, 2024. It was discussed that Commission comments could be more powerful, though the time crunch could be difficult. There was consensus that each person will review the plan individually and email their top two strengths and weaknesses (forcing Commissioners to focus on the most important things) to Commissioner Fox by November 25, 2024, who will then synthesize those comments, draft a letter, and present to the Commission at the next meeting. Commissioner Fox can meet with staff to clarify any questions. Ms. Erling encouraged the Commissioners to focus on Chapter 8 PROS, Chapter 7 Resource Stewardship & Resilience and Wildlife Corridors, and Goals & Policies Chapter 3.

C. Open Space Commission November/December Meeting Dates

Commissioner Fox motioned to combine the November and December meetings to December 9, 2024 4-6pm at the Aquaplex Community Room. Commissioner Wallen seconded, and all voted in favor.

D. Project Prioritization and Multi-year Project Planning

Robert Wallace reviewed the provided list of proposed project considerations for using future BBB funds. This meeting is informational. The next meeting will have a prioritization exercise where Commissioners can rank priorities. There was some discussion about whether projects were high maintenance or low maintenance--would these decisions put a burden on another section or division? Commissioners were encouraged not to focus on costs and burdens, but rather on which projects they want in the 5-year plan/which are most important. Then it is the staff's work to figure out the details. Also, when the BBB funds are reviewed and approved by this Commission, it will have the opportunity to figure out when/how projects will be funded, and whether money will be saved for bigger projects.

There was discussion about breaking projects down into two categories: maintenance of current assets, and acquisition of additional open spaces.

7. Reports and Updates

A. Council Representative Report, Council Representative Deborah Harris

Council Representative Report, Deborah Harris noted that it is important to take care of what we have and address deferred maintenance issues and figure out how to get developers to give us open space, or designate city-owned property as open space. Also encouraged the Commission to look at the concept of open space broadly--including small neighborhood parcels.

B. Planning and Zoning Commission Representative Report, Representative Mary Norton

Planning and Zoning Commission Representative Report: Commissioner Norton noted in writing that she did not have anything to share.

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

Open Space Management Report: Mr. Wallace reported that the Archaeological Survey of McMillan Mesa is finally complete, which will allow us to apply for funds to install signs. We completed the Kahtoola grant. Ms. Struss reported that the stone steps at Petroglyph Overlook and the realignment of the trail at the Waterbird Petroglyph Site are complete at Picture Canyon.

D. PROSE Monthly Newsletter

8. Informational Items To and From Commissioners and Staff

Mr. Wallace reported on the Observatory Mesa Trail Plan, noting that Southwest Decision Resources is synthesizing the latest community survey input, and that will be presented at the next Commission meeting. He also provided an update on the Hidden Hollow easement--next steps are for City staff to assist in presenting it to the State Parks Board on November 14, 2024.

9. Potential Future Agenda Items

- Jack Welch Memorial Bridge
- Regional Plan Comments and Prioritization

10. Adjournment

Commissioner Fox motioned to adjourn, Commissioner Wallen seconded. They all voted in favor.

The meeting ended at 6:07pm.