

OPEN SPACE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

OPEN SPACE COMMISSION
MONDAY
DECEMBER 9, 2024

HYBRID MEETING
FLAGSTAFF AQUAPLEX
AND [MICROSOFT TEAMS](#)
1702 N FOURTH STREET
4:00 P.M.

1. Call to Order

Commissioner Applin started the meeting at 4:05 PM.

2. Roll Call

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

Chair Bruce Applin	Commissioner Lina Wallen
Co-Chair Jacqueline Thomas	Commissioner Nat White
Commissioner Mary Norton (P&Z Liaison)	Councilmember Representative: Deborah Harris (Not Present)
Commissioner Bruce Fox	Others Present: Rebecca Sayers, Robert Wallace, Sylvia Struss, Ashlee Fliney, Cole Lang and Annie Ridgell
	Martin Ince present on Teams

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 October 28, 2024 Minutes

Commissioner Fox motioned to approve the minutes of the October 28th meeting as written. Commissioner Wallen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

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 comments were made.

Robert Wallace introduced Cole Lang as the OS Assistant. He is an AmeriCorps Member, with the Environmental Literacy Corps (ELC). Its members serve with local agencies and organizations to promote environmental literacy in northern Arizona and beyond.

6. Business Items

A. Regional Plan Review and Recommendation. (8514)

Decision Item: Review, finalize, and vote on the Commission's recommendation.

The Flagstaff Regional Plan 2045 is open for a 60-day review from October 20 to December 19, 2024. The Open Space Commission elected at their October 2024 meeting to review the plan and prepare a formal recommendation. The Commission discussed the plan's strengths and improvement opportunities and finalized the consensus of comments below.

Dear Regional Plan Committee,

Please accept this summary of comments from the Open Spaces Commission on the Draft Flagstaff Regional Land Use Plan 2045. This document represents a consensus of comments from members of the Open Spaces Commission regarding the plan's strengths and improvement opportunities.

STRENGTHS OF THE PLAN:

One of the Plan's five main priorities is to "Protect the region's significant and cultural resources"

1. Parks, Recreation and Open Space are grouped together with its own implementation section
2. Chapter 8's "High Priority Action Item" is land acquisition in the John Wesley Powell area
3. The plan acknowledges the need for recreation and open space across the city
4. The implementation Guidelines in Chapter 8 specifically mention the requirement of following the Management Plan for *Legally-Designated Open Space Properties*
5. Recognition for the importance of state lands in the acquisition of additional open space
6. Recognition of the importance of open space preservation with areas of development.

IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES:

1. Lack of comprehensive integration between topics. The Plan should identify how different goals balance priorities. Inherently difficult priorities need to be balanced by the document, examples:

a. Better and more clearly identify and explain consequences of implementing different actions by acknowledging the conflicts of balance between achieving higher density and preserving accessible natural resources, including open space, access and viewsheds

b. More clearly and strongly connect plan recommendations to potential effects on the private sector and the potential partnerships with respect to open space and access

c. Policy PROS 2: the two parts of this policy contradict/negate/cancel each other out. Delete "while allowing for concentrated development in areas that support housing supply and climate action". Leave only the first part of the policy to "Focus the purchase and management of regional preserves and connector open spaces on protecting cultural or significant natural resources".

d. Policy PROS 4 & 5: the Action items do not address how we will get new parks and open space set aside, gifted, required, or purchased during the early development plans of a greenfield site. Without such a policy, we are too late. The plan should address how this will be achieved

e. In the Chapter 8 Goal, add "providing 10-minute accessibility to open space". This is part of the Open Space core documents, and should be included in the goal in addition to the mention in the Implementation Guidelines.

2. Shorten and reduce jargon;

a. The document is very long and difficult to read

b. Better define key terms used in the plan, such as "significant" and "greenfield"

3. Identified omissions;

a. Resource Guidelines should be expanded. For example, why aren't the large stands of Ponderosa Pines, Prairie dog colonies, escarpments, etc. not mapped? We believe that these

should be included in our natural resources and wildlife. The significant natural resources map should be comprehensive

b. It is important to more explicitly include maintenance of recreation and open space areas, not just acquisition and development

c. Provide more emphasis on how trail systems reduce carbon emissions along with more clearly identifying safety issues resulting from more bike use (a "consequence" example).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to this important community document. We appreciate your attention to the Commission's recommendations.

Sincerely,

Mr. Bruce Applin
Open Spaces Commission Chair

Open Spaces Commission Members:

Commissioner Bruce Applin
Commissioner Mary Norton
Commissioner Bruce Fox
Commissioner Jacqueline Thomas
Commissioner Lina Wallen
Commissioner Nat White

Chair Bruce Applin motioned to vote on the Commission's Recommendation. Commissioner Bruce Fox seconded the motion. There was unanimous support for the Open Spaces Commission's recommendation to be submitted to the Regional Plan Committee.

B. Project Prioritization and Multi-year Project Planning. (8515)

Open Space Commission review and maintenance projects, new amenities, and acquisitions to which the BBB tax could be allocated. The Commission completed an activity where they rank from 1 to 10 (1 being the lowest and 10 the highest). The Commission's input will direct staff in the development of a capital project plan. The results of the Commission's prioritization activity will be shared at their January 2025 meeting. Projects considered as part of the activity include the following:

McMillan Mesa Property Restoration: Evaluate property to determine property restoration areas. Work could involve eradicating invasive plants in areas of high infestation, seeding, and completing erosion control in high-use areas.

McMillan Mesa Signage: Design and install signage throughout the preserve to match the newest design, including rules signage and other educational information. Open Space applied for a \$10,000 grant for this project, which, if awarded, could help fund some of it.

McMillan Mesa Trail Rehabilitation: This project will evaluate the McMillan Mesa trails and partner with Parks to complete the needed trail repairs and maintenance.

McMillan Mesa Tree Canopy Buffer: Restore property between the FUTS and the Veteran's home. This would address past impacts, restore vegetation, control erosion, and help create a vegetative buffer. Grant funding could possibly be obtained to supplement this project.

Observatory Mesa Fencing: Install wildlife-friendly fencing for the Observatory Mesa Natural Area to reduce unauthorized motorized vehicles, minimize cattle impacts, and inform users that they are entering a protected Natural Area with regulations enforced.

Observatory Mesa Property Restoration: Continue restoration work on forest thinning chip piles, which has been ongoing with grant funding. Grant funding will be spent by 12/2025.

Observatory Mesa Trail Plan Implementation: Implement the council-approved trail plan,

which includes priorities 1-3 and long-term priorities. The plan would incorporate parking, signage, restroom facilities, unauthorized road and trail restoration, trail maintenance, and trail building. Grant funding could likely be obtained for this project.

Observatory Mesa Water Tank Restoration: Evaluate earthen water catchment basins to determine the benefits of restoration. Restore high priority tanks to retain water for wildlife.

Picture Canyon Fencing: Install wildlife-friendly fencing for the Picture Canyon Preserve to reduce unauthorized motorized vehicles, prevent further mine encroachment, and inform users that they are entering a protected Natural Area with regulations enforced.

Picture Canyon FUTS Connection: Work with FUTS to design and build the FUTS connection to the Picture Canyon Trailhead. Property acquisition and rights are needed before implementation can occur. Grant funding could possibly supplement this project.

Picture Canyon Locus D Trail Spur and Viewing Area: Design and build a trail spur to the Locus D rock art panel to help manage current use and provide another opportunity to view rock art.

Picture Canyon Property Restoration: Continue restoration work on unauthorized roads and trails that have been ongoing with grant funding. Grant funding will be spent by 5/2025. Expand work to restore vegetation in areas with high infestations of invasive species, such as along the Rio de Flag corridor.

Picture Canyon Rio De Flag Bridge Replacement: Replace the current wood bridge with a steel FUTS-style bridge.

Picture Canyon Signage Replacement: Upgrade the sun-damaged signage throughout the preserve to match the newest design, including rules signage and other educational information. Grant funding could possibly be obtained to supplement this project.

Picture Canyon Toilet: Develop a single restroom unit for the public at the Picture Canyon Trailhead.

Picture Canyon Trail Rehabilitation: This project will evaluate the Picture Canyon trails and complete the necessary trail repairs and maintenance.

Picture Canyon Trailhead Entry Road and Parking Lot: Repair/Replace the roadway and trailhead parking for Picture Canyon. The road from the Wildcat Water Reclamation Plant to the Picture Canyon Trailhead.

Schultz Creek Trailhead: Designing new trailhead improvements to enable proper parking, signage of the trail system, delineation of trail access to direct use to approved locations, and the addition of appropriate facilities such as trash service and restrooms. Property acquisition and rights are needed before implementation can occur. Grant funding could possibly be obtained to supplement this project.

7. Reports and Updates

- A. Council Representative Report, Council Representative Deborah Harris - not present.
- B. Planning and Zoning Commission Representative Report, Representative Mary Norton (10 minutes)
 - 1. Commissioner Norton updated and encouraged the commissioners to view the City Council discussion on the John Wesley Powell resolutions (numbers: 2024-49, 2024-50, 2024-51) from the December 3, 2024 council meeting, regular agenda items 11b-11d. Shared information included considerations that may be important to the Open Spaces Commission such as trail considerations, wildlife impacts, open space and parks and safe access during development. These resolutions authorize executing the development agreements to permit the construction

of the road alignment. There is much additional work that needs to be completed to achieve the open space commission's property open space corridor.

2. Secondly, council approved a property rezoning, Routine item 9C: **Adoption of Ordinance No. 2024-29**: An ordinance amending the Flagstaff Zoning Map to rezone approximately 13.96 acres of real property located at 4631 S. Lake Mary Road, from the Estate Residential (ER) zone with a Resource Protection Overlay (RPO) to the High Density Residential (HR) zone with a Resource Protection Overlay (RPO) at the December 3, 2024 council meeting.
3. Thirdly, the Planning and Zoning Commission were involved in a work session regarding the Resource Protection Overlay (RPO). City staff are proposing a change in the RPO standards. This change would allow a development to forgo counting the trees in proposed main arterial roadways so that removed trees from the road alignments would not count against the development's RPO requirements. Tree resource percentage would be worked out after roads are put in. This change will allow more houses to be built.

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

The Open Space Section had 30 attendees at the October 17, 2024 Full Moon hike.

The McMillan Mesa signage grant has gone through two out of three required reviews. A final review will be completed by the Arizona Department of Transportation before the Open Space Section is notified about the award results.

D. **PROSE Monthly Newsletter - No comments or questions**

- October 2024 Monthly Newsletter
- November 2024 Monthly Newsletter

8. **Informational Items To and From Commissioners and Staff**

A. The Arizona State Parks Board reviewed and approved the Hidden Hollow Driveway through Observatory Mesa Natural Area.

B. Molly Joyce was appointed Commissioner by the City Council on December 3, 2024.

C. February will be a joint commission meeting with the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Open Spaces Commission.

9. **Potential Future Agenda Items**

Next Meeting January 27, 2024

- Observatory Mesa Trail Plan
- Present Top 10 in January
- Project Planning activity review

10. **Adjournment**

Commissioner Applin motioned to adjourn, Commissioner Thomas seconded. All in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 6:06 PM.

CERTIFICATE OF POSTING OF NOTICE

The undersigned hereby certifies that a copy of the foregoing notice was duly posted at Flagstaff City Hall on December 3, 2024, at 4:00 p.m. This notice has been posted on the City's website and can be downloaded at www.flagstaff.az.gov.

Dated this 3rd day of December, 2024.

Annie Ridgell

Annie Ridgell, Administrative Specialist

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact Annie Ridgell (annie.ridgell@flagstaffaz.gov) at least two business days prior to the scheduled meeting time to enable the City to make reasonable arrangements.