

MINUTES

OPEN SPACE COMMISSION
MONDAY
JUNE 23, 2025

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

1. Call to Order

Chair Jacqueline Thomas called the June 23, 2025 Open Spaces Commission meeting to order at 4:01 PM.

2. Roll Call

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

Chair Jacqueline Thomas	Commissioner Molly Joyce
Co-Chair Bruce Fox	Commissioner Lina Wallen (virtual, intermittently present)
Commissioner Mary Norton (P&Z Liaison)	Commissioner Nat White
Commissioner William Kluwin	Councilmember Representative: David Spence

Others present: Ashlee Fliney (virtual), Haley Reynolds (present for part of the meeting), Lori Reynolds, Rebecca Sayers, Sylvia Struss, and Robert Wallace

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 May 12, 2025 Minutes.

Commissioner Norton motioned to approve the May 12, 2025 minutes. Commissioner White seconded and all voted in favor.

Motion by Mary Norton, Seconded by Nat White

5. Public Comment

Chair Thomas called for public comment on any items not on the agenda. There were no comments or requests.

6. Business Items

A. Update on July 4th Drone Show

Haley Reynolds, City of Flagstaff Events and Marketing Manager, shared with the commission details on the upcoming Fourth of July drone show happening in Flagstaff. This drone show, by Open Sky Productions, will be a first for Flagstaff. She referenced a map of the drone show's coverage area that is available on the Discover Flagstaff webpage (<https://www.flagstaffarizona.org/events/festivals/4th-of-july-events/>).

Haley highlighted points on the map for designated viewing areas, parking availability, and general information about the scope of drone visibility. She mentioned that there would be traffic control

points and park staff monitoring in Buffalo Park and around McMillian Mesa to provide points of communication to the public. Haley further informed the commission that the event was first brought to City Council in April of this year and the proposed budget for the event is \$95,000. She concluded by sharing that the drone show would feature custom animation and custom audio that would last just over 20 minutes, beginning promptly at 9:10 PM.

Commissioner White asked if Haley could elaborate on what a drone show was exactly. She informed him that it was a coordinated light show in the sky using drones. Each drone is programmed to synchronize different visual features and fly in different sequences to an audio recording. There were additional concerns expressed about the drones and what could happen if they crashed or there was inclement weather. Haley replied that the drones were not prone to crashing; they could land themselves. She also added that drones could continue to fly in a mild rain or wind event, but if a larger monsoonal system moved through, they would have to postpone until the weather was gone.

Commissioner White also requested to know who spearheaded the event, to which Haley responded that this was a city effort and that the funds were coming from a budget transfer from Economic Vitality to Events. Councilmember Spence commented that the drone show was a fraction of the cost of a traditional fireworks show and is more mindful of the current fire restrictions in effect.

Commissioner Joyce asked if the city had reached out to the bus line to see if they could run later hours to help get more people from across town closer to the optimal viewing area for the event. Haley replied that they did talk with Mountain Lion bus line, but they did not have the staffing capacity to support extended hours.

Chair Thomas expressed concern about the staff assisting on McMillan Mesa and Buffalo Park not appearing to look like official event support staff. Haley shared that all staff and volunteers assisting would have reflective vests and would each be familiar with the space and be able to educate event visitors on Leave No Trace principles.

There were no additional commission or public comments on the topic of the Fourth of July Drone Show.

B. Observatory Mesa Natural Area Renaming Consideration

Robert Wallace, Open Space Supervisor, opened the topic for the commission to discuss renaming suggestions for Observatory Mesa, including what the implications or results of that name change could mean. Chair Thomas added that a result of the name change could include increased tourism and time and resources to update the name on signage and published materials.

Commissioners engaged in a lively back and forth discussion on the topic of renaming Observatory Mesa. It was acknowledged that Picture Canyon Natural and Cultural Preserve has similar founding documents as Observatory Mesa and that should be taken into consideration for the renaming. Commissioner White shared his preference for including "Preserve" in the name (Observatory Mesa Preserve), as it would keep consistency with Picture Canyon's name. Commissioners were reminded by Mr. Wallace that the names of the city's regional preserves do not determine how the open space properties are managed.

Commissioner Kluwin mentioned that the Observatory Mesa name did not communicate that it was a City of Flagstaff regional preserve within the boundaries of the City of Flagstaff. Commissioner Joyce expanded on this, sharing that other cities have different names for pieces of land, such as Community Forest or Demonstration Forest. Commissioner Joyce asked her fellow commissioners to consider consulting with local indigenous peoples to get their input on this name change. Mr. Wallace informed the commission that this name change does not need to go through City Council and that renaming this property could help set it apart from Forest Service land and other private properties.

It was requested that Open Space staff coordinate with Rose Toehe, Indigenous Affairs Administrator for the City of Flagstaff, as a starting point for indigenous consultation on the renaming of Observatory Mesa. Mr. Wallace added that by the next meeting he would have alternative name options to present.

Chair Thomas requested that the Observatory Mesa renaming be added as a future agenda item. There was no public comment.

C. Open Spaces Commission Accomplishments & Priorities

Robert Wallace shared different topic items on Open Space accomplishments and projects that the commission could request to be expanded upon as future agenda topics.

- Observatory Mesa right-of-way easement, providing access from highway 180 to private property on the east side of Observatory Mesa Natural Area, section 6.
- Don Weaver Trail realignment Open Spaces Commission's recommendation.
- Community naming memorial, approval for the Jack Welch Memorial Bridge.
- Community beautification grant approval for the artwork on the Jack Welch Memorial Bridge.
- Community Beautification grant approval for landscaping native plants near Izabel Street and the Segó Lily Trail.
- Regional Plan comments submitted by the Open Spaces Commission.
- Grants and conservation easements report completion
- Ongoing projects for new signage along McMillian Mesa and new fencing along the boundary of Picture Canyon.
- Insight into future focus areas, including the Regional Plan, LASS CAP input, and the Forest Resource Pilot Program Zoning Code Text Amendment.

Concluding the topic with future priorities and agenda items, Mr. Wallace shared with the commission that LASS CAP input for Framing Our Future Together was looking for feedback on the Code Concepts report.

The commission returned to the discussion on the need for an Open Space Master Plan. Rebecca Sayers, PROSE Director, provided insight that the Open Space Master Plan, it would be a part of a PROSE Master Plan. This would involve going through a procurement process and would take time. Once they had a contractor in place, the Open Space Commission would likely become a focus group for the contractor, and the Commission would be encouraged to get the community to participate through public meetings, feedback and surveys. Chair Thomas remarked, speaking on behalf of the commission, that they fully support the PROSE staff working on getting this procurement project moving this year.

7. Reports and Updates

A. Council Representative Report, Council Representative David Spence

Councilmember David Spence did not have anything specific to share with the commission, but he did mention that he has been sharing with the City Council the status of various Open Space projects.

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

Commissioner Norton shared with the commission details on an upcoming community meeting for a conditional use permit for a golf course and related facilities in the 125-acre parcel of land south of I-40 near the Pine Canyon development. The meeting will be held via Zoom on July 2, 2025 at 5:30 PM. Anyone in the community can listen, learn, and provide feedback.

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

Sylvia Struss, Open Space Coordinator, shared an update with the commission on current Open Space projects.

- Staff drafted a FUTS connection proposal between Route 66 and Picture Canyon.
- Applied for a \$170,000 grant with the Tohono O'Odham Nation.
- Addressed abandoned campsites and trash dumps on McMillian Mesa.
- Worked on a beautification grant at the bottom of the Sego Lilly Trail, adding riprap rock to reduce erosion.
- Ongoing work addressing the illegal mountain biking trails that have been created around Observatory Mesa past the Railroad Springs neighborhood.

Sylvia also shared upcoming Open Space events.

1. Wednesday Weed Pulls, recurring on select Wednesdays through September 3, 2025.
2. Bug Out event at Frances Short Pond on June 28, 2025 from 10 AM to 12 PM.

D. PROSE Monthly Newsletter

The May 2025 newsletter was shared. No comments or feedback was received from commissioners.

8. Informational Items To and From Commissioners and Staff

There were no additional informational items from Commissioners or Staff.

9. Potential Future Agenda Items

Chair Thomas referenced discussions from earlier in the meeting, reiterating that they would add the Observatory Mesa renaming consideration into next month's agenda.

10. Adjournment

Commissioner White motioned to adjourn. The meeting ended at 6:07 PM.

Motion by Jacqueline Thomas, Seconded by Nat White