

MINUTES

OPEN SPACE COMMISSION
MONDAY
MAY 12, 2025

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

1. **Call to Order:** Co-Chair Fox called the May 12, 2025 Open Spaces Commission meeting to order at 4:03 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
Commissioner Mary Norton (P&Z Liaison)	Commissioner Nat White
Commissioner William Kluwin	Councilmember Representative: David Spence

Others present: Ashlee Fliney, Martin Ince, Lori Reynolds, Sylvia Struss, and Robert Wallace

3. **Land Acknowledgment:** Co-Chair Fox read the land acknowledgment.

4. **Approval of April 28, 2025 Minutes:** Commissioner Wallen motioned to approve the April 28, 2025 minutes. Commissioner Thomas seconded and all voted in favor.

5. **Public Comment:** Co-Chair Fox called for public comment on any items not on the agenda. There were no comments or requests.

6. **Business Items**

A. Open Space Education Program Update:

Ashlee Fliney, Open Space Education Coordinator, provided an information update on Open Space programming for the 2024-2025 school year and future objectives. Ms. Fliney began by giving a brief background on her personal work experience in the area of outdoor leadership and STEM, then she began her PowerPoint presentation on education programs for the Open Spaces program.

The presentation highlighted how their education program has served over 2800 individuals, including over 1500 youths, in the 2024-2025 school year. Programming included 50 field trips, 40 of which were to Flagstaff Open Spaces, 10 classroom visits, staffing 12 educational booths at various community-specific events, and leading 17 guided hikes for participants of all ages. Those school-based programs focused on underserved kids within the Flagstaff community to give them a hands-on experience visiting Open Space lands in Flagstaff. Ms. Fliney also noted that visiting school programs from outside of Flagstaff were interested in incorporating Flagstaff's Open Spaces into their curriculum. She expanded on the importance of Open Spaces staff and volunteers showing up at community events, helping increase the program's visibility in the community, and sharing with community members what is available and free to them.

Looking ahead to future plans for Open Spaces, Ms. Fliney informed the commission that she would be assisting with various summer camps and youth programming in Northern Arizona and would be preparing lessons for the 2025-2026 school year for local schools. Those lesson plans and educational resources can be found at www.necna.org. Ms. Fliney completed her presentation by sharing why outdoor education in Flagstaff's open spaces was so critical. Aside from the importance of collaborative opportunities that outdoor education programs provide for the local community and school-age children, Ms. Fliney emphasized that the programs and outreach efforts that Open Spaces provides can be inspiring to community members and possibly provide a positive impact on them that they will feel ownership of the land and seek to become stewards or even pursue an

education or career based in STEM.

Commissioner Fox asked if there were any demographics or statistics on the participants in Open Space programming. Ms. Fliney replied that he could reference the demographics of the various schools participating in outdoor education programming with the Open Space team.

Commissioner Fox followed up with a comment on partnerships, sharing that Camp Colton and Diablo Trust could make for good partners, and he suggested how exercises in mindfulness could be something that was integrated into Open Space programming. Mr. Fox concluded his comments by asking what the Commission could do to help Open Spaces, to which Ms. Fliney directed the question to Robert Wallace and Sylvia Struss. Ms. Struss answered that Open Spaces could use additional volunteers to help manage the larger groups of kids on field trips.

Commissioner Molly Joyce asked if they were using any kind of community volunteer database to reach people. Ms. Fliney responded that they do have a calendar available via the city website at: <https://volunteer.flagstaffaz.gov/Calendar>.

Councilmember David Spence mentioned that Camp Colton aspires to get all Flagstaff sixth graders to their camp, and inquired if Open Spaces had a similar goal. Ms. Fliney responded that Open Spaces did have a similar goal, where they were focused on developing and implementing programming for third, seventh, and tenth-graders.

Commissioner Nat White commented that the most important thing is creating pride and ownership in the open spaces. Emphasizing that open spaces are not just something that people can use, but need to be appreciated and protected as Flagstaff grows.

Commissioner Molly Joyce asked about funding for programs and supplies and wanted to know if there was anything else that could be done to support programming. Robert Wallace responded that Ms. Fliney's position is only funded for two years via the Heritage Fund grant, and they were at capacity for reapplying prior to utilizing that fund, Ms. Fliney's position had been volunteer-based through Serve America (AmeriCorps), but they had also hit capacity with how many times they could apply to that program. Currently, Ms. Fliney's position is funded through August 2026, and staff are in the process of looking to secure future funding.

Commissioner Mary Norton asked if they had reached out to any of the local charter schools to which Ms. Fliney replied that their current focus has been on underprivileged schools first. Reaching charter schools would come afterwards.

B. Flagstaff Urban Trail System Update:

Transportation Planner Senior Lead, Martin Ince provided a presentation on the Flagstaff Urban Trail System (FUTS). Mr. Ince began his presentation by providing context on his line of work for the city, how he takes care of things related to walking and biking, including the FUTS trail. In his presentation, Mr. Ince shared background information on FUTS development and how it intermingles with the City of Flagstaff and Open Spaces. He explained that the trail offered users varying experiences, ranging from busy city streets to quiet woods, providing a community connection from natural areas to metro areas. Transportation and recreation are what make FUTS successful. Mr. Ince further noted that of the current 59 miles of existing trail, there are upwards of 75 additional planned miles to be constructed or improved upon in the future.

During his presentation, an image of the proposed regional FUTS plan map was displayed. There were several additional questions from commissioners surrounding what was on the map. Commissioner Mary Norton asked for confirmation that the map being shown was the most current proposed map. Mr. Ince confirmed that the map being shown was current. Commissioner Nat White commented that the east side of the map lacked urban trails and questioned why that was. Mr. Ince responded that the east side area, Country Club, pre-dates FUTS trail development. Commissioner Molly Joyce also noted the lack of FUTS trails in the densely populated Linda Vista area. Mr. Ince replied that Sunnyside, just south of Linda Vista, also lacked FUTS trails, but that Sunnyside had

connector trail options leading from McMillian Mesa. He added that because there was no FUTS trail system through those neighborhoods, they could work on strengthening the sidewalks and walkways.

Continuing with his presentation, Mr. Ince spoke about how they are introducing more separation of bike lanes from vehicular traffic, and that even with bikeways along city roads that there was still use and continued need for the FUTS trail system. This information answered an earlier comment from Commissioner Nat White, who worried that FUTS may become too transportation-leaning and less geared towards recreational use.

Commissioner Molly Joyce brought up the integration of East Butler Avenue and the Little America hotel area, explaining that for modern bike routes, that area was not biker-friendly. Mr. Ince responded that central Butler Avenue would be redone, but that some areas were missing a bike lane, and parts of Butler intersect with the I-40 interchange, making it especially difficult to build a buffer between bikes and traffic.

Commissioner William Kluwin asked Mr. Ince who paid for FUTS maintenance. He replied that Flagstaff's PROSE and the BBB tax help provide funding that is earmarked specifically to support FUTS maintenance. Mr. Ince added that it is more expensive to build FUTS trails now than in previous years. He shared that Flagstaff's Regional Plans have always included a map that depicted FUTS trails. This is the source of the staff's ability to get FUTS implemented.

Commissioner Mary Norton directed her question to Robert Wallace, asking if the Regional Plan map was consistent with the Open Space map and plan. Mr. Wallace responded that the regional map relied on the transportation plan but that Open Spaces was looking into creating a master plan that would be more specific and reflect both FUTS and Open Spaces. Mr. Ince added that they are also seeking to add greenways along the trail in urban areas to provide a better experience for FUTS users.

Commissioner Norton commented again on the map that FUTS was largely left to the outer limits of the city, and that not as much of the trail system connected through the middle; little delineation going through the larger parcels of land. Commissioner Molly Joyce noted that accessibility and equal access to the FUTS trail could also impact sustainability plans. Mr. Ince replied that some FUTS trails are contingent on neighborhoods completing development. He also discussed the importance of planning in a manner that requires considering detention basins, drainages, and utility easements, for trails or open space that could benefit the neighborhood.

Completing his presentation, Mr. Ince shared that they were seeking to protect access points from city lands to the surrounding forest in present and future neighborhoods, and even communities beyond Flagstaff's city limits, such as Bellemont and Doney Park.

Commissioner Chair Jaqueline Thomas asked Mr. Ince how the commission could help FUTS. Mr. Ince responded that it began with Robert (Wallace) and Sylvia (Struss); getting Open Spaces and the Transportation division working together, planning and sharing information. Mr. Wallace added that he plans to include Mr. Ince in the Open Space master plan development.

7. Reports and Updates

A. Council Representative Report:

Councilmember Spence informed the commission that he was getting a better understanding of what Open Space does. He shared that he provided the city council with an update on the Don Weaver trail alignment and on the Observatory Mesa Trail Plan, letting the commission know that the council would be considering the commission's recommendations at the upcoming meeting on May 13, 2025. Mr. Spence's final item to share was his sighting of an albino mule deer on McMillan Mesa.

B. Planning and Zoning Commission Representative Report:

Commissioner Mary Norton shared that things had been very busy lately. The next planning and zoning meeting will be next Wednesday (May 21, 2025). She shared that the regional plan, Chapter 8 was undergoing major rewrites, removing duplications found in goals and policies. She noted that there was a lot of shifting of things that the Open Spaces commission had previously read and commented on. The commission should receive an opportunity to review it again, but the opportunity may not look the same as before. Ms. Norton suggested that if commissioners wish to provide additional comments on the plan, they do so as individuals, especially on the FUTS maps and trail delineations sections, keeping in mind that Open Space does not have a master plan completed yet. Commissioner Norton also shared with the commission concerns on the JW Powell corridor being identified as a suburban center, including mixed use. She noted that the Open Spaces commission could be losing influence as the regional plan gets closer to being approved. Ms. Norton concluded her report by reiterating that the Open Spaces Commission needed to review the regional plan again when it is released. Robert Wallace added that the JW Powell open space corridor (Hoffman Tank Corridor), from the I-40 wetlands to the Flagstaff loop trail, nearby Fisher Point, is a top priority for Open Space. He added that staff are working to determine if they can purchase property or an easement with remaining 2004 bond funds.

C. Open Space Management Report:

Open Space staff did not have any further information to share other than referencing Flagstaff's volunteer website (<https://volunteer.flagstaffaz.gov/>) and informing the commission that the newest PROSE monthly newsletter has been released.

D. PROSE Monthly Newsletter

8. Informational Items To and From Commissioners and Staff

Commissioner Fox asked for clarity on the date for the next Open Spaces commission meeting. Robert Wallace confirmed that the commission would be returning to a meeting date of the fourth Monday of each month, the next meeting being on June 23, 2025.

9. Potential Future Agenda Items

Robert Wallace added the review of the future regional plan to the agenda in preparation for the August meeting. Commissioner Fox requested that an update on the Hidden Hollow Access be given at the Commission's next meeting.

10. Adjournment

Commissioner Fox motioned to adjourn. The meeting ended at 6:10 PM.