

Pima County Conservation Acquisition Commission Meeting

MEETING MINUTES

**Pima County Parks and Recreation
3500 W. River Road
Thursday, March 5, 2015
2:00 p.m.**

MOTIONS

MOTION: Commissioner Gardner moved, seconded by Commissioner Pettis to approve the August 21, 2014 meeting summary. Motion approved 8-0 (Commissioners Hare, Marian, and Marshall were absent).

MOTION: Commissioner Johnson moved, seconded by Commissioner Sheridan to accept the conservation portion of the Semi-Annual 2004 Bond Program report for Fiscal Year 2014/2015. Motion approved 9-0 (Commissioners Marian and Marshall were absent).

MOTION: Commissioner Sheridan moved, seconded by Commissioner Corey to approve a bond ordinance amendment to the 2004 bond ordinance for project OS1.19 Santa Cruz River Open Space, as requested by the Town of Sahuarita. Motion approved 9-0 (Commissioners Marian and Marshall were absent).

SUMMARY OF MEETING

1. Roll Call

The Commission meeting began at 2:07 p.m.

Chairman Roe introduced the newly appointed District 1 representative, Chris Laria.

Commissioners Present

Les Corey
Helen Gardner
Trevor Hare (arrived 2:11 p.m.)
Jan Johnson, Vice-Chair
Chris Laria
Chuck Pettis
Tim Prouty
Bill Roe, Chairman
Tom Sheridan

Commissioners Absent

James Marian
Rob Marshall

2. Approval of the August 21, 2014 Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Commissioner Gardner moved, seconded by Commissioner Pettis to approve the August 21, 2014 meeting summary. Motion approved 8-0 (Commissioners Hare, Marian, and Marshall were absent).

3. Update on 2004 Bond Program Expenditures

Nicole Fyffe reported that Jurisdictional open space is the only category with remaining funds. These funds are the \$1.5 million earmarked for the Town of Sahuarita for land purchases along the Santa Cruz River, which will be discussed during the bond ordinance amendment item on the agenda, along with \$500,000 remaining to partially fund the second payment for Painted Hills.

(Commissioner Hare arrived).

4. Accept the Semi-Annual 2004 Bond Program Report

Nicole Fyffe briefly summarized the conservation portion of the Semi-Annual report materials and indicated that since the last report to the Commission in August 2014, the County purchased the 286-acre Painted Hills property. Staff recommended the Commission accept the conservation portion of the Semi-Annual report for Fiscal Year 2014/2015.

MOTION: Commissioner Johnson moved, seconded by Commissioner Sheridan to accept the conservation portion of the Semi-Annual 2004 Bond Program report for Fiscal Year 2014/2015. Motion approved 9-0 (Commissioners Marian and Marshall were absent).

5. Proposed Amendment to 2004 Bond Ordinance to Project OS1.19 Santa Cruz River Open Space – Town of Sahuarita

Nicole Fyffe provided an overview of the bond ordinance amendment process and the number of public meetings available for the public to provide input on any amendment. Ms. Fyffe explained that the discussions over the possible acquisition of the Robson property in Sahuarita were not successful. In 2014, the County acquired at public auction 290 acres of State Trust land for \$1.1 million to buffer the Green Valley Wastewater Reclamation Facility using County Wastewater revenues. This acreage is located along the Santa Cruz River, will remain primarily as natural open space, and would provide a location for the Anza Trail. The Town of Sahuarita felt that this acquisition met the intent of the open space bond program, and requested that the bond funds be reverted back to the County to pursue other eligible acquisitions outside of the Town. The Town expressed interest in locating a trailhead on the County's buffer land, which can be accommodated. If the Commission approves the amendment, it would then need to be approved by the Bond Advisory Committee (BAC), which will hear this item at their March 13 public meeting, followed by the Board of Supervisors approving this amendment at a public meeting.

MOTION: Commissioner Sheridan moved, seconded by Commissioner Corey to approve a bond ordinance amendment to the 2004 bond ordinance for project OS1.19 Santa Cruz River Open Space, as requested by the Town of Sahuarita. Motion approved 9-0 (Commissioners Marian and Marshall were absent).

6. Planning for Possible 2015 Bond Election

A. Update on the Pima County Bond Advisory Committee deliberations concerning a possible 2015 bond election.

Before the discussion, Chairman Roe mentioned the high quality of the Anza Trail exhibit at Picacho Peak State Park and Commissioner Gardner also mentioned that Heritage Days are currently scheduled at Canoa Ranch, and the Anza Trail exhibit at that location.

Carolyn Campbell, Vice-Chair of the BAC, gave a brief overview of the work the BAC has done to arrive at a proposed bond package for the Board of Supervisors to consider. As of January 23, 2015, the BAC reduced \$1 billion worth of bond project proposals to \$887 million. The Chairman, Vice-Chair and the County Administrator met to try and reduce it further to an amount closer to \$650 million. The open space project was slated for \$120 million, and after much debate was reduced to \$95 million. The FLAP project was reduced from \$10 million to \$5 million, and the Altar Valley Watershed Restoration Project was reduced from \$1.5 million to \$500,000. At the last BAC meeting, the only action taken was to approve a cap of \$640 million. Jurisdictions were also asked to provide input and most groups and jurisdictions had not replied with anything further. The City of Tucson did come back with \$15 million of requests. The next BAC meeting is scheduled for March 13, 2015, where final deliberations should occur. Ms. Campbell noted that their job is to now finalize a package to send to the Board of Supervisors.

The Commission asked about the County's federal permit and whether the reduction in open space funds posed an issue. Nicole Fyffe responded that the County was deficient in habitat for Pima pineapple cactus and Tumamoc globeberry, but that the funding recommended will be sufficient to address those needs. Carolyn Campbell explained that the Fish and Wildlife Service has to ultimately decide, and that they understand the importance of connectivity, and that the County cannot wait very long on certain pieces of land.

The Commission asked about the Marley options, to which Nicole Fyffe responded that they would have to be renegotiated since they expire at the end of the year.

The Commission also asked about how the ballot questions are decided, to which Nicole Fyffe responded that the projects were organized by possible ballot questions. This can change and the grouping of projects can be done in different ways.

The Commission asked what the status of the County's Multi-Species Conservation Plan and what is still needed for it. Nicole responded that the County could potentially receive the permit by the end of the summer and Sherry Ruther added that the Fish and Wildlife Service needs to complete the biological opinion.

The Commission asked if we could repurpose the funds proposed for the open space program for management purposes. Kerry Baldwin indicated that our bonds would not be structured that way and our attorneys have not indicated we can.

The Commission asked what the timeline would be for the calling of a bond election, to which Ms. Fyffe responded that if the BAC concluded their work at the March 13, 2015 meeting, the recommended package would perhaps go to the Board in April or May for them to call the election. At this same meeting, the Board would have to approve the ballot questions and approve a filing period for and against arguments. Staff will be drafting the implementation plan to submit to the Board for approval prior to early voting.

- B. Item continued from last Commission meeting: The Northern Altar Valley properties and Double XX Ranch property – keep as Community Open Space or move to Habitat Protection Priorities category?

Commissioner Marshall was to provide the update, but was not able to attend the meeting. It was agreed that the Commission can meet in the summer to discuss this and the item was postponed.

7. General Updates

- A. Proposed Development Activities on Bond Parcels: Sherry Ruther indicated there was very little activity and indicated there were no new actions to report.
- B. Successfully acquired the Tucson Mountain Park State Trust land properties: Diana Durazo reported that the Trails End and Robles Pass parcels, totaling 100 acres and identified as State API lands adjacent to Tucson Mountain Park, were successfully acquired by the County at public auction from the State Land Department for \$1.175 million, with assistance with matching funds from Arizona State Parks awarded to the County. The 2014 State Parks matching grant cycle was the last, as the funds for this program have been expended. Ms. Durazo noted that since 2008, the County has been able to acquire 2,700 acres of API State Trust land at public auction with matching grants from Arizona State Parks totaling \$6.5 million.
- C. Catalina/Tortolita Wildlife Corridor: The wildlife bridge over Oracle Road is under construction.
- D. Avra Valley-Interstate 10 Tucson-Tortolita Mountain Wildlife Corridor: No update.
- E. Marley Ranch: The County received a Pima pineapple cactus survey report which was favorable, and staff are reviewing possible Section 6 grant opportunities.
- F. Recent offers to sell to the County: The County recently received a donation near the Sweetwater Preserve and a conservation easement over 250 acres of the Agua Verde Creek property owned by Mr. Mumford. The County is in the process of receiving a donation of another conservation easement from the Rincon Institute.
- G. Rosemont Mine: The Forest Service will be meeting to discuss the supplemental information next week. The County will appeal the water quality permit.
- H. SunZia Transmission Line Project: On January 25, 2015, Secretary Jewell issued the Record of Decision approving SunZia's right-of-way over federal lands. They will still need to continue to work with State and local agencies for all other compliance and permitting requirements. In-service is projected to be by 2020.
- I. Pima County Multi Species Conservation Plan Update: Discussed earlier.

7. Next Commission Meeting

The Commission's next oversight meeting will be in August or September 2015. It is possible the Commission will meet before then to review bond implementation ordinance language for the open space portion of a 2015 bond issue, as well as the item deferred at this meeting.

8. Call to the Public

Kerry Baldwin said that Don Martin and Joe Goff, both ranch managers for County ranches, recently passed away. The families have indicated their interest in continuing the ranching operations and are currently in negotiations with the County over Bar V Ranch and Six Bar Ranch, respectively. Mr. Baldwin also indicated that the Frick property near Tucson Mountain Park was sold and under new ownership.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

DRAFT