

**Pima County Conservation Acquisition Commission Meeting**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Sweetwater Preserve Trailhead  
4001 North Tortolita Road  
Thursday, March 3, 2016  
2:00 p.m.**

**MOTIONS**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Pettis moved, seconded by Commissioner Marian to approve the August 6, 2015 meeting summary. Motion approved 10-0 (Commissioner Sheridan was absent).

**MOTION:** Commissioner Prouty moved, seconded by Commissioner Gardner to accept the Semi-Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2015/2016. Motion approved 10-0 (Commissioner Sheridan was absent).

**SUMMARY OF MEETING**

1. Roll Call  
The Commission meeting began at 2:05 p.m.

Commissioners Present

Les Corey  
Helen Gardner  
Trevor Hare  
Jan Johnson, Vice-Chair  
Chris Laria  
James Marian  
Rob Marshall  
Chuck Pettis  
Tim Prouty  
Bill Roe, Chair

Commissioners Absent

Tom Sheridan

The Chair gave a brief history of the Conservation Acquisition Commission and their role in acquiring thousands of acres for conservation. Nine of the original Commissioners are still serving today.

Supervisors Bronson, Carroll and Elias each said a few words and thanked the Commission for their years of service, the legacy they have created, and that they are now also stewards and advocates of the lands acquired. The County Administrator also thanked the Commission and said the County has been conserving land for the past 40 years. Mr. Huckelberry said that at some point, another bond issue will be held, and the Commission's work will continue.

2. Approval of the August 6, 2015 Meeting Minutes

**MOTION:** Commissioner Pettis moved, seconded by Commissioner Marian to approve the August 6, 2015 meeting summary. Motion approved 10-0 (Commissioner Sheridan was absent).

3. Update on 2004 Bond Program Expenditures

Nicole Fyffe reported that the final \$1.5 million in 2004 bond funds was spent in September for the Painted Hills property. The down payment and second payment were paid using bond payments, with the anticipated remaining payments being funded through the Starr Pass Enhancement Fund. Ms. Fyffe noted that the 700-acre Sweetwater property we were meeting on was one of the first properties acquired in 2004.

The Commission commented on the many mountain bikers using the property during the meeting and discussed that this site is one of the most popular sites with all sorts of users enjoying the property.

4. Accept the Semi-Annual 2004 bond Program Report

Nicole Fyffe reported that the bond program update for open space shows it as complete. The County purchased 53 properties, conserving 47,000 acres of land in fee and 127,000 acres of State grazing leases and Federal grazing permits. As stated before, the final \$1.5 million was spent in September on the Painted Hills property. This is also the final report the Commission will need to accept as all of the bond funds have been expended.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Prouty moved, seconded by Commissioner Gardner to accept the Semi-Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2015/2016. Motion approved 10-0 (Commissioner Sheridan was absent).

5. Post 2015 Bond Election Update

The County Administrator briefly discussed some of the reasons given for why the bond election did not pass, including opposition to a tax hike. Mr. Huckelberry said that a bond package of \$400 million would not have required any tax increase. Regarding debt, Mr. Huckelberry reiterated the difference in Pima County's debt when compared with other counties, with the glaring difference being that the majority of our debt, or \$700 million, relates to the County-operated sewer system and no other County operates a sewer system. The Highway User Revenue Fund (HURF) bond debt is paid back using our share of gas tax monies, which the State has been decreasing over the years, resulting in our decreased HURF capacity. Our General Obligation debt is really about \$350 million, with a repayment schedule of \$60 million a year. In five years, the County will essentially be debt free.

Commissioner Johnson asked whether the County was receiving our share of HURF funds from Phoenix, to which Mr. Huckelberry responded that Pima County has the largest unincorporated population of all counties, yet Maricopa receives four times the HURF revenues.

6. General Updates

- A. Proposed Development Activities on Bond Parcels: Sherry Ruther provided a detailed breakdown of proposed development activity on eligible bond properties and their status over the years of the program. Ms. Ruther reported that there were 28 individual projects totaling 6,900 acres, and that in the end the County was able to acquire half of that acreage rather than it being developed. Of these 28 projects, four are current rezoning projects in the northwest that resulted in set-asides for the Conservation Lands System (CLS), some were withdrawn, denied or closed due to inactivity, and nine proceeded and moved forward with development.

The Commission complimented the format and comprehensive data provided, and thanked staff for their due diligence in implementing the CLS.

- B. Catalina/Tortolita Wildlife Corridor: Carolyn Campbell reported that the underpass and wildlife overpass were both completed and just seeded, with a ribbon cutting to be organized. Right of way across the Treehouse property, south of the bridge was exchanged with the church in return for the church reducing their driveway next to the bridge by one-lane of traffic, and seeding it for a vegetation screen for wildlife. There will be 17 wildlife cameras, with 40 camera volunteers. There will be video cameras and still photo cameras on the wildlife bridge. The fencing north and south along Oracle Road is almost completed.
- C. Avra Valley-Interstate 10 Tucson-Tortolita Mountain Wildlife Corridor: No update.
- D. Marley Ranch: Nicole Fyffe reported that the County was not able to exercise the options and they were allowed to expire. Staff is exploring grant opportunities for funding.
- E. Recent offers to sell to the County: Kerry Baldwin has been in discussions with the BLM and AZGFD regarding a parcel that is currently being offered for sale that would provide access to the Coyote Mountain Wilderness in Altar Valley. Funding options for this parcel are being discussed.

The Frick property near Tucson Mountain Park has also recently been offered for sale. These parcels link the County's Jacobs Trust parcels with Tucson Mountain Park. The County is in discussions with the owners, and the funding source would be the Starr Pass Enhancement funds.

- F. Rosemont Mine: Julia Fonseca reported that Rosemont does not have all of their permits yet. The biological opinion is still not complete. At this time, Federal mitigation is very inadequate.
- G. SunZia Transmission Line Project: Diana Durazo reported that on February 8, 2016, the AZ Corporation Commission issued a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility on a 3-2 vote. SunZia now has federal and state approvals. The next step is for them to appear before the New Mexico Public Regulatory Commission. They project that their first line will be in operation by 2021.

H. Pima County Multi Species Conservation Plan Update: Julia Fonseca indicated that the County is very close to receiving approval from the Fish and Wildlife Service for its Section 10 Permit. It has to be noticed in the Federal Register. An implementing agreement would need to be approved and would serve as the Board's commitment to manager the permit. The lands acquired would be managed for conservation in perpetuity for the permit. In fee holdings will have prescriptive conservation easements placed over them shortly after the permit is approved to create the mitigation bank. Moving forward, the Science Technical Advisory Team will be reconstituted to oversee its implementation.

7. Words of Gratitude to Commission Members (Performed after Item 8)

Supervisors Carroll, Bronson and the County Administrator presented Commissioner with posters each showing several of the properties they helped to acquire, and commemorating their years of service.

Commissioners thanked all County staff, particularly those that staffed the Commission through the years. They also recognized Carolyn Campbell and Diana Freshwater as key partners and collaborators through the years.

8. The Making of Tucson Mountain Park and Saguaro National Park

Nancy Laney, Associate Director of the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum, gave an excerpt of the presentation she provided to the Audubon Society on the history of Saguaro National Park and the creation of Tucson Mountain Park in 1929.

9. Future Meetings of the Commission

No future meetings are planned at this time. It was also noted that most of the Commissioners appointments do not expire until 2020. If and when another meeting is necessary, the Commissioners and public will be notified.

10. Call to the Public

No speakers.

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:22 p.m.