

Pima County Conservation Acquisition Commission Meeting

MEETING MINUTES

**Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Building
3500 West River Road
Thursday, September 12, 2013
2:00 p.m.**

MOTIONS

MOTION: Commissioner Marian moved, seconded by Commissioner Hare to approve the February 28, 2013 meeting minutes. Motion approved 8-0 (Commissioner Black abstained; Commissioners Corey and Marshall were absent).

MOTION: Commissioner Gardner moved, seconded by Commissioner Johnson to accept the End of Year bond update report for fiscal year 2012/2013. Motion approved 8-0 (Commissioner Black abstained; Commissioners Corey and Marshall were absent).

MOTION: Commissioner Prouty moved, seconded by Commissioner Gardner to recommend that the Bond Advisory Committee keep the bond allocation for Habitat Protection Priorities at \$110 million. Motion approved 8-0 (Commissioner Black abstained; Commissioners Corey and Marshall were absent).

SUMMARY OF MEETING

1. Roll Call

The Commission meeting began at 2:05 p.m.

The Chairman welcomed Robert Black who replaced Corey Smith as the Supervisorial District 1 appointee to the Commission.

Commissioners Present

Robert Black
Helen Gardner
Trevor Hare
Jan Johnson, Vice-Chair
James Marian
Chuck Pettis
Tim Prouty
Bill Roe, Chairman
Tom Sheridan

Commissioners Absent

Les Corey
Rob Marshall

2. Executive Session

None.

3. Approval of the February 28, 2013 Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Commissioner Marian moved, seconded by Commissioner Hare to approve the February 28, 2013 meeting minutes. Motion approved 8-0 (Commissioner Black abstained; Commissioners Corey and Marshall were absent).

4. Update on 2004 Conservation Bond Program Expenditures

Nicole Fyffe gave a brief overview of the 2004 Conservation Bond Program, which was approved by voters for \$164 million. Ms. Fyffe reported that only \$5 million remain under the Jurisdictional Open Space category, with \$1.5 million remaining for the Town Sahuarita and \$4.5 million remaining for the City of Tucson. The City of Tucson has asked that those funds be earmarked for the Painted Hills property, and the Town of Sahuarita's funds will be used towards the purchase of 310 acres of State Trust land along the Santa Cruz River. The due diligence has been completed for the State Trust land in Sahuarita, and it is anticipated that an auction can be held within six months.

Commissioner Hare asked whether the County can hold federal grazing permits, to which Kerry Baldwin responded that the County can and does hold federal BLM grazing permits, but not Forest Service grazing permits.

5. Accept the 2004 End of Year Bond Program Report

Twice a year the Commission is tasked with reviewing and accepting the bond program update reports. Nicole Fyffe presented the End of Year report and map depicting all projects. Materials are available online and on cd. The Commission received the brochure and the open space portion of the report for review and approval.

MOTION: Commissioner Gardner moved, seconded by Commissioner Johnson to accept the End of Year bond update report for fiscal year 2012/2013. Motion approved 8-0 (Commissioner Black abstained; Commissioners Corey and Marshall were absent).

6. Future Pima County Bond Election Planning

Nicole Fyffe provided a brief overview of the Bond Advisory Committee's planning efforts for a future bond election which began in 2006. In 2007, the CAC recommended an allocation of \$285 million to the Bond Advisory Committee (BAC) for project OS2 Habitat Protection Priorities (HPP). By 2010, the BAC had tentatively approved 83 projects totaling \$649.8 million, of which \$110 million was tentatively allocated to OS2. Due to the delay in holding a bond election, the Committee requested that the tentatively approved projects be reviewed for any necessary updates and to consider any new project proposals. To date, the County has received over 80 new proposals and the overall total is now about \$1.2 billion in project requests. None of the new proposals affect the CAC. The County has determined that a bond package of \$550 million is possible. The County Administrator has recommended a reduction in funding for project OS2 HPP from \$110 million to \$96 million. The reduction is due to the amendments to the Marley Ranch option agreements that decreased the future purchase prices.

The BAC asked that a public survey be distributed for input on new bond project proposals. The survey was conducted and the County received 17,000 responses. There were three sections to the survey: vote on project type categories, specific

individual projects and a section for open-ended comments. Of the 17,000 respondents, 4,000 submitted open ended comments. There were some issues that became obvious, such as the topic of transportation receiving 800 comments, but only two actual transportation projects are being proposed to the BAC. The County Administrator may propose a \$50 million project for transportation issues based on the overwhelming survey responses. The County Administrator will recommend to the BAC that the bond election be postponed until 2015, citing economic conditions and other factors.

Carolyn Campbell addressed the Commission as the Executive Director of the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection. Ms. Campbell recommended to the CAC that the Commission submit a recommendation to the BAC asking them not to reduce the tentatively approved allocations to open space, indicating that the reduction is based on one property, the Marley Ranch, and that the allocation should be about the overall program.

Commissioner Prouty asked how much more land is needed to be able to complete the County's Multi-species Conservation Plan (MSCP) and receive the federal permit, to which Ms. Fyffe responded that the County needs to continue to acquire land to keep the ratio balanced between conservation and development, and that the \$110 million would just acquire another portion of what would be needed.

Commissioner Hare commented that there is still a need for mitigation lands in the Cienega Creek watershed, especially if Rosemont develops and degrades surrounding lands, since the Service can take away credits from the County if our mitigation lands are degraded by Rosemont's activities, and suggested that the allocation should be increased by another \$20 to \$30 million in case Rosemont's lands become available for sale. (Note that after the meeting it was confirmed that the Service will not take credits away from Pima County as a result of another federally permitted project like Rosemont Mine).

Kerry Baldwin responded that Marley Ranch is key, the life of the first phase of the MSCP federal permit is for 30 years, and that the permit can be issued with what we have now. The first phase of the Marley Ranch acquisition did not include State grazing leases. Later phases do include the leases. If the State Land Department revokes our State grazing leases, those credits would be lost.

Commissioner Sheridan commented that the MSCP was never the sole major goal behind the open space acquisition program. The Conservation Lands System was the guiding principle and agreed with an increase in bond funding or to keep the \$110 million allocation at the very least.

Commissioner Gardner expressed concern over supporting any reduction in funding for Habitat Protection Priorities and felt it was premature at this point.

Commissioner Black expressed concern as a taxpayer and asked if the County Administrator was recommending cutting funding in other areas as well, and whether his recommendation is based on budget constraints.

MOTION: Commissioner Prouty moved, seconded by Commissioner Gardner to recommend that the Bond Advisory Committee keep the bond allocation for Habitat

Protection Priorities at \$110 million. Motion approved 8-0 (Commissioner Black abstained; Commissioners Corey and Marshall were absent).

Carolyn Campbell recommended that the CAC also submit a written letter to the BAC and send a representative to the meeting.

7. General Updates

- A. Proposed Development Activities on Bond Parcels: No update.
- B. Painted Hills: Discussed earlier.
- C. State Trust land conservation efforts within the Town of Sahuarita: Discussed earlier.
- D. Catalina/Tortolita Wildlife Corridor
 - Current State Trust land applications: Nicole Fyffe provided an update on the Oracle Rd. wildlife bridge right of way application submitted to the State Land Department. The auction for the right of way may be scheduled for a January or February auction. Diana Durazo provided an update on the 800 acres of State Trust land the County applied for acquisition, as well as an update on the tentative award of a Growing Smarter matching grant from Arizona State Parks. The AZ State Parks Board will have their final hearing on the grant awards on September 18, 2013. The State Land Department's public auction for the 800 acres will be held on December 4, 2013. Ms. Fyffe noted that the County may apply for another Growing Smarter grant for acquisition of remaining API lands within Tucson Mountain Park.
 - Kelly Ranch – Desert Springs Oro Valley General Plan Amendment: No update.
- E. Avra Valley-Interstate 10 Tucson-Tortolita Mountain Wildlife Corridor: A developer has had discussions with the County on a possible retail outlet center at the Parson's property. The project would generate revenue that would be applied towards wildlife corridor improvements. The AZ Game and Fish Department, Town of Marana, and Carolyn Campbell met to revisit the Paul Biers' study, given new developments that have occurred since the study was first released. ADOT is looking at this area for possible additional wildlife crossings.
- F. Marley Ranch: If the Bond Advisory Committee moves to postpone the bond election until 2015, the County will need to renegotiate the options with Marley.
- G. Recent offers to sell to the County: The County recently received an offer of sale for property in the northern end of the Santa Rita Mountains and Empirita area. The offer was higher than what had previously been heard by this Commission. The County also received information on a possible sale or donation of property in the Coyote Mountains area, but nothing concrete has come from that.
- H. Rosemont Mine: County and other cooperating agencies submitted comments in August on a preliminary administrative final environmental impact statement.
- I. Saguaro National Park Boundary Adjustment Act H.R. 715: No update.

- J. SunZia Transmission Line Project: The Bureau of Land Management released the Final EIS in June 2013, and the County's comments were not adequately addressed. The Preferred Alternative continues to include a segment of the transmission line traversing the northeastern corner of Pima County through the San Pedro Valley, and the County's Six Bar, M Diamond, and A-7 ranches. The County has not seen a development plan for impacts to develop an appropriate mitigation plan to submit to the project proponent. It was suggested that staff look at the media coverage out of New Mexico due to the controversy surrounding the routing of the transmission line through the White Sands area and its impacts to the project.
- K. Sierrita Pipeline (formerly known as Sasabe Lateral Project): The Notice for Availability for the Final EIS is scheduled to be released by April 18, 2014, with the 90-day Federal Authorization Deadline scheduled for July 17, 2014. A date for the release of the draft EIS has not been provided. The County is looking into appropriate mitigation for impacts to County lands.
- L. Pima County Multi Species Conservation Plan Update: Julia Fonseca provided an update on the plan, and indicated that the comment period on the Plan has ended. The Final EIS should be released in early 2014, with the permit possibly issued in mid-2014.
- M. Future Bond Election Update: No further update than what was discussed earlier.

13. Next Commission Meeting

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be scheduled before the Bond Advisory Committee's regular statutory meeting in late February or early March.

14. Call to the Public

Carolyn Campbell introduced Hannah Stitzer, who is now working with her for the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection.

Keith Bagwell introduced himself and was there on behalf of Supervisor Elias.

Sharma Torres introduced herself representing Arizona Land and Water Trust.

Mr. Roe mentioned that the Parks and Recreation building was constructed when Rafael Payan was the director, and after serving 11 years, he has now retired and moved on to Monterey, California to be their Parks and Recreation Director.

Kerry Baldwin provided a status update to the Commission on A-7 ranch and the new ranch operators, who are the Smallhouse family, and are 4th generation in the area. They will manage the ranch, while County staff focuses more on the long-term resource management role.

15. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

DRAFT