

**Pima County Conservation Acquisition Commission Meeting**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Building  
3500 West River Road  
Thursday, July 3, 2014  
2:00 p.m.**

**MOTIONS**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Hare moved, seconded by Commissioner Pettis to approve the March 6, 2014 meeting minutes. Motion approved 8-0 (Commissioners Laria, Marian and Prouty were absent).

**MOTION:** Commissioner Gardner moved, seconded by Commissioner Sheridan to approve the acquisition agreement for the purchase of the 286-acre Painted Hills property, located between Anklam Road and Speedway Boulevard for \$7.5 million. Motion approved 8-0 (Commissioners Laria, Marian and Prouty were absent).

**SUMMARY OF MEETING**

1. Roll Call

The Commission meeting began at 2:20 p.m.

Commissioners Present

Les Corey  
Helen Gardner  
Trevor Hare  
Jan Johnson, Vice-Chair  
Rob Marshall  
Chuck Pettis  
Bill Roe, Chairman  
Tom Sheridan

Commissioners Absent

Chris Laria  
James Marian  
Tim Prouty

2. Approval of the March 6, 2014 Meeting Minutes

**MOTION:** Commissioner Hare moved, seconded by Commissioner Pettis to approve the March 6, 2014 meeting minutes. Motion approved 8-0 (Commissioners Laria, Marian and Prouty were absent).

3. Acquisition of the Painted Hills Property

Nicole Fyffe reported that the County reached an agreement with the owner of the 286-acre Painted Hills property, represented by local attorney Keri Sylvan and located in the eastern foothills of the Tucson Mountains, for \$7.5 million. Final payment, with the agreed upon 5.75 percent interest, will be \$8.3 million. If, however, the County holds a

successful bond election in the future, this amount could be paid in full decreasing the interest. The Starr Pass Environmental Enhancement Fund could be an alternative source of revenue for this acquisition. This acquisition required a bond ordinance amendment in order to use Jurisdictional bond funds earmarked for the City of Tucson for this property. The amendment was approved by the Mayor and Council on June 30<sup>th</sup>, and was approved by the Board of Supervisors on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Commissioner Johnson mentioned an article in the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection newsletter on Painted Hills. Commissioner Corey asked who the dissenting vote on the Board of Supervisors to which Nicole responded Supervisor Ally Miller.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Gardner moved, seconded by Commissioner Sheridan to approve the acquisition agreement for the purchase of the 286-acre Painted Hills property, located between Anklam Road and Speedway Boulevard for \$7.5 million. Motion approved 8-0 (Commissioners Laria, Marian and Prouty were absent).

Commissioner Hare had a follow up question on two parcels south of the Mary Henderson property that could make the connection to the Painted Hills property. Mike Stofko, with County Real Property Division responded that there is an easement over one of the parcels, but the second parcel's owner is asking for six times the appraised value. Staff will continue to work with the owner.

#### 4. Future Pima County Bond Election Planning

Nicole Fyffe provided a brief overview of the information and analysis requested by the Commission at the last meeting to inform whether any changes need to be made to the map of eligible lands for a future bond election and amount of bond funds requested. Ms. Fyffe went over a series of maps showing what has been conserved since 2004 from the original Habitat Protection Priorities, Community Open Space and Jurisdictional Open Space priorities.

Commissioner Gardner suggested that a few parcels be highlighted to show the public what would be done, given that the next bond election may not be easy. Commissioner Corey stated that iconic areas that still need to be secured should be shown. Ms. Fyffe reminded Commissioners that as individuals, Commissioners can promote the bonds. However, as a Commission member during Commission meetings, they should only discuss needs and educate the public.

The second map discussed was the current map of eligible lands and its updates, which included deleting properties that had been developed and properties that have since been acquired for conservation. The deletions amounted to about 2,000 acres. The next map discussed addressed the Commission's request to map the eligible lands by size distribution. This map helped to identify which large property holdings are still not conserved.

Commissioner Gardner asked about properties that are categorized Community Open Space (COSP) that do not fit the definition of the category. Ms. Gardner asked how the Hayhook and King Anvil properties made it on the list of COSP, given their rural locations. The concern expressed was the proposed limited amount of bond funding for COSP, and that these rural properties should be categorized under Habitat Protection Priorities (HPP). Ms. Fyffe responded that these two properties did not meet the HPP criteria, but that staff would research these further.

The discussion then centered on how the Commission arrived at the overall bond request of \$285 million in 2006. Diana Durazo explained that the Commission voted to request 50 percent of the total general obligation bond package or \$250 million, whichever is greater. This was followed by an amendment request to increase the amount to \$285 million and approved at the August 10, 2006 meeting. The Commission also voted to allocate a total of 25 percent of the total open space bond allocation to COSP and 75 percent to HPPs. After the Commission's 2006 recommendation, the Bond Advisory Committee tentatively approved a total of \$120 million.

Ms. Fyffe explained the final map that was developed out of a meeting between staff, three Commission members that requested to participate, and Carolyn Campbell. During that meeting, concerns were expressed over the current map and voters possibly not understanding the details and nuances involved in the County's land conservation program, leading to the perception that the County is attempting to purchase most of eastern Pima County. Another issue is the fact that almost 140,000 acres of State Trust land on the map is already managed by the County for conservation because of the County's acquisition of associated grazing leases when purchasing private ranch land. This led to a discussion of removing much of the State Trust land from the map, but recommended keeping the State Trust land in the Tortolita Fan and the State land east of Tortolita Mountain Park. It was also recommended State land identified as Wildlife Corridors be kept, along with the State land adjacent to Colossal Cave Mountain Park and Saguaro National Park East. Staff noted that if State Trust land reform were to occur or an important State parcel was listed for auction, the Board of Supervisors could still add that State Trust land to the map through a formal bond ordinance amendment, which requires several public notices and public hearings.

Staff also mentioned that while parcels may look fragmented or disconnected on the new map due to State Trust land being removed, it was felt that this could be addressed artistically through the map. Staff will be working with GIS and Graphics staff to address this issue.

Carolyn Campbell, with the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, presented a map that the Coalition developed that looked at connectivity, wildlife linkages and current preserves.

Ms. Fyffe said staff would meet with the Coalition to better understand what they are proposing.

The Commissioners commented that the map illustrates the need for making connections to what already has been acquired and that adding Marley and its lease tells a compelling story. It was suggested that maybe this is the map shown to the public.

Commissioner Corey noted that a key question is to what degree the Commission wants the map to reflect certain state trust lands.

Ms. Campbell noted that the map was not intended to be a proposal and that it is not finished, and pointed out that the San Pedro area is missing from the map and said that if Marley is added, we once again begin to look like the current map showing too much land. Ms. Fyffe replied to a question that the current remaining option prices for Marley

total \$64 million, but that the option deadlines would obviously need to be renegotiated as the first option expires in 2015.

There was discussion concerning the importance of White Stallion Ranch, located north of Saguaro National Park west, and whether the Marley Ranch acquisitions could be delayed to free up bond funding for it and other properties.

Chairman Roe suggested that staff look at Edward Tufte's presentation data, a Yale professor who specializes on how to develop visual presentations to convey what is needed. The Commission would like to see a narrative and map on the program for the public.

Ms. Fyffe said a recommendation and map would be needed by October. The working group will meet again and bring something back to the commission by mid-September.

There was considerable discussion regarding the pros and cons of supporting the \$120 million figure, recommending more, or continue to advocate for the \$285 million original recommendation. Both Ms. Campbell and Chairman Roe spoke about the competing needs that the Bond Advisory Committee is facing. Ms. Campbell suggested that if the Commission were to ask for more than \$120 million, the Commission would need to narrow down priorities, develop a visual representation of the recommendations, and determine how much to request. A number would need to be determined based on information. The Commission requested that staff update the estimate of value of lands identified in the future bond map.

Commissioner Corey stated that we need to be able to convey why this multi-generational legacy matters, how it builds off of past multi-jurisdictional agency efforts, the need to continue to invest incrementally, and the need for a compelling narrative.

There was discussion on re-valuing the private lands and a few property owners that may now be willing sellers.

Chairman Roe requested final words from each Commissioner.

Commissioner Corey suggested that the working group continue to meet, that he was less concerned about the numbers, was still comfortable that \$285 million is the need, but happy with \$120 million, and that we need to clearly articulate the long term need verses next 10 year increment.

Commissioner Pettis stated that it will be harder in the future to make good buys and that we need to spend money wisely.

Commissioner Gardner stated that 30 years ago biologists were saying that the Tucson Mountains were becoming an island, that they are under incredible threat and that although we've made an honest effort with the Marleys, there is a pressing need to look at the Tucson Mountains and corridors.

Commissioner Sheridan stated that he would be willing to contribute to the working group discussion.

Vice-Chair Johnson stated that she liked the idea of educating the Bond Advisory Committee members individually.

Commissioner Hare stated that since the original \$285 million recommendation was not based on need, we should be cautious about the number we recommend.

Commissioner Marshall stated that we need to honor our commitments to Marley, corridors were somewhat considered in development of the original 2004 HPPs even though spatial data was not readily available at that time, the original focus was more on core habitat, we need to be firm on the need and consistent, we need to demonstrate awareness of all competing needs to the Bond Advisory Committee, and explain that the timeframe being considered is to accomplish work 20 to 30 years from now.

Ms. Durazo thanked the Committee and stated that she looked forward to their input.

Ms. Fyffe emphasized the importance of completing the Marley acquisition.

5. Next Commission Meeting

Ms. Fyffe indicated that dates would be sent out for the smaller working group to meet and go over all of the information provided today.

6. Call to the Public

Kerry Baldwin suggested that the Commission continue to focus on the overall story being told, which will be key for the Bond Advisory Committee and public, instead of becoming too focused on the map. In addition, he stated that past debates have been about not enough land on the map, as opposed to too much.

Carolyn Campbell said she was proud of Pima County and its leadership.

Ms. Fyffe pointed out that the final phase of the Marley acquisition includes all of the water rights.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.