

Pima County Conservation Acquisition Commission Meeting

MEETING MINUTES

**Pima County Housing Center
801 W. Congress Street
Thursday, August 6, 2015
2:00 p.m.**

MOTIONS

MOTION: Commissioner Prouty moved, seconded by Commissioner Pettis to approve the March 5, 2015 meeting summary. Motion approved 7-0 (Commissioners Gardner, Hare, Laria, and Marshall were absent).

MOTION: Commissioner Marian moved, seconded by Commissioner Sheridan to allocate remaining 2004 Conservation Acquisition bond funds of \$1.46 million towards the Painted Hills payments. Motion approved 7-0 (Commissioners Gardner, Hare, Laria, and Marshall were absent).

MOTION: Commissioner Sheridan moved, seconded by Commissioner Corey to recommend increasing funding of open space in the earlier implementation periods of the 2015 bond program to accelerate option payments on the Marley Ranch to reduce future interest payments and take advantage of current land values. Motion approved 7-0 (Commissioners Gardner, Hare, Laria, and Marshall were absent).

MOTION: Commissioner Sheridan moved, seconded by Commissioner Johnson to include the 160-acre Cocoraque Butte property as eligible land under the 2015 Open Space Acquisition Program. Motion approved 7-0 (Commissioners Gardner, Hare, Laria, and Marshall were absent).

MOTION: Commissioner Prouty moved, seconded by Commissioner Marian to remove lands purchased by Caterpillar, Inc. and Freeport-McMoRan from the 2015 open space program, per their request. Motion approved 7-0 (Commissioners Gardner, Hare, Laria, and Marshall were absent).

MOTION: Commissioner Corey moved, seconded by Commissioner Sheridan to move the Double XX Ranch and Northern Altar Valley properties from Community Open Space to the Habitat Protection Priorities and Associated Lands category of the 2015 open space program. Motion approved 6-0 (Commissioners Gardner, Hare, Laria, Marshall, Prouty were absent).

SUMMARY OF MEETING

1. Roll Call

The Commission meeting began at 2:10 p.m.

Commissioners Present

Les Corey
Jan Johnson, Vice-Chair
James Marian
Chuck Pettis
Tim Prouty (left at 3:00 pm)
Bill Roe, Chair (arrived at 2:15pm)
Tom Sheridan

Commissioners Absent

Trevor Hare
Helen Gardner
Chris Laria
Rob Marshall

2. Executive Session – None
3. Approval of the March 5, 2014 Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Commissioner Prouty moved, seconded by Commissioner Pettis to approve the March 5, 2014 meeting summary. Motion approved 7-0 (Commissioners Gardner, Hare, Laria, and Marshall were absent).

4. Update on 2004 Bond Program Expenditures

Nicole Fyffe reported that the Bond Ordinance amendment was approved by the Town of Sahuarita, the Bond Advisory Committee and the Board of Supervisors to release the remaining \$1.46 million in bond funds earmarked for land along the Santa Cruz River for other 2004 bond eligible properties. Payments for the Painted Hills property are due in September for the next 5 years, and staff recommends applying these remaining funds towards payment of Painted Hills. If approved, this will expend all remaining 2004 Open Space bond funds.

MOTION: Commissioner Marian moved, seconded by Commissioner Sheridan to allocate remaining 2004 Conservation Acquisition bond funds of \$1.46 million towards the Painted Hills payments. Motion approved 7-0 (Commissioners Gardner, Hare, Laria, and Marshall were absent).

5. 2015 Bond Election Update

- A. Review of draft bond implementation plan ordinance – Open Space section

Nicole Fyffe summarized that the draft Bond Implementation Plan Ordinance was sent to organizations, towns and jurisdictions for review and comments. Comments are being solicited through Monday, August 10, 2015. For the open space portion, most of the acquisition guidelines listed are from the 2004 bond program language. The County is planning to sell bonds over 12 years, and the implementation spreadsheet provided assumes that all propositions will pass and a certain level of growth in taxable property values. If growth were to occur at a faster rate, the County would be able to sell bonds more quickly. Additionally, if capital projects are delayed for whatever reasons, funding will become available earlier to spend on the open space program.

The County has received numerous comments, with most requesting that their projects be moved up. The City of Tucson requested that their road repair funds be pushed back so as to allow for the completion of their ongoing road repair program.

The current working draft shows fifty percent of the open space bond monies moved to the first half of the bond program, with the remainder scheduled in the second half.

The Commission asked whether the debt payment schedule layered the payment of current debt and addressed capacity, to which Ms. Fyffe responded yes.

The Commission asked whether the Marley Ranch options payments aligned with the scheduling. Ms. Fyffe noted that a recent meeting with the Marley representatives looked at how the options, currently priced at \$65 million, might change based on cash flow constraints. The payment structure might include a lease-purchase acquisition due to State statutes that prohibit term purchases going longer than 5 years. After agreed upon payment amounts, lands will be released, with full release once payments are completed. This scenario will include interest payments over time. The sooner we can acquire, the more we save in interest.

Ms. Fyffe explained that, per the Commission's protocol, the County would order 2 appraisals in response to a question from the Commission regarding whether the value of the remaining ranch would be renegotiated.

Ms. Fyffe said that the revised ordinance would be sent to the Clerk of the Board on August 26, with the Board of Supervisors hearing this on September 8, 2015.

Note: Since the CAC meeting, the Board cancelled the September 8 meeting – it is now scheduled for September 15, 2015.

Carolyn Campbell asked that the Commission submit comments in writing regarding moving more funds for open space early in the bond program.

MOTION: Commissioner Sheridan moved, seconded by Commissioner Corey to recommend increasing funding of open space in the earlier implementation periods of the bond program to accelerate option payments on the Marley Ranch to reduce future interest payments and take advantage of current land values. Motion approved 7-0 (Commissioners Gardner, Hare, Laria, and Marshall were absent).

B. Finalize map of 2015 bond eligible lands

(i) Map changes: Add Cocoraque Butte, remove Caterpillar and Freeport lands

Nicole Fyffe commented that the Cocoraque Butte property was formally a stand-alone project under the Historic Preservation program, but the Bond Advisory Committee voted to move this project under the open space program.

Linda Mayro provided a brief presentation on the 160 acre-private property located within the Ironwood National Monument. The historic homestead is still used for visitors by the owner, and the property itself contains high cultural resource values. This property was submitted as a suggested mitigation site to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for solar site development. BLM is still considering this property. Staff recommends adding this property as eligible land.

MOTION: Commissioner Sheridan moved, seconded by Commissioner Johnson to include the 160-acre Cocoraque Butte property as eligible land under the 2015 Open Space

Acquisition Program. Motion approved 7-0 (Commissioners Gardner, Hare, Laria, and Marshall were absent).

Nicole Fyffe pointed out the lands purchased by Caterpillar, Inc. and Freeport McMoRan that are being recommended for removal from the map at the request of the owners.

MOTION: Commissioner Prouty moved, seconded by Commissioner Marian to remove lands purchased by Caterpillar, Inc. and Freeport-McMoRan, per their request. Motion approved 7-0 (Commissioners Gardner, Hare, Laria, and Marshall were absent).

- (ii) Item continued from last Commission meeting: The Northern Altar Valley properties and Double XX Ranch property – move to Habitat Protection Priorities and Associated Lands category

Nicole Fyffe recapped the reasons why these properties did not fit the usual criteria for Community Open Space. Per the Commission's request, the properties were assessed based on the criteria for Habitat Protection Priorities (HPP), and Rob Marshall and Diana Freshwater further reviewed the parcels, as they originally considered the criteria for HPPs. Staff recommends that these properties be moved into the HPP and Associated Lands category.

MOTION: Commissioner Corey moved, seconded by Commissioner Sheridan to move the Double XX Ranch and Northern Altar Valley properties from Community Open Space to the Habitat Protection Priorities and Associated Lands category. Motion approved 6-0 (Commissioners Gardner, Hare, Laria, Marshall, Prouty were absent).

7. General Updates

- A. Proposed Development Activities on Bond Parcels: The Planning and Zoning Commission approved a requested rezoning of 9.7 acres located at Linda Vista Blvd. and Thornydale Rd. The developer is proposing 27 acres in the Cochie Canyon area as offsite mitigation, which may result in more acreage conserved.
- B. Catalina/Tortolita Wildlife Corridor: The wildlife bridge over Oracle Road is under construction and fencing appears to be up on one side.
- C. Avra Valley-Interstate 10 Tucson-Tortolita Mountain Wildlife Corridor: No update.
- D. Marley Ranch: This item was already discussed.
- E. Recent offers to sell to the County: The County recently received a 40-acre donation in the Ventana Canyon area. This donation will go to the Board of Supervisors on August 11th for their approval.
- F. Rosemont Mine: No update.
- G. SunZia Transmission Line Project: SunZia will be applying for their Certificate of Environmental Compliance from the AZ Siting Committee soon. They project receiving the certificate in October.

H. Pima County Multi Species Conservation Plan Update: The Fish and Wildlife Service is optimistic that their review will be done by the end of the year.

8. Presentation of Certificate to Joe Kellner, NRPR Rangelands Program Manager, for 30 years of service to Pima County

Joe Kellner has been with the County for 30 years and had been the operations manager since early on in our open space program in the Natural Resources Division in the Parks and Recreation Department. He more recently became the County's ranch manager for our open space properties and has played a key role in maintaining and improving our properties. Kerry Baldwin, Superintendent of the Natural Resources Division of the Parks and Recreation Department, presented Mr. Kellner with a certificate of appreciation for his 30 years of outstanding service, and in his honor, will designate two wildlife water tanks the Kellner tanks on the County's A-7 Ranch. Mr. Kellner was involved in the design and construction of these wildlife waters on many of our ranches. Mr. Kellner will be greatly missed.

9. Next Commission Meeting

The Commission's next oversight meeting will be in February 2016.

10. Call to the Public

Susan Shobe introduced herself and is working with the Friends of the Sonoran Desert.

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.