IVINS
CITY COUNCIL WORK MEETING
MINUTES
February 15, 2024

NOTICE: This meeting was held electronically and in person. City Hall was the anchor location for the electronic meeting. You may watch the audio and video feed by going to www.ivins.com under "City Council" on the right of the home page and selecting "Audio".

1) WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

MAYOR AND COUNCIL: The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. and announced there was a quorum present.
All present included Mayor Hart, Council Member Scott, Council Member Smith, Council Member Barton, Council Member Gillespie, and Council Member Anderson.
STAFF: City Manager/Attorney Dale Coulam, and City Recorder Kari Jimenez.
EXCUSED: None.

A. Acknowledgement of Quorum

Mayor Hart acknowledged there was a quorum present. Council Member Barton arrived at 4:28 p.m.

B. Disclosures

There were no disclosures or conflicts of interest with items on this meeting's agenda.

2) WORK MEETING

A. Discussion with County Commissioner Adam Snow

County Attorney Eric Clark and **County Commissioner Adam Snow** provided a presentation to the Mayor and City Council regarding the Northern Corridor. **County Attorney Eric Clarke** indicated that historically, the protection of the desert tortoise began in the early 1990s. Initially, the focus was on identifying and safeguarding habitats, irrespective of land ownership. This effort intersected with the development of Tuacahn, leading to an incident where a tortoise was accidentally killed, temporarily halting construction. The incident underscored the significant impact species protection listings can have on communities. To address this, habitat designations were made, leading to collaborative initiatives between private landowners, the County, State, and Federal agencies. In 1995 and 1996, the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve was established, ensuring the preservation of vital habitat, while allowing for controlled development elsewhere. That proactive approach, supported by Biologists, facilitated development in Washington County since the mid-1990s, without compromising tortoise populations. Simultaneously, the need for a Northern Corridor arose, anticipating future traffic demands. Lobbying efforts in the 2000s led to the designation of Federal lands as a National Conservation Area in 2009. That designation balanced conservation with infrastructure needs, including the Northern Corridor.
During negotiations, the County expressed concerns that establishing a National Conservation Area might hinder the future development of a necessary road and specific language was incorporated directing the Secretary of the Interior, through the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), to formulate a Transportation Management Plan within three (3) years. The plan was to include options for a Northern Corridor, rather than a predetermined route, to allow collaboration with Biologists in determining the least disruptive path. In 2009, the directive was issued, with the plan originally due three (3) years later. As of the present, the plan remains incomplete.

Meanwhile, the County's permit, issued in 1996 to establish the Reserve and permit development, was set to expire in 2016. In anticipation of that, the County applied for renewal in early 2015.

During the renewal process, the Fish and Wildlife Service raised the issue of the Northern Corridor. Commissioner Cox subsequently engaged with the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) to secure a right-of-way for the road. Several alternative routes were studied, including the one favored by UDOT. That collaborative effort involved various entities including the State, cities, and the School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA). SITLA proposed a solution that involved relinquishing development rights in one area in exchange for support for the Northern Corridor and additional conservation measures. The County's proposal for permit renewal included provisions for adapting to changes in circumstances, such as the construction of the Northern Corridor and involved adding an additional zone to the Reserve and allocating funding for tortoise conservation activities. Despite local support and the completion of the approval process during the final weeks of the Trump administration, legal challenges emerged. Conserve Southwest Utah, in collaboration with national environmental groups, filed a lawsuit challenging the agreement. Subsequently, the Biden administration entered into a settlement agreement without consulting local entities, leading to a reevaluation of the Northern Corridor decision. Currently, the BLM is considering five route alternatives, including the T Bone Mesa alternative, favored for its efficiency but posing greater habitat disruption, and another route, preferred for its balance of efficiency and habitat preservation. The decision making process involves careful consideration of environmental impacts to ensure minimal disruption to the tortoise habitat.

Decisions have been made on data that predates the implementation of road fencing measures. Since then, proactive efforts led by HCP Biologist Cameron Rognan and studies conducted by the Fish and Wildlife Service have shed light on the efficacy of culverts for tortoises. Culverts have been found to be frequented by tortoises, indicating their suitability as crossings. Studies conducted along Red Hills Parkway, a road similar in nature to the proposed Northern Corridor, have revealed the successful utilization of culverts by tortoises and concerns regarding the potential division of the Reserve have diminished over the years. Regarding route alternatives, the lower route was recommended by Biologists to closely align with the Reserve boundary. However, modeling indicated that route would carry only a fraction of the traffic needed and could potentially exacerbate congestion issues near downtown St. George. Similarly, the Red Hills Expressway option, while theoretically feasible, presented practical challenges due to complex engineering requirements, property acquisitions, and safety concerns. Proposals such as the One-Way Couplet were met with opposition from St. George City officials due to pedestrian safety and urban planning considerations. The reconsideration of the options by the BLM, under the shadow of the legal settlement agreement, posed uncertainties regarding the future of the Northern Corridor permit. Should the permit be revoked, Zone Six, particularly the SITLA portion, would become susceptible to development and given SITLA's mandate to prioritize financial returns, this could potentially lead to irreversible land use changes so efforts are underway to advocate for the retention of the Northern Corridor permit.

B. Continued discussion regarding the Planning Commission’s recommendations on updating the General Plan

The **Mayor and City Council** discussed the structure, style, and content of the draft updates suggested by the Planning Commission as compared to the proposed alternative. There was a consensus on needing a clear and concise General Plan that would be accessible and

understandable to the public that includes the vision for the future. Suggestions were made for adopting a narrative that includes both data-driven and story-like elements to engage readers more effectively. The **Mayor and City Council** considered goals for various sections, discussed the importance of a unified vision statement to guide the document's development, and outlined actions for moving forward.

3) ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Council Member Barton moved to adjourn
SECOND: Council Member Smith
VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

Council Member Scott	AYE
Council Member Smith	AYE
Council Member Barton	AYE
Council Member Gillespie	AYE
Council Member Anderson	AYE

The meeting adjourned at 5:18 p.m.

Respectfully,

Kari D. Jimenez, MMC
Ivins City Recorder