

**MINUTES OF THE STUDY SESSION
OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE
TOWN OF CHINO VALLEY**

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2023
5:00 PM**

**CHINO VALLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
202 N. STATE ROUTE 89, CHINO VALLEY, AZ**

Present: Jack Miller, Mayor; Eric Granillo, Vice-Mayor; Annie Perkins, Councilmember;
Tom Armstrong, Councilmember; John McCafferty, Councilmember; Sherri
Phillips, Councilmember; Robert Schacherer, Councilmember

Absent:

Staff Present: Cindy Blackmore, Town Manager; Andrew McGuire, Town Attorney; Terri
Denemy, Assistant to the Town Manager; Mark Holmes, Water Consultant; Joe
Duffy, Administrative Services Director; Maggie Tidaback, Economic Development
Project Manager; Spencer Guest, IT Manager; Cyndi Thomas, Community Services
Director; Will Dingee, Assistant Director of Development Services; Frank Marbury,
Town Engineer/Public Works Director; Lawrence Digges, Audio/Visual Technician;
Sara Burchill, Deputy Town Clerk; Erin Deskins, Town Clerk

1. CALL TO ORDER; ROLL CALL

Mayor Miller called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- a.** Update and discussion from Michael Patrick on Trust for Public Lands regarding Del Rio Springs.

Cindy Blackmore, Town Manager, introduced Michael Patrick with the Trust for Public Land who would be talking about the Del Rio Springs project.

Michael Patrick, Trust for Public Land (TPL), presented the following:

- He had been working with Jody Norris from the Nature Conservancy, Maggie Tidaback, and Mark Holmes since last summer on a project to protect the Del Rio Springs Ranch.
- The TPL and the Nature Conservancy had hired a lobbying firm, Russell Smolden, to help secure some funding to acquire the property.
- Chairwoman for Natural Resources, Energy and Water Committee, Sine Kerr had introduced a bill a couple weeks ago and the group would be presenting to the committee on Thursday with a short presentation to the committee members and answering questions.

Jody Norris, Director of Land and Water Protection for the Nature Conservancy, presented the following:

- The title of Senator Kerr's bill was "An Appropriation to Create a New State Park on the Headwaters of the Verde River."
- A map showing the location of the Del Rio Springs Ranch on the east side of 89 was shared with the Council.
- The Del Rio Springs Ranch was very close to the Prescott National Forest and the Game and Fish Upper Verde River Wildlife area.
- An important point to make to the committee would be that the land is still in private ownership and the TPL had an option contract giving them the right to acquire it from a willing seller, but they needed help with the capital to acquire that land.

Michael Patrick presented the following:

- In 20 years of doing this work in Arizona and the Southwest he had never come across a property that had so many different ecological and historical resources, and opportunities for outdoor recreation as was present in this community.
- Sullivan Lake was ecologically important and he believed the group could lead an effort to restore it and create more Cottonwoods in the area.
- Mile zero of the Verde River was symbolically important as so many people had spent a lot of time protecting it.
- The Del Rio Springs were partly on the land they were looking at buying, partly on the acre that Prescott owned, and partly on the 20 acres that the Town of Prescott Valley owned.
- The Del Rio Springs were important for ecological reasons and because in the past it supplied water for the City of Prescott as well as Ashfork, Williams, and Seligman by rail which made it an important part of the history of the area and the state.
- There were shallow lake features and groves of Cottonwoods that housed a bald eagle nest.
- There was a property to the northeast which held the abandoned Santa Fe Corridor which was the site for the Peavine National Recreation Trail which was one of the few rail to trail projects in Arizona.
- Protecting the property would make it possible to extend the Peavine Trail from Watson Lake in Prescott up to the start of the Verde River.
- Opportunities for historical preservation and interpretation was important for the entire state. There was one of several Fred Harvey buildings that provided beef, eggs, poultry, milk, and ice to all the Fred Harvey hotels that were built along the Santa Fe railroad.
- There was an additional purchase of 10-acres of land owned by Dwayne Fauvis that was being considered which would create a continuous stretch of protected land along the Verde River from Sullivan Lake down to Perkinsville.
- Photos of Del Rio Springs, Sullivan Lake, the Fred Harvey milking barn, and the Peavine National Recreation Trail were shared with Council.
- A list of supporters who had written letters of support was shared with Council.

Maggie Tidaback, Economic Development Project Manager, presented the following:

- The Del Rio Springs location was in the center of the state and headwaters of the Verde River.
- The tourism dollars that could come to Chino Valley and the region as a whole was incredible.
- The fiscal impact studies had not been done yet, but nationally it was billions of dollars for similar trails throughout Arizona. The Town had been working on promoting tourism more and there were projects going on that would support a State Park like this. It would create jobs and bring a lot of dollars to Town.

Michael Patrick presented the following:

- A map that showed how much of the Peavine Trail had been constructed and how the segment at the North end could get it all the way up to the Verde River was shared with Council.

Jody Norris presented the following:

- She was speaking as a supporter of the project from The Nature Conservancy.
- The Nature Conservancy had been working in the Verde River region for about four decades starting with the development of the Verde River Greenway, and protection of Dead Horse Ranch State Park.
- The Nature Conservancy was now working with farmers to reduce water use and improve flows to the river while still producing food and fiber.
- The Nature Conservancy had been a supporter of the project and was working alongside TPL because they believe the project would set up a win-win-win for the communities, the river, and the economy.
- There had never been a more important time to invest in projects that protect water.
- The Nature Conservancy had worked all along the Verde River for a long time, and the Upper Verde River was very important for wildlife making Del Rio Springs a critical location to protect.
- The project would reduce development pressure in a sensitive area for the aquifer that provides the flows in the Verde River.
- The Nature Conservancy believed that the project and park provide opportunity for regional partnerships around water, conservation, and recharge, as well as low water use recreation.
- The Nature Conservancy had been very involved in the project and would continue to support the project for the community and TPL.

Mark Holmes, Water Consultant, presented the following:

- The property was ideally located where all water flows by gravity to the property from within the Little and Big Chino Sub-basins, making it an ideal location for the Town of Chino Valley or a regional water reclamation facility to treat waste water from the town of Chino Valley, Prescott, PV, or the County high density unincorporated residential areas.
- The reclaimed water could be used to recharge the aquifer and springs, and mitigate the water pumped in the future to be imported from the Big Chino Sub-basins from the local municipalities.
- The town of Chino Valley had nearly completed the groundwater modeling effort that showed water recharge within these lands and the adjacent lands could mitigate imported water projects that could impact the Upper Verde River and sustain the flows of the Upper Verde River.
- The land was important from a water resource management standpoint as it could provide for real solutions and sustain the Upper Verde River base flows and allow for the importation of water from the Big Chino Sub-basin through real mitigation projects that provide riparian habitats and recreation uses upon the proposed park.

Michael Patrick presented the following:

- TPL had an option contract with the owners of the Del Rio Springs Ranch and they were in the process of Due Diligence including an environmental site assessment and studying title work.
- They had retained a landscape architect, Peter Bourgois. He was going to help with developing a master plan for uses for the property. Mr. Bourgois was currently on the first of three tasks:
 - The first task was gathering historical records, photographs, maps, etc., and hosting a site visit by State Parks next month to see where they envisioned a camping area for a State Park.

- The second was centered around community input. The current plan was to have a working session with Town Council and invite the community to give input for ideas on things like outdoor education spaces, farmers markets, etc.
- The final task would be project funding or acquiring land and building out the trail, and establishing the State Park. There were also thoughts of going to the Water Infrastructure Finance Authority (WIFA) to see about getting funding from them. TPL would also try to get a congressional earmark from Congress and work with the AZ delegation. TPL would also be looking into any philanthropic sources for funding.

Council, staff, and guests discussed the following:

- Although the Cottonwood trees along the Verde River were known to consume a fair amount of water, they were an important habitat for the wildlife in the area, and looking at the amount they used compared to the amount used for residential development wasn't as comparable. But it could be a conversation when discussing repair and restoration to the area.
- Michael Byrd from Prescott Creeks looked at the property the previous weekend and the hope was that he would become a consultant in that type of work.
- The president of Yavapai College was going to gather faculty to see if any would be interested in lending their expertise.
- Council requested a field trip to view the ranch. Michael stated that he would work with Cindy Blackmore to find a day to do that.
- The project wasn't just about not developing the land. The land on the west side of the highway would likely be used for housing, but the east side of the highway had unique resources that couldn't be found anywhere else.

3. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Miller adjourned the meeting at 5:28 p.m.

Jack W. Miller, Mayor

ATTEST:



Erin N. Deskins

Erin N. Deskins, Town Clerk

CERTIFICATION:

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Town Council of the Town of Chino Valley, Arizona held on the 14th day of February, 2023. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Dated this 11th day of April, 2023.

Erin N. Deskins

Erin N. Deskins, Town Clerk