

Doney Park-Timberline-Fernwood Area Plan Update Committee

Meeting #6 Notes May 14, 2020 6:00-9:00 pm

Zoom Meeting

I. Welcome and Introductions

Committee members

Bernice Carver
Bryan Bates (co-chair)
Dave Browning
Evelyn Wannie
Harriett Young
Jim Clifford
John Ruggles
Liz Baldwin
Monica Julian
Rich Ferguson
Rob Wilson (co-chair)
Saylor Caudill

Staff

Jay Christelman
Jess McNeely
Jessica Simmons
Melissa Shaw

Guest Speakers

Christopher Tressler – Flood Control District Engineer and County Engineer
Jay Smith - Forest Restoration Director, Coconino County
Lucinda Andreani – Deputy County Manager
Pat Staskey – Deputy Chief, Operations, Flagstaff Fire Department / Summit Fire & Medical District
Torsten Palm – Battalion Chief Station 32, Summit Fire & Medical District

Members of the Public

Bea Cooley
“Galaxy Tab”
Kris
Steve Sessions
“Tamariah”

II. Committee Points of Order

Emily Stenman will no longer be serving on the committee.

April 4, 2020 Meeting notes

Clarification requested on Sherriff Driscoll's presentation. People want a sheriff's presence in DPTF as there was in the past at the fire station and would like to know if there is funding to support that now. They also want to know more about trends for calls in DPTF how those have changed since the 2001 Area Plan was approved to the present. CD will follow up with the sheriff's office for that clarification.

III. Presentations

Summit Fire District – Chief Staskey and Chief Palm

Summit Fire is part of the Great Flagstaff Region (GFR) IGA between Summit, Flagstaff and Highlands, signed in 2019 and called the "Big 3". They share a joint 911 call center. Reviewed the numbers of calls over past few years per year and by station. Stations train together so they can be more efficient. Internal organizational chart. Map of different fire stations and medical districts in Flagstaff area and in DPTF. Stations 31, 32 and 33 are located in DPTF; Station 32 is the busiest. Duties of the Fire Department besides fighting fires – the majority (80%) of what they do is medical response, technical rescue, community risk reduction (CRR), wildland fuels management (WFM) to identify hazards and conduct Firewise evaluations on private property. High risk but low volume hotspots in DPTF are Hwy 89, Interstate 40, and the railroad. Future DPTF planning might want to consider future stations, depending on zone classifications and population density. The important variables for them are access, water supply, and telecommunications. Current station capacity is sufficient in DPTF to provide service.

Question: Do you cover Twin Arrows casino, and are you being approached to cover a casino at the Horsemen Lodge property?

Answer: Don't cover Twin Arrows because it's on the Navajo Nation, but they would respond on a mutual aid request. They have had a few talks about the Horsemen Lodge property, but there hasn't been an official ask or request from the Navajo Nation yet.

Question: Why is the number of calls going up when the population isn't increasing proportionately?

Answer: People are using 911 more often due to increased awareness, and seasonal calls.

Question: Things to think about in the SWAT analysis?

Answer: Weaknesses/Issues: Water supply and lack of hydrant issues; property access; building and property addressing; Threats: forest restoration; potential for technical disasters along Hwy 89, Interstate 40, and the railroad; fire code requirements for developing businesses on the outskirts of developed areas. Strengths: Service and personnel.

Coconino County Flood Control District – Lucinda Andreani

Discussed regulatory scope of the Flood Control District. The district was formed in 1984 to provide local flood regulation. Cities and towns contribute property tax money to it. Coconino County has participated in national flood insurance program since 1974. The rate increased due to the need to fund Schultz Fire-caused flood mitigation. Current top priority project is Mountain Dell (construction scheduled spring 2020).

Question: How is property tax calculated?

Answer: It's based on the valuation of the property.

Question: Does Coconino County have the lowest primary property tax rate in Arizona?

Answer: The lowest primary property tax rate in Arizona, yes.

Question: Are there any projects proposed to address drainage from E Brandis Lane to the Silver Saddle intersection? There are only three drains which causes water to collect on Hwy 89.

Answer: One of the major challenges in our county is that most development took place prior to implementation of drainage requirements. This has resulted in bad flooding during recent rain events. The District has the authority to regulate drainage but it is hard to implement flood control measures after development occurs or on a piecemeal basis because whatever you do can cause flooding downstream. Newer developments will have improved flood control methods due to the regulatory framework in place. This specific location may not be addressed anytime soon because there are many other priority areas that have been waiting for decades, and the reach of the district and the amount of funding it has are very limited. The current priority of the District is on Schultz fire area restoration and forest restoration in DPTF, and in other part of the County management of FEMA flood plains where property owners are paying flood insurance.

Question: Is there a way for the community to bring concerns to the Flood Control District?

Answer: We do track concerns that are brought to us, and there is some funding available especially if they're roadway-related, but it's pretty limited. People can call Public Works Community Relations to report and document drainage issues.

Schultz Fire Flood Mitigation – Christopher Tressler

Huge rain events followed the Schultz fire, which caused lots of flooding and damage in DPTF. In 2013, thirty million dollars worth of flood mitigation projects were completed in five different watersheds following those events, including sediment basins. The sediment basins were designed to slow down stream flows, store and eventually completely fill in with sediment. This is complimented with revegetation efforts upstream in the burned areas. Revegetation efforts are being tracked and monitored and at this point considered successful. As revegetation and watershed restoration continues flows will be further slowed. In 2018 a 1000-year flood event occurred in North Schultz and tested the flood mitigation infrastructure. While some damage occurred, particularly in the Peaceful Way Watershed where there were no flood mitigation structures built, overall the flood mitigation infrastructure was considered to be effective in preventing major property damage.

An update about the Museum Fire Flood Mitigation in the City of Flagstaff: it is protecting over 400 homes and 35 businesses in just over 2 weeks immediately following the fire at a cost of \$1.8 million. Some of that was reimbursed by the Arizona Department of Emergency Affairs.

For DPTF, while writing your area plan remember that we need all this flood control infrastructure and drainage, and most people aren't going to voluntarily address it.

Question: What is the status on federal reimbursement for spending on post-fire flood control measures?

Answer: The work gets done right away, and later the state or federal agencies deem some things eligible for reimbursement. Covid-19 may affect the amount of money available for such work. The County usually gets reimbursed for about 75% of its costs.

Question: How do you feel the current flood mitigation measures are performing, and what changes do you think need to be made?

Answer: Designing or retrofitting highways to handle drainage for a 100-year event is very expensive. The standard design for road culverts is for a 25-year storm event. The County can require that drainage studies and structures for projects approved as subdivisions, conditional use permits and rezonings. This is beneficial to the community as a whole, versus land being divided with an administrative (land division process) because it is at that level the County can require drainage design to handle larger events than just a 25-year storm. The land division process only considers one or a few parcels and it is difficult to assess drainage issues at this small level, whereas the platting process requires a comprehensive drainage design. The Copeland Detention Basin is an important part of the DPTF flood control system and is hydrologically connected to the cinders area.

Question: What is the process to get additional flood mitigation projects approved to go forward? Is it something we could facilitate in the plan?

Answer: Private property owners must agree to provide easements for flood control channels. We're getting significantly more flow than 25-year events which is what the channels are designed to. There's a lot of discussion about areas that abut forests and impacts downstream, and how to regulate development.

Question: The Copeland storage basin is for storing water during an emergency flood event. Are there additional compatible uses for that property that could be addressed in the area plan?

Answer: The County would need to consult its legal department to assess the liability of something like opening up that parcel to the public. Perhaps the committee could follow up with Parks and Recreation to understand if public use of the basin was considered in the Parks Master Plan update and get more information about opportunities for that parcel. Part of the deed for that parcel specifies that it be a flood control basin in perpetuity.

Question: Are property owners responsible for maintaining easements they've turned over to the county?

Answer: The county does maintain some, but others that remain as private property are maintained by the landowner.

Ideas for the Area Plan update values and/or policies: Elevate and promote the concept of designing adequate drainage networks with new and existing developments; inform property owners that maintenance of drainage structures, such as road side ditches and culverts on private property is important to the community and is the responsibility of individual property owners. Maintenance will contribute to the community's overall flood preparedness.

Coconino County Forest Restoration Initiative – Jay Smith

Floods and fires were identified as the number-one threat to Coconino County citizens, and the County's forest restoration initiative arose from that assessment. Best way to avert threat is to prevent fire in the first place, and forest thinning reduces the threat of crown fires. The program is managing several projects. One, the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Grant (REPI) from Dept. of Defense will protect NPOI telescope and treat about 8,847 acres. Post-wildfire risk studies will identify steep slope restoration projects on Mormon Mtn., Munds Park and Sedona/Oak Creek. The Anderson Mesa restoration project south of DPTF is important to protect DPTF from fires because fire moves from south/southwest to the north. Assessments indicated Bill Williams Mountain as the highest risk area, so the forest was thinned via helicopter logging. Important to assess how to use tax money to make the biggest impact; this is done using computer models and simulations.

The Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI), a separate but related effort from the County's Forest Restoration department, was issued the first 20-year contract by the USFS. The project goal is to treat 600,000 to 800,000 acres across the four national forests; contractors to do the work should be decided in September of this year. In the DPTF watershed, some timber sales will take place in the near future.

Question: Is there anything planned for the Turkey Hills area?

Answer: No. There probably will be prescribed burning sometime in the future, but all prescribed burns were canceled this year due to Covid. No mechanical harvesting is in the 5-year plan right now.

Question: What traffic problems will arise when the trees are hauled out? Or will they be burned?

Answer: The haul route for the Schultz Pass area is Little Elden Springs Road, coming out onto Hwy 89 and from there onto I-40 via either Country Club Rd or Winona Rd. Dust abatement is usually required along the route once it gets dry in the summer time, and signs are posted informing about heavy truck traffic on the road. Contractors negotiate that with the county.

Question: In the DPTF area, only the Schultz Tank and Orion areas are going to be logged?

Answer: Yes.

Question: A strip of unthinned forest was left along the western flank of the DPTF area following the Schultz fire. Are there any plans to thin or otherwise treat this area?

Answer: The County notifies the USFS about areas that are potentially threatened by adjacent USFS land. Because this area could be vulnerable to crown fire activity, Jay will review maps and bring to the attention of the Forest Service about that section.

Question: Is Townsend-Winona Rd able to carry the heavy timber trucks?

Answer: Yes; it would also be discussed between the USFS and the contractor.

IV. Work Session Key Ideas, Further Questions, and Discussion from the Presentations

Summit Fire District

- How to put in the plan that there should be communication between communities and service providers.
- Make sure future developments are planned subdivisions, not wildcat lot splits.
- Future house address visibility.
- Have CUPs for commercial developments say they have to work with the fire district to achieve firewise planning and use of the property. Access is covered in County code.
- How do we know when we need to add another fire station or increase the personnel within current fire stations based on population and density? We can follow up with the district on that question.
- Calls to the fire station are increasing faster than the population, and 80-90% are medical. Perhaps the fire district's public education programs could have the aim of reducing some of the preventable medical calls, for example through drug and alcohol education. Maybe that could go in the sustainability chapter, regarding community health.
- Include evacuation planning if there are fire and flood events.
- Many of these presentations involve restrictions or limitations, such as the limited water supply. Everything we've heard about has to do with managing something. Let's keep that in mind and highlight those limitations as we think about issues and opportunities that will inform and help reorganize the area plan.
- The update to the zoning code has made it easier to place a new fire station, and they can now be permitted at a location in perpetuity.

Flood Control District

- Our discussion included the fact that we're taxed at the lowest rates in the state. We should examine the tradeoff between having low taxes and having fewer public amenities.
- Has there been consideration about how landowners can safely pick up sandbags for their property in light of Covid-19? Yes pallets will be delivered every couple of blocks, and there will be a few staging areas where sandbags can be collected. There will also be assistance for the elderly and disabled. This will help disperse people rather than having one central location.
- People have different perspectives on flooding in DPTF than what was presented tonight. Let's ask Public Works if they'll have future meetings to discuss this. Maybe there was resistance from landowners to give up easements because it was not something they'd

considered when buying the property; perhaps in the area plan we should try to address this. When the idea of easements was first presented to DPTF landowners, they were told they'd have to continue to pay tax on the property and carry the liability.

Schultz Fire Flood Mitigation

- Ensure that the flood and drainage infrastructure that has been developed is maintained.
- Ensure that what mitigation has been carried out is actually working.
- Older properties and wildcat developments are a problem because they did not follow the County process for ensuring sufficient flood mitigation measures. There's a lot of property where nothing can be done as it has already been developed. There are lots of tools to mitigate problems like this. If a property applies to be subdivided in the future, County standards would apply; however, DPTF is almost built out. CD staff would look at the Engineering Design and Construction Manual with regards to how drainage is applied to new developments.

Four Forest Restoration Initiative

- Some concern about traffic impacts from the thinning operations planned in DPTF.
- The unthinned western edge of the planning area is in the Wildland Urban Interface, or WUI, and is likely fire-prone and poses a risk, so it might be beneficial to address that in the plan.
- Lucinda talked about a grant opportunity from the "Community Wildfire Reduction Pilot Program". The committee wants to see that document. The County is applying for grant funding for the Community wildfire reduction pilot program, and Lucinda said she'd look into whether DPTF would be a good location for that.
- Concern about the burning that may occur if the REPI challenge grant comes through for the area southwest of DPTF, because the prevailing wind would blow the smoke into the neighborhood. They should consider chipping instead of burning. An air curtain burner would be impracticable for such a large area (88,000 acres). Some slash may be hauled away. The Department of Forestry and Fire Management and USFS would look at the wind and atmospheric conditions prior to any burning in order to minimize smoke and particulate matter blowing towards communities.

V. Meeting Close

Next meeting is June 11. M. Shaw will send out list of tentative topics.