Climate, Water, Environment, and Parks Committee (CWEPC) Meeting Transcript – 11/10/2026

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[9:33:09 AM]

It is 933 on Tuesday, November the 10th. We. I will call the meeting of the climate, water, environment and parks committee to order. We have a quorum of the committee present and wanted to find out. Do we have any public speakers? No, sir. Okay. Well, we're going to go a little out of order. We're going to start with the briefing of item number four, which is the briefing on the Austin water environmental resource office and wildland conservation division. And I see. Multiple people coming up. I'll let you fight over who talks first.

[9:33:57 AM]

>> Good morning, council members. My name is Shea Ralls roalson. I'm the director of Austin water. Thank you so much for having us here today to present on our work in the wildlands. You may know that Austin water is the steward of 49,000 acres of of water quality protection lands and balcony canyonland preserve. And, and we're here today to provide you an update on that work.

[9:34:24 AM]

>> Thank you. Shea. I'm Sherri. Cool. I'm the environmental resource officer for Austin water, and I'm going to kick us off here talking a little bit about the environmental resource office. If I get this right, is that what you do? Oh, sorry. Okay. So we the environmental resource office coordinates a lot of our

climate mitigation and resilience work. We work a lot with the Austin climate office of action, climate action and resilience office and also do work internal to Austin water and also work with our water supply planning group who do the climate work for our water forward plan. We have the center for environmental research at Hornsby bend. We have the balcones canyonlands conservation plan and permit that. I'm going to talk a little more about. And then the wildland conservation division, which Justin is going to talk about this morning. So understanding and preparing for climate change, as I mentioned, we do a lot of across the city work, but we also work in Austin water with the water utility climate alliance, which is a group of about 14 utilities across the country that are working to prepare for climate change. And we're able to leverage a small amount of funding every year to go together with other utilities on projects to analyze potential impacts of climate on our utility. One of the most recent projects that we worked on, and Heather Dalrymple and my staff co-led this project, was to develop climate resilient engineering design guidance, and we just completed the first phase of this project.

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With a large report that we've shared across the city. And next, we're going to be working on checklists and more streamlined documents that we can incorporate into our cip planning and hopefully get some of these measures to be more climate resilient in our planning. The center for environmental research at Hornsby bend, we conduct environmental research. Hopefully you're familiar with Hornsby bend. It's our award winning biosolid plant, where we take all the sludge from sa and walnut and mix it with all those broken branches from all the winter storms that we've had, and create dillo dirt. So it's an overall very sustainable operation for our city. We have water that from the effluent that we use to water hay fields. We also have a series of ponds so that that water doesn't go directly into the Colorado river. And the site has become very popular with birding community around really around the country. So we helped manage kind of the public involvement out there for the plant superintendent.

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We have about three miles of trails along the Colorado river that are open for the public from dawn to dusk. Also about 1200 acres of land. And some of that is riparian woodland that we help kind of oversee. And then we help with the public coming out to do birding. The center for environmental research has a long standing agreement with UT and A&M, and particularly with UT. We work a lot with the Jackson school on hydro hydrology studies. The river right there, you know, of course, is pulsed out from the series of dams. So they've done a lot of interesting research over the years on how that impacts a river to be managed that way. We also have monthly bird trips and bird walks and lecture series for community education and outreach. A big part of what we do is help the city with endangered species act compliance. There is a permit for Barton springs pool that watershed protection manages. But our balcones canyonlands conservation plan and permit is extends across the whole county. What is the balcones canyonlands conservation plan? It's kind of a mouthful. It is a county wide habitat conservation plan and permit that was created back in 1996, when a lot of these species were first listed under the

endangered species act, and there was a lot of conflict between development and the environmental community and our local leaders and throughout the community came up with this solution to have a local, locally controlled habitat conservation plan. So it provides a the ability to mitigate for what's called incidental take, which means that you're affecting an endangered species incidental to something else that you're doing, like a development or infrastructure. And so we help manage that permit and process.

[9:39:33 AM]

It's the permit is held by the city of Austin and Travis county together. So what does the bcp do? Well, it provides that take coverage. And then also we're able to have conservation measures that we oversee on all of our preserve lands. This is one of our balcones canyonlands preserves caves. It's actually at circle C metro park. And over a series of a number of years, we spent time cleaning trash out of that cave. And now it's really beautiful. The benefits of the balcones canyonlands conservation plan, as I mentioned to, is to mitigate for development. The preserve serves as the mitigation so we don't have to pay any fees. We have essentially a mitigation bank and so does Travis county. So we've permitted all this development subdivisions. We've permitted 400 infrastructure projects, about 12,000 acres of development. And you can see in this time lapse photo or two different photos how much development has occurred since 1996. So the permit expired in may of 1996, but we worked with U.S. Fish and wildlife to make sure that we could continue to operate while we were renewing the permit, so we can still issue take coverage. Our balcones canyonlands conservation plan has an officer, Kimberly Harvey, who's here in in our audience today.

[9:41:11 AM]

She works with me, but she's actually her salary is half covered by Travis county. So she supports the permit for both the city and the county. So that's a great partnership. We when we renew the permit, we're we're going to need to look at all the current regulations. We'll have to bring everything up to 2026, 2027, and a couple years into the future, it's going to be probably a 4 to 5 year process to look at all those current regulations and also all the species that have been listed since we did the bcp. So if we can, we'll look at those and we may or may not add them. But if we do add them, then it'll be a way that we can have a one stop shopping again, because right now, for the species that aren't on our permit, we still have to send folks to fish and wildlife to cover that. One of the first things you'll see, we're going to send out a joint press release with Travis county to recruit people to serve on the biological advisory team and the citizens advisory committee. We had those standing committees for a long time originally, and then they didn't have a lot of activity, so we disbanded them.

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But they are required by Texas parks and wildlife chapter 83. So we'll be sending out a solicitation. We've actually already had a couple people who are interested in participating in that. So as we go forward, the bcp has been very successful. Locally controlled habitat conservation plan, one of the first regional multi-species plans in the country. And we're hoping to just continue that success into the future, add more species, bring it up to current standards. Mapping is one thing that back then we hand drew a lot of the maps. We didn't have gis yet, so it's really been kind of remarkable considering how long ago it was that we did get a lot of things right. So we're looking forward to continuing that effort and providing for this land conservation. And I'll turn it over to Justin bates.

[9:43:27 AM]

>> Good morning everyone. My name is Justin bates. I'm the division manager for wildland conservation with Austin water and at Austin water. Our mission is to work every day to provide water for people and care for the environment. And at the wildland conservation division. The latter half of that mission is is really what we focus on, but with the goal of providing water and other benefits to our broader community. We today are one of the largest conservation management organizations in central Texas. So today, over the last 30 years, the city of Austin has made a commitment and has protected over 49,000 acres of land. Just to put that in perspective, you know, that's largest than all of our closest state parks combined. If you actually put us in the rankings in terms of acreage, we'd be in the top ten. It's a huge amount of conservation land, 26,000 acres of which the city owns outright. And we manage on a day to day basis.

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And then another 23,000, where the city has purchased the development rights and extinguished those to protect working landscapes and kind of those rural, beautiful landscapes that we love here in central Texas in perpetuity. This work represents a huge monetary commitment by the city as well. Over $280 million has been invested through a variety of bonds and other resources in land protection to put together this network. If you go from our northernmost property to our southernmost property, it's 30 miles as the crow flies. So it really gives you an idea of the scale of work that we're doing. And these lands were intentionally placed with Austin water to have the resources to steward them in perpetuity. The lands that we manage are managed under the goals of two programs. Sherry described the balcones canyonlands conservation plan, which set up the balcones canyonlands preserve. And so today we protect about 13,000 plus acres of land that's owned by the city, with the goal of protecting woodland and cave habitat for endangered species and species of concern. The bcp, as we call it, includes some of our favorite places Barton creek, greenbelt, bull creek, mount Bonnell and many more.

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And it has the added benefit of protecting our water supply. A lot of the balcones canyonlands preserve sits in the lake Travis and lake Austin watersheds, so it provides incredible benefits there. And you can see here on the map most of the lands that the city manages as part of the bcp were purchased in the early 1990s. So we really got lucky in that, you know, the community made a commitment at that time, and we've been able to benefit from that with this streamlined endangered species act compliance mechanism. Looking south and west of of the city, we manage lands over the recharge and contributing zone of the Barton springs segment of the Edwards aquifer. So these water quality protection lands were first established in 1998. And together, over the last 30 years, we have been able to protect 28% of the recharge zone where water goes underground before it bubbles up at Barton springs. And there we're trying to manage these lands actively to restore native grassland Savannah, which the science tells us, gets the highest quality and quantity of water underground.

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And you can see here this has been a real community commitment. Bonds, you know, voted on by the voters in 1998, 2000, 2006, and most recently in 2018. And it probably goes without saying, but these conservation lands provide incredible benefits to the city. First, they're a community commitment, right? We, our voters, you know, decided to set money aside to protect some of these natural landscapes and places that are so important to our community. Along with that, through our conservation easements, we're working with private landowners to preserve working landscapes. You know, those ranches and farms that are part of our heritage here in central Texas, as you can imagine, you know, having this open space provides a number of benefits from urban heat reduction, air quality improvements, water quality.

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And, you know, the one other thing that I always like to say is that these conservation lands are not a draw on city services by having purchased them and set them aside, they're not generating traffic, pollution or other demands. And so we can focus development in those services in, in kind of our central city and developed areas. Every day. We're working actively to manage these landscapes. And what that does is by, you know, knitting together a large connected network of conservation lands, we're able to provide more water quality and quantity protection to provide a variety of ecosystem services, to protect riparian stream and river corridors, to protect this biodiversity that's so unique to where we live in the world. And then, you know, everything from carbon sequestration to protecting our incredible dark skies here in central Texas. But the work is not without challenges and opportunities. You know, first and foremost, you know, it's hard to imagine now that we've gotten into cool weather and rain. But not too long ago, we were thinking about hot, dry weather and the risk of wildfire. And, you know, that's something that we take very seriously is a large land manager, both from how do we protect this

incredible investment that the city has made, and how do we protect our communities and do the right work in the right places to mitigate and manage risk? So we've done a lot of work to understand what true wildfire risk looks like. Here in central Texas, we have a long standing citizen science live fuel moisture monitoring program that gives, you know, biweekly information about fuel conditions here in on the landscape. We also just partnered with the us forest service to understand how wildfire fuels have changed over the last 20 years or so, especially on the balcones canyonlands preserve, where we saw a lot of those impacts from our past winter storms. So really trying to get good information so that we can then put the right projects in the right places. And so that looks like on our water quality protection lands, we've treated over 14,000 acres over the last 20 years with prescribed fire.

[9:50:49 AM]

Working with partners like AFD, Travis county, the wildflower center, parks and recreation, and many more. It also looks like fuel mitigation projects along our boundaries with neighborhoods and developed areas, as well as along potential ignition corridors, places like roads, power lines and the places where historically we've seen wildfire starts. And then I'd be remiss without saying that a lot of our work, too, is focused on ecosystem restoration and resilience, because healthy landscapes are much more resilient and resistant to wildfire. Another challenge on the screen here you can see the Barton springs zone and the development that's occurred since 1998. Over 23,000 acres have developed. The little speck in the middle of the purple on the left is ranch road 12 and 290 in dripping springs. You can see how that whole 290 corridor has really expanded. You can see the development in lakeway and bee cave and many other places, and that development as it marches westward and and southward, it begins to encircle our conservation lands, which provides some challenges in terms of expansion of the wildland urban interface, ecological effects, you know, kind of surround reducing wildlife corridors and that sort of thing. And it also provides fewer and fewer opportunities to continue to grow and build this conservation network. The 2018 bonds, we had $72 million and were able to protect over 6800 acres. But as as we see this development marching outward around our properties, the the opportunities are fewer for conservation protection and the costs continue to rise. As that development continues to March outward, we also see a growing threats from condemnation for linear infrastructure. You know, we have a large, connected, connected network with a single landowner. So there as as development continues to grow, we see road projects, gas pipeline projects and other things that view our property as a as a potential route. Of course, if we put a road through the middle of this incredible connected network, that will have impacts, you know, from the immediate pollution and habitat destruction to breaking up these large chunks and, you know, having other kind of spillover effects. So it's something that we're tracking very closely. We're working, trying to understand where projects might be coming and how they might be impacting these conservation lands. And then working closely with folks

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like law department and our conservation partners to make sure that we have a strategy to push back. The good news is that in some places where we've been able to push back, we've been able to encourage these projects to move to the other side of the road or to find more suitable routes. Public access is another, you know, both an opportunity and a challenge. We have a number of incredible opportunities to get out on the wildlands. We have 12 miles of trails on our Austin water man managed properties alone, and then another 30 miles on the acreage that we co-manage with parks and recreation. So a lot of publicly accessible, open all year trails. We also have guided access that we do. We work to get access to some of our bcp permit caves, and we have a number of volunteer programs that the community can get engaged with. But in a growing city with not a lot of, you know, public land, there is always demand for more recreation. And so we really think about how can we put that recreation in the right places?

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How can we closely monitor it and manage it to reduce the impacts to endangered species or to sensitive, you know, recharge lands and that sort of thing? And then lastly, you know, it, Austin water, we're working today and preparing for tomorrow. And one of the things that we're doing through our 100 year water plan, water forward is thinking about how we can learn from the lessons of the balcones canyonlands preserve and the water quality protection lands to protect our drinking water supply upstream in the lower Colorado. And so we're looking to see how we what you see here is a prioritization exercise on the right that we did as part of that water forward effort. And we're looking to starting to think about how we can put Austin water expertise and resources to work to protect land upstream and to preserve the working, rural working landscape that really provides a lot of benefits to the highland Lakes and to our water supply here in Austin. And with that, I'll just say thank you.

[9:56:13 AM]

We appreciate the time to give an update and happy to take any questions.

[9:56:18 AM]

>> All right. Thank you very much for that presentation. Any questions from councilmember duchen?

[9:56:26 AM]

>> Thank you, chair, and thank you for this very helpful presentation. And one thing I was hoping you could expand on. What is the sort of timeline you anticipate for once the committees have been established, the citizen advisory committee, the biological advisory team, the other work you mentioned, you know, getting gis up and running. What is the expected timeline for the permit to be renewed?

[9:56:51 AM]

>> We think the process will take 4 or 5 years to get through the whole process. We recently executed an interlocal agreement with the county. I didn't mention that was on one of the slides, and we hired a consultant, and they're helping us put together that timeline. So pretty soon we'll have a timeline out there to share. But it especially with the administration changing and the fish and wildlife service has been, you know, hasn't had as many staff and resources recently. So some of the some of it's out of our control in terms of the fish and wildlife service process. But we're going to do it as quickly as as we can.

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>> And what are the consequences, then, of the permit, I suppose technically being expired for 4 to 5 years?

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>> Well, it's not, it's expired, but as long as we're working in good faith to renew it, it's still in place. So there's not any consequences of of that. And as long as we just keep working, making progress towards renewing it there, there won't be any consequences.

[9:58:03 AM]

>> Okay. Thank you for clarifying that, Justin, you mentioned that the water quality protection lands are not a draw on city services. I'm just curious if you have I know when we talked to parks, they can give us kind of a rough estimate of what the the maintenance of cost per acreage is for different kinds of park land that they manage. Do you have data similar to that for what it takes to maintain either universally or different kinds of bcp land?

[9:58:33 AM]

>> Absolutely, absolutely. And I, I don't have exact figures off the top of my head and we can follow up with that. But, you know, depending on the type of work that we do, we, you know, cost varies. So we have more intensive restoration activities. We do especially, you know, focusing on our balcones canyonlands preserve, where we're trying to restore really degraded areas, areas that were over harvested in terms of, you know, cutting down trees and erosion issues, those sorts of things. So there we might have a slightly more intensive, you know, hands on restoration activity and then thinking about, say, water quality protection lands there. We focus on really broad scale treatments. So we're looking at prescribed fire, which is, you know, very cost effective way to reduce fuels and to protect those open grassland and savanna habitat. We're looking, you know, pairing that prescribed fire work with broadcast seeding. So, you know, getting seed on the ground at the right time and then letting nature do its work to, to restore those areas. And so we think a lot about, you know, the level of intervention that we take in these natural systems and trying to be wise stewards of the resources that we have.

[9:59:53 AM]

>> Got it. Well, if we can follow up on that and get some additional details, that'd be helpful. The last question I've got. Was really just about a specific you know, as you know, we're kind of trying to wrap our heads around what it means for this quasi data center to be up in this particular region, surrounded by some bcp land. And I'm just trying to broadly understand, in terms of your understanding of the recharge zone, what kinds of similar facilities already exist that are managing, say, diesel fuel for emergency backup generators, that they've got cooling facilities that have glycol in them. I'm asking in part because if you tell me that we've got two dozen other facilities that are already have similar kinds of features that they're managing and that they have mitigations for, then I'm going to say then that would be no problem in this space. But if my understanding is that's more unusual, I'd like to know that.

[10:01:00 AM]

>> Well, we you know, with the.

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>> Lands that we manage, we have we have a lot of different kinds of neighbors. I, I don't know that we've done an analysis on, you know, which ones of those store diesel fuel, for example, or, you know, have other of those kinds of impacts. So I don't know that we can can answer your question exactly,

except to say that we, you know, as we work to be good stewards and good neighbors to the land uses next to us, we also, you know, seek the same from them. So I don't know, sherry, if you have anything to add to that.

[10:01:43 AM]

>> Yeah, I would say the vast majority of our neighbors are residential on. And as you saw from that map, like along when we started, we had a lot of borders that had no development. They were just ranches. So now it's mostly residential development. We do work with watershed protection and with our development services. When there's a development coming in close to the bcp and talk about those potential impacts, sometimes it's a stormwater impact. If they have a stormwater discharge, you know, that's coming onto our land. So we'll work with them on trying to make sure that's managed appropriately. So we are involved in those conversations of trying to be clear about the impacts. I, I think this particular development we're still trying to learn about exactly what's going to happen there, but we have been involved in those conversations along with our development services and Austin water and Austin energy and watershed protection.

[10:02:44 AM]

>> Okay. Well, I appreciate that. I'm going to follow up then on that. Also, I don't want to eat up all of our time this morning, but I do want to fully appreciate the extent that if there are existing similar kinds of facilities, we can just borrow those mitigations and advise this particular organization to put them in place. I think in particular, this is responding to a community concern that says, we're not so much worried about the existence of these things, but if there is an accident of some kind, if there is some sort of penetration into the limestone, that is our drinking water, and we want to make sure that, therefore we have those mitigations in place.

[10:03:23 AM]

>> Yes, sure. Okay. Yeah. And the the B, C, C, B permit, you know, allows for development. And we can put certain provisions in that as far as making sure they're not bringing in contaminated soil and things like that. But we don't have a lot of ability to regulate development, you know, adjacent to us. That's more other departments at the city, right? So we just participate in those conversations.

[10:03:48 AM]

>> Okay. Thank you. I'll follow up. Thanks, chair. You got it.

[10:03:52 AM]

>> Vice chair. Alice.

[10:03:54 AM]

>> Thank you for the presentation. I am fortunate to get to serve on the bcp coordinating committee. And so it's something that I know myself and Brigid Shea take a lot of pride in. And we love Kimberly Harvey, helping us through all of the nuts and bolts of of what it's like to run that conservation plan. My question is going to be specifically around mopac south is set to be expanded. What kind of conversations are happening in the spaces that overlap, where the highway will expand. And we have these sensitive environmental areas like the Barton creek greenbelt, that the highway will go over.

[10:04:28 AM]

>> I know watershed protection. Usually we coordinate with them on any road projects. We have had some conversations. We several. It seems like a couple years ago we provided some comments on potential impacts to caves in that area south of there. As you know, there's a lot of caves right around circle C, so we're we're at the table, you know, just along with other departments that are in the lead, similar to what I was just talking about, where we're we're providing the information about the endangered species and then watershed protections, looking at what could be put in place to reduce the impact.

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>> So that information I didn't want to jump in front of you, Justin.

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>> I just add, you know, we're kind of going to the, the condemnation piece and, and thinking about we have some, we have some limited preserves right along that route. It does not in the current plans look

like there will be any taking or impact to those. But that's something that we watch very carefully as part of this. And, and try and see if there's ways to continue to influence that so that we minimize impact to our preserved lands.

[10:05:40 AM]

>> Thank you. I know I had seen in the news a couple of months ago that a was, you know, saying there's there's no regional significance to some of the endangered species impacts. And I just it made me smile because some of these endangered species have nowhere else to go. And so it's like, well, it's not regionally significant because these species don't migrate. You can't a salamander can't get up and walk to another spring. Like that's just not how these particular endangered species work. Do you think that that information is being received well by the entities that are reviewing these documents that are outside the cities scope of service?

[10:06:16 AM]

>> I hope so. I, I don't know, I don't know if you've been involved in any of those conversations. Shea.

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>> I what I'll say is, you know, as sherry and Justin have said, is that we do have a seat at the table and we're making sure that all of this information is making its way into the into the conversation and that it's our, you know, we're charged with protecting these places and we intend to do that.

[10:06:41 AM]

>> Thank you. I appreciate that. I know one of the criticisms that I had received from a constituent was that the water quality protection that's being planned into the project is going to mitigate for the additional impervious cover, but it's not necessarily going to help with the existing impervious cover that doesn't have enough water quality protection as part of that. So I don't want to put you all in the hot seat. I just wanted to flag that. I think this is a huge project, and it is going to impact endangered species and park space and schools and things like that. And I want to make sure that if the project's moving forward, it's got every single safeguard it possibly can have. But thank you for being at the table. I appreciate your input. Thanks.

[10:07:19 AM]

>> Thank you. All right. Well, thank you all for the work you're doing. Thank you for the update and keep it up.

[10:07:27 AM]

>> So thank you.

[10:07:28 AM]

>> Thank you.

[10:07:29 AM]

>> All right. With that, we will move to item number five, which is a briefing on the partnership between the city and peace park conservancy.

[10:07:54 AM]

>> Good morning. My name is Nicole Netherton, and I am the chief executive officer of peace park conservancy. Thanks so much for inviting us here to speak today about the conservancy's work at peace district park next to me.

[10:08:10 AM]

>> Hi, everyone. My name is Christine Chu and I manage the partnerships with the Austin parks and recreation department, including peace park conservancy.

[10:08:19 AM]

>> So I thought I'd start with a little history. Some of you have heard me talk about this before. The land that became Pease district park was donated to the city in August of 1875 by governor mps and his wife, leucadia. Pease park conservancy was then founded by our neighbor, Richard Craig, as a volunteer group known as trees for peace. In 2008, they noticed erosion and TRE decline in the park and decided to start planting and caring for the trees themselves. Trees for peace then became Pease park conservancy and a 501 C 3 in 2013, and those early conservancy leaders fundraised to create the vision plan for the park, which was unanimously approved by city council in 2014. Next, the renovation in Kingsbury commons was the first big project undertaken from the vision plan. It was $15 million raised, 10 million of those going into the ground for renovation. That was completed in 2021. Finally, in 2023, ppc and the city signed our Poma or park's operation and maintenance agreement that guides our partnership. Today. Under this Poma, the conservancy has primary responsibility for what we built in Kingsbury, with some additional requirements regarding land management activities throughout the entire park. The whole park is 84 acres, but the area of the Poma is approximately 75 acres, and the Poma also gives the conservancy special work to do in Kingsbury, including responsibility for maintaining and operating the splash pad daily, enhanced park servicing and programing and events. This slide just means to to show that there's a lot of communication and interaction between April and ppc that is required by the Poma, including an annual programing plan and operations and maintenance plan that ppc provides and must be reviewed and approved by April.

[10:10:14 AM]

Every year. We have quarterly meetings between April and ppc, the Poma management committee, and we provide information for an annual impact report, and there's copious data shared there. There's many other requirements, including a certain amount of cash reserves that ppc puts aside for the park and annual audit, and other opportunities for oversight and accountability. Both ppc and April would say that we have a successful partnership because of the way we are able to work together and meet our obligations under the Poma, but I'd like to highlight a couple other standout successes, including park safety, both in award winning environmental design standards and initiatives that have helped address and prevent crime, especially vehicle break ins. Peace park has won many local and statewide awards, including best park and best playground from the Austin chronicle, and peace is a vibrant third space for community members to enjoy, whether through activities that ppc helps to bring or through passive recreation and connection, connection to nature and each other. We're also very proud of the environmental stewardship that ppc helps bring to the partnership, including involving many volunteers in this work and helping with projects that enhance biodiversity and restore ecosystem, which is especially important in an urban park space. You can see profiled here information about the restoration project at the Windsor hillside, as well as some numbers from our fiscal year that just ended in September. So we had more than 1500 volunteers contributing more than 3000 hours in fiscal year 26. Hundreds of yards of mulch spread, hundreds of pounds of litter collected and lots of plantings, both to increase support for pollinators and to provide shade. We also provide hands on support with our staff in the park 365 days a year. We're really proud of the high level of service that we can provide to the

community, and we do lots of outreach through events like pride picnic, squirrel fest and our lives, remembered black history tours in the park.

[10:12:26 AM]

There's actually one that's starting right now. We also offer mostly no cost events to the public and have visitation from every Austin zip code. We're very grateful that the phase plan was unanimously passed by council on November 5th, and we're excited to scale our work outside of Kingsbury commons. Briefly, the phase plan expands pcc's operations and maintenance responsibility throughout the whole park, so ppc will collect trash recycling and pet waste receptacles throughout the park, mitigate graffiti except on the historic bridges at 24th and 29th street, where we'll continue to coordinate with April and maintain certain existing features like the picnic tables, the volleyball courts at polecat hollow, right on Lamar, and the split rail fence at the horizontal kissing tree in live oak meadow, and we'll continue to provide additional land management services and ecological restoration throughout the park.

[10:13:26 AM]

As part of the phase plan, we'll also coordinate volunteering, programing, rentals and concessions in the rest of the park and can maintain our exclusive use of the park for marketing and fundraising purposes, and we will extend community engagement to get public input on the whole park in order to be able to propose future improvements in alignment with the vision plan. Taking on more work in the park will require the conservancy to scale our capacity, but we're confident that we have a good plan in place to be able to do so sustainably. We will undertake a strategic planning process early in 2027. To be sure, we are visioning and planning appropriately for the next five years. We're also committed to launching the phase plan with strong attention to our fundraising and budget strategy. Second, we have already planned our current budget to add to our ops team headcount this coming year, and again likely in fiscal year 28, and will bolster our employees efforts with conditional additional volunteer projects as well. And finally, our top priority for fundraising is a focus on a balanced budget and sustainable fund. Financial sustainability. In the long term, we're committed to growing our endowment, as well as bringing more philanthropic dollars to be able to serve the park and the community at this enhanced level. That's expected in the Poma and in the phase plan.

[10:14:54 AM]

Several important things do not change with the adoption of the phase plan. The Poma, as it relates to Kingsbury commons will stay the same. We will remain responsible for most new and renovated features in the area, and the city of Austin maintains primary responsibility for the urban forest built trails, shoal creek and the surrounding park road infrastructure. Our partnership with the city of Austin

remains the same. Pease will always be public parkland and the city will continue to manage, oversee and collaborate with the conservancy at the park. Ppc commits to follow all city review processes, and we commit to the principle that we had in Kingsbury commons, which is if we build it, then we will maintain it. The city of Austin will continue some base level maintenance work at peace park, including TRE care, upkeep and some mowing. And the phase plan does not cost the city any additional funds. The benefits of the phase plan will allow us to reduce April workload so that they can provide services to other parks, especially in underserved communities. The conservancy will also provide an enhanced level of park service. Our ops team is responsive to the needs on the ground, and they are in the park every day, and we remain committed to continuing to improve the park and provide important ecological work that makes the park more biodiverse, friendlier for wildlife, more full of shade, more able to sequester carbon and be even more beautiful. Finally, as we look forward to our goals and priorities, we are aligned with April's goals as well, including site certification for current and future improvements. Green jobs development. We have we do a lot of work with Texas conservation corps, and we have internships through breakthrough central Texas. We collaborate with watershed and April on green water, green stormwater infrastructure, both existing and new opportunities in the park. And we'll continue to develop opportunities for historical and cultural interpretation, guided by our existing interpretive plan, and focused on ways to engage diverse communities with stories in and about the park.

[10:17:08 AM]

So thanks for the opportunity to share. Here's some of us who are at our sesquicentennial birthday party last summer.

[10:17:15 AM]

>> I know those people.

[10:17:17 AM]

>> Yeah.

[10:17:18 AM]

>> Happy to answer any questions.

[10:17:20 AM]

>> Sure thing. Any questions or.

[10:17:26 AM]

>> You're fine. It's your district. So I figured you have thoughts.

[10:17:29 AM]

>> All right. Well, first of all, thank you for this and very excited about the partnership and what it's going to mean for the future. And so one question I've got for Christine would be to what extent if April feels like this is a relatively successful partnership or partnership, to what extent, what have we learned? How can we model off of this and figure out how do we create other similar partnerships across the city based on what we've learned here?

[10:18:02 AM]

>> Sure. Thank you for asking that. So it was a very deliberate process to really build the framework for what we call our palmas. And it actually started in 2020 with the direction of council and then a year of developing kind of policy and framework and configurations is what we call it for our partnerships and our policy. And then we went into actually developing the agreement with our law department. And so the permit is a framework that we developed intentionally to be a model, to be able to take that to other sites that is appropriate. For example, the trail conservancy, that was the first Poma, and soon after the peace park conservancy, Poma was executed. So we also have in our framework, we not only have what we call the Poma, we do have other partnership agreements that may be more appropriate for this space. So it might be a section of a park that we're working with a partner, a user group to help to steward, improve and maintain. So every park is a little bit different and every need is a little bit different.

[10:19:23 AM]

So yes, the Poma definitely serves as that framework, but it may not be appropriate for every single park within the parks department.

[10:19:32 AM]

>> Okay. Thank you. I think there's probably some more follow up I need to understand then about what are the kinds of, again, sort of what are the lessons learned from this particular partnership that can be extended to other potential, whether they're Poma's or not? The other question I've got is, to what extent have the two of you discussed or. Maybe created or brainstormed ideas around addressing the landslide? I know we've had conversations about that, Nicole, but I'm curious to the extent that you as part of even this agreement that's come up and you guys have some ideas about what future work, what timeline? I know we've talked about funding sources, but I'd like to learn more about what you guys have discussed around that.

[10:20:16 AM]

>> So I will say Pease park conservancy has been at the table in the conversation around that since since the first days of the landslide even occurring. That has really been led by our watershed protection department with a pr peace park conservancy there, as well as other stakeholders of the site and other departments. And so that continues to be a conversation on how there can be a partnership for that site and what that looks like, both from fund development, but also ongoing stewardship and use of the site. And then Nicole.

[10:20:52 AM]

>> Sure. I'll just, I'll say in general that our, our organization, our, our donors, certainly our neighbors are very interested in continuing to problem solve. We've had walk in talks. We've tried to, you know, discuss how to address safety. That's sort of the main thing. There has been a loss of, you know, a trail. There's been there's just been multiple things where there's just an interest and an eagerness to find solutions. That said, it's not uncomplicated. It's very it's a very interesting site with a hydrogeology. I've learned a lot about it and defer to our our friends at the city about what's safe and what's appropriate. But I'll say that there is the conservancy is very interested in in helping to find solutions there.

[10:21:42 AM]

>> And so am I. So I want to make sure that's something that we can continue to talk about, to see if we can try and find whatever the right solution is and add a resource, then. Okay. Thanks a lot. Thank you. Chair.

[10:21:53 AM]

>> Absolutely no questions. Just really appreciate the coordination that's happening here. I know that we all love our park system. We know how hard it is for the department itself to be able to improve and maintain these park spaces with the constraints of the general fund budget. So I'm just really appreciative that there's nonprofits like yours coming in and that staffs coordinating so diligently to help make sure these spaces are safe for families to come and play in. Thanks.

[10:22:17 AM]

>> Thank you.

[10:22:18 AM]

>> I was hoping you could provide a little more detail or context. You talk about how now with the phase plan, that it will reduce April's o&m requirements or time. Really, can you quantify that in any way? Like, are we going to be seeing these individuals now free at other parks? And are we talking about a person, five people like, what is just kind of the scale of that?

[10:22:46 AM]

>> So I will say it's not necessarily a one for one. A lot of that is because of how the parks department, how our daily servicing is. It's that is our servicing is moving from one park to the next park. So unlike our conservancy, which has on site staff who is there during the park hours, that is not how the parks department is able to service our parks. So number one is it's it's peace park conservancy is able to provide a higher level of service. And number two, yes, it does provide the parks department the ability, though, as Nicole mentioned, we are still servicing the park. We are still servicing the trails, we are doing the TRE work, and we are doing mowing of many areas of the park. So the parks department is still going to be very much a part of the maintenance of the site. However, the daily maintenance we are seeing the conservancy take on some of those responsibilities. And with that, the parks department is then able

to take those those precious time in our daily lot about trash and restrooms and use that time to go to other sites that have high use and that need additional servicing.

[10:24:00 AM]

So that is a part of the identification of those sites that there is understanding that there is need for more servicing from our base level, and being able to redirect the staff to those sites for need.

[10:24:12 AM]

>> All right. Well that's great. Excited to hear that. You know, we're kind of creating people without having to go hire more or expand the budget. So that's wonderful work. I will just close, you know, peace park is one of my kids favorite parks. They love to go there. And of course, the splash pad and just the playscape there. So love what you all are doing. It really means a lot for families like ours. So keep up the good work. Thank you. Absolutely. All right. With that, we will circle back to the beginning of the agenda and just need a motion to approve the minutes for the September 23rd agenda. I have a motion by councilmember duchen, seconded by vice chair Ellis. Without objection, those minutes are approved. We also. Item number two is to approve the minutes for the June 2nd, 2025 and July 30th, 2025. Climate. Water parks. Parks committee minutes. Motion by councilmember duchin, second by vice chair Ellis.

[10:25:18 AM]

Without objection, those are also approved. Item number three is discussion and possible action on our calendar for 2027. This is the dates are in the backup, of course, starting in January will have a different composition. So this may need to be updated. But I think, you know, having a calendar put in place now is a good idea. So if I could just get a motion to approve the calendar move by councilmember duchen, seconded by vice chair Ellis. Without objection, those are approved and we will have a calendar in place for next year. And with that, if anybody has any future items, feel free to speak now or find me later, but otherwise I will adjourn the meeting at 10:26 A.M. Thank you so much, chair.