



**SPECIAL MEETING**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT**

**Tuesday, December 3, 2024**

*The Board of Directors conducted this meeting in accordance with  
California Government Code section 54953.*

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MIDPENINSULA  
REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT**

President MacNiven called the special meeting of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District to order at 9:32 a.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Jed Cyr, Craig Gleason, Zoe Kersteen-Tucker, Margaret MacNiven, and Curt Riffle

Members Absent: Karen Holman (Arrived at 9:35 a.m.)  
Yoriko Kishimoto (Arrived at 9:38 a.m.)

Staff Present: General Manager Ana Ruiz, General Counsel Hilary Stevenson, Assistant General Manager Susanna Chan, Assistant General Manager Brian Malone, Chief Financial Officer/Director of Administrative Services Stefan Jaskulak, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Maria Soria, Executive Assistant/Deputy District Clerk Shaylynn Nelson, Budget & Finance Manager Rafaela Ocegueda, Engineering & Construction Manager Jason Lin, Grants Program Manager Carol Schimke, Human Resources Manager Candice Basnight, Information Systems & Technology Manager Casey Hiatt, Land & Facilities Manager Brandon Stewart, Natural Resources Manager Kirk Lenington, Planning Manager Jane Mark, Public Affairs Manager Lori Low, Real Property Manager Allen Ishibashi, Procurement Program Manager Sarah Araya, Chief Ranger/Visitor Services Manager Matt Anderson, Management Fellow Samantha Rozal, and Budget Analysts Elissa Martinez and Jordan McDaniel

President MacNiven announced that the public has the opportunity to comment on the agenda, and the opportunity to listen to this meeting through the internet or via telephone. This

information can be found on the meeting agenda, which was physically posted at the District's Administrative Office, and on the District website.

### **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

**Motion:** Director Cyr moved, and Director Gleason seconded the motion to adopt the agenda.

**ROLL CALL VOTE: 5-0-0 (Directors Holman and Kishimoto absent)**

### **BOARD BUSINESS**

#### **1. Environmental Scan and Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives for Fiscal Year 2025-26 (R-24-143)**

Director Holman arrived at 9:35 a.m. and Director Kishimoto arrived at 9:38 a.m.

Chief Financial Officer/Director of Administrative Services Stefan Jaskulak presented the Environmental Scan results and stated that the environment scan external key themes include economic and labor conditions, community and stakeholder dynamics, and political and regulatory landscape. Internal key themes include organizational culture and structure, and operational resources and performance. He went into detail of each of the key themes and provided a high-level review of the key takeaway recommendations that include accelerating project delivery, enhance public engagement, invest in human capital and technology, and strengthen partnerships.

Director Riffle commented that his understanding for SB610 is that the changes could allow for housing to move into the wildlife urban interface.

General Manager Ana Ruiz explained that the measure would address some of the fire insurance issues that exist because of how fire risk is currently assessed which does not take into consideration fire mitigation actions. The measure would consider and incorporate fire mitigation actions to reduce the level of risk assigned to various areas across the state, including hillside wildland-urban interface (WUI) areas. She noted that if the risk in those areas is identified as much lower, it could facilitate development. She expressed concern that this could lead to increased development in sensitive areas that are important for habitat, wildlife connectivity, resource protection, and similar considerations, further encroaching in the WUI.

Director Holman commented that she thought that there is another legislation that did not allow housing development encroachment in the WUI areas.

Director Kishimoto stated that the legislation that Director Holman is referring to forbids housing in severe or high severity fire areas and that SB610 changes would impact this legislation.

Director Holman asked which legislators the Board should contact and who sponsored the bill, adding that she does not recall this legislation being presented to the Board.

General Counsel Hilary Stevenson stated that the bill appeared to start as one concept and then drastically change over time. She explained that the bill allows for more local control over

designating fire severity areas, subject to oversight by the state fire marshal. She pointed out that this increased local control could result in outcomes similar to what the Ms. Ruiz had described.

Director Holman suggested looking further into the bill, and who weighed in on it, and conduct advocacy efforts.

Director Kersteen-Tucker requested to further expand on the balance core mission with new initiatives since the District is beginning to expand further with additional staff and projects.

President MacNiven concurred.

Director Riffle agreed with a variation noting that he appreciated the Board report about inspecting initiatives to see if they align with the District's mission and to understand the trade-offs.

Director Riffle commented that he is agreement with the compensation, recruitment, and retention philosophy but mentioned feeling somewhat confused reading the staff report. He was under the impression that the overall turnover rate was around 10%. However, the tenure is only three years. He asked if there is a problem or anticipating a problem.

Mr. Jaskulak explained that the overall retention rate at the District is relatively low. While the industry standard is 10%, the District was at 8.5% last year. He noted a high turnover among mid-level staff, whereas senior and management-level staff tend to stay longer. However, some senior staff have left for higher salaries, which contributes to the three-year average tenure. He attributed part of this to the need to hire staff at or near the top of the salary range. Younger employees with families then may seek higher-paying opportunities or promotions elsewhere. He suggested that adjusting the compensation philosophy could allow the District to hire staff at lower levels with room for growth, and that implementing career ladders would further support retention.

Human Resources Manager Candice Basnight stated that the District is losing staff at the peak of their learning curve to surrounding agencies offering higher salaries for similar positions. She shared that her recent exit interviews were particularly disheartening, with departing employees expressing a desire to stay but they will be receiving an additional \$20,000 elsewhere for the same role. She has received feedback from former staff who missed the District and mission driven work. However, compensation is a critical driver behind the turnover.

Director Gleason mentioned that for the upcoming Action Plan and Budget Committee (ABC) meeting, it would be helpful to bring in details on lateral transfers, especially where the salary is very different.

Director Holman commented that time off can sometimes be more important than compensation and requested this topic be included in the upcoming ABC meeting. She asked about the balance and what feedback has been received from staff.

Ms. Basnight stated that the District is doing better if not the same as most agencies with time-off benefits, vacation accruals, additional holidays like Juneteenth, and flexible scheduling options such as 9/80 or 4/10s schedules. However, the primary concern for staff is financial

compensation, particularly due to inflation and comparisons with other agencies offering higher pay for similar roles.

Director Riffle highlighted the importance of strengthening partnerships to enhance project and program capacity, particularly the point about allowing partners to be responsible for their work and allow the District to remain within its lane and focus on its core work. He identified two key requirements: having capable partners who can fulfill their roles and ensuring the District establishes clear expectations upfront and adheres to them without stepping in to perform the work.

Ms. Ruiz stated that she envisions the District's future involving an increase in partnerships. As new partnership agreements are established, it will become even more critical to avoid spreading staff too thin by engaging in day-to-day operations. Otherwise, staff efforts could become consumed by these activities, and the District's core projects will not progress.

Director Kersteen-Tucker raised a follow-up question related to the internal capacity section of the report, pointing out that unexpected things have come up over the past year and are likely to happen again. She stressed the value of memorializing the processes and procedures for items that are surprises. As well as memorializing the process and procedures for how the District and the Board work with partners and maintain a separation to ensure a clear distinction between the District's role and the partners' responsibilities, including defining when and how to end a partnership if it is no longer effective.

Director Holman noted there are different types of partners, such as Green Foothills, Sierra Club, and Audubon, but what is being discussed is partners who have active, ongoing involvement not by instance or situation. She asked for the partners to be defined.

Mr. Jaskulak agreed that partners as Director Holman mentioned are more in the public input process, whereas the partnerships in this context are more of contractual partnerships where they manage a function for the District on the land.

Director Kersteen-Tucker noted that there are lots of recommendations in the staff report and asked how staff envisions the Board to revisit, approve, affirm, or edit the recommendations.

Mr. Jaskulak stated that at the highest level it would be part of the strategic goals and objectives, which is the next topic. He noted that there are a few recommendations in the report related to that, which could be further discussed if needed. He added that the report is a living document, and there are other items that may not rise to the level of strategic goals or objectives.

Director Gleason expressed support for accelerating project delivery and using the increased capacity of the organization to move the same set of projects forward faster. He noted that reviewing the Action Plan each year reveals a daunting number of projects, and the idea of increasing the organization's capacity while expanding that number is even more overwhelming.

Director Riffle added that when he looks at the project list, he focuses more on the completion list rather than those in progress. He expressed support for Director Gleason's comments to get things done rather than just having many projects moving forward. He also noted that he believes this is in line with what staff is recommending and supports that approach.

Director Riffle commented on the public engagement process, mentioning his involvement in the La Honda Public Access Working Group (PAWG) process and the Bear Creek Stables ad hoc committee. He recognized the significant effort required from the public, volunteers, and other forms of input. While acknowledging the value of these efforts, he emphasized the need to learn how to manage these processes effectively, given the trade-offs involved. He expressed appreciation that the District is not shying away from these engagements but is instead confronting them and evaluating what is working and what is not. He encouraged continuing along this path. Furthermore, he expressed that he feels that he has fallen behind in understanding the District's approach to public awareness and communications. He welcomed the opportunity for an FYI or brief presentation, particularly with the fresh perspective from the new Public Affairs Manager Lori Low and what she is seeing and where she thinks the District should be heading. He emphasized that this was not a critique, but rather would like to attain more information.

Director Kishimoto mentioned that she missed today's agenda-setting discussion but had planned to propose reviewing Measure AA (MAA) projects before addressing Board priorities and the strategic plan. Reflecting on MAA, she emphasized that the District is now 10 years into the program, with 125 projects, many of which have a lengthy permitting processes and extensive public involvement. She stressed that these projects were commitments made to the public. She recommended that staff develop a timeline and budget for all 125 projects, or at least the 25 portfolios. She highlighted that there has not been any money spent on Long Ridge, minimal progress on the Middle Stevens Creek Trail, and fish habitat restoration. She would argue that the District should look at the small rocks in addition to big rocks, as these are essential to fulfilling the District's promises. She underscored the importance of delivering on commitments ahead of future public funding efforts, noting that the public will likely evaluate the District based on its 2014 promises. Furthermore, she commented that the strategic goals and objectives were written in 2011 and believes it may be time for an overhaul.

Director Riffle suggested addressing the overhaul of the goals and objectives later in the meeting, noting that staff is already engaged in this year's strategic plan process.

Director Kishimoto agreed that it may be too late for an overhaul this year but would still look at the completion of MAA and advocated for developing a clear timeline and prospective budget for all projects.

Ms. Ruiz mentioned that Assistant General Manager Susanna Chan is working on a project that focuses on evaluating the timeframe the District has to fulfill its commitments for Measure AA projects. She noted that significant progress has been made on most of the Measure AA portfolios, but some portfolios have seen little to no progress. Regarding the potential revamp of the strategic plan, it would be helpful for staff to understand if there is a problem or issue with the current plan or what is lacking or missing. This would help staff determine the appropriate process and approach for updating it, and that it would be a project for the next fiscal year.

Ms. Chan said the project is on the current Capital Improvement and Action Plan (CIAP) and that staff is developing a 20-year roadmap for the MAA program. The goal is to create a master schedule for the remaining projects over the next 20 years. Staff will review the scope and timeline of each project to ensure the appropriate level of resources into delivering the projects within the 20-year period. This master schedule will serve as a valuable tool to manage the program effectively. Staff has allotted two years to develop the schedule, recognizing that it will

take time to evaluate the projects, the timelines, and scope. Staff can bring periodic updates throughout the two years for the Board to provide feedback on the master schedule.

Director Holman emphasized the importance of public outreach, particularly as the District will eventually seek voter support again. She noted that many of the vision statements for various preserves highlight the need for partnerships, which can take different forms, including contractual ones, as mentioned by the General Manager. She views the public as a key partner as in the La Honda PAWG and Bear Creek Stables Working Groups, where there was public partnership. She suggested that, for large or potentially controversial projects, the District should consider incorporating public engagement processes early on to prevent delays, time, and money often spent before realizing the need for public input and support.

Ms. Ruiz highlighted a key point from the environmental scan regarding the critical timing of public engagement and the importance of maintaining project momentum. She noted that both the La Honda Creek PAWG and Bear Creek Stables projects originated from extensive and robust public engagement efforts tied to the master plans for those preserves. However, she pointed out that there was a significant lag between the Board's adoption of these plans and the implementation of specific components. This delay resulted in challenges such as the loss of institutional knowledge and changes in stakeholder involvement. A key point is to be cognizant of maintaining momentum to quickly move into implementation to retain support.

Director Holman asked for clarification on how there was an interruption of momentum as she was not on the Board for the La Honda PAWG and the early Bear Creek Stables project. She asked for clarification if the project loses momentum because a PAWG is formed.

Ms. Ruiz explained that while the public engagement process added time, the real issue was the significant lag between the Board's decisions on how to proceed and the actual implementation of the projects. This delay was more than 10 years and led to changes in key players and ideas. When implementation finally began, there was some confusion and pushback, as stakeholders had either forgotten about the original plans or changed their views.

Director Holman asked how to address the lag time.

Ms. Ruiz said the District can avoid the lag time by remaining true to the project until it is completed without allowing other projects to become a priority.

Director Kersteen-Tucker mentioned that another factor that changes is leadership at the Board level, noting that several current members were not involved in earlier decisions. As a result, there is often a tendency to revisit or reinvent projects when it comes time for implementation. She suggested that when new Board members are onboarded to help them understand the need to move projects forward otherwise the momentum is lost.

Director Gleason discussed public engagement in relation to the Bear Creek Phase 2 multiuse trail alignment. He explained that an initially proposed alignment was not working, and after bringing a proposal back to the Board, a small group of stakeholders provided valuable input, ultimately consolidating their feedback into joint recommendations. While the process was disruptive, he suggested that it could offer insights for future situations where plans are not working. He recommended a more focused engagement with a key group of stakeholders, possibly having them develop joint recommendations, to streamline the public input process. He

emphasized that a simpler, more efficient approach would allow for better stakeholder input when revisiting plans.

Mr. Jaskulak expressed appreciation for the suggestion and assured that it would be taken into consideration when looking at the various levels of public input for certain projects.

Assistant General Manager Brian Malone reviewed the process used to develop the District's Strategic Plan Conceptual Model. In 2011, the Board adopted a comprehensive strategic plan to guide the District's long-term direction. Since then, the Board has annually reviewed and updated the plan to account for new opportunities and challenges in response to prior environmental scan considerations, ensuring ongoing successful implementation of the District's mission. The Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives are structured around broad categories. The CIAP is structured to be aligned with these categories. The strategic plan goals provide direction on the projects, and projects are directly linked with the strategic plan objectives. Mr. Malone reviewed the draft FY25-26 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives and suggested staff changes.

Discussion ensued and the Board provided edits to the FY25-26 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives.

Director Riffle expressed support for the strategic plan for this year and the changes. For Goal 1, Objective 3, which is about building a relationship with legislators and elected officials, he suggested attaining action items from Governmental Affairs Program Manager Josh Hugg and others to assist the Board in reaching out to build those relationships.

Director Riffle expressed support for Goal 3, Objective 1, emphasizing the importance of communicating the unique value of parks and preserves, as highlighted in the staff report. He appreciated the focus on distinguishing these elements from those of other partners and stressed to Ms. Low the need to clearly convey the specific value the District brings to its portfolio of parks and preserves.

Public comment opened at 11:33 a.m.

District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Maria Soria reported there were no public speakers for this item.

Public comment closed at 11:33 a.m.

Director Holman suggested grammatical changes to Goal 4, Objective 3 to add a comma after objectives and add the words "as well as" and delete "and".

Evaluate new initiatives against the District's mission, strategic goals and objectives, *as well as* ~~and~~ internal capacity/workplan to confirm alignment and state of readiness

Director Holman asked for clarification on what is a new initiative.

Ms. Ruiz explained that the term new initiatives phrase is meant to serve as an umbrella for anything new or different to what has already been approved by the Board in the CIAP or direction given prior from the Board. This includes new directions, ideas, concepts, or a brand-new partnership would fall under the new initiative umbrella.

Director Riffle asked whether Bear Creek Stables and the Hawthorns would have been considered new initiatives, requiring the Board to evaluate them under Goal 4, Objective 3 and consider the ramifications before processing.

Ms. Ruiz confirmed.

Director Kersteen-Tucker noted that Bear Creek Stables and Hawthorns are the two examples she wanted to ensure were addressed by the language. While not entirely new initiatives, they represent changes in direction. She expressed support as long as the language effectively encompasses these types of changes.

President MacNiven called for a recess at 12:09 p.m. and reconvened at 12:43 p.m. with all Directors present.

Public comment opened at 12:48 p.m.

Ms. Soria reported there were no public speakers for this item.

Public comment closed at 12:48 p.m.

Director Riffle mentioned that he looks forward to evaluating at the end of the meeting whether this process is still effective, noting that he reflected on last year's notes and asked the same question then. He expressed his approval of the four goals, adding that the only one missing is building relationships with new legislators, which he suggested incorporating alongside the other four.

**Motion:** Director Riffle moved, and Director Cyr seconded the motion to adopt the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives to guide the development of the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Budget and Capital Improvement and Action Plan with grammatical changes to Goal 4 Objective 3.

**ROLL CALL VOTE: 7-0-0**

## **2. Implementation Status of the Financial and Operational Sustainability Model (FOSM) Refresh Recommendations (R-24-144)**

Mr. Jaskulak presented the updates on the Financial and Operational Sustainability Model (FOSM) Refresh. He reviewed the history of FOSM, starting with the initial study and continuing through the strategic refresh. The refresh included 49 recommendations, with no significant restructuring, which were further broken down into 57 implementation actions across three phases per fiscal year, extending through FY27. He then reviewed the status of the implementation actions planned for FY24-FY27 and concluded with an update of the FOSM position hiring update reporting that 93 new positions were identified for the next 10 years and 32 positions are specific and the District is on track to achieving these goals.

Public comment opened at 1:50 p.m.

Ms. Soria reported no public comments were submitted for the closed session.



Public comment closed at 1:50 p.m.

No Board action required.

### **INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDA**

- Progress on Measure AA Commitments

Ms. Chan provided a high-level update on the MAA Program. MAA is a 30 year \$300M general obligation bond that was approved by the voters in 2014 for the District to implement the top 25 priority actions as identified in the District's Vision Plan and organized by the District's geographic area. It has now been 10 years since the District has implemented the MAA program. She then continued to provide a high-level overview of the accomplishments that have been done over the past 10 years. Using the MAA funds, 10,000 acres of open space have been permanently conserved, and the District opened close to 32 miles of new trails across eight preserves, unveiled five new public access areas, including Mount Umunhum, completed 14 habitat restoration projects including Hendry's Creek and lower Turtle Pond, added 126 new parking spaces at key locations, expanded conservation grazing programs to eight new agricultural leases, and invested \$42.3M in Coastside projects. She estimated that to date the program is approximately 48 to 52% complete in terms of project delivery. Regarding expenditures, she noted that \$102M of bond proceeds had been spent as of June this year, which represents about 32% of the \$300M bond. However, when accounting for grant funding brought in to support MAA projects, the percentage increases to approximately 42 to 43%. She added that the program is about 33% in terms of life of the program and noted that when reviewing all performance indicators, they all compare really well in terms of the life of the program, and slightly ahead in terms of project delivery.

Director Riffle suggested adding another indicator for completed projects because the public are likely interested in the progress and projects completed.

Ms. Chan stated that staff will take it in consideration when preparing for the next report.

Director Kishimoto asked and received information on the impact of inflation on project funding. She questioned whether the focus should be on meeting the allocated amount or the inflation-adjusted number.

Ms. Ruiz responded that the expenditure plan is not based on inflation. However, the District can enhance that amount using its own funds or grant funding, but the amount allocated for MAA is a very specific number.

Director Kishimoto recommended keeping the number in the forefront. She acknowledged that it does not have to be achieved but emphasized that projects completed later tend to be penalized.

Director Riffle asked Director Kishimoto what she expect staff to do differently as a result of that information.

Director Kishimoto emphasized that knowing the updated number could influence decisions, such as whether a project deserves additional funding through grants or general funds. She

pointed out that sometimes projects are deemed underfunded, and if the allocation were higher, it could lead to more ambitious proposals.

Mr. Jaskulak acknowledged Director Kishimoto's point that costs have increased, but he also noted that if everything is now twice as expensive, the remaining \$200M would require \$400M to cover, which is not feasible. He emphasized that the \$300M cap is fixed, though it can be augmented with grants, investment income from bond proceeds, and partnerships. Sometimes, additional funding is needed for specific projects, such as the Highway 17 crossings, which require more than what was initially allocated. In those cases, staff will go find the funding.

Director Kishimoto expressed concern for the little rocks, noting that those not completed until about three years later will receive only about 25% of what they would have received in 2014.

Mr. Jaskulak stated that it is true, but that is the nature of a 30-year project.

Director Kishimoto commented that the timing of projects is important and recommended reviewing the geographical allocation of where funds are being spent. She emphasized that restoration projects should be considered as important as public access projects and reiterated that projects completed first have a significant advantage.

Ms. Chan stated Director Kishimoto's point was well taken and that the Board, as a whole, did take that into consideration. She stated that before the MAA program's implementation the Board developed prioritization criteria to evaluate how to prioritize and advance projects. This evaluation criteria helped the development of the first five years of prioritization for MAA projects. A couple of years ago, the prioritization criteria was updated, which is now being used to develop the next five years of projects. Currently, they are in the second year of that five-year prioritization project list. She noted that the Board has done well in evaluating different priorities and using an objective set of criteria to determine which projects move forward and be added to the work plan and staff is very diligently implementing the Board's directions in terms of using those tools to deliver the projects.

Ms. Chan reported on the progress of the five-year prioritization list. She stated that there are 36 projects on that list and that the commitment is to start working on those projects within the five years. To date this is the second year of the five-year period, and 4 projects have been completed, 29 in progress, and 3 have not yet started. Additionally, there is an optional list of projects that will be advanced if there is enough capacity within the five-year period, and work has started on some of the projects on that list. She shared that progress has been good, and that the Board did consider the different priorities, and provided direction on how to evaluate and prioritize project delivery. She stated that developing the 20-year plan will provide an even better tool for evaluating the entire program, allowing staff to prioritize projects effectively and ensure they meet the 20-year timeline.

Director Riffle stated that in the end, the goal is to ensure that the public receives what was committed to them, considering factors like cost and inflation, acknowledging that the process staff is following is achieving this. He pointed out that every five years, the priorities are reassessed, and the focus is adjusted accordingly, the cost is provided, but the question is how much was budgeted.

Ms. Chan explained that while the cost of individual projects was not specifically considered when discussing the 5-year list over the past 10 years, as longer-term planning tools are being developed for the program over the next 20 years, staff will factor in the cost as part of the planning process, given the Board's interest, and present it for the Board's consideration.

Director Riffle commented that he believes this would address Director Kishimoto's concerns. He explained that every five years, there is an opportunity to review the list of projects, which allows the Board to advocate for priorities and discuss how to proceed with projects while ensuring the appropriate budget is allocated. With the 5-year refresh, this process would resolve the issue, as it would not rely solely on 2014 figures but be updated with more current information. He asked if this is how the process would work.

Ms. Chan stated that even with the current tools, such as the 5-year refresh of the project list, there is still the opportunity to advance certain projects or discuss how inflation affects the project scope. However, she added that with the development of the 20-year plan, there will be an even better opportunity to have those types of conversations.

Director Gleason commented that there is another nuance in the process regarding what would happen if more funds are available. He explained that if partners are involved in the project and there is not sufficient planning, the full opportunity may not be realized. He agreed that during the refresh, these questions should be addressed but emphasized the importance of asking the right questions in the process.

Director Kishimoto suggested that when this comes back to the Board, to return with some options for the Board to consider.

Ms. Chan asked if the options would pertain to the scope of the project, funding, and timeline.

Director Kishimoto confirmed.

Ms. Ruiz stated that the focus will always be on accomplishing the goals outlined in the expenditure plan and reiterated that it is a 30-year timeframe. She noted that while the funding allocation under MAA is fixed, it can be supplemented as needed. Ultimately, the focus remains on the goals identified for each portfolio and what was committed to be accomplished.

Ms. Chan stated that Director Kishimoto has asked for an update on priority actions that are part of the MAA Bond Annual Accountability Report, and Mr. Malone provide an update on the fish passage projects, Long Ridge Trails, and the Montebello and Black Mountain extension/quarry trail.

- **Progress on Big Rock Projects**

Ms. Chan provided an update on the Big Rock Projects, which hold the highest priority among the District's CIAP initiatives. These projects are strategically identified to ensure adequate resources and capacity are allocated to complete their scope of work, barring factors beyond District control. Introduced to the Board on March 6, 2024, during the FY25–FY27 CIAP retreat, the Big Rocks encompass five categories, three aligning with strategic plan goals: Climate Resilience and Biodiversity, Public Access and Trails, and FOSM Implementation. Additionally, they include the Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve projects, reflecting significant public access

and restoration efforts, and Infrastructure Improvements to support agricultural use and address facility needs. The Big Rocks list was affirmed by the Action Plan and Budget Committee (ABC) on May 7, 2024, and updated following the Board's May 14, 2024 decision to form the Bear Creek Stables (BCS) Ad Hoc Committee. This prompted a reevaluation of priorities due to resource reallocation. A refined list was presented to ABC on May 21, 2024, and the full Board on June 12, 2024, during the first budget hearing. Projects removed from the Big Rocks list remain in the CIAP but may face delays due to capacity constraints or competing priorities. Of the eleven current Big Rock projects, all remain on schedule except the Northeast Trailhead of the Bear Creek Redwoods Phase 2 Trail, delayed by external permitting challenges. While the core Phase 2 trails are complete and open to the public, the Northeast Trailhead, located within Caltrans' right-of-way at Highway 17 and Bear Creek Road is still pending.

Director Riffle inquired when the Board would receive the updated Big Rocks list.

Ms. Chan stated that the updated list will be presented at the March Board retreat. She reminded the Board that removal from the Big Rocks list does not mean a project will not occur, it will remain in the CIAP but may face potential delays or deferrals due to outside factors. She emphasized that Big Rock projects receive priority resources allocations to stay on schedule and proceed as planned.

Mr. Jaskulak concluded by reporting that the next Board retreat will be held on March 5, 2025, to review the projects that are the three-year CIAP that informs the FY25 budget.

Director Kersteen-Tucker asked whether additional Big Rocks will be added or removed moving forward.

Ms. Chan stated that the Board will have the opportunity to look at the Big Rocks list again at the upcoming Board retreat in March.

Director Kersteen-Tucker confirmed if staff will be providing the Board with recommendations for additions and subtractions for the Big Rocks list in March.

Ms. Chan confirmed the General Manager will provide recommendations.

Director Kishimoto expressed uncertainty about whether the effort to refine the strategic goals and objectives would be worthwhile, mentioning that it has undergone many changes over time. She noted that while there is room for improvement, the amount of work required might not justify the effort and sought input from her colleagues.

Director Riffle commented that he too wondered if the strategic goals and objectives should be revisited since they were created 10 years ago, but it seems to be working. He asked staff if they are continuing to work internally in being able to deliver the CIAP.

Mr. Jaskulak mentioned that about five years ago, the strategic goals and objectives were adjusted to align with the four programs that the CIAP is based on. This alignment makes it easier to track the process and deliverables for each goal and a metric. He also pointed out that they are being updated every year to stay current and relevant.

Director Riffle recommended continuing to use the strategic goals and objectives and suggested identifying key initiatives, similar to the Big Rocks for projects, to help focus on what the organization truly needs. He highlighted themes such as accelerating project delivery, enhancing public engagement, investing in human capital, and strengthening partnerships. He emphasized that in March, during the CIAP review, it should be double-checked that these areas are being actively addressed and have a list not only of Big Rocks but what is needed as an organization. Ms. Ruiz explained the big initiatives are embedded in the goals and objectives and how they are implemented will be in the work plan.

Director Riffle suggested reviewing the four strategic goals in relation to the CIAP to assess how they are being addressed within the four key areas.

Director Kersteen-Tucker stated that she appreciated the idea of re-evaluating the strategic goals and objectives but did not see anything missing from them. She believes they should continue to be reviewed annually.

Director Riffle commented that there was good discussion on Goal 4, Objective 3, but he was unclear on how it will be implemented. He asked if it would be discussed in March.

Ms. Ruiz stated that the work plan includes one, if not a couple, of projects that address the objective. She also mentioned that the Board can be updated if there are additional actions beyond the work plan projects, either through a Board FYI or another form of communication, to ensure the Board understands what is being implemented.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

President MacNiven adjourned the special meeting of the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District meeting at 2:22 p.m.

Maria Soria, MMC  
District Clerk