



SPECIAL AND REGULAR MEETING

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

Wednesday, January 22, 2025

*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 – STUDY SESSION**

President Cyr called the special meeting of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District to order at 5:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

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

Members Absent: Karen Holman

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 Stephanie Gross, Senior Planner Tina Hugg, Planner III Galli Basson, Planner III Tyler Smith, Land & Facilities Manager Brandon Stewart, Planning Manager Jane Mark, and Skyline Area Superintendent Chris Barresi

President Cyr 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.

1. Skyline Field Office Rapid Assessment Results and Selection of the Sherrill Site in Monte Bello Open Space Preserve as the new Skyline Field Office Location to Begin Conceptual Design (R-25-10)

Planner III Galli Basson, Land & Facilities Manager Brandon Stewart, Skyline Area Superintendent Chris Barresi, and two consultants from Siegel & Strain Architects - Principal Susi Marzuola and Project Manager Laura Levenberg presented the item.

Director Kishimoto commented that the building being proposed on the Sherrill site is located in the City of Palo Alto and noted that the city has strict open space zoning requirements and is uncertain whether a Conditional Use Permit is allowed in the area. She requested that staff review the original documents to confirm its feasibility, otherwise the site may need to be re-zoned as a public facility.

Director MacNiven expressed that it would be important to conduct additional outreach to the community during the design phase of the project.

Director Kishimoto inquired whether there has been any consideration of opening the space to the community and perhaps having a community room, a helicopter zone, or other uses given the large size of the parking lot. In addition, that light and glare should also be considered.

Director Riffle requested that the project be fast-tracked if the Board chooses to move forward.

Director Riffle requested including potential uses for the existing Skyline Field Office (SFO) site along with cost estimates during the design phase if the Board selects a location other than the existing SFO site.

Director Kersteen-Tucker suggested parking could be phased in, rather than having a large parking lot that may not be fully utilized.

Public comment opened at 6:37 p.m.

The following members of the public spoke in favor of the item:

- Mike Bushue
- Mark Ferrell

The following members of the public spoke against the item:

- Donna Ducca

Public comment closed at 6:45 p.m.

Director MacNiven commented that after consideration, she is fine with the Sherrill site and emphasized the importance of designing the new facility to reflect the culture of the Skyline area, which is woody, rural, and lacks many conveniences. She asked that staff focus on what the community wants and not on what "I" want. The community seeks to maintain a rural, safe way of life, and she encouraged staff to adopt a more outward thinking approach. She further stated that the facility should reflect the rural nature of the area and not dominate it. Regarding Donna Ducca's 60-year tree farm presence, she requested empathy for Ms. Ducca, noting that the project would affect 2.5 acres and noted there are nice trees on that piece of land. She suggested considering the human impact of the project and recommended reducing the parking to provide more space for trees. Lastly, she expressed her desire for the existing SFO site to be restored to a natural environment, acknowledging that it may come at a high cost. She urged staff to focus on nature, rather than parking lots, storage spaces, or public meeting spaces. She proposed that trail access could be from Sunny Jim and Ipiwa Trails with no public entrance off Skyline Boulevard. Lastly, she stated that she is fine with keeping the existing main structure and remodeling it as a ranger residence.

Director Kishimoto agreed with Director MacNiven's comments and is supportive of the Sherrill site.

Director Riffle commented that while the Christmas Tree Farm is a commercial operation, it also serves as a public experience with a trail, noting the importance of keeping this in mind. He expressed support for Option 3 (Sherrill site). He further commented on Director MacNiven's remarks, which resonated with him. As the Skyline representative on the Board, he respects her desire to return the existing SFO site to nature. However, his preference is to keep all options open and explore how that site could serve other purposes, such as hosting volunteers, docents, or training programs. He mentioned the Daniels Nature Center as an example and suggested that the existing SFO site could potentially be transformed into a public-use facility or a community space for the Skyline community. Additionally, he emphasized that not only does he want to acknowledge the District's Christmas Tree Farm neighbor, but also the Skyline neighbors, and understand what they would see as an asset for them.

Director Kersteen-Tucker commented that when considering the project, she views it from various perspectives, the neighbors and the culture of the area, as well as the workforce that calls the area home and performs vital work. She highlighted the importance of the work done by the Land & Facilities staff and rangers who are holding the line in the Skyline area. She expressed a preference for the Sherrill site, as it is not visible from key corridors. She suggested doing the best possible job to either return the existing SFO site to its natural state, as Director MacNiven proposed, or find community benefits that would truly resonate with the neighbors. Furthermore, she liked the idea of exploring the possibility of a sheriff's substation. In addition, she hoped that the parking at the new SFO site could be phased in if possible, and the importance of coordinating the planning of the Coastal Field Office with repurposing the existing Skyline facility.

Director Gleason expressed his support for the Sherrill site. He found the staff survey compelling, as it reinforced the site as the preferred choice among staff. He agreed with previous comments about preserving the area's rural character and emphasized the importance of minimizing the visual impact of the parking lot. He also pointed out that the buildings would primarily be viewed from distant trails, suggesting they be designed to look rural to lower the impact. Regarding the current SFO site, he initially agreed with Director MacNiven's suggestion to restore the area to its natural state and also agrees with Directors Riffle and Kersteen-Tucker's idea of keeping options open. He proposed prioritizing partial restoration as a high goal and that the space could be used to support District volunteers.

Director Cyr gravitated towards the Sherrill site for a variety of reasons and that no place would be perfect and this site is as close to fulfilling all the key goals as possible.

Motion: Director MacNiven moved and Director Riffle seconded the motion to:

1. Accept the Skyline Field Office Rapid Assessment and Site Selection Report.
2. Select the Sherrill Site as the new Skyline Field Office location to advance into the conceptual design phase.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 6-0-0 (Director Holman Absent)

ADJOURNMENT

President Cyr adjourned the special meeting of the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District at 7:01 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

President Cyr called the regular meeting of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District to order at 7:12 p.m. He dedicated the meeting in memory of Herb Grench, the first General Manager of the District who passed away in December.

ROLL CALL

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

Members Absent: None

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 Stephanie Gross, Planner III Galli Basson, Volunteer Program Manager Jennifer Williams, Volunteer Program Lead Judd Volino, Land & Facilities Manager Brandon Stewart, Field Resource Specialist Chelsea Young, Open Space Technician Tim Sandage, Open Space Technician Michael Vitols, Open Space Technician Joe Flewelling, Open Space Technician Chris Anderson, Real Property Planner Aaron Peth, Planner III Galli Basson, Senior Real Property Agent Kelly Hyland, Human Resources Manager Candice Basnight, and Human Resources Supervisor Rebecca Wolfe

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ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Public comment opened at 7:15 p.m.

Leonard Lehmann, a neighbor of the Hawthorns property, noted that a historic mansion on the site has been abandoned for at least 40 years. He described the structure as deteriorated, with boarded windows and not having a proper roof. He urged the Board direct staff to develop a plan within 12-24 months to either restore the property to community standards or demolish it.

Marianne Rees Schroeder, resident of Los Altos Hills, advocated for the Girouard family to continue as caretakers at Rhus Ridge under a long-term lease arrangement. She urged the Board to consider the family’s longstanding service and stressed that the family’s contribution to

maintaining the property, deterring vandalism, supporting trail users, and preserving the character and safety of the preserve.

Public comment closed at 7:20 p.m.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion: Director Riffle moved, and Director MacNiven seconded the motion to adopt the agenda.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 7-0-0

ANNOUNCE OUT OF CLOSED SESSION

General Counsel Hilary Stevenson announced that the Board met in closed session on Wednesday, January 15, 2025 and took no reportable action.

SPECIAL ORDERS OF THE DAY

Introduction of Staff

- Judd Volino, Volunteer Program Lead
- Chelsea Young, Field Resource Specialist
- Tim Sandage, Open Space Technician
- Michael Vitols, Open Space Technician
- Joe Flewelling, Open Space Technician
- Chris Anderson, Open Space Technician

INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDA

- Maher Property Additions, Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve
- Review Use of Contingency Funds FY24

CONSENT CALENDAR

Public comment opened at 7:42 p.m.

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

Public comment closed at 7:42 p.m.

Motion: Director Kersteen-Tucker moved, and Director Gleason seconded the motion to approve the Consent Calendar.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 7-0-0

1. **Approve the January 8, 2025 meeting minutes**
2. **Approve Claims Report**
3. **Appointment of the Board of Directors Standing Committee Members and Representatives to Various Bodies, Including the Governing Board of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Financing Authority, for Calendar Year 2025 (R-25-11)**

General Manager's Recommendation: Approve the Board President's appointments to the Board Standing Committees and other bodies, including the Governing Board of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Financing Authority, and the compensable status for attendance at these meetings.

4. Approve the addition of a new Central Services Department Manager position as recommended by the Financial and Operational Sustainability Model Refresh (R-25-12)

General Manager's Recommendation: Approve the addition of a new Central Services Department Manager position to begin the process of restructuring operational programs between the existing Land and Facilities Department and a new Central Services Department. This change will enable an expanded specialization, focus, and leadership of essential core functions to better meet program and project delivery commitments, increase capital project workflow, and ensure capacity keeps pace with the growth in public visitation, land acreage preserved, and new miles of trail added within the open space preserves.

5. Award of Contract to Primal Paint Inc., for the Exterior Painting of three (3) Residences and Two (2) Accessory Structures located within El Corte de Madera, La Honda Creek and Thornewood Open Space Preserves (R-25-13)

General Manager's Recommendations:

1. Authorize the General Manager to award a contract to Primal Paint Inc., to paint the exteriors of three residences and two accessory structures located in El Corte de Madera, La Honda Creek and Thornewood Open Space Preserves for a not-to-exceed base contract amount of \$60,630.00.
2. Authorize a 10% contingency of \$6,063.00 to cover unforeseen tasks beyond the current scope, bringing the total not-to-exceed contract amount to \$66,693.00.

6. Grant Agreement under the United States Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration Highway Infrastructure Program to support the Highway 17/El Sereno Open Space Preserve Spooky Knoll Trail Project (R-25-14)

General Manager's Recommendations:

1. Adopt a resolution authorizing the General Manager to enter into a grant funding agreement for \$400,000 in United States Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration Highway Infrastructure Program funding.
2. Confirm continued use of "Spooky Knoll" as the trail name for consistency with the Congressional funding designation; if desired, future renaming of the trail could be investigated after construction is completed and grant obligations are fulfilled.

7. Award of On-Call Contracts for Inventory and Monitoring of Botanical Resources Services (R-25-15)

General Manager's Recommendations:

Award contracts for on-call botanical services to the following five firms, each contract with a term of four (4) years and a not-to-exceed contract amount of \$320,000:

1. Avila and Associates, Inc., of Walnut Creek, CA
2. H. T. Harvey and Associates of Los Gatos, CA
3. Nomad Ecology, LLC of Martinez, CA
4. UC Santa Cruz Arboretum & Botanic Garden (University of California, Santa Cruz)

5. Vollmar Natural Lands Consulting, Inc., of Berkeley, CA

BOARD BUSINESS

8. Proposed purchase of the Alves Properties: 1) 2.61-acre Commercial Property at 2251 South Cabrillo Highway and 1602 Miramontes Point Road, Half Moon Bay, CA as a potential new Coastal Area Field Office site (San Mateo County APNs 066-093-270 and 066-093-280) and 2) 31.26 and 31.42-acre Open Space Properties (62.68 acres total) on Miramontes Point Road in unincorporated San Mateo County as additions to Miramontes Ridge Open Space Preserve (San Mateo County APNs 066-430-100 and 066-430-110) (R-25-16)

Real Property Planner Aaron Peth presented.

Public comment opened at 7:57 p.m.

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

Public comment closed at 7:57 p.m.

Motion: Director Kersteen-Tucker moved, and Director Riffle seconded the motion to

1. Determine that the recommended actions are categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as set out in the staff report.
2. Adopt a Resolution authorizing the purchase of the Alves Properties for \$8,100,000 with a corresponding authorization for a Fiscal Year 2024-25 budget adjustment of the same amount.
3. Adopt a Use and Management Plan for the Open Space Properties, as set out in the staff report.
4. Withhold dedication of the Alves Properties as public open space at this time.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 7-0-0

9. Hawthorns Historic Complex – Lower Barn Partnership Opportunity (R-25-17)

The staff report was presented by Planner III Galli Basson.

Director Holman referred to page four of the staff report which states, “Also, per the Board-approved goals, the partnership agreement and requirements regarding structure rehabilitation and reuse would be structured to follow applicable guidelines for the treatment of historic properties.” She noted that, in addition to guidelines, there are standards that need to be considered. She suggested adding the word “standards” into the language since it is a CEQA requirement. She expressed hope that, as staff reviews the project, they consider the possibility of trade-offs and how best to manage them. Lastly, she suggested it would be prudent to include a preservation architect as part of the lead team.

Director Gleason mentioned that the question of how the public will be able to use the property keeps coming up and noted that as the District moves forward with the agreement, working out the details of public access will help people feel more comfortable with the proposal.

Public comment opened at 8:30 p.m.

The following members of the public addressed concerns they have for the project:

- Leonard Lehmann
- Kristi Corley
- Karen Askey

The following member of the public spoke against the item:

- Richard Crevelt

Public comment closed at 8:42 p.m.

Motion: Director Riffle moved, and Director Holman seconded the motion to direct the General Manager to pursue a partnership for rehabilitating and programming the Hawthorns Historic Complex Lower Barn and bring the proposed terms and conditions of a partnership agreement to the Board of Directors at a later meeting for consideration of approval.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 7-0-0

10. Amendments to Board Policy 2.03, *Employee Compensation Guiding Principles (R-25-18)*

The staff report was presented by Chief Financial Officer Stefan Jaskulak.

President Cyr called for a recess at 8:57 p.m. and resumed the meeting at 9:01 p.m. with all Board members present.

Public comment opened at 9:30 p.m.

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

Public comment closed at 9:30 p.m.

Motion: Director MacNiven moved, and Director Gleason seconded the motion to adopt the amendments to Board Policy 2.03, *Employee Compensation Guiding Principles*, also referred to as the “compensation philosophy,” provided as Attachment 1 to this item, as unanimously supported by the Action Plan and Budget Committee.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 7-0-0

INFORMATIONAL REPORTS

A. Committee Reports

None

B. Staff Reports

Brian Malone provided an update of recent activities related to Bear Creek Stables.

C. Director Reports

Director Kishimoto reported she attended the following meetings:

- January 16 – Bay Conservations & Development Commission
- January 22 - Friends of Stevens Creek meeting attended with Director Riffle

Director Holman announced her reappointment to the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority.

Director Cyr reported he attended the following meeting:

- January 22 - Santa Clara Valley Water Commission

ADJOURNMENT

President Cyr adjourned the regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District meeting at 9:38 p.m.

Maria Soria, MMC
District Clerk