



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

Board Meeting 17-06

SPECIAL MEETING

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

Mitchell Park Community Center - Adobe Room
3700 Middlefield Rd.
Palo Alto, CA 94303

**Thursday, February 23, 2017
9:30 AM**

APPROVED MINUTES*

CALL TO ORDER

President Hassett called the special meeting of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District to order at 9:31 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Jed Cyr, Cecily Harris, Larry Hassett, Yoriko Kishimoto, Curt Riffle and Pete Siemens

Members Absent: Nonette Hanko

Staff Present: General Manager Steve Abbors, Assistant General Manager Ana Ruiz, Assistant General Manager Kevin Woodhouse, Chief Financial Officer/Director of Administrative Services Stefan Jaskulak, Assistant General Counsel Hilary Stevenson, Controller Mike Foster, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Jennifer Woodworth, Planning Manager Jane Mark, Interim Public Affairs Manager Christine Butterfield, Engineering and Construction Manager Jay Lin, Human Resources Supervisor Candice Basnight, Information Systems Technology Manager Garrett Dunwoody, Skyline Area Superintendent Tom Lausten, Land and Facilities Manager Brian Malone, Natural Resources Manager Kirk Lenington, and Real Property Manager Mike Williams

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Director Hanko arrived at 9:34 a.m.

Saratoga City Council member Howard Miller spoke in support of providing ADA access to the Upper Terrace of Quarry Park and the Saratoga-to-Sea Trail and asked the Board to partner with Saratoga to support these projects.

*Approved by the Board of Directors on March 22, 2017

Debbie Pedro, Planning Director for the Town of Portola Valley, spoke in favor public access to the Hawthorn Property, including realignment and widening of the Alpine Road Trail.

BOARD BUSINESS

General Manager Abbors provided opening comments summarizing the agenda topics for the retreat and the goal to keep the Board informed on progress related to current District projects and recommended projects for the upcoming fiscal year. Mr. Abbors reviewed the Board-directed success criteria and explained current constraints on District workload and District staff including continued implementation of Measure AA and a new business model as informed by the Financial and Operational Sustainability Model.

Assistant General Manager Kevin Woodhouse provided an update on projects to be completed before the end of the current fiscal year and the seven project focus areas Fiscal Year 2017-18.

Chief Financial Officer/Director of Administrative Services Stefan Jaskulak described projects associated with implementation of the new business model and projected for completion by June 2017. Mr. Jaskulak described proposed FY2017-18 projects related to staff facilities, technology, and organizational improvements, including the creation of an intranet, document management system, and project tracking and documentation system.

Assistant General Manager Ana Ruiz summarized current and upcoming projects associated with staff facilities, including studying alternatives and design development for the Administrative Office, preliminary site assessments for a South Area Field Office, and evaluation of additional field office sites.

Ms. Ruiz described the ongoing and proposed projects associated with opening Mount Umunhum Summit to the public, including property purchases, completion of the Mt. Umunhum Trail and Road improvements, construction of summit improvements, and a public grand opening.

Ms. Ruiz provided an update regarding the opening of La Honda Open Space Preserve. Completed projects and proposed projects include repairs to ranch roads, construction of a parking area along Sears Ranch Road, visitor education materials for recreation in active grazing pastures, drafting a Red Barn Site Plan, and a public grand opening for the preserve.

Ms. Ruiz summarized projects associated with opening the Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve to the public. Ms. Ruiz described projects to be completed before the end of the current fiscal year and proposed for FY2017-18, including approval of the Environmental Impact Report and Preserve Plan, building a new parking lot, and numerous water system, Bear Creek Stables, and Alma College improvements.

Mr. Woodhouse summarized several projects planned for FY2017-18 related to improving and creating regional connections, including Rancho San Antonio transit connections, Bay Area Ridge Trail crossing, Saratoga-to-the-Sea regional trail connection, and Ravenswood Bay Trail design and implementation.

Director Siemens left at 10:22 a.m. and returned at 10:25 a.m.

President Hassett announced Director Riffle will be recusing himself regarding any Board discussion related to Cloverdale Ranch.

Director Hanko left at 10:28 a.m.

Mr. Woodhouse discussed other Measure AA projects and projects driven by the implementation of the Strategic Plan and the District's mission, which are currently underway or recommended for FY2017-18, such as El Sereno Open Space Preserve dog access, Fremont Older public safety improvements, Vision Plan review, and outreach and partnership opportunities.

Director Riffle asked how the information is being relayed to the public.

Mr. Abbors spoke regarding the strategic direction of the Public Affairs department and recruitment timeline for a new Public Affairs Manager.

Interim Public Affairs Manager Christine Butterfield spoke regarding the Public Affairs strategic plan currently being developed, including communications plans, departmental support, and integration of Public Affairs staff with the project teams.

Director Riffle commented on the public's desire to access the preserves.

Director Kishimoto thanked staff for their efforts in completing numerous projects in the current fiscal year.

Director Kishimoto commented on the need to balance the three aspects of the District's mission.

Director Cyr spoke regarding the need to set dates for opening the District's preserves to the public.

Director Harris suggested not promoting projects as Measure AA-funded projects because it may cause confusion for the general public because there are several Measure AAs in the area, including the Measure AA for the Bay Restoration Authority.

Director Siemens commented on the need to focus on completing projects and less on the use of Measure AA as a funding source for those projects.

Public comments opened at 10:52 a.m.

Frank Bakonyi spoke in favor of increasing communication with the public regarding project results, especially those that directly affect public access. Additionally, Mr. Bakonyi spoke in favor of selecting a tenant for Bear Creek Stables as soon as possible.

Public comments closed at 10:56 a.m.

Director Riffle spoke in favor of public accountability regarding Measure AA projects and the need to focus on Coastal Area projects.

Director Cyr left at 10:59 a.m. and returned at 11:01 a.m.

Mr. Woodhouse reported there are numerous projects related to the Coastal Area included in the draft Action Plan that could be highlighted more prominently.

Mr. Woodhouse and Ms. Ruiz explained the draft Action Plan before the Board includes work to be completed by six prior Board-approved positions, and three additional positions in the planning and project delivery business line would be needed. The added positions follow FOSM projections and are fiscally affordable according the District's 30-year financial model.

The Board recessed at 11:06 a.m. and reconvened at 11:15 a.m. with Directors Cyr, Hassett, Riffle, and Harris present.

Ms. Ruiz described the list of potential Action Plan projects proposed for FY2017-18 explaining the list will likely be shortened based on staff capacity and other District resources.

Directors Kishimoto and Siemens returned at 11:17 a.m.

Director Riffle suggested the Board discuss the three proposed positions needed to complete the projects included in the draft Action Plan.

By consensus, the Board agreed to the three proposed positions with the understanding that the positions would be included in the FY2017-18 Budget for additional discussion and approval by the Board as part of the annual budget process.

The Board reviewed the seven areas of focus for the draft Action Plan and requested and received clarification regarding the projects included. The Board also requested edits to various project descriptions.

Director Siemens requested clarification of the Mount Umunhum Radar Tower second assessment and repairs stating his concern regarding spending money on repairs when it was his understanding that outside money would help fund the repairs.

Ms. Ruiz explained the project includes assessment and initial design for the repairs, and any additional repair work would require Board approval of the construction contract.

District Clerk Jennifer Woodworth read a letter from Basim Jaber stating the Umunhum Conservancy's desire to be involved in budgeting for and planning any repairs to the radar tower.

President Hassett suggested including some of the specific veterans' stories and interviews in the Mt. Umunhum audio tour.

Mr. Abbors reported that information and materials would also be provided to the Veterans Affairs Council.

Director Harris requested additional information regarding project support for La Honda Creek projects.

Mr. Woodhouse explained these projects are related to support from the Public Affairs department related to the opening of this preserve and others. The language will be updated to reference Public Affairs staff's communication plans.

Director Riffle inquired if the public will be involved in developing the Red Barn Site Plan.

Ms. Ruiz explained public meetings planned for this project will provide opportunities for public input.

Director Riffle asked if the proposed Coastal Office at the Driscoll Event Center would be a part of the FY2017-18 Action Plan.

Land and Facilities Manager Brian Malone reported staff is currently studying the feasibility of using the Event Center for a staff field office, and the item may be added to the Action Plan.

Director Riffle commented on the need for progress to continue for the projects at La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve.

Director Harris suggested organizing the Bear Creek Preserve projects by Alma College, Bear Creek Stables, water system, etc. Additionally, Director Harris commented on the large amount of District funding for stable improvements will have a private benefit.

Land and Facilities Manager Brian Malone explained the stables improvements will be completed in a phased approach with the initial improvements being improvements necessary to allow for public access. The second phase of improvements will require tenant funding.

Public comments opened at 11:42 a.m.

Frank Bakonyi spoke in favor of selecting a tenant prior to stable improvements to allow the tenant to raise funds in preparation for stable improvements. Stable improvements should be undertaken with the understanding that the public will have access to the stables for education programs and other public programs.

Public comments closed at 11:45 a.m.

Assistant General Counsel Hilary Stevenson explained that when improvements are made on public property, state law requires a prevailing wage is paid. This requirement remains even when tenants are funding the improvements.

Director Riffle spoke in favor of using the Stevens Creek Trail as a possible trail connection for Rancho San Antonio, and the District may be able to help facilitate the trail connection.

Director Harris spoke in favor of the Purisima-to-the-Sea trail. Director Harris also questioned the need for the District to do work on the Alpine Road, since it is owned by San Mateo County.

Mr. Abbors explained San Mateo County currently owns Alpine Road, and an engineering study is first needed to understand the problem and better inform whether the District is prepared to own the property.

Director Harris suggested the project may be delayed due to the road's unknown condition.

Director Kishimoto spoke in favor of Alpine Road as a key cyclist connection and suggested she would be open to alternatives. Also fixing the road now may prevent the need for more expensive fixes later.

Director Hanko returned at 12:05 p.m.

Director Riffle announced his recusal regarding Cloverdale Ranch and left the room.

Mr. Abbors provided additional information regarding the size, location, and potential regional connections for Cloverdale Ranch including a proposed Board tour of the property. There are currently no adjacent District preserves.

Director Riffle reentered the room at 12:08 p.m.

Director Kishimoto expressed her support for the Saratoga-to-the-Sea Trail, Ravenswood Bay Trail, and Hawthorn property public access.

Director Kishimoto requested additional information and clarification regarding several regional connection projects related to protection of watershed lands.

Director Siemens spoke regarding Saratoga City Council's support of the Saratoga-to-the-Sea project and in favor of using District Measure AA funds to support Saratoga's work on this project.

Mr. Abbors spoke regarding Measure AA funds for land acquisition and wildlife conservation. Saratoga Councilman Miller has spoken in favor of using District funds towards purchasing an easement for the trail, and the District will look into the logistics of this suggestion.

The Board recessed at 12:19 p.m. and reconvened at 12:29 p.m. with all Directors present.

Director Kishimoto requested the language describing the Cooley Landing project be broadened to include a second recommendation to allow for flexibility in scoping the project, including a potential education center.

Director Hanko requested additional information regarding wildlife corridors along Highway 17.

Natural Resources Manager Kirk Lenington provided additional information related to the proposed Highway 17 wildlife corridors, including District partners for the project.

Directors requested clarification regarding other proposed Action Plan projects, including restoration forestry, District obligations at the Hawthorn Historic Complex, and outreach efforts for the San Mateo County Coast.

Director Harris left at 12:54 p.m. and returned at 12:57 p.m.

Director Kishimoto requested additional information regarding wildfire management and protection and requested creation of a comprehensive fire response plan.

Mr. Lenington explained CalFire typically develops comprehensive fire management plans on a regional scope. District staff is working with various agencies to inform them of biologically sensitive areas, fuel breaks already in place, etc. and provide additional information for the fire management plans.

Mr. Malone reported Land and Facilities crews provide ongoing fire protection measures, including mowing, disking, and structure clearance throughout the District's preserves.

Director Siemens suggested including pursuit of a master permit with San Mateo County.

Director Harris left at 1:16 p.m.

Ms. Ruiz reported District staff has provided grading permit exemption language to San Mateo County, similar to language included in Santa Clara County's grading ordinance. In addition, there are now San Mateo County staff members dedicated to the District's type of projects, which has shortened the permit process.

Director Siemens requested to add the following project "Pursue San Mateo County permit streamlining."

The Board reviewed the various suggestions made throughout the day to determine which will move forward.

Director Hanko suggested having a meeting in the Coastal Area to present to the public projects completed in the area.

Planning Manager Jane Mark suggested including a column on the Action Plan to call out projects that are related to the Coastal Area.

The Board discussed the need for an office on the San Mateo Coast.

Mr. Malone explained staff will have an interim office in the Coastal Area, but further analysis of a permanent office will need to be deferred until FY2018-19 due to limited staff capacity for the project.

The Board decided against including this project in the Action Plan.

Mr. Abbors provided closing comments summarizing the District's focus for the coming fiscal year.

President Hassett thanked staff and the members of the Board for their work and comments.

ADJOURNMENT

President Hassett adjourned the Special Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District at 2:18 p.m.

Jennifer Woodworth, MMC
District Clerk