



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

# Memorandum

DATE: June 12, 2019

MEMO TO: Board of Directors

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, AICP, General Manager *[Signature]*

FROM: Brian Malone, Assistant General Manager

SUBJECT: Hawthorns Historic Complex Update, Windy Hill Open Space Preserve

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## SUMMARY

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) has been seeking a partner for restoration and operation of the Hawthorns property Historic Complex since 2014; this memo is an update on District efforts in forming such a partnership.

Last year, on June 1, 2018, the District signed an access license agreement with Jim and Patty White to allow them to conduct initial planning, design, and feasibility investigations for their proposal to renovate the Hawthorns historic house for use as an independent community residence for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. On May 2, 2019, Jim White met with District staff to explain that they had decided that they would no longer pursue the proposed partnership, and instead investigate alternative sites. The Whites reached this conclusion after discussions with Town of Portola Valley staff. Town staff provided a preliminary interpretation of the Town's zoning regulations applicable to multi-family dwellings and concluded that only 8 to 9 independent living apartments may be permitted. The Whites' preliminary plans require at least 10 occupants to make the independent living community financially viable.

## BACKGROUND

In 2006, the Board of Directors (Board) accepted the 79-acre Hawthorns property, which was gifted to the District. The property transferred to the District in 2011 as the Hawthorns Area of Windy Hill Open Space Preserve. Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) holds a conservation easement over the property, which restricts development and improvements. Soon after, in 2012, the Board adopted a Preliminary Use and Management Plan for the property (PUMP; R-12-46). Since that time, staff have implemented a number of actions prescribed by the PUMP, including:

- Secured the historic mansion and surrounding structures against trespass and vandalism.
- Evaluated long-term management alternatives for the historic complex.
- Sought partnerships to restore and preserve/manage the historic resources.
- Established an onsite employee residence to provide presence and monitoring.
- Implemented wildfire fuel reduction and defensible space safety measures in accordance with Woodside Fire Protection District fire marshal prescriptions.

Staff issued a Request for Letters of Interest on April 3, 2014 to seek a partner who would restore and utilize the Hawthorns historic house. On April 8, 2015, the Board approved a partnership with Richard and Ann Crevelt. On August 8, 2016, the District entered into a one-year license agreement with the Hawthorns Preservation Trust Foundation (Foundation), which was formed by Mr. Crevelt for the purpose of restoring and utilizing the building. The Foundation made limited progress during the one-year term of the agreement and the District did not renew the license agreement after it expired. During their outreach, the Foundation became acquainted with the Whites and introduced them to the District.

On June 8, 2017, the Whites presented a proposal to restore the Hawthorns for use as an assisted living facility for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The proposal was largely consistent with the PUMP, the conservation easement held by POST, and Board policy 4.02 *Improvements on District Land*, which directs staff to seek partnerships to preserve historic structures. After positive discussions with the Whites, the District granted them an access license agreement on June 1, 2018. The Whites hired various consultants to investigate the condition of the structures. Although the consultants did not produce a detailed assessment document, Jim White relayed that the estimated project costs were approximately 10 million dollars. Renovation of the mansion requires the replacement of virtually all components of the building, including all framing that forms the structure of the building. The Whites did not submit a permit application to the Town because a series of preliminary discussions with Town staff led them to believe that their application would be unsuccessful.

The financial plan presented in the Whites' partnership proposal to the District assumed that apartment lease and services agreements would provide \$50,000 per year, per tenant, which is consistent with the amount of financial assistance that persons with disabilities are eligible to receive for housing and programmatic assistance. However, given that the Town indicated it may only allow 8 to 9 apartments, the facility would have an annual operating loss that would be unsustainable, especially given the large capital outlay for the initial reconstruction and ongoing maintenance of the Hawthorns house.

## **NEXT STEPS**

General Manager Ana Ruiz has contacted the Town with a request to have a couple of Board members and staff meet with their Town Mayor and Vice Mayor to discuss the White's proposal. If a partnership with the Whites is no longer viable, staff will evaluate options for the Hawthorns complex to present to the Board later this year.