



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The Committee conducted this meeting in accordance with California Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-29-20. All Board members and staff participated via teleconference.

Tuesday, August 4, 2020

DRAFT MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Director Kishimoto called the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee to order at 2:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members present: Karen Holman, Zoe Kersteen-Tucker, and Yoriko Kishimoto

Members absent: None

Staff present: General Manager Ana Ruiz, General Counsel Hilary Stevenson, Assistant General Manager Brian Malone, Assistant General Manager Susanna Chan, Chief Financial Officer Stefan Jaskulak, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Jennifer Woodworth, Planning Manager Jane Mark, Senior Planner Tina Hugg, Planner II Leialani Hufana, Engineering & Construction Manager Jay Lin, Senior Capital Project Manager Tanisha Werner, Senior Capital Project Manager Scott Reeves, Senior Resource Management Specialist Julie Andersen, Natural Resources Specialist Karine Tokatlian, Capital Field Projects Manager Bryan Apple

District Clerk Jennifer Woodworth announced this meeting is being held in accordance with Governor Newsom's Executive Order allowing Committee members to participate remotely. The District has done its best to conduct a meeting where everyone has an opportunity to listen to the meeting and to provide comment. 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. Ms. Woodworth described the process and protocols for the meeting.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

District Clerk Jennifer Woodworth reported no public comments had been submitted.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion: Director Holman moved, and Director Kersteen-Tucker seconded the motion to adopt the agenda.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

1. Beatty Parking Area and Trail Connections Project at Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve (R-20-83)

Planner II Leialani Hufana described project progress to date, including a commitment to Santa Clara County (County) to develop a trail connection to the Priest Rock Trail as part of a regional trail connection.

Director Kersteen-Tucker inquired regarding the availability of equestrian parking in the area.

Ms. Hufana reported that no equestrian parking is available in the area.

Ms. Hufana described feedback received from the Committee and members of the public and the project modifications to address those comments, including newt protection and environmental enhancements; maximize parking in the open flat area of the property; partnering with Santa Clara County on parking options; and bicycle and equestrian parking areas. Ms. Hufana provided updates the project in response to the feedback received. Ms. Hufana reviewed the various project options: (1) vehicular seasonal parking lot; and (2) vehicular and equestrian seasonal permit parking lot.

Director Holman requested clarification regarding the driveway at SA42 and its nearness to the creek and width of the driveway.

Senior Capital Project Manager Scott Reeves reported the driveway has been studied and been determined to be feasible at its current width and with minimal use as an ingress only driveway with only seasonal use for equestrians. Also, since it is an existing driveway with a permanent impact, maintenance of the driveway would be permitted by the County.

Director Kersteen-Tucker inquired regarding the level of newt mortality along various areas of Alma Bridge Road and at the driveways.

Senior Resource Management Specialist Julie Andersen reported that newts would be crossing through the driveways, but they would be crossing while the seasonal parking lots are closed. Ms. Andersen provided information regarding the areas along Alma Bridge Road with the highest mortality but reported newt mortality occurs along then entire road length.

Ms. Hufana described the next steps of the project including review by the Board of Directors and environmental review.

Director Kersteen-Tucker inquired regarding the need for the proposed parking lot.

General Manager Ana Ruiz stated the decision is largely policy based related to creating a new trail connection without a parking area to allow the public to easily access it. The nearby County parking lot is already heavily used on the weekends and requires a fee. The parking lot would serve the regional trail connection and provide safe access to the public without the danger of walking along Alma Bridge Road and potentially provide equestrian parking, which is lacking in the area.

Director Kishimoto inquired regarding potential parking areas outside of the newt mortality areas or other possible solutions to address newt mortality.

Ms. Andersen reported the County is looking into the impact on the newt population and a potential proposal to provide safe wildlife crossings.

Director Kishimoto suggested including information from the District's resource management policies related to habitat connectivity when the item is considered by the full Board.

Director Holman inquired regarding how the number of proposed parking spots was determined.

Mr. Reeves reported the number is due to the desire to minimize impact on the area and could be increased based on the Board's desire to increase access.

Director Holman suggested the site may be a potential site for environmental education and historic resources interpretation.

Planning Manager Jane Mark stated these options are currently being explored by District staff.

Director Holman suggested the staff may be a better location for environmental restoration rather than public access.

Ms. Andersen stated the District recently restored the Hendrys Creek area, which was a higher priority site that is not open to public access.

Public comment opened at 3:10 p.m.

District Clerk Jennifer Woodworth read the submitted comments into the record.

Nancy Asquith provided comments related to the high mortality of newts along Alma Bridge Rd.

Robin Argawal opposed building a new parking lot due to the negative impact on newts in the area.

Merav Vonshak provided comments related to protecting newts and the seasonal nature of the proposed parking lot to protect against newt mortality.

Carlos Marquez Garcia expressed concern regarding newts and other wildlife that could be killed while crossing the proposed parking lot and Alma Bridge Rd. Mr. Marquez Garcia suggested including safe crossings for amphibians and other wildlife in the project.

Kim Cabrera expressed concern regarding the negative impacts of a new parking area on newt mortality and inquired if additional parking is needed in the area.

Teri Baron provided comments supporting Option 2 included in the staff report and in favor of equestrian parking in the area.

Public comment closed at 3:15 p.m.

Director Holman expressed concerns regarding the impact of equestrian trailers on the driveways that are located near the creek and potential negative impacts to the creek. Director Holman recommended eliminating option 2 and delaying the project until completion of further research on the impact to newts by the County.

Director Kersteen-Tucker questioned the need for additional parking in the area and whether studies have been completed to study the need for parking. Director Kersteen-Tucker expressed support for delaying the installation of the parking lot until additional analysis related to parking and newt mortality is completed. Director Kishimoto spoke in support of having equestrian parking on this location if a parking lot is built.

Director Kishimoto spoke regarding the need to balance environmental restoration with public access and suggested a Board policy may be needed to mitigate public access impacts with environmental restoration projects. Director Kishimoto spoke in favor of delaying the project and working with the County to extend the timeline to provide a regional trail connection.

Director Kersteen-Tucker inquired if the County had been contacted related to constructing the regional trail connection without an additional parking area.

Ms. Ruiz stated that a permit parking lot would help limit the number of vehicular trips through the area because it would potentially have the effect of limiting the number of visitors seeking access to the trail.

General Counsel Hilary Stevenson expressed concern related to requiring preserve visitors cross the road in order to access the District's trails.

Assistant General Manager Brian Malone provided additional information regarding how District permit parking lots are managed, which helps manage the number of visitors to the preserve.

Assistant General Manager Susanna Chan reported the District currently has a \$150,000 grant from Valley Water for trail construction that requires the trail to be built before June 2025.

Ms. Andersen provided an estimated timeline for the newt mortality study, which is currently being scoped. Monitoring is planned for fall through spring, and ideally the information could be completed in the next one to two years but could take up to four years depending on which study is funded.

Ms. Ruiz suggested staff could return with the project with any data received to date within the next two years, which may allow the project to move forward with the secured grant funding if directed by the Board.

Director Holman suggested working with Valley Water to determine if an extension for the grant funding could be granted due to project delays resulting from COVID-19.

Motion: Director Kishimoto moved, and Director Holman seconded the motion to direct staff to approach Santa Clara County and Valley Water to request a time extension to allow time to complete the new study and to bring the item back to the Board at the appropriate time.

Friendly amendment: Director Holman offered a friendly amendment that staff would pursue development of potential environmental education opportunities for the site during the intervening time.

Ms. Ruiz inquired if potential education opportunities can be developed at this time when public access for the site has not been approved by the Board.

Director Holman withdrew her friendly amendment.

Director Kishimoto suggested members of the Board may be available to advocate with County officials regarding further coordination with the County.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Kishimoto adjourned the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee at 3:51 p.m.

Jennifer Woodworth, MMC
District Clerk