



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-12-119  
Meeting 12-37  
November 28, 2012

## **STUDY SESSION AGENDA ITEM 1**

### **AGENDA ITEM**

Discuss the Purpose of the Vision Plan Community Advisory Group and Proposed Key Principles Related to its Formation

### **GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. S. S." or "Sally S." followed by a surname.

Discuss and provide input to staff on the purpose of the Vision Plan Community Advisory Group and the proposed key principles related to its formation, including refinements to the recommended preliminary list of participants.

### **SUMMARY**

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) Vision Plan Project would greatly benefit from the creation of a volunteer Community Advisory Group to participate in the Vision Plan as an important component of the overall strategy to meaningfully engage the public in the planning process and build support for the District. The District is currently at the beginning stages of the overall Vision Plan project that includes the formation of a Community Advisory Group. The goal is to generate a list of possible participants by mid-December to provide sufficient time to invite members and finalize the group make up by the end of January and allow meetings for the public engagement portion of the Vision Plan project to begin shortly thereafter.

This Study Session agenda item offers the opportunity to discuss and obtain input from the District Board of Directors (Board) on a number of issues related to the Community Advisory Group. The approval of the Vision Plan Community Advisory Group will be considered as a separate agenda item at tonight's regular Board meeting (see Report R-12-117).

### **DISCUSSION**

The District preserves a regional greenbelt of open space land, protects the natural environment, and provides opportunities for public recreation and environmental education for the San Francisco Peninsula and South Bay, as well as the broader Bay Area region. A number of challenges are facing the District and its partners today: how to scale up efforts to provide connectivity to whole natural systems and protect agricultural landscapes; how to scale up resource stewardship capacity; and how to open more preserved land for public recreational access. To address these challenges, the District's Strategic Plan calls for enhancing regional collaboration, building public support, and enhancing financial and staffing resources.

The Vision Plan process will focus the District's efforts to accomplish these goals by identifying priorities. A critical step in this Vision Plan process is to clearly understand community, partner, and stakeholder interests, values, knowledge, and perspectives related to open space. To reach these groups, staff is developing a Communication, Engagement, and Public Participation Plan (CEPP) as part of the Vision Plan process, which will be presented to the Board for review at a subsequent Study Session on December 12, 2012. The CEPP will include the formation of a volunteer Community Advisory Group (CAG) to participate in the Vision Plan as an important component of the overall strategy to meaningfully engage the public in the planning process and build support for the District. In the long-term, the District may consider integrating this group of engaged citizens, partners, and stakeholders as part of ongoing District activities to help establish strong networks for ongoing community outreach, volunteerism, and community leadership to help fulfill the District's work.

Board comments received at the October 10, 2012 Study Session on the Vision Plan process helped guide the proposed framework that has been developed for the CAG. This agenda item offers a more focused opportunity to discuss and obtain additional input from the Board on a number of issues related specifically to the CAG, including:

- Purpose
- Role and charter
- Desired perspectives, formation process, and membership
- Meeting approach

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Vision Plan CAG is to provide consistent involvement and meaningful, informed participation that allows the Board and project staff to understand community, partner, and stakeholder perspectives and needs, and to effectively engage the public so that the Vision Plan appropriately addresses their perspectives.

### **Charter and Roles**

It is important at the outset to establish the charter that will outline the Board's expectations for the CAG, as well as the group's roles, responsibilities, and interface methods. The Board will retain full decision-making authority. The District Mission and a basic set of objectives, developed from the District Basic Policy and the San Mateo Coastal Service Plan, will be provided to guide and structure the CAG's work (see Attachment 1).

The CAG will work in close contact with the Board as an advisory body. The CAG will have several important key roles:

#### **1. Become familiar with the District's mission, roles, and purpose**

CAG members will need time and the opportunity to develop cohesion as a team, understand more about one another, and gain a solid understanding of the District and its mission, roles, and purpose.

#### **Possible Activities**

- Attend orientation meeting and review District policy materials, including District enabling legislation.
- Land tours – orientation tours of District preserves as a way of introducing members to the District's mission and work.

**2. Encourage community involvement**

The District will rely on CAG members to encourage and facilitate appropriate public, partner, and stakeholder participation in the Vision Plan effort. The CAG will play a critical role in the Vision Plan, and will need to be an enabler and conduit of community participation and input.

**Possible Activities**

- Provide a service for the public-at-large by representing its interests in discussions regarding the District's work and by relaying information from these discussions back through each member's network to the public.
- Advocate on behalf of the public, including promotion of greater attention and sensitivity to the needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented stakeholders and communities.
- Facilitate two-way communication between stakeholder, partner, and community groups and the District. CAG members will be asked to identify and facilitate connections with community leaders and representatives of diverse communities and perspectives.

**3. Advise the Board during the Vision Plan development and deliberation process**

Another role of the CAG will be to advise the Board on how best to use public input and understand community needs and priorities throughout the process. As such, the CAG will need to review public input and engage in timely and meaningful dialogue with their networks and the District about major District programs and priorities. The CAG will also provide input and recommendations on a list of priority actions to be addressed by the District.

**Possible Activities**

- Participate for the duration of the District visioning process.
- Identify and advise the Board on priority considerations and issues requiring community, stakeholder, and partner participation.
- Monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the Board-endorsed Community Engagement and Public Participation Plan.
- Provide input in the development of selection and measurement criteria for District priority actions.

**4. Increase public awareness of the importance of the District's mission to community well-being**

Through members' networks, the CAG will disseminate information to the public to increase the community's awareness of the District and the critical role its mission plays in the overall sustainability and livability of the community and region.

**Possible Activities**

- Assist the District in identifying and establishing on-going communication with community-based organizations. Disseminate information on the District and Vision Plan through members' distribution lists.
- Assist the District Vision Plan Project Team in expanding the database of contacts.
- Encourage participation at District workshops.

CAG meetings will need to be District staff supported and appropriately resourced to ensure that meetings and discussions are well organized, focused, and productive. CAG members will also need District support to undertake the roles listed above, including:

- Guidance from the Board and Vision Plan Project Team.
- Access to administrative staff to assist with scheduling.
- Access to consultant facilitation services to moderate meeting discussions.
- Access to the District website and creation of a Vision Plan webpage to maintain and track important Project information.
- Access to District communication material (collateral) and communication methods (social media, email blasts, Vision Plan newsletters, and quarterly District newsletters) to disseminate information, as needed.

### **Desired Perspectives, Membership, and Formation Process**

The CAG will be comprised of a well-rounded group of representatives from District partner organizations, agencies, major landowners, stakeholders, and community leaders and organizers. For discussion purposes, please see Attachment 2, which contains a list of community perspectives and the Project Team's preliminary list of possible representative organizations or groups that may be desirable to include as part of the CAG. The CAG is ultimately expected to have 20 to 25 members representing diverse perspectives and geographical areas. However, because it is probable that some suggested organizations or groups will not be able to commit or participate in the CAG, staff recommends starting with a larger list from which to solicit membership.

### **Qualities of the Community Advisory Group**

Membership on a CAG involves making a major commitment, and members must be prepared to devote considerable time and effort. As discussed above, members will be invited to participate for the duration of the Vision Plan effort to advise the process; to articulate their own open space visions, goals and objectives; and to provide referrals and introductions to other community leaders and potential participants in the public engagement process.

Participants will be sought based upon several qualities:

- General interest in open space, land conservation, natural resources, public recreational access, and/or sustainable communities;
- Willingness to learn more about the District's mission and Vision Plan efforts;
- Connections and leadership within their communities;
- Willingness to objectively share information about the Vision Plan with their organization, constituency, and other interested parties;
- Willingness to work cooperatively with other group members;
- Experience (professional and/or civic), knowledge, and education;
- Experience serving in collaborative group environments;
- Geographic and demographic representation;
- Commitment to attend the CAG meetings.

### **Process to form the Community Advisory Group**

For the November 28, 2012 meeting, each Board member is asked to come prepared to refine the list of potential CAG members suggested by the Project Team. Once this comprehensive list of suggested participants is formed, the list will be returned to the Board at its meeting on December 12, 2012, for final review.

The Board and District staff will then begin recruiting members on the list to participate as a member of the Vision Plan CAG. The Board will be asked to identify those potential CAG

members that they wish to contact directly. Staff will contact the remaining participants on the list. Based on the level of response and acceptance received, staff will then balance the group makeup by filling in any remaining gaps in geographic and perspective viewpoints. A final list of the members who have agreed to participate in the CAG will be assembled and returned to the Board at its meeting on January 9, 2013, at which time the Board will ratify the final membership. After that, the first orientation meeting with the CAG can occur.

### **Meetings**

Staff recommends that all meetings of the CAG be conducted as public meetings, so that they may be attended by all interested parties. A listing of meeting topics will be prepared in advance and if a quorum of the Board wishes to attend one of the meetings, that meeting can be made Brown Act compliant at that time. The CAG is expected to meet approximately 10 to 11 times during the duration of the Vision Plan process.

Upon finalization of a list of prospective members in mid-January, an invitation will be prepared for the first CAG meeting in January/February. The first CAG meeting will be designed to orient members to the Vision Plan process and to articulate clear roles, guidelines, expectations, ground rules, a defined set of tasks, and a timeline for the process. As the group sponsor, the entire District Board is encouraged to attend the first meeting to allow the Board to set expectations, clarify responsibilities, and emphasize goals.

As part of the initial meetings, it will also be important for CAG members to spend time getting to know each other and to have an opportunity to articulate their aspirations and hopes for land conservation, the natural environment, and public recreation.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

This Study Session will not result in a direct fiscal impact. Input received will be used to refine the purpose and formation of the CAG which are being considered for Board endorsement as a separate agenda item on tonight's Board meeting (refer to report R-12-117). Expenses associated with the CAG and necessary to conduct meetings and tours, such as possible venue rentals, are expected to remain within the current FY2012-13 Budget.

Staff is also currently analyzing staffing requirements needed to administer and implement the Vision Plan project given its ambitious schedule, extensive time and resource needs, taking into consideration competing project priorities. The addition of temporary staffing to address the required staffing capacity may be needed. Staff will bring temporary staffing recommendations to the Board at a later time as these are developed.

### **BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW**

No Board Committee review was needed for this item.

### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice was provided pursuant to the Brown Act. Notice was also sent to the interested parties list for this project and to the list of potential CAG members shown in Attachment 1.

**CEQA COMPLIANCE**

This item is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

**NEXT STEPS**

The endorsement of the purpose and formation of Vision Plan Community Advisory Group is a separate agenda item at tonight's Board meeting. Upon Board approval and input, staff will refine the list of suggested participants and return to the Board at its meeting on December 12, 2012 for final review. Also at the December 12, 2012 meeting, staff will be presenting the Communication, Engagement, Public Participation Plan for Board review and input, as well as refined scopes of work for the Vision Plan consultant teams.

Attachment(s)

1. Summary of District Mission and Objectives
2. Desired Membership Perspectives

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## **ATTACHMENT 1**

### **SUMMARY OF DISTRICT MISSION AND OBJECTIVES**

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's mission statement guides the purpose of the organization. The mission statement was reaffirmed by the District Board of Directors (Board) as part of the Strategic Plan process in 2011, and the Board clarified the desired direction for the District to move forward towards a balanced implementation of the Mission. The following objectives, developed from the Basic Policy and Coastal Service Plan, shall also provide direction for the Vision Planning process.

#### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The District's mission is:

To acquire and preserve a regional greenbelt of open space land in perpetuity; protect and restore the natural environment; and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.

And, in addition, on the San Mateo Coast, to acquire and preserve in perpetuity agricultural land of regional significance, preserve rural character, and encourage viable agricultural use of land resources.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

The District will achieve its Mission and Strategic Plan in the following ways:

##### **Open Space Land Preservation:**

1. The District seeks to preserve the maximum feasible area of open space land within our boundaries, including baylands and foothills. The District seeks to link its open space lands with federal, state, county, and city parklands and watershed lands.

##### **Open Space Management:**

2. The District follows management policies that ensure proper care of the land, that provide public access appropriate to the nature of the land, and that are consistent with ecological values and public safety.
3. The District protects and restores the natural diversity and integrity of its resources for their value to the environment and the public, and provides for the use of the preserves consistent with resource protection.
4. The District is a land management agency that is subject to regulatory agency permits and requirements.

##### **Public Access and Improvements:**

5. Where appropriate, the District provides public access and visitor-serving facilities for low-intensity recreation. Low-intensity recreation avoids concentration of use, significant alteration of the land, and significant impact on the natural resources or on the appreciation of nature. Development of traditional park and recreation facilities is the responsibility of the cities and counties.
6. Developing facilities and managing public use activities while protecting natural resources and providing for public safety may require limits on access to some open space lands.

7. Access for hiking is typically unrestricted on District trails and lands. The District is committed to working with different trail user groups to find practical solutions to recreational use issues with the understanding that some trails or preserves may not be open to all uses.

### **Working Lands**

8. The District recognizes the importance of agriculture to the economy and heritage of the community. The District works to preserve and foster existing and potential agricultural operations in San Mateo County in order to keep the maximum amount of prime agricultural land and all other lands suitable for agriculture in agricultural production, while minimizing conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses that may occur on District owned or managed lands.

### **Public Safety**

9. The District monitors and manages its preserves to provide a safe environment for visitors and neighbors.

### **Cultural Resources**

10. Historic structures and sites will be considered for protection by the District where they are associated with lands acquired for overall open space values.

## ATTACHMENT 2

### DESIRED PERSPECTIVES FOR THE COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP

<b>Perspective</b>	<b>Potential Organizations</b>
Forest Landowner	Kings Grove
Preserve Neighbor	South Skyline Association
Partner Government Agency	Santa Clara County Parks Commission Bay Trail San Mateo County Resource Conservation District
City / County Elected Officials	Sunnyvale Los Gatos Redwood City Half Moon Bay East Palo Alto Saratoga
Partner Nonprofits	Peninsula Open Space Trust Save the Redwoods League Coastside Land Trust Bay Area Ridge Trail
San Mateo Coastside community leader	
Coastside Farmer	San Mateo County Farm Bureau Pie Ranch
Cattle Rancher	
Environmental Advocate	Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter Santa Clara Valley Audubon Acterra Committee for Green Foothills San Gregorio Environmental Resource Center
Creek / Watershed Group	San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority
Recreational Advocate	Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition Responsible Organized Mountain Pedalers (ROMP) Friends of Stevens Creek Trail ETRAC Cross country running group Dog owner group
Youth Advocate	Youth United for Community Action
Health Advocate	San Mateo County Community Health Agency
Senior Organization	
Employer Groups	Silicon Valley Leadership Group
Environmental Education	Hidden Villa Friends of Deer Hollow Farm
Docents and Volunteers	
Diverse Populations	Hispanic Chamber of Commerce – Silicon Valley
Taxpayer Group	Silicon Valley Taxpayers Association
Native American Group	Ohlone Tribe
Sustainability Advocates	Greenbelt Alliance Sustainable Silicon Valley Sustainable San Mateo County Peninsula Transportation Alternatives