



**AG + OPEN SPACE**  
SONOMA COUNTY

SONOMA COUNTY OPEN SPACE DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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**APPROVED MINUTES**

**Virtual Meeting Due to Sonoma County's Shelter in Place Order  
January 26, 2023 | 5:00 pm**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Don McEnhill	Wendy Eliot	Thembi Borrás	Paul Martin	Kristina Tierney
Michelle Whitman	Bill Smith	Cary Fargo	Sue Conley	Tawny Tesconi
Steve Rabinowitsh	Jesús Guzmán	Curt Nichols	Neysa Hinton	Angel Lopez

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Josh Proctor                      Brian Barnacle                      Jan McFarland

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Misti Arias, General Manager; Amy Ricard, Community Resources Manager; Sheri Emerson, Stewardship Manager; Jennifer Kuszmar, Acquisition Manager; Kim Batchelder, Vegetation Management Coordinator; Jacob Newell, Stewardship Supervisor; Marina Montes, Stewardship Specialist; Pamela Swan, Grants Coordinator; Lukas Steinrueck, Stewardship Technician; Raquel Guevara-Bolanos, Stewardship Technician; Kendall Gutt, Stewardship Technician; Aldo Mercado, County Counsel; Sara Ortiz, Administrative Aide; Mariah Robson, Advisory Committee Clerk.

**Call to Order**

Chair Michelle Whitman called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

**Public Comment**

No public comment.

**Approval of Minutes from October 27, 2022**

Chair Whitman asked for any revisions to the October 27, 2022 minutes. There were none. Curt Nichols motioned to approve the minutes. Cary Fargo seconded the motion. A vote took place and all were in favor. Paul Martin, Kristina Tierney, Neysa Hinton and Sue Conley abstained as they were not present at the October meeting.

**Resolution of Appreciation**

Misti Arias, General Manager, presented Tawny Tesconi a resolution of appreciation and thanked her for her contributions to the Ag + Open Space Advisory Committee. Advisory Committee

members, members of the public, and staff shared their appreciation as well for Tawny's service to the committee.

### General Manager's Report

- Ms. Arias introduced the newest Youth Member Representative to the committee, Angel Lopez. He is a junior at Santa Rosa High School and is the Vice President of the Santa Rosa Future Farmers of America, as well as an All-Star Ambassador for Sonoma County 4-H. He has raised market sheep for the Sonoma County Fair and is interested in livestock genetics.
- Three new Stewardship Technicians joined the Ag + Open Space staff team on January 24, 2023. They will be responsible for conducting ground and remote monitoring of our conservation easements, as well as monitoring our fee land properties and overseeing contractors to maintain these properties.
  - Lukas Steinrueck is coming from the Ag Commissioner's office where he has been conducting regulatory compliance monitoring including permitting and enforcement of cannabis regulations. He has a degree in Wildlife Conservation from Cal Poly Humboldt, and also worked as a Scientific Aide for CA Fish & Wildlife. He's also worked as a viticultural intern at one of our conservation easements, Windsor Oaks, and is actively involved in the Good Fire Alliance.
  - Kendall Gutt has worked for both Regional Parks and Sonoma Land Trust, where she focused on land stewardship and environmental education, including Park Previews on some of our conservation easements. She has a degree in Geography and Environmental Planning from Sonoma State University.
  - Raquel Guevara-Bolanos is coming from Sonoma Water where she has led workshops on riparian habitat, salmon, and the role of land management. She has also worked for Circuit Rider doing fire management, stream restoration, and invasive plant management, and has interned in the Santa Rosa Junior College's wildfire resilience program. She has a degree in Environmental Studies and Planning from Sonoma State University, where she also worked as a docent-naturalist at Fairfield-Osborn Preserve.
- Ms. Arias updated the Advisory Committee members on the Sonoma Developmental Center: It looks like the transition of management is going to State Parks. There has been a budget request which includes planning and maintenance, which means that the open spaces will stay open and natural and for recreational purposes.
- Ag + Open Space is recruiting for an Acquisition Assistant. The position is posted now through February 9, 2023. Ms. Arias asked the Advisory Committee members to share with anyone who may be interested.

Chair Whitman opened the meeting for questions and comments from Advisory Committee members and members of the public. A discussion ensued with the committee but no comments from public.

### Vegetation Management Program Update

Kim Batchelder, Vegetation Management Coordinator, presented a PowerPoint presentation for the Vegetation Management Program. Mr. Batchelder explained Ag + Open Space's role in coordinating and supporting the Healthy Forests Ad Hoc committee led by Supervisors James Gore and Lynda Hopkins. On January 10, 2023 the full Board of Supervisors approved a \$4.55 Million budget to



support capacity building, additional vegetation management grants, and an interim organizational structure to support wildfire resilience. Mr. Batchelder is working with Ms. Arias on how these recommendations will continue to support the Ag + Open Space mission.

Mr. Batchelder encouraged Advisory Committee members to advocate for future community fuel management projects in their districts and areas of interest. A new request for proposals will be announced this Spring. Finally, Advisory Committee members are encouraged to attend the *Living with Fire: Sonoma County Forest Conservation Conference* at the end of June.

For more information, please feel free to contact Mr. Batchelder at Ag + Open Space. The PowerPoint presentation is available upon request.

### **Transition Back to In-Person Meetings**

Ms. Arias discussed the transition back to in-person meetings. Due to the expiration of statewide COVID-related health orders, Advisory Committee meetings will be held in person starting March 1, 2023.

Chair Whitman opened the meeting to the committee members for a discussion. The meeting was also opened to the members of the public for comment, but there were none.

### **Advisory Committee Resolution & Rules of Procedure Review**

Amy Ricard, Community Resources Manager, quickly reviewed the Advisory Committee Resolution #99-0962 dated July 20, 1999, which states the goals of the Committee and direction from the Board of Directors and the General Manager. The resolution states that this committee is solely advisory, and members refrain if there are conflicts of interest. Ms. Ricard also went through the Rules of Procedures that give guidelines for the meetings.

### **Advisory Committee Administration**

#### **a) Election of Committee Officers**

Chair Whitman, Vice Chair Don McEnhill and Chair Pro Tem Curt Nichols all announced that they were open to stepping down from their current roles if there were any other members who would be interested. Thembi Borrás volunteered for Chair, Wendy Eliot volunteered for Vice Chair, and Chair Whitman nominated Steve Rabinowitsh as Chair Pro Tem. Curt Nichols motioned for the changes in Committee Officers, and Don McEnhill seconded the motion. All were in favor with no oppositions or abstentions.

#### **b) Advisory Committee Rules of Procedures**

Chair Whitman asked for a motion to ratify the Rules of Procedures. Don McEnhill motioned to ratify the Rules of Procedures as is, and Steve Rabinowitsh seconded the motion. All were in favor with no oppositions or abstentions.

#### **c) Ad Hoc Subcommittee Assignments**

The current Matching Grant Program subcommittee was disbanded, and four new subcommittees were formed:

Matching Grant Revision Subcommittee: Michelle Whitman volunteered

Agriculture Subcommittee: Sue Conley stepped down and the other members remained: Paul Martin, Jan McFarland, Josh Proctor, and Cary Fargo



Acquisition Subcommittee: No one volunteered

Endowment Subcommittee: This Subcommittee is new and its role is to come up with ways to fund the work in perpetuity if in the future there is no sales tax. No one volunteered.

No action was taken tonight, and this item will be added to next month's agenda to see if absent members would like to volunteer.

d) Committee Calendar and Roster

Chair Whitman asked members to review the calendar dates for meetings in 2023. No changes were made.

Chair Whitman would like to see the committee discontinue using members' personal addresses, phone numbers and email addresses on the roster. Aldo Mercado, County Counsel, said that it would be ok to use the Ag + Open Space address and phone number and delete the individual contact information. Chair Whitman asked for a motion to accept the calendar as is and to change the roster to include the Ag + Open Space address and phone number and delete individual contact information. Don McEnhill motioned for this change and Thembi Borrás seconded the motion. All were in favor, with no oppositions or abstentions.

### **Projects in Negotiations**

Chair Whitman asked for any comments or questions on the Projects in Negotiations spreadsheet and there were none.

### **Announcements from Advisory Committee Members**

Sue Conley acknowledged the passing of Phyllis Faber, a botanist, wetland biologist and one of the visionary founders of the Marin Agricultural Land Trust.

### **Adjournment**

Chair Whitman adjourned the meeting at 6:54 in memory of Phyllis Faber.

Next Meeting: February 23, 2023

Respectfully submitted,

Mariah Robson  
*Advisory Committee Secretary*

