



**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 27, 2022 | 5:00 pm**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Steve Rabinowitsh	Don McEnhill	Wendy Eliot	Brian Barnacle
Cary Fargo	Bill Smith	Jesús Guzmán	Michelle Whitman
Paul Martin	Sue Conley	John Nagle	Neysa Hinton
Kristina Tierney			

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Tawny Tesconi  
Jan McFarland  
Curt Nichols

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Misti Arias, General Manager; Jennifer Kuszmar, Acquisition Manager; Sheri Emerson, Stewardship Manager; Curtis Kendall, Acquisition Specialist; Allison Schichtel, Senior Conservation Planner; Mary Chambers, Agricultural Specialist; Amy Ricard, Community Relations Specialist; Olivia Fiori, Acquisition Assistant; Cieara McKetchnie-Stanley, Administrative Aide; Aldo Mercado, County Counsel; Mariah Robson, Advisory Committee Clerk

**Call to Order**

Chair Michelle Whitman called the meeting to order at 5:02 pm. Chair Whitman did a roll call: Steve Rabinowitsh, yes; Don McEnhill, yes; Wendy Eliot, yes; Jan McFarland, no; Cary Fargo, yes; Tawny Tesconi, no; Bill Smith, yet; Paul Martin, yes; Curt Nichols, no; Jesús Guzmán, yes; Sue Conley, yes; John Nagle, yes; Kristina Tierney, yes; Neysa Hinton, yes; Brian Barnacle, yes; Michelle Whitman, yes.

**Public Comment**

Chair Whitman asked for any public comments on items not on the agenda. Susan Kirks had a request for members to reach out to the community to encourage attendance to the Advisory Committee meetings so people can learn about Ag + Open Space. She also stated that the Paula Lane "habitat destruction" continues and that eight months later the American Badger are still displaced. She expressed that another entity should take over fee title of the Paula Lane property so that the City of Petaluma can be relieved of its ownership duties.

### **Approval of Minutes from December 9, 2021**

Chair Whitman asked for any comments or revisions regarding the December 9, 2021 minutes. There were none. Chair Whitman asked public comments on the minutes but there were none. Paul Martin motioned for the minutes be approved as is. Don McEnhill seconded the motion. All in approval except Michelle Whitman, Neysa Hinton, Brian Barnacle, John Nagle and Kristina Tierney who abstained as they were not present at the December meeting.

### **General Manager's Report**

- Misti Arias, General Manager, introduced Olivia Fiori, the new Acquisition Assistant. Olivia most recently worked for the Conservation Fund, graduated from UC Berkeley with a Bachelor's degree in Society and Environment, with a focus on sustainable food systems. At the Conservation Fund she moved up the ranks from Forest Technician to Forester to receiving her Registered Professional Forester's license last year. She is also a certified Wildland Firefighter 2, has considerable experience using GIS to collect and analyze field data (including conducting Northern Spotted Owl surveys) and speaks Italian and Spanish as well as English. Ms. Fiori introduced herself to the committee and said she was happy to be part of the team.
- A joint funding agreement with Sonoma Water and USGS for LiDAR acquisition will go to the Board in early February.
- We have officially closed on the 10.42-acre Paulin Meadow, which has been added to the existing 9-acre Paulin Creek Open Space Preserve. The Preserve is now 19.42 acres.
- The Board approved the El Recreo Conservation Easement acquisition on January 25, 2022.

Chair Whitman asked if there were any public comments on the General Managers report out, but there were none.

### **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 was any other member who would be interested, but were also interested in continuing in their roles. John Nagle motioned for all three to continue in their respective roles, and Wendy Eliot seconded the motion. A vote was taken and all were in favor with no oppositions or abstentions.

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

Chair Whitman asked for a review of the Advisory Committee Rules of Procedures for recommended changes. John Nagle noted that there is nothing in the Rules of Procedures about videoconferencing, which has been taking place for the past two years and may continue into the future and wondered if that should be included in the procedures. Aldo Mercado, County Counsel, said that due to the health order that it is stated on each agenda that the meeting will take place virtually, there is no need to add it to the Rules of Procedures.



c) Ad Hoc Subcommittee Assignments

Chair Whitman asked members to review the current Ag Subcommittee and Acquisition Subcommittee list of members that were included in the packet and if anyone would like to join or decline. Sue Conley would like to be taken off the Acquisition Subcommittee and stay on the Ag Subcommittee. Brian Barnacle would like to be taken off the Acquisition Subcommittee. Paul Martin would like to be added to the Acquisition Subcommittee and to stay on the Ag Subcommittee. Steve Rabinowitsh would like to be added to the Acquisition Subcommittee. These changes will be made.

d) Committee Calendar and Roster

Chair Whitman asked members to review the calendar dates for meeting in 2022. No changes were made. John Nagle made a motion to approve the dates as is. Bill Smith and Neysa Hinton seconded the motion. A vote was taken and all were in favor. No oppositions or abstentions.

**Acquisition Projects Overview**

Curtis Kendall, Acquisition Specialist, discussed two acquisition projects located northeast of Petaluma off Adobe Road. They are separate conservation easements and come as a package deal. The first property, Deniz Dairy, is mostly pastureland with some woodland and riparian areas following Lynch Creek. This property meets the District's conservation goals for grazing, biodiversity, and natural resources.

The second property is a scenic location with woodlands and runs along the Adobe Creek. There is also pastureland and meets the District's conservation goals for grazing, biodiversity and groundwater recharge.

Chair Whitman opened up the meeting for discussion with the Advisory Committee members and members of the public.

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

**Project Evaluation Criteria**

Misti Arias, General Manager, Jennifer Kuszmar, Acquisition Manager, and Allison Schichtel, Senior Conservation Planner, discussed Project Evaluation Criteria. These criteria will be used by Ag + Open Space staff to evaluate projects submitted to the organization via application and tier from the Vital Lands Initiative (Vital Lands). The Board adopted Vital Lands a year ago after an extensive community and stakeholder engagement process. This plan will guide the work of the District between now and 2031, outlining goals, objectives and strategies for conservation action. The District is now beginning the implementation of Vital Lands, which helps identify areas to focus conservation efforts. Ms. Arias, Ms. Kuszmar and Ms. Schichtel discussed goals, objectives, evaluation process and next steps, and asked for input on the draft Project Evaluation Criteria. The discussion was opened to the members and to the public.

For more information, please feel free to contact Ms. Arias, Ms. Kuszmar or Ms. Schichtel at Ag + Open Space. The PowerPoint presentation is available upon request.



### **Vital Lands Initiative Implementation Discussion**

Through Chair Whitman, Ms. Arias recapped the Vital Lands Initiative Implementation discussion that took place during the December meeting. The implementation will focus on measurable priorities moving forward. These will be high level goals and objectives with feasible outcomes, and the workload will be prioritized. A top goal is to conserve 30% of Sonoma County lands by 2030. Since 1991 the Ag + Open Space has preserved 12% of the county. Vital Lands will help to identify and protect the highest priority lands.

She requested further thoughts and feedback from Advisory Committee members and a discussion took place.

The discussion was then opened up to members of the public.

For more information, please feel free to contact Ms. Arias at Ag + Open Space.

### **Projects in Negotiations**

No questions or comments on Projects in Negotiations.

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

#### John Nagle

Mr. Nagle commented on the efficiency of the meeting.

### **Adjournment**

Chair Whitman adjourned the meeting at 7:03.

Next Meeting: February 24, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Mariah Robson  
*Advisory Committee Secretary*

