



AG + OPEN SPACE
SONOMA COUNTY

SONOMA COUNTY OPEN SPACE DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

APPROVED MINUTES

**Virtual Meeting Due to Sonoma County's Shelter in Place Order
January 28, 2021 | 5:00 pm**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Michelle Whitman	Bill Smith	John Nagle	Cary Fargo
Curt Nichols	Neysa Hinton	Evan Wiig	Paul Martin
John Dell'Osso	Jan McFarland	Jennielynn Holmes	Sue Conley
Tawny Tesconi	Don McEnhill	Kristina Tierney	Doug Lipton

MEMBERS ABSENT:

No members absent

STAFF PRESENT:

Caryl Hart, Interim General Manager; Misti Arias, Acquisition Manager; Jennifer Kuszmar, Matching Grant Coordinator; Amy Ricard, Community Relations Specialist; Louisa Morris, Acquisition Specialist; Taylor Acosta, Stewardship Technician; Sara Ortiz, Administrative Aide; Mariah Robson, Advisory Committee Clerk

Call to Order

Chair Dell'Osso called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

Chair Dell'Osso began the meeting with an acknowledgement of the traditional land carers of Sonoma County and giving a thank you to them.

Public Comment

Chair Dell'Osso asked for any public comments on items not on the agenda. There were none.

Approval of Minutes from October 22, 2020 and November 20, 2020

Chair Dell'Osso asked for any corrections to the minutes. Doug Lipton asked that on the October 22, 2020 minutes that after his motion to send a letter to the Board was rescinded, to add that the reason was 'because the committee was split on the matter.' Don McEnhill said that on the November 20, 2020 minutes it states he was absent, but that he actually was on the call. Chair Dell'Osso asked for a motion for both month's minutes be approved with corrections. Don McEnhill motioned for the minutes to be approved with corrections, and Jan McFarland seconded the motion. All were in favor, with no oppositions. There were seven abstentions from members who

were not present at the previous meetings: Tawny Tesconi, John Nagle and Jennielynn Holmes abstained from the October minutes and Tawny Tesconi, Kristina Tierney, Paul Martin, Cary Fargo and Doug Lipton abstained from the November minutes.

General Manager's Report

- Caryl Hart, Interim General Manager, acknowledged the former General Manager, Bill Keene, and expressed appreciation for his time at the District and his hard work. This being her first official meeting, Ms. Hart introduced herself to the members, and acknowledged that she already knows and has worked with several of them. She expressed that she is always available to members via text or email.
- The Vital Lands Initiative was approved by the Board and Ms. Hart acknowledged the staff and all of their hard work that has gone into the Initiative. There will be an article in the Press Democrat that will likely run this weekend.
- The Estero Americano will be taken to the Board on February 9, 2021
- The ASAP Grant Program, providing small farmers who are struggling financially due to COVID-19 with \$1 million, will be taken to the Board on March 2, 2021.
- Land Management Service Agreements will be taken to the Board on March 16, 2021.
- The Matching Grant Program funding recommendations will be taken to the Board on March 23, 2021.
- The Calabazas and Wright Hill transfers to Regional Parks will be taken to the Board on May 11, 2021.
- The County has begun the recruitment for a permanent General Manager for the District and interviews will be held in March, and the position will most likely be by May or June of 2021.

Chair Dell'Osso welcomed Ms. Hart as the Interim General Manager He pointed out her incredible background, which includes work on the Coastal Commission, sitting on the Board of Save the Redwoods League, and as former Executive Director of Sonoma County Regional Parks, to name but a few.

Chair Dell'Osso also welcomed Sue Conley back as a former Advisory Committee Member returning to service at Ag + Open Space. Ms. Conley expressed that she is happy to be back on and has officially retired from her business, Cowgirl Creamery.

Advisory Committee Administration

a) Election of Committee Officers

Chair Dell'Osso announced that he is resigning from City Council and thus from the Advisory Committee, and the Chair position will be open. Both Vice Chair Don McEnhill and Chair Pro Tem Curt Nichols are interested in staying in their current positions, but would step down if anyone else showed interest in the positions. Chair Dell'Osso asked if there was anyone interested in any of the positions. Michelle Whitman stated she would be interested in the Chair position. No other members expressed interest.. Chair Dell'Osso asked if there were



any disagreements and there were none. All were in agreement for Michelle Whitman to be the next Chair, starting this evening at adjournment.

Ben Peters, a member from the public, was not in agreement with selecting a Chair before the vacant Mayors and Councilmembers positions are appointed. Chair Dell'Osso explained that those positions might not be filled until March of 2021 and the committee needs a Chair person before then.

b) Advisory Committee Rules of Procedure

Chair Dell'Osso asked for a review of the Advisory Committee Rules of Procedure for recommended changes. No changes were proposed at this meeting.

c) Ad Hoc Subcommittee Assignments

No new subcommittees were formed. The only current subcommittee is the Matching Grant Program. It has been decided that the Matching Grant Program subcommittee will be formed after applications are received rather than the January meetings.

d) Committee Calendar and Roster

Chair Dell'Osso asked members to review the calendar dates for meetings in 2021. One mistake was found in the dates, the meeting in December showed December 11 which is a Saturday and should be December 9. Mariah Robson, Advisory Committee Clerk, will make that change and will re-send dates to the members. Members chose to wait to decide on a summer month off until the March meeting.

Members perused the roster and will send Ms. Robson any corrections as needed.

Subcommittee Report Out

Misti Arias, Acquisition Manager, reported out that the applications that were received for the Matching Grant Program will be brought to the Board on March 23, 2021. Nine applications were received. The applications will be shared with the committee at the February meeting.

Resolution of Appreciation for Bill Keene from AC and FOC

Chair Dell'Osso read the Resolution of Appreciation to former General Manager Bill Keene, which was presented to him from the Advisory Committee Members and the Fiscal Oversight Commissioners. Mr. Keene was General Manager of the Sonoma County Ag + Open Space District from July 2008 until December 2020, when he retired from the position. Advisory Committee members, Fiscal Oversight Commissioners, members of the public and staff thanked Mr. Keene for his service. Mr. Keene expressed his thanks to all and his honor to have served in this position.

Acquisition Update

Misti Arias, Acquisition Manager, presented a PowerPoint presentation highlighting active acquisition projects. There are 17 projects being prioritized currently, and there are several that are being brought to the Board in the next month. Several new projects will be added to the active list as Ag + Open space implements the Vital Lands Initiative, which will help staff identify prioritized areas. Ms. Arias explained the evaluation process going forward.



For more information, the PowerPoint presentation is available upon request, or contact Ms. Arias at Ag + Open Space.

Ben Peters, member of the public, expressed he was not in support of how long the Vital Lands Initiative took to be implemented.

Vital Lands Initiative Strategy

Ms. Arias explained the parameters and criteria of the Vital Lands Initiative. Now that Vital Lands has been approved by the Board, it is time to implement the vision. It informs the work of Ag + Open Space going forward and gives staff strategies and tools to follow. The process on how to implement will be brought to the Advisory Committee in future meetings for recommendations and then brought to the Board for approval.

For more information, the PowerPoint presentation is available upon request, or contact Ms. Arias at Ag + Open Space.

Ben Peters, member of the public, again expressed he was not in support of the Vital Lands Initiative.

Use of PG&E Litigation Funds: Strategy Development with CLEE at UC Berkeley

Ms. Hart spoke about the use of PG&E litigation funds. Due to the fires in Sonoma County, there has been a settlement of funds with PG&E that has gone to the County. CLEE at UC Berkeley Law School has been meeting to talk about how to leverage these funds in order to get the maximum help in the short term but also in the long term with vegetation management and creating a resilient landscape. There are two focus groups with high level experts on each who know how to leverage funds and are working on how to best spend the funds. This will be brought to the Board on March 23, 2021 with Ag + Open Space as the lead and the Advisory Committee will be kept in the loop.

Projects in Negotiation

Ms. Arias asked for questions on the Projects in Negotiations spreadsheet but there were none.

Announcements from Advisory Committee Members

Several members expressed appreciation to Chair Dell'Osso on his last meeting, and said he did a great job keeping members in line, adding levity to the meetings, always being respectful to staff, members and the public, and gave thanks overall for his service.

Adjournment

Michelle Whitman, incoming Chair, adjourned the meeting at 6:58 pm.

Next Meeting: February 25, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Mariah Robson
Advisory Committee Secretary

