



AG + OPEN SPACE
SONOMA COUNTY

SONOMA COUNTY OPEN SPACE DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

APPROVED MINUTES

747 Mendocino Avenue – Suite 100, Santa Rosa, CA 95401
October 24, 2019 | 5:00 pm

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Bill Smith	Neysa Hinton	Jan McFarland
Alex Wood	Curt Nichols	Jennielynn Holmes
John Dell’Osso	Evan Wiig	

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Paul Martin	Doug Lipton	Taj Hittenberger	Leah Gold
Steve Barbose	Don McEnhill	Cary Fargo	Tawny Tesconi
Austin Maners	Steve Rabinowitsh	John Nagle	

STAFF PRESENT:

Bill Keene, General Manager; Sheri Emerson, Stewardship Manager; Jen Kuszmar, Matching Grant Coordinator; Allison Schichtel, Senior Conservation Planner; Aldo Mercado, County Counsel; Mariah Robson, Advisory Committee Clerk

Call to Order

Chair Dell’Osso called the meeting to order at 5:06 pm.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Approval of Minutes

Bill Smith motioned to approve the minutes from September 26, 2019 as is, and Neysa Hinton seconded the motion. All in favor, with abstentions from Jan McFarland, Curt Nichols and Jennielynn Holmes who were not in attendance at the September meeting.

General Manager’s Report Out

- Bill Keene presented a map of the perimeter of the recent Kincadee fire and the evacuation zone. The fire has already affected several District properties: Klesko Ranch, Hall Ranch, McCord Ranch North and South, Modini Ranch, Santa Angelina Ranch. The County has activated the Emergency Operations Center and some District staff are working there. Amy Ricard is helping with Community Relations and Allison Schichtel is helping with GIS.

- A grant for the Silva acquisition near Lake Sonoma went to the Board on October 22, 2019 and was approved.
- Approval for fencing on the Oken property will go to the Board on November 5, 2019.
- The Matching Grant Program guidelines and revisions will go to the Board on November 12, 2019.
- The Vital Lands Initiative draft will go to the Board on December 16, 2019. Staff will let committee members know what time the presentation will be so that they can attend if they choose to.

Subcommittee Report Out

The Advisory Committee currently has one active subcommittee, the Matching Grant Program. Chair Dell'Osso announced there was a meeting on October 2, 2019 and the outcomes of that meeting will be discussed later tonight during the Matching Grant Program Guidelines item.

Field Trip Debrief

Sheri Emerson, Stewardship Manager, debriefed committee members who were not at the field trip last month. Advisory Committee members were shuttled to two different fee land properties, the Dogbane Preserve and the Oken property. Fee land properties are owned and maintained by Ag + Open Space.

Dogbane is in north Santa Rosa along 101. The property hosts a large area of the dogbane plant that is culturally important for the Native Americans who used it to make baskets, nets and cordage. This property is three acres and is not grazed as the dogbane is toxic to animals.

Oken is south of Santa Rosa along Petaluma Hill Road. It is seventy six acres and is being leased for cattle grazing. Currently about thirty cattle graze the open grassland. The grazing helps in thistle control. The property includes several seasonal drainages. Ag + Open Space plans to revegetate portions of the drainages with native plants, and will install exclusionary fencing to protect the plantings from the cattle. The fencing phase of the revegetation project is going to the Board for approval on November 5, 2019. The Stewardship Update will be going to the Board in 2020. As part of that item, Ag + Open Space will give an update to the Board members on the transfer status of its fee land properties.

For more information on the field trip to Dogbane Preserve and Oken, or on fee lands and the stewardship program, contact Ms. Emerson at Ag + Open Space.

Matching Grant Program Guidelines

Jennifer Kuszmar, Matching Grant Coordinator, presented some proposed recommendations for the Matching Grant Program. These recommendations came out of the Matching Grant Program subcommittee that took place on October 2, 2019. Ms. Kuszmar, John Dell'Osso, Bill Smith, Neysa Hinton, Taj Hittenberger, as well as two Fiscal Oversight Commissioners, make up the subcommittee. Ms. Kuszmar went over the history and background of the Matching Grant Program,



and went over the recommendations through a PowerPoint presentation. If approved by the Advisory Committee this evening, the recommendations will go to the Board on November 12, 2019 for Board approval and the kick off for next years' cycle will begin in January 2020.

Chair Dell'Osso opened up the discussion to the public. Susan Kirks is supportive of the Matching Grant Subcommittee recommendations.

Chair Dell'Osso called for a vote to approve the recommendations. Jan McFarland motioned to move forward with the recommendations. Evan Wiig seconded the motion. All were in favor. No oppositions or abstentions

For more information on the Matching Grant Program, the PowerPoint presentation is available at the Ag + Open Space, or contact Ms. Kuszmar.

Vital Lands Initiative

Mr. Keene introduced the Vital Lands Initiative. The draft is going to the Board for approval on December 16, 2019. Mr. Keene requested members to attend if possible. He also suggested the members write a letter of support to the Board of Directors if they would like to.

Allison Schichtel, Senior Conservation Planner, updated the members on the current work and final touches after input from the Fiscal Oversight Commission, Advisory Committee and Ag Advisory Team. The draft will be posted on the Ag + Open Space website between November 11 and November 18, 2019. There will also be an online survey available on the website for more input. The Board of Directors and members of the public will have a chance for further input on December 16, 2019 when it is presented to the Board. The final product will be taken to the Board in early 2020 for approval.

Chair Dell'Osso asked for a vote on a letter of support from the Advisory Committee. Curt Nichols motioned to go forward with a letter of support, and Jan McFarland seconded the motion. All in favor with no oppositions or abstentions. Chair Dell'Osso will work with Ag + Open Staff on the letter.

Projects in Negotiation

Jacobsen Ranch will go to the Board in December 2019.

The Silva grant near Lake Sonoma for 4,000 acres was approved by the Board on October 22, 2019. A member of the public, Susan Kirks, is in support of Taylor Mountain's Cooper Creek addition.

Announcements from Advisory Committee Members and Members of the Public

Evan Wiig shared some unfortunate news that affects ag easements. The Marin Sun Farms slaughter facility has written letters to farmers that they no longer will accept business from many farms and ranches locally. These farms and ranches will have to transport out to places further away which will hurt them financially and many may have to shut down.



Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:29 pm.

Next Meeting: December 12, 2019

Respectfully submitted,

Mariah Robson

Advisory Committee Secretary

