



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
May 27, 2021 | 5:00 pm**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Michelle Whitman	Bill Smith	Ariel Kelley	Brian Barnacle
Curt Nichols	Neysa Hinton	Paul Martin	
Jan McFarland	Sue Conley	Doug Lipton	
Tawny Tesconi	Don McEnhill	Steve Rabinowitsh	

MEMBERS ABSENT:

John Nagle
Kristina Tierney
Cary Fargo

STAFF PRESENT:

Misti Arias, General Manager; Jennifer Kuszmar, Interim Acquisition Manager; Amy Ricard, Community Relations Specialist; Stephanie Tavares-Buhler, Senior Acquisition Specialist; Sara Ortiz, Administrative Aide; Louisa Morris, Acquisition Specialist; Mary Chambers, Agricultural Specialist; Lisa Pheatt, County Counsel; Mariah Robson, Advisory Committee Clerk

Call to Order

Chair Whitman called the meeting to order at 5:02 pm.

Public Comment

Chair Whitman asked for any public comments on items not on the agenda. There were none. However, she had received an email statement from a previous Ag + Open Space General Manager, David Hansen. Chair Whitman read the statement welcoming Mist Arias, the new General Manager, to her position.

Approval of Minutes from March 25, 2021

Chair Whitman asked for any comments or revisions regarding the March 25, 2021 minutes. There were none. Neysa Hinton motioned for the minutes to be approved as is and Ariel Kelley seconded the motion. All were in favor with two abstentions from Steve Rabinowitsh and Jan McFarland who were not in attendance at last month's meeting. There were no public comment on the minutes.

General Manager's Report

- Misti Arias, General Manager, announced some new hires and a promotion within the staff of Ag + Open Space:
 - Curtis Kendall was promoted to Acquisition Specialist from Acquisition Assistant. A recruitment for his Assistant position will begin soon.
 - Marina Davies was hired as a Stewardship Technician on May 18, 2021.
 - Ms. Arias was promoted to permanent General Manager on May 18, 2021.
 - Mary Chambers was hired as the Agricultural Specialist and will be helping with the Ag Subcommittee.
- Awarding contracts for the Oken habitat restoration project, a property on the edge of the Rohnert Park wetlands, and is part of a larger riparian habitat restoration project, will go to the Board on June 8, 2021.
- The Lang Conservation Easement Amendment will go to the Board on July 13, 2021.
- The Vegetation Management funding grants for the Vegetation Management position closed last week with 90 applications. The awards were announced last week.
- By March of this year, our Outings and Education Program has reached over 6,300 participants due to the virtual outings provided during the pandemic. In normal years we reach roughly 4,000. Future outings will include a combination of on-land experiences with virtual options as well.
- Website updates continue with a homepage refresh coming soon. It is in the process of becoming modernized.
- Calabazas and Wright Hill property transfers to Regional Parks were approved by the Board and we will conduct media outreach at time of transfer, most likely in July and August.
- We are still working to secure coverage for the Mattos conservation easement acquisition. The Press Democrat is interested in the story, but the Mattos family would prefer to maintain their privacy, so Amy Ricard, our Community Relations Specialist, is working on looking at different angles that might appeal to the PD while allowing the Mattoses to remain anonymous.
- The Vegetation Management position is going to the Board on June 8, 2021. This position will be funded through the PG&E funds and housed at the Ag + Open Space offices.

Chair Whitman said that the Ag Subcommittee, which Paul Martin had suggested the Advisory Committee reconvene at a prior meeting, will take place next month and will be agendaized. Mary Chambers, the new Agricultural Specialist, spoke about the Ag Subcommittee as a way to help the Vital Lands Initiative be incorporated into the agricultural process and that the subcommittee will provide insights and ways to move forward with the newly approved initiative.

Advisory Committee members welcomed Ms. Arias as the new General Manager, who has been with the Ag + Open Space since 1990.

Advisory Committee members also welcomed Steve Rabinowitsh back as a member. He served on the Advisory Committee since 1991 for all but 10 years. Mr. Rabinowitsh expressed he was pleased to be back.



Mary Chambers was also welcomed as the new Agricultural Specialist.

Members of the public, Susan Kirks, noted that she was pleased to hear the first General Manger Report Out from Ms. Arias as the new General Manager. She also welcomed Mr. Kendall as the new Acquisition Specialist, who also has many years of experience with Ag + Open Space.

Formation of Subcommittees

Ms. Arias introduced and discussed forming an Acquisition Subcommittee to help implement the Vital Lands criteria into the acquisitions process. The subcommittee would meet to discuss and prioritize projects and then report back to the full Advisory Committee. There would be more work and meetings up front but eventually the subcommittee would only meet quarterly or twice a year. This would include field trips as well. Jennifer Kuszmar, Interim Acquisition Manager, explained that the subcommittee would provide input on project evaluation criteria. She asked if there were any volunteers for the subcommittee, with the maximum number of six to avoid a quorum, and the following committee members expressed interest:

Neysa Hinton, Brian Barnacle, Sue Conley, Don McEnhill, Jan McFarland and Tawny Tesconi. Curt Nichols motioned to form the subcommittee with the six members who volunteered. Bill Smith seconded the motion. There were no public comments.

Roll call on the vote was taken: Bill Smith, yes. Steve Rabinowitsh, yes. Curt Nichols, yes. Ariel Kelley, yes. Don McEnhill, yes. Doug Lipton, yes. Jan McFarland, yes. Sue Conley, yes. Brian Barnacle, yes. Neysa Hinton, yes. Tawny Tesconi, yes. Michelle Whitman, yes.

The Acquisition Subcommittee was voted in.

Acquisition Projects Overview

Ms. Kuszmar introduced the Acquisition Projects Overview. The three properties presented were Ayers, Baumert Springs and Miguel-Tocci.

Louisa Morris, Acquisition Specialist, shared a PowerPoint presentation on Ayers and Baumert Springs. Ayers is adjacent to the Armstrong Redwood State Park on three sides of the property. This project would protect creeks and waterways and add some new public areas to the park. It is a 320 acre property, including 8.2 acres of old growth redwoods, 161 acres of conifer forest and 91 acres of tanoak woodland.

Baumert Springs is located on the Bohemian Highway near Camp Meeker. St. Dorothy's Rest currently uses the property for summer camp programs. This project would protect creeks, waterways and redwoods and provide public recreational and educational opportunities. It is a 372 acre property that includes Baumert Springs, a tributary to Dutch Bill Creek.

Stephanie Tavares-Buhler, Senior Acquisition Specialist, shared a PowerPoint presentation on the Miguel-Tocci Ranch property. This project is in the coastal range along the Bohemian Highway that is adjacent to the Sonoma Land Trust's Quail Hill conservation easement. This project would protect Nolan creek, a mosaic of habitat types, rangeland and grazing land, and parts of it are visible from the Bohemian Highway scenic corridor. It is a 489 acre property that includes 2 building envelopes.

The meeting was opened for discussion with members of the committee and the public.



For more information, the PowerPoint presentations are available upon request, or contact Ms. Morris or Ms. Tavares-Buhler at Ag + Open Space.

Projects in Negotiations

Ms. Kuszmar pointed out that the Pfendler property was put on the active list unintentionally.

Chair Whitman opened up the meeting for member and public comments but there were none.

Announcements from Advisory Committee Members

Chair Whitman welcomed returning member Steve Rabinowitsh and acknowledged his institutional knowledge and passion.

Doug Lipton announced that Farm to Pantry is hosting a Gala on June 26, 2021 at the Jackson Family Winery. Farm to Pantry help farmers by purchasing their food products and giving them to people in need.

Adjournment

Chair Whitman adjourned the meeting at 6:21.

Next Meeting: June 24, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Mariah Robson
Advisory Committee Secretary

