



AG + OPEN SPACE
SONOMA COUNTY

SONOMA COUNTY OPEN SPACE DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

APPROVED MINUTES

747 Mendocino Avenue – Suite 100, Santa Rosa, CA 95401
June 22, 2023, | 5:00 pm

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jan McFarland	Steven Rabinowitsh	Thembi Borrás	Bill Smith
Jesús Guzmán	Wendy Eliot	Michelle Whitman	John Schribbs
Mark Stapp	Don McEnhill	Curt Nichols	
Josh Proctor	Paul Martin		

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Kristina Tierney Kevin McDonnell Angel Lopez

STAFF PRESENT:

Misti Arias, General Manager; Jennifer Kuszmar, Acquisition Manager; Allison Schichtel, Senior Conservation Planner; Sara Ortiz, Administrative Aide; Michelle Nozzari, Administrative Aide; Luke Bowman, County Counsel.

Call to Order

Chair Thembi Borrás called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

Public Comment

There were no comments.

Approval of Minutes from May 25, 2023

Chair Borrás asked for any comments or revisions to the May 22, 2023, minutes. There were two corrections. Kevin McDonnell was moved to absent as he did not attend May 25th meeting. In the Announcements from Advisory Committee Members, Steve Rabinowitsh corrected that the State *agreed to sell* the property, not that State sold the property. Chair Borrás took roll call. A vote took place, and all were in favor and the minutes were approved.

General Manager's Report

Upcoming Board Items for AG + Open Space

- 7/11: Outings and Education Contracts & Denner Ranches Conservation Easement, Second Amendment to Cinquini & Passarino Contract
- 7/18: Contract with Singing Stream Conservation Consultants
- 8/1: Chanslor Ranch, Environmental Services Contracts, Fitch Mountain OSP – County Slope Easement along Fitch Mtn Rd (Joint with TPW), and Gillis Ranch (Riebli Dairy)
- 8/22: MGP 2022 Round 2 Recommendations

Acquisition Update:

- We are taking the Denner Ranches to the Board on July 11. Denner Ranches is a 489-acre property between Forestville and Santa Rosa, California. The Property is adjacent to and in the historic footprint of the Laguna de Santa Rosa (the “Laguna”). The Property has been historically used for agriculture as well as a farm stand, grazing, personal recreation, hunting, and open space (at least 100 years). Restoration of this part of the Laguna is a high priority for local and regional habitat and stormwater management organizations. Conservation of this property will help to achieve state and regional climate goals including protection of critical water resources in a changing climate.
- Mark West Wikiup Preserve (the former golf course) was approved by the FOC at their June meeting. The landowner has conditionally accepted our offer. We are finalizing the documents for closing with Sonoma Water taking fee title at closing with us retaining a Conservation Easement and Recreation Covenant.
- Acquisition Specialists will be bringing several acquisition projects to the FOC in the months ahead. We anticipate the following projects in July, August and September: Gillis Ranch, Armstrong Redwoods – Ayers Addition, LaFranchi Laguna, Spring Hill Ranch, Hood Mountain – Salt Creek Addition, and Lobban.

Community Resources Update

- PD article on May 31 about our potential purchase of 378-acre Chanslor Ranch north of Bodega Bay. There was also a PD Editorial on June 11 regarding Chanslor Ranch with messaging about the value of open space and the benefits the community receives as a result of their investment.
- AOS participated in Child in the Wild hosted by Sonoma Land Trust on June 4, 2023.
- AOS sponsored Sonoma RCD Agricultural Heritage Series. Family Farm Day is hosted on June 17, 2023

Vegetation Management Update

- 17 of 19 grant agreements were approved by the Board of Supervisors on 6/12/23 and are making their way through the administrative system to have checks prepared for each entity by the end of next week. Two projects are awaiting additional CEQA finding and will be approved by mid-July. By the end of July, the Sonoma County Vegetation Management Grant Program will have funded 65 community-driven wildfire resilience projects throughout the County and invested close to \$11.5M of the PG&E Settlement Funds; all these groups have matched this funding with close to \$2.6M of matching funds.
- Living with Fire: Sonoma County Forest Conservation Conference starts June 23, 2023 at Shone Farm. This event is completely SOLD OUT with a waitlist.
- Ag + Open Space staff is working with Gold Ridge RCD to launch a series of workshops for landowners and resource managers on various topics including wildfire resilience, fuel



management, forest management, watershed protection, carbon sequestration and land conservation as part of National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant worth \$353,000 matched by PG&E Settlement Funds. Ag + Open Space will work with partners including Occidental Arts and Ecology, Sonoma Ecology Center, Sonoma Land Trust, Sonoma RCD, Fire Safe Sonoma, and others.

Stewardship Update

- Staff will be bringing information on the Stewardship Reserve Fund/Endowment to the Board as part of a Stewardship Update in September. Ag + Open Space will be seeking direction to develop an Endowment investment policy and to work towards new legislation that allows for a more diverse set of investment options.

Chair Borrás opened the meeting for questions and comments from Advisory Committee members and members of the public. No members of the public had questions.

Michelle Whitman recused herself from reviewing the 2022 Matching Grant Round 2 Funding Recommendations citing a conflict of interest due to her role as the Director of Community Development Commission (CDC) as they have submitted an application for the Tierra de Rosas project. She left the meeting.

2022 MGP Round 2 Funding Recommendation

Marc Stapp and Steve Rabinowitsh recused themselves from discussion and approval of the recommendations citing their roles with the City of Santa Rosa, who is also an applicant in this round of funding.

Amy Ricard, Community Resources Program Manager, and Pamela Swan, Grant Coordinator presented on the 2022 Matching Grant Program Round 2 funding cycle. Six projects were received requesting over \$8.2 million in funding. Three funding scenarios were presented.

Chair Borrás opened the meeting for questions and comments from Advisory Committee members and members of the public. Advisory Committee members asked questions about the application cycle and funding timeline. Applicant Representatives provided public comment to express support for their projects.

Chair Borrás closed public comment and brought the scenarios back to the Advisory Committee for deliberation. Chair Borrás took roll call, and a quorum was present. Several motions were considered. Vice Chair Eliot introduced a motion to increase the budget proposed in Table 1 (The Ad Hoc/Staff Funding Recommendations for 2022 MGP Round 2). Her proposal was to increase the total amount by \$1 million, adding \$250,000 to Sonoma Schellville Trail with total funding of \$750,000, and adding \$750,000 to Tierra De Rosas to increase the total funding to \$1.55 million. The motion passed with a majority. Member Paul Martin commented that he had concerns about the large sum of funding going for Bounty Farm Project and asked for his concerns to be noted.

Subcommittee Report Outs



Acquisition Subcommittee – No updates and has not met.

Agricultural Subcommittee – No updates and has not met.

Endowment Subcommittee – Did not meet, but the committee has met three times this year and supported the Staff proposal. AOS will be going before the board during the Stewardship Update this fall for support and guidance in seeking to create and establish this fund.

Matching Grant REVISION Subcommittee – No updates and has not met.

Matching Grant APPLICATION EVALUATION Subcommittee – The committee met and reviewed the applications. They also moved forward with supporting staff recommendations.

Projects in Negotiation

Misti noted she covered Projects in Negotiation in her managers' report.

Announcements

Member Paul Martin announced that the Sonoma Marin Fair is June 21- June 25. The Dairy Show was Thursday June 22, the Steer show would be June 23, the Dairy Heifer show would be on June 24, and Farmers Day would be on June 25.

Adjournment

Chair Borrás adjourned the meeting at 7:00.

Next Meeting: August 24, 2023

This meeting will be in person with an option for members of the public to join via zoom. The meeting place is: 747 Mendocino Ave, Ste 100, Large Conference Room, Santa Rosa

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Nozzari

Advisory Committee Clerk

