



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
June 23, 2022 | 5:00 pm**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Curt Nichols	Kristina Tierney	Brian Barnacle	Don McEnhill
Michelle Whitman	Bill Smith	Wendy Eliot	
Paul Martin	Sue Conley	Jesús Guzmán	

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Osvaldo Jimenez	Jan McFarland	Steve Rabinowitsh	Cary Fargo
Tawny Tesconi	John Nagle	Neysa Hinton	

STAFF PRESENT:

Amy Ricard, Community Resources Manager; Allison Schichtel, Senior Conservation Planner; Sheri Emerson, Stewardship Manager; Lauren Alpert, Community Relations Assistant; Monica Delmartini, Stewardship Specialist; 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 took a roll call:

Steve Rabinowitsh, no; Neysa Hinton, no; Curt Nichols, yes; Kristina Tierney, no; Bill Smith, yes; Cary Fargo, no; Wendy Eliot, yes; Paul Martin, yes; Jan McFarland, no; Sue Conley, yes; Osvaldo Jimenez, no; Jesús Guzmán, yes; Don McEnhill, yes; Brian Barnacle, yes; Tawny Tesconi, no; John Nagle, no; Michelle Whitman, yes.

Public Comment

Chair Whitman asked for any public comments on items not on the agenda.

There were none.

Approval of Minutes from May 26, 2022

Chair Whitman asked for any comments or revisions regarding the May 26, 2022 minutes. There were none. Wendy Eliot motioned for the minutes to be approved as is. Bill Smith seconded the motion. All in favor except Brian Barnacle, Jesús Guzmán, and Don McEnhill who abstained as they were not present at the May meeting.

General Manager's Report

- Amy Ricard, Community Resources Manager, presented the General Manager report for Misti Arias, General Manager. The El Recreo property is closing soon. This property is located in Sonoma Valley and is 289 acres adjacent to Hood Mountain.
- Ag + Open Space is participating in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training with a company called Promise54. Staff will be involved in several groups trainings and surveys over the summer.
- The Matching Grant Program is coming to a close, with the application deadline of July 1, 2022. We will form the Advisory Committee MGP Subcommittee at the next meeting.
- The Grants Coordinator position has opened and will close on July 21, 2022. This position will oversee the Matching Grant program, as well as oversee management of grants and other related tasks.
- The Acquisitions Specialist recruitment is ongoing as we are now filling two positions.
- The Senior Stewardship Specialist position closed and interviews will be held soon.
- We are recruiting for the two youth positions on the Advisory Committee. If any Advisory Committee members know of anyone, please refer them to Ms. Ricard.
- The Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation Restoration Projects at Sonoma Valley Regional Park, Trail and Haroutunian South will be going to the Board on July 12, 2022.
- The Eighth Amendment to lease the building that Ag + Open Space is housed in will go to the Board on July 12, 2022 as well.
- The Alternative Funding Arrangements grant under Natural Resource Conservation Service will go to the Board for approval on August 2, 2022.

Chair Whitman opened the meeting for discussion with the Advisory Committee members and members of the public. There were no public comments.

Stewardship – Oken Riparian Restoration Update

Sheri Emerson, Stewardship Manager, introduced this habitat restoration project located north of Rohnert Park.

Monica Delmartini, Stewardship Specialist, presented a PowerPoint presentation giving the status of the project. Over the past few years, there has been erosion repair and planting on the property. The property was acquired in 1998 as a greenbelt acquisition. It is 76 acres, located north of Rohnert Park at the foot of Taylor Mountain, and is currently leased to a local family for a commercial cattle grazing operation. There are seasonal creeks, grasslands, and some mature native willows on the property but not much tree or shrub coverage. In the past the cows have had year-round access to the creek areas and had denuded these of vegetation, creating significant erosion and water quality concerns. With design input from a company called Prunuske Chatham and funding and technical support from Point Blue Conservation Science, Ag + Open Space has been able



to repair and revegetate the riparian areas and add fencing to allow seasonal grazing. A grant from Sonoma Water has allowed high school students to contribute to the restoration project by planting acorns and other native species. During the late fall rains last year, the improvements held up well.

Chair Whitman opened the meeting for discussion with the Advisory Committee members and members of the public. There was no public comment.

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

Outings & Education Program

Lauren Alpert, Community Relations Assistant, presented a PowerPoint presentation to report out on public outings and educational programs that Ag + Open Space is involved in. Ms. Alpert discussed the history and program review, current status, hybrid programming, outcomes and looking ahead. Ag + Open Space has been running this program for over 15 years. The goal is to educate the community. The programs run in all five supervisorial districts and the contracts run for 3-year cycles. These are free programs that offer field trips and outings to students and community members. We partner with Sonoma Land Trust, Sonoma Ecology Center, Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation, LandPaths, and Sonoma and Gold Ridge Resource Conservation Districts. Through a new partnership with Sonoma Land Trust, we have expanded the program to Baylands along San Pablo Bay. The outings usually last anywhere from three to six hours, and field trips are multi-touch with 1–6-hour classroom visits and field trips. Our current contracts began in April 2020 just when shelter in place started and the programs immediately shifted to virtual and now are hybrid. In person field trips and outings returned in March of this year but virtual programs are also still being offered. The virtual outings connect to new and more diverse audiences. They are more accessible to audiences that may have mobility and language barriers and can allow for much larger groups and can cover more than one property per outing.

Chair Whitman opened the meeting for discussion with the Advisory Committee members and members of the public. The Chair and committee members noted that they would be supportive of additional funding for these programs.

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

Projects in Negotiations

Chair Whitman announced that there was a question from a member of the public that came to us as an email and asked if it is easy for public to get questions answered directly by staff and by contacting the Ag + Open Space directly. Ms. Ricard assured that public can call us directly on the main line and via emails and direct phone calls. Ms. Ricard answered the question from the public regarding how long it takes for a project to appear on the Projects in Negotiations spreadsheet after an application has been submitted. Ms. Ricard explained that there is a 4-to-6-week window from when the application is received, and if it is approved, will then appear on the Projects in Negotiations spreadsheet. Advisory Committee members and members of the public discussed different properties and questions were answered by staff.



Announcements from Advisory Committee Members

Wendy Eliot

The Sonoma County Climate Resilient Lands Strategy was released on June 15, 2022 and members of the public are invited to review the document online and provide feedback over the course of a 30 day public comment period. On June 27, 2022 County staff will be hosting an information webinar to further engage with members of the public.

Brian Barnacle

Petaluma River Park finished a multi-purpose trail. The Petaluma Fair will take place this weekend and 38 Special will be performing along with other bands.

Adjournment

Chair Whitman adjourned the meeting at 6:18.

Next Meeting: July 28, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Mariah Robson
Advisory Committee Secretary

