



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 25, 2020 | 5:00 pm

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Bill Smith	Tawny Tesconi	Evan Wiig	Paul Martin	Don McEnhill
Curt Nichols	Taj Hittenberger	Jennielynn Holmes	Leah Gold	Neysa Hinton
John Dell'Osso	Cary Fargo	Michelle Whitman	John Nagle	Jan McFarland

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Austin Maners
Doug Lipton

STAFF PRESENT:

Bill Keene, General Manager; Misti Arias, Acquisition Manager; Karen Gaffney, Conservation Planning Manager; Sheri Emerson, Stewardship Manager; Kim Batchelder, Conservation Associate Planner; Allison Schichtel, Senior Conservation Planner; Sara Ortiz, Administrative Aide; Catherine Iantosca, Stewardship Technician; Taylor Acosta, Stewardship Technician; Aldo Mercado, County Counsel; Mariah Robson, Advisory Committee Clerk

Call to Order

Chair Dell'Osso called the meeting to order at 5:02 pm.

Public Comment

Susan Kirks from the Paula Lane Network nonprofit organization requested assistance in communicating with the City of Petaluma regarding Paula Lane.

Approval of Minutes

Michelle Whitman motioned to approve the minutes from May 28, 2020 as is, and Cary Fargo seconded the motion. All were in favor, with three abstentions from Jennielynn Holmes, Neysa Hinton, and Don McEnhill who were not in attendance at the May meeting.

General Manager's Report Out

- Renewal of the Ag + Open Space office building lease will go to the Board on July 14, 2020.
- The Board is holding budget workshops on July 27 and 28, 2020. The Ag + Open Space presentation will be on July 28, 2020 at 2:00 pm.

- The Torr acquisition with Regional Parks will go to the Board on September 22, 2020. This property is adjacent to Monti Rio above the school on Bohemian Highway.
- Since the last Advisory Committee meeting there have been several marches and protests. Ag + Open Space will be having internal Equity, Diversity and Inclusion discussions and actions. This will come to the Advisory Committee at a future date. The County of Sonoma has created and approved a new department for Equity and will hire an officer and staff. This will go to the Board on July 7, 2020 for final approval and should be up and running in the next couple of months. The Matching Grant Program is developing an equity lens which will be discussed in the Matching Grant Program Subcommittee meetings and then will be brought to a future full Advisory Committee meeting.
- Ag + Open Space is working with Dr. Robert Eyer, an economist from Sonoma State, on the COVID-19 effects on Sonoma County agriculture.
- The 2020 Matching Grant Program cycle is moving forward with an extended application deadline of August 31, 2020. We are recommending up to \$4 million in awards this cycle. The Matching Grant Program Subcommittee members for the 2020 MGP cycle will be selected at the September Advisory Committee and Fiscal Oversight Commission meetings, after all the MGP applications are received. Counsel will review financial and incompatible conflicts of interest as well as perceived conflicts. Staff will provide a list of the applicants for the 2020 MGP funding cycle so that AC and FOC members can disclose any conflicts they may have prior to selection of the Subcommittee. Tentative dates for the Subcommittee meetings are October 13, November 3, and December 15, 2020. Subcommittee members will work with staff to develop preliminary funding recommendations that will be presented at meetings of the full AC and FOC and ultimately to the Board.
- On July 14, 2020 Ag + Open Space is taking an item to the Board in response to Board member requests during our update in May. In response to the impacts of COVID-19 on Sonoma County Agricultural producers, Ag + Open Space proposes to offer an emergency grant program targeted at protecting agricultural lands and operations at-risk of land conversion to non-agricultural uses. If approved, we will allocate up to \$1 million in emergency grant funding to support farmers and ranchers. These grant funds will go toward ensuring agricultural lands remain productive so they can continue to provide access to locally grown food and fiber, contribute to our local economy, and keep farming and ranching viable in Sonoma County. Funds awarded through this program will be targeted to stabilize conditions created by the COVID-19 crisis that imperil local farms by offering direct aid to farmers or landowners who can show the assistance will keep their agricultural land in production. Since the start of our local shelter in place orders, staff have been in regular communication with local agricultural groups including the Sonoma County Farm Bureau, Community Alliance for Family Farmers, the Farmer's Guild, and FEED Sonoma. This emergency grant program will draw upon local expertise to understand the problems facing local farmers due to the pandemic. If the program is approved by the Board, staff will move quickly to launch the program and will conduct additional outreach to Sonoma County farmers and ranchers notifying them of this emergency funding opportunity.



- Ag + Open Space offices will be open starting July 7, 2020 for 20 hours a week from 9:00 to 1:00 Monday through Friday. There are new safeguards including an intercom to have outside visitors check in and answer questions and take their temperature before entering in order to have control of entrance to the building.

Subcommittee Report Out

The Advisory Committee currently has one active subcommittee, the Matching Grant Program. The subcommittee has not met since the last Advisory Committee meeting and will reconstitute once the Matching Grant Program applications are received after August 31, 2020.

County Hazard Mitigation Plan

Karen Gaffney, Conservation Planning Manager, presented a PowerPoint presentation on the County Hazard Mitigation Plan. She explained Ag + Open Space's role, implication, intent and purpose. Committee members asked questions and made comments after the presentation. For more information, the PowerPoint presentation is available upon request, or contact Ms. Gaffney.

Carrington Ranch Transfer

Misti Arias, Acquisition Manager, introduced the Carrington Ranch Transfer PowerPoint presentation. Carrington Ranch is in process of being transferred to Regional Parks. Catherine Iantosca, Stewardship Technician, presented the PowerPoint presentation. Carrington Ranch was purchased in 2003 by Ag + Open Space and was originally slated to be transferred to State Parks prior to their financial problems. Regional Parks stepped up to take it and it has just been approved and will be transferred by September 2020. For more information, the PowerPoint presentation is available upon request, or contact Ms. Iantosca.

Projects in Negotiation

Two projects will go to the Fiscal Oversight Commission in July 2020, and then to the Board: Mattos Dairy and Joseph Camozzi Dairy. These are projects that Ag + Open Space has been working on for a long time.

Announcements from Advisory Committee Members and Members of the Public

No announcements.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:37 pm.

Next Meeting: August 27, 2020

Respectfully submitted,

Mariah Robson
Advisory Committee Secretary

