



AG + OPEN SPACE
SONOMA COUNTY

SONOMA COUNTY OPEN SPACE DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

APPROVED MINUTES

747 Mendocino Avenue – Suite 100, Santa Rosa, CA 95401

August 24, 2023 | 5:00 pm

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Paul Martin	Ladi Asgill	Steve Rabinowitsh	Thembi Borrás
Bill Smith	Jesus Guzman	Michelle Whitman	John Schribbs
Kevin McDonnell	Don McEnhill	Dayna Ghirardelli	Josh Proctor
Angel Lopez			

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Jan McFarland	Kristina Tierney	Mark Stapp	Wendy Elliot
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STAFF PRESENT:

Misti Arias, General Manager; Aldo Mercado, County Counsel; Amy Ricard, Community Resources Manager; Sara Ortiz, Administrative Aide; Michelle Nozzari, Administrative Aide.

Call to Order

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

Public Comment

Duane Dewitt gave comment on the importance of protecting Roseland Creek from pollution from vehicles and he spoke on a need for accessible, uninterrupted space for the local community to access nature.

Approval of Minutes from June 22, 2023

Chair Borrás asked for any comments or revisions to the June 22, 2023, minutes. Members noted there was correction in attendance of Members Paul Martin and Don McEnhill who were mistakenly listed as absent. Chair Borrás took roll call. A vote took place to approve the minutes. Michelle Whitman, Kevin McDonnell, and Angel Lopez abstained from the voting; the minutes were approved with the corrections.

Advisory Committee Members Oath of Office

In compliance with state law and as part of general housekeeping, Advisory Committee Members present swore the oath of office and signed their Oath of Office forms.

General Manager's Report

The General Manager welcomed two new Advisory Committee Members, Ladi Asgill and Dayna Ghirardelli. Mr. Asgill comes to the committee with experience as an agronomist and environmental scientist in North Bay. Dayna Ghirardelli is the new Executive Director of the Sonoma County Farm Bureau. Ms. Ghirardelli previously worked for UC Cooperative Extension as a Dairy Program Representative for Sonoma & Marin.

Upcoming Board Items for Ag + Open Space include:

- Spring Hill Ranch Conservation Easement Acquisition on September 12, 2023
- Stewardship Update on September 19, 2023
- Mark West Wikiup Open Space Preserve Fee Title Purchase

Acquisition Update

Gillis Ranch and Chanslor acquisitions were approved by the Board on Tuesday. Last week the FOC approved the appraisals for Spring Hill and LaFranchi Laguna.

Community Resources Update

The Board approved full funding (\$7.2 million) for 5 of the 6 Matching Grant projects submitted in Round 2 of the 2022 cycle. These awardees include Petaluma Bounty Farm, Sonoma Schellville Trail, Geyserville Public Plaza, Tierra de Rosas Community Plaza, and Mark West Community Park. Media outreach is underway. Staff will schedule an MGP Revision Ad Hoc meeting in the coming weeks.

Vegetation Management Update

The Board approved a contract with Gold Ridge RCD. This will launch a 2-year Capacity Building program for landowners within the Russian River watershed. Gold Ridge RCD will work with Kim Batchelder, community partners, and non-profit organizations to provide technical workshops and field visits to improve forest management, wildfire resilience, watershed protection, carbon sequestration, fuels management, and ecosystem health. This program is supported by a \$353,000 grant from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) matched by PG&E Settlement Funds and will start in September 2023 and go through May of 2025.

Stewardship Update

On September 19 staff will present a Stewardship Update to the Board, including information about the Ag + Open Space Endowment fund cost model and the need to seek investment options that can achieve a higher interest rate than the County Treasury. This past spring staff worked with members of the Advisory Committee/Fiscal Oversight Commission Endowment Joint Subcommittee to review and discuss the cost model prepared by the nonprofit Center for Natural Lands Management, as well as possible investment options with a longer-term investment horizon. The financial firm Macias, Gini, and O'Connell recommends that Ag + Open Space utilize an investment structure similar to that used by the County for its Other Postemployment Healthcare Plan. Ag + Open Space will need to work with state representatives to propose a change to state legislation in order to be able to participate in this type of investment.

Comments: Member Martin asked if the Agricultural Subcommittee was going to meet soon. Ms. Ricard reiterated the Agricultural Specialist was preparing materials for Farmland For All that will be available soon. Also, with the addition of new members there should be new appointments to



subcommittees. Member McDonnell mentioned that he was grateful that Petaluma Bounty Farm was among awardees for the Match Grant Program.

Subcommittee Report Outs

Acquisition Subcommittee – No updates and has not met.

Agricultural Subcommittee – No updates and has not met.

Endowment Subcommittee – Has met three times. The subcommittee supports Staff proposal. The Stewardship Update to the Board will take place on September 19, 2023.

Matching Grant REVISION Subcommittee – The subcommittee will be meeting soon to review.

Matching Grant APPLICATION EVALUATION Subcommittee – has met and reviewed applications.

Projects in Negotiation

The Advisory Committee members requested larger font for the Projects in Negotiation Spreadsheet.

Announcements

No Announcements.

Adjournment

Chair Borrás adjourned the meeting at 5:31pm

Next Meeting: September 28, 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

